[Press release: New charity investigation: Kenya Community Support Network]

The Charity Commission, the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales, has opened a statutory inquiry into the Kenya Community Support Network (1104003). The investigation was opened on 22 January 2018.

The charity's objects include relieving poverty, sickness and distress among Kenyans and promoting research into the conditions of life of Kenyans. The charity's stated activities include providing advice and guidance on issues such as immigration, health, welfare benefit, housing, further education, training and basic counselling.

The Commission engaged with the charity in October 2017 after receiving a complaint. This complaint raised concerns about the charity's expenditure and whether it was in furtherance of the charity's objects. The Commission met with representatives from the charity to explore the charity's internal governance, management and administration and inspected the charity's records. The Commission is concerned that there are strong indicators that show that the charity is being used for significant private benefit, that there is mismanagement and misconduct in the administration of the charity, and that the charity is not carrying out activities in furtherance of its charitable objects for the public benefit.

In order to address these concerns, the investigation will look at:

- whether the trustees have acted in compliance with their legal duties and responsibilities under charity law in the administration of the charity
- the financial management of the charity, in particular with regard to its expenditure
- whether there has been any private benefit to the trustees of the charity
- whether the trustees have operated the charity in furtherance of its charitable objects for the public benefit
- whether there has been misconduct and/ or mismanagement by the trustees

In light of the Commission's concerns, it has taken action to protect the charity's assets by restricting the transactions from the charity's bank account. As a result, the charity cannot make payments or part with any of the charity's assets without the Commission's prior written approval.

The Commission stresses that opening an inquiry is not in itself a finding of wrongdoing. The purpose of an inquiry is to examine issues in detail, investigate and establish the facts so that the regulator can ascertain whether there has been mismanagement and/or misconduct; establish the extent of any risk to the charity's property, beneficiaries or work and decide what action needs to be taken to resolve the serious concerns, if necessary using its investigative, protective and remedial powers to do so.

It is the Commission’s policy, after it has concluded an inquiry, to publish a report detailing what issues the inquiry looked at, what actions were undertaken as part of the inquiry and what the outcomes were. Reports of previous inquiries by the Commission are available on GOV.UK.

The charity’s details can be viewed on the Commission’s online charity search tool.

Notes to editors

1. The Charity Commission is the regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work see the about us page on GOV.UK.
2. Search for charities on our check charity tool.
3. Section 46 of the Charities Act 2011 gives the commission the power to institute inquiries. The opening of an inquiry gives the commission access to a range of investigative, protective and remedial legal powers.
4. The Commission’s decision to announce the opening of a statutory inquiry is based on whether it is in the public interest to do so and with consideration of our objective to increase public trust and confidence in charities.

Press release: Nearly 180 employers named and shamed for underpaying thousands of minimum wage workers

- £1.1 million identified for 9,200 workers underpaid minimum wage rates
- 179 employers named and fined £1.3 million after underpayment
- 8 Northern Ireland employers among those named

As well as recovering backpay for 9,200 workers, the government also fined the employers a total of £1.3 million in penalties for breaking national minimum wage laws. The most prolific offending sectors in this round were retailers, hospitality businesses and hairdressers.

It comes ahead of the next rate rise on 1 April, when the National Living Wage will go up from £7.50 to £7.83 per hour. Apprentices under the age of 19 and those in the first year of their apprenticeship will benefit from a record 5.7% rise.

Later this month the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) will launch a campaign to raise awareness of the new rates and encourage workers to speak to their employer if they think they are being underpaid.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP said:

> The National Living and Minimum Wage, which every worker is entitled to, is an essential part of building the higher wage, lower welfare, lower tax society that the UK needs.

> Thanks to government investigations almost 10 thousand of the UK's lowest paid workers are to be back paid as we continue to build a United Kingdom, that works for everyone.

Business Minister Andrew Griffiths said:

> The world of work is changing and we have set out our plans to give millions of workers enhanced rights to ensure everyone is paid and treated fairly in the workplace.

