

Regulator concludes regulatory case involving Alzheimer's Society

Press release

Charity Commission reports on outcomes of its regulatory case involving the dementia charity



The Charity Commission has concluded its regulatory compliance case into the [Alzheimer's Society](#), finding that the trustees acted in line with their legal duties.

The case was opened in February after the national media reported allegations about the handling of bullying and harassment within the charity, including the use of confidentiality clauses in settlement agreements.

After reviewing detailed records and information, the regulator found no evidence that confidentiality clauses used by the charity were designed to or would have had the effect of preventing staff from reporting any whistleblowing, bullying, harassment or discrimination complaint. Allegations reported in the national media around the amount of money paid out in settlements were not substantiated by the evidence the Commission saw.

The Commission is satisfied that there were processes in place to ensure that settlement payments were properly scrutinised. The regulator has reviewed the Society's updated policy on settlement agreements, instigated following the allegations. It notes that the policy includes new explicit provisions stating that settlement agreements and confidentiality clauses cannot be used to hide improper behaviour or prevent lawful disclosures.

The Commission also welcomes the launch of a review of the Society's procedures for staff raising concerns to ensure these meet best practice. It has advised the Society that in making payments, thought should be given to how the decision might affect public trust and confidence in the charity.

In the interests of accountability and transparency, the regulator has also advised the charity to explain its decision-making and use of compensation

payments in its annual report.

The charity provided evidence that work continues to strengthen its internal culture to ensure a positive environment for staff.

The regulator is satisfied that the trustees cooperated with its enquiries and took its guidance on board.

Tracy Howarth, Assistant Director of Casework at the Charity Commission said:

Our case did not find evidence of wrongdoing at the Alzheimer's Society, or that its use of settlement agreements would stop people from whistleblowing. This is crucial – the Alzheimer's Society has an important role in ensuring the wellbeing of so many, and so it is important that its working culture allows staff to raise concerns. Like all charities, the Society must continue to ensure that staff settlements are only made where that supports the charity's purpose. Donors expect charities to be different from other organisations and to spend their money carefully. We also welcome steps being taken to further strengthen procedures at the Society and to strengthen the charity's internal culture.

Ends

Notes to editors

1. Any new evidence that might change our assessment would be of serious concern and would be examined closely.
2. Our case did not examine individual instances of bullying or harassment; our role is to look at a charity's governance, policies and processes, to assess whether trustees are complying with their duties in line with the charity law framework.
3. We received a complaint about the Alzheimer's Society in February 2018, detailing concerns about the charity's approach to dealing with staff grievances, including the extent to which the trustee board was aware of and overseeing decisions appropriately. We did not follow up on the complaint at the time, and have acknowledged that this did not meet the high standards we set ourselves.

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Joint statement on domestic and sexual violence risks under Covid-19 in the OSCE region

Mr Chair

On behalf of Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and members of three gender networks: Women in the First Dimension, Men Engage, and the Women Ambassadors, I wanted to bring the attention of the Permanent Council to a potentially hidden security risk related to COVID-19 in the OSCE area.

Alongside unprecedented health risks for individuals, economic security risks, risks for human rights and democratic institutions and enhanced risks in the OSCE's conflict areas, there is a greater risk of domestic and sexual violence during the COVID-19 crisis.

Domestic violence often increases during times of heightened stress. This is particularly the case when it is linked to economic instability and fears of job losses. The last weeks are no exception. Women and girls are the overwhelming majority of victims of gender-based violence; however, it is also important to recognise that anyone can be affected, regardless of gender.

The OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women, adopted in 2018, recognises the persistence of gender-based violence experienced by women and girls, and the many forms it can take.

At this challenging time, the social isolation of lockdowns means women and girls, as well as other victims, may be trapped in their homes with their abusers, isolated from the people and the resources that could help them. They may also have fewer opportunities to contact domestic abuse support services. It is incumbent on all of us to ensure that these risks do not remain hidden. We need to address them and ensure that victims are able to access the support they need.

On 5th April, the UN SG shone a spotlight on the 'horrifying global surge in domestic violence' and urged 'all governments to make the prevention and redress of violence against women a key part of their national response plans for COVID-19.' We also greatly appreciate that this issue was raised by the OSCE's SG, the Parliamentary Assembly and ODIHR in their press release of 2nd April.

We should also be concerned about the possible increased occurrence of sexual

exploitation and abuse. We stress the need to remain alert to this risk, and we underline the need for effective preventative and safeguarding measures in responding to the crisis.