> There are no excuses for short-changing workers. This is an absolute red line for this government and employers who cross it will get caught – not only are they forced to pay back every penny but they are also fined up to 200% of wages owed.

> Today's naming round serves as a sharp reminder to employers to get their house in order ahead of minimum wage rate rises on 1 April.

This 14th naming round comes after the government published its Good Work plan last month, which announced the right to a payslip for all workers. The new law is likely to benefit around 300,000 UK workers who do not currently get a payslip.

For those paid by the hour, payslips will also have to include how many hours the worker is paid for, making pay easier to understand and challenge if it is wrong. The move is part of the government's Industrial Strategy, the long-term plan to build a Britain fit for the future by helping businesses create better, higher-paying jobs in every part of the UK.

Since 2013 the scheme has identified more than £9 million in back pay for around 67,000 workers, with more than 1,700 employers fined a total of £6.3 million. The government has also committed £25.3 million for minimum wage enforcement in 2017 to 2018.

Employers who pay workers less than the minimum wage not only have to pay back arrears of wages to the worker at current minimum wage rates but also face financial penalties of up to 200% of arrears, capped at £20,000 per worker.

For more information about your pay, or if you think you might be being underpaid, get advice and guidance at www.gov.uk/checkyourpay. Workers can also seek advice from workplace experts Acas.

Press release: Regulator publishes a response to the Value for Money consultation

Following a statutory consultation by the Regulator of Social Housinga new Value for Money Standard and a supporting Code of Practice, which will apply to all private registered providers of social housing, will come into effect on 1 April 2018.

Alongside the new Standard and Code the regulator is publishing value for money metrics that providers will be expected to report against. To meet its statutory objective to be proportionate and minimise interference, the metrics are based on information collected through the providers' existing Annual Accounts regulatory return and drawn from the pilot undertaken by the Sector Scorecard Working Group.

Generally respondents welcomed the move away from a narrative approach of VfM reporting to more focused reporting, and understood and supported the metrics approach that RSH had proposed.

From 1 April 2018 private registered providers will no longer need to produce a VfM self-assessment and should meet the reporting requirements of the new Standard. While the value for money metrics which are applicable to all, are financially focused, providers will be able to also set performance targets themselves to reflect social outcomes, appropriate to their objectives.

The Standard requires providers to publish performance evidence in their annual accounts against their own metrics and those defined by the regulator, and report how that performance compares to peers. Providers will be free to report outside of the accounts in a way they see fit if they consider this increases transparency with stakeholders.

Simon Dow, Interim Chair of the Regulation Committee said:

> Thank you to everyone who contributed their views to our Value for Money (VfM) consultation and the separate Technical Note on

metrics. Overall, the responses have been very positive and the strengthened Standard now sets out a clear expectation that VfM should be a key strategic consideration for boards.

The new approach will assist with scrutiny and consistency over the information reported, enable a greater focus on outcomes, and help continue to drive improvements in value for money in the sector. As is already our practice, we will seek assurance through In Depth Assessments that registered providers are putting the Standard in practice.

A decision statement, outlining the analysis of consultation responses received, has been published on the Gov.uk website. It includes the final version of the VfM Standard and Code of Practice.

The VfM Metrics Technical Note is also published on a separate page of the website.

1. There were 174 completed responses to the statutory consultation which ran from 27 September 2017 to 20 December 2017. The regulator also consulted extensively with sector representative bodies.

2. The Sector Scorecard is a voluntary approach that has been adopted by a large proportion of the sector as piloted by the Sector Scorecard Working Group. The new VfM Standard does not oblige providers to adopt the Sector Scorecard. However, the Standard expects that providers will also report on performance targets based upon their own strategic objectives, and if providers wish to draw on the sector scorecard in setting such targets they are free to do so. Where the two sets of measures overlap, we have sought to align the calculation of the metrics in order to ensure consistency and avoid any scope for confusion.

3. The regulator’s purpose is to promote a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector able to deliver homes that meet a range of needs. It does this by undertaking robust economic regulation focusing on governance, financial viability and value for money that maintains lender confidence and protects the taxpayer. It also sets consumer standards and may take action if these standards are breached and there is a significant risk of serious detriment to tenants or potential tenants.