In addition, we should be alert to the repercussions of school closures. Girls are least likely to return to school following a crisis, facing increased risks of child marriage, teenage pregnancy, gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, including on-line sexual exploitation, and the loss of vital sexual and reproductive health services as resources are diverted elsewhere.

We call on all OSCE participating States to do their utmost at this time to mitigate against these risks. This includes through appropriate scaling up of response services, adapting prevention activities and recognising that a public health response to screen for domestic violence could be life-saving.

We want to ensure that this major security risk does not remain hidden in the OSCE area. We are committed to retaining a focus on this topic. We would like attention to be drawn in a subsequent week on broader gender implications of COVID-19.

Self-employed invited to get ready to make their claims for coronavirus (COVID-19) support

From today (Monday 4 May), HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) will begin contacting customers who may be eligible for the government's [Self-Employment Income Support Scheme \(SEISS\)](#).

Those who are eligible will be able to claim a taxable grant worth 80% of their average trading profits up to a maximum of £7,500 (equivalent to three months' profits), paid in a single instalment.

HMRC is also inviting customers, or their agents, to [go online and check their eligibility for SEISS](#).

In order to receive quick confirmation from the eligibility checker, individuals should:

- have their Unique Taxpayer Reference (UTR) and their National Insurance Number to hand
- make sure their details are up-to-date in their Government Gateway account

Once the online check is complete, eligible customers will be given a date when they can submit their claim. They will also be encouraged to update their contact details.

Claims service opening shortly

The claims service will open on 13 May and is being delivered ahead of the original timetable. This will help millions of self-employed people, covering a wide range of industries and jobs, whose livelihoods have been adversely affected by the coronavirus.

The claims process will be very simple, and those eligible will have the money paid into their bank account by 25 May, or within six working days of completing a claim.

Who's eligible

Individuals are eligible if their business has been adversely affected by coronavirus, they traded in the tax year 2019 to 2020, intend to continue trading, and they:

- earn at least half of their income through self-employment
- have trading profits of no more than £50,000 per year
- traded in the tax year 2018 to 2019 and submitted their Self Assessment tax return on or before 23 April 2020 for that year

HMRC is using information that customers have provided in their 2018 to 2019 tax return – and returns for 2016 to 2017 and 2017 to 2018 where needed – to determine their eligibility and is contacting customers who may be eligible via email, text message or letter.

Wider government support

This scheme brings parity with the [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#), where the government committed to pay up to £2,500 each month in wages of employed workers who are furloughed during the outbreak.

Where individuals are ineligible for the scheme, HMRC will direct people to guidance setting out the scheme conditions to help them understand why they are ineligible, and advise on other support available to them such as:

- income tax deferrals
- rental support
- Universal Credit
- access to mortgage holidays
- various business support schemes the government has introduced to protect businesses during this time

Further information

Guidance and information on the scheme is available on GOV.UK:

[Government support package for universities and students](#)

New measures to protect students and universities, including temporary student number controls, have been announced by the Education Secretary today (4 May), answering sector calls on the Covid-19 response.

Gavin Williamson has announced the [package of measures](#), drawing on proposals from the universities sector, to stabilise university admissions this autumn and to help the universities and students are safeguarded at a time of unprecedented uncertainty.

Through the plans, English higher education providers will be able to recruit full-time undergraduate UK and EU students for 2020/21 up to a temporary set level, which is based on their forecasts for the next academic year, plus an additional 5%. The Government will control these numbers through the student finance system.

The Government will also have the discretion to allocate an additional 10,000 places, with 5,000 ring-fenced for nursing, midwifery or allied health courses to support the country's vital public services.

The measures aim to allow students, who want to go to university and meet their entry requirements, to access higher education while avoiding competition among providers taking a form which would go against the interests of students and the sector.

Through the proposals from Government and the sector, students will benefit from a new proactive and personalised [UCAS Clearing process](#) this summer, which will help to broaden their horizons, and funding to support those in financial hardship.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway has also announced that £100m of public funding will be brought forward to this academic year to help protect vital university research activities. On top of that, an estimated £2.6bn of tuition fee payments will be bought forward to help universities better manage financial risks over the autumn, including taking steps to improve efficiencies and manage their finances in order to avoid cash flow problems further ahead.

The Government has also confirmed that providers are eligible to apply for its support packages, including business loan support schemes, which the

Office for Students (OfS) the regulator in England, estimates could be worth at least £700m to the sector, depending on eligibility and take up. The Government has also published further guidance about how providers should access the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to safeguard staff jobs, in particular stating that any grant from the scheme should not duplicate other sources of public funding where these are being maintained, such as UK home student tuition fees.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

We are committed to supporting our world class universities and students through this unprecedented challenging time. So we are putting measures in place to help protect students and staff from the impact of coronavirus.

I know this is an unsettling time for all involved, and we are working tirelessly with the sector to do everything we can to stabilise admissions and protect a vital part of our country's economy and society.

I am very grateful to universities for their innovation and dedication in their frontline response at this time.

Universities Minister Michelle Donelan said:

I know this is a very difficult and anxious time for students, universities and higher education staff, and we are working determinedly with the sector and my counterparts across the UK, to support them during this time.

Universities have an integral part to play in our economy, society and culture, which is highlighted now more than ever through their important role in the fight against the virus.

That is why we are introducing a package of measures to boost support for students, stabilise the admissions system and ease pressures on universities' finances.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

The UK is home to some of the world's leading scientists and researchers. From the study of disease to vaccine development, their work has already proved itself to be invaluable to our response to coronavirus.

This £100 million we are bringing forward will provide immediate help to ensure the excellent research taking place in our universities continues throughout this period of uncertainty.

The full range of measures, bringing together collective action from the Government and sector organisations to help mitigate the impact of coronavirus, include:

- Stabilising admissions – Temporary measures mean providers will be able to recruit full-time, domestic students up to 5% above their forecasts in the next academic year, which is in line with proposals originating from the sector, to help reduce volatility and ensure a fair and orderly admissions. The Government will also have the discretion to allocate an additional 10,000 places, with 5,000 ring-fenced for nursing, midwifery or allied health courses to support the country's vital public services.
- Preventing exploitative admissions practices – The OfS will consult on a [new temporary registration condition](#) so it can intervene if providers take actions that are harmful to the sector and students.
- Enhanced Clearing process – UCAS is developing a new, personalised Clearing system for students this summer. This includes Clearing Plus, a new service which matches students to universities or other opportunities based on their achievements and course interests. If students' calculated grades exceed their predicted ones, it can suggest alternative courses with higher entry requirements.
- University research funding – The Government is bringing forward £100m of [Quality-related research funding](#) (QR) for providers in England into this current academic year as immediate help to ensure research activities can continue during the crisis.
- Research sustainability taskforce – DfE and BEIS Ministers will set up an advisory sector working group with the Devolved Administrations to consider how best to respond to the challenges universities face on research as a result of Covid-19, and so university research can continue to support the UK's economic recovery following the crisis.
- Government business support – The Government has confirmed that universities are eligible to apply for the Government support schemes, including business loan support, which the OfS estimates could be worth at least £700m, depending upon eligibility and take-up. Providers can also access the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to safeguard staff jobs, including for those with short-term contracts.
- Changes to tuition fee loan payments – The Student Loans Company will bring forward tuition fee payments of students in the in the 2020/21 academic year to providers, expected to be worth £2.6bn, to help cash flow. This will not affect the loan liability, amount of interest charged to students or the timing of their maintenance loan payments.
- Financial opportunities – As part of existing programmes and using established procedures, the DfE will consider purchasing assets, such as land and buildings, where they can be used for new or expanding schools and colleges. This financial year the DfE has budgeted for up to £100m to acquire sites for planned projects across purchases from suitable vendors, including higher education providers among others.
- Financial help for students – The Government has worked with the OfS to help clarify that providers can use existing funds, totalling £46m across April and May, to boost their hardship funds for students in financial difficulty. This can include help for IT equipment and internet access.

- Supporting international students – The UK continues to welcome overseas students, and Ministers are working across Government as a priority to ensure universities can continue to attract international students. DfE and DIT Ministers will also chair a group, including key sector representatives, to consider how the International Education Strategy can be updated to respond to the impact of the coronavirus outbreak. The student number controls will only apply to domestic and EU domiciled full-time undergraduate students in the 2020/21 academic year.

The OfS is proposing a new temporary condition for registered higher education providers in England, allowing it to intervene if universities and colleges act in ways which puts at risk students' interests, or the stability or integrity of the sector. This could include making unconditional offers or pressuring students to accept places that would not be in their best interest through incentives, such as free laptops.