For more information visit the RSH website.

Our media enquiries page has contact details for journalists.

For general queries to RSH, please email enquiries@rsh.gov.uk or call 0300 124 5225.

Press release: UK government publishes analysis on returning EU powers

The UK government has today published provisional analysis of the returning EU powers that will result in the devolved administrations of the UK receiving extensive new powers as we depart the EU.

This analysis covers 153 areas where EU laws intersect with devolved competence. There are only 24 policy areas that are now subject to more detailed discussion to explore whether legislative common framework arrangements might be needed, in whole or in part.

This means that the vast majority of powers returning from Brussels will start off in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast.

None of the existing powers of the devolved governments will be affected in any way.

The document published today by the Cabinet Office makes clear that the vast majority of these policy powers are now intended to be in the full control of the devolved governments from day one of Brexit. This is expected to include policy areas such as:

- carbon capture and storage
- water quality
- charging of HGVs
- onshore hydrocarbon licensing

The 24 policy areas that are expected to require a UK legislative framework and where it is intended that existing EU rules and regulations will rollover into UK law for a temporary period, include:

- animal health and traceability
- food and feed safety and hygiene law
- food labelling
- chemical regulation

This temporary restriction on the devolved governments using some of these new EU powers is to help ensure an orderly departure from EU law and to provide certainty to UK businesses while new legislative frameworks are agreed.

Speaking as he published details of the new powers that will transfer to the devolved governments, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, David Lidington MP, said:

> This is cast iron evidence that the EU Withdrawal Bill will deliver

significant brand new powers for the devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The list we have published today shows how many EU powers that were controlled by Brussels, will, after Brexit, be controlled by the parliaments and assemblies in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast.

The vast majority of these new powers will be in the control of the devolved administrations on the day we leave the EU. There is a much smaller group of powers where the devolved governments will be required to follow current EU laws for a little bit longer while we work out a new UK approach.

We are discussing with the devolved governments how this process will work but, as the UK government, we feel very strongly that we must have the ability to take action to protect the UK internal market which represents a huge investment to everyone in the UK.

We are publishing this material today because this can no longer just be a conversation between governments – this process has to be open and transparent. These issues are of central importance to Parliament and the devolved legislatures, as well as businesses and wider stakeholders whose day to day activities will be affected by these decisions.

The UK government has moved a considerable distance to accommodate the concerns of the devolved government and other parliamentarians. It is now time for others to engage in a similarly constructive manner. We have not yet been able to reach an agreed way forward on Clause 11 but I remain hopeful that we will still be able to.

News story: Future cities: UK mission to Australia

View from the Sydney Tower Eye in Sydney, Australia.

Next week (12 and 16 March), 14 UK entrepreneurs will travel to Sydney and Melbourne, Australia as part of an Innovate UK future cities mission.

These cities have demonstrated significant progress in sustainable living and smart infrastructure. The UK businesses to use the observations and connections they make on the visit to grow and scale up.

They will:

- meet with delegates from across Australia

- meet potential customers, partners and investors
- attend workshops
- explore export opportunities

The organisations

The entrepreneurs represent some of the UK's most innovative companies. They include:

- Predina Tech – uses analytics and AI to predict the severity and cause of road traffic accidents
- JustPark – helps drivers to find parking spaces and homeowners to open up their spaces to the public
- Doordeck – an app that allows doors to be unlocked with a smartphone
- Inavya Ventures – digital profile creation used for personalised healthcare
- Loqiva – platform allowing civic and commercial providers to provide personalised services
- Grid Smarter Cities – connecting communities and people with transport and services
- Open Energi – provides data and insights so companies can reduce energy costs and emissions
- Bulweria – transport system for reducing cars on the road and improving companies vehicle use
- Citi Logik – urban analysis platform for public sectors organisations to understand movement of people
- Multipass – platform for transport operators that lets any sized provider use automated fare collection capabilities
- SEaB Energy – creating energy, water and fertiliser from organic waste
- Sunamp – low to zero-carbon heating