The Government continues to work closely with the Devolved Administrations in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, to mitigate the challenges the entire UK sector faces as a result of coronavirus.

It also continues to support the recruitment of critical workers, such as nurses and doctors, during this important time and aims to use this summer's enhanced Clearing to help this.

In January the Education Secretary wrote to the OfS asking it to prioritise funding through the teaching grant to STEM and specialist subjects. This move will be of more importance in responding to coronavirus.

The research funding plans follow the announcement by Government earlier this month that UKRI-funded PhD students whose studies have been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic will receive further support, including additional grants of up to six months.

The Government's key focus will be on ensuring the country's world-class higher education system delivers for all students and the wider economy. As part of this, it expects all providers and their creditors to behave responsibly.

The Government expects access to the business support schemes, reprofiling of public funding and student number controls should be sufficient to help stabilise most providers' finances, and that should certainly be the first port of calls for providers. Should that not be sufficient, such that a higher education provider finds themselves at risk of closure, the Government will only intervene further where we find there is a case to do so, and only where it believes intervention is possible and appropriate, and as a last resort. In such instances, the DfE will be working with HMT and other Government departments to develop a restructuring regime, through which we will review providers' circumstances and assess the need for restructuring. Where action is required, this will come with attached conditions. The Government will work with the Devolved Administrations on this approach.

PM: 'It's humanity against the virus'

- The Prime Minister will call on countries to come together in a “truly global effort” to defeat coronavirus at a virtual international coronavirus pledging conference today
- Pledging event today kickstarts a month-long international investment drive ahead of the UK-hosted Global Vaccine Summit on 4 June
- The UK is already the biggest donor to the global fund to find a coronavirus vaccine

Prime Minister Boris Johnson will today (Monday, 4 May) co-host a major international conference to drive forward the global race for coronavirus vaccines, treatments and tests – and call on other countries to step up their efforts and work together on the “most urgent shared endeavour of our lifetimes”.

The Prime Minister’s call to action will come during the virtual Coronavirus Global Response International Pledging Conference, which is co-hosted by the UK and eight other countries and organisations.

He will confirm the UK’s pledge of £388 million in UK aid funding for research into vaccines, tests and treatments – part of a larger £744 million existing UK aid commitment to help end the pandemic and support the global economy.

This includes £250 million for the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) to develop vaccines against coronavirus – the biggest such donation to the fund by any country.

Speaking to the conference, the Prime Minister will say:

To win this battle, we must work together to build an impregnable shield around all our people, and that can only be achieved by developing and mass producing a vaccine.

The more we pull together and share our expertise, the faster our scientists will succeed. The race to discover the vaccine to defeat this virus is not a competition between countries, but the most urgent shared endeavour of our lifetimes.

It’s humanity against the virus – we are in this together, and together we will prevail.

International Development Secretary, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, said:

It is only by working together that we will prevent future waves of infection and end this pandemic as quickly as possible.

By strengthening developing countries' health systems and working to find a vaccine, the UK is playing its part in stopping the global spread of coronavirus to save lives everywhere and protect our NHS.

Tackling coronavirus globally is crucial to preventing a second wave of the virus re-emerging in the UK, which would put even further pressure on the NHS. It will also ensure that life-saving vaccines, treatments and diagnostic tests are available as soon as possible.

In the UK, work is progressing at pace on vaccine development – on Thursday the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca announced a partnership to support large-scale manufacture and potential distribution of a vaccine currently being trialled by the university.

On the 4th June, the UK will host the Global Vaccine Summit, bringing together countries and organisations to follow the UK's lead in investing in the work of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

Last week International Development Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan announced a funding pledge equivalent to £330 million a year over the next five years to Gavi. This will help immunise 75 million children in the world's poorest countries.

Notes to editors:

The UK has so far provided £744 million of UK aid for the global response to coronavirus.

Today's pledge towards the \$8bn target is made up of the UK's previously announced £388 million support for new vaccines, tests and treatments:

- £250 million to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, the biggest contribution of any country, to this fund to research a coronavirus vaccine.
- £40 million to support the Global Therapeutics Accelerator, a fund for the rapid development of coronavirus treatments.
- £23 million to support Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics to develop rapid tests for the virus to help identify and slow its spread.
- £75m for the World Health Organization's critical health systems

response.

The UK has also pledged the equivalent of £330 million a year over the next five years to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

The UK is co-hosting today's summit with Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway, Saudi Arabia, and the European Commission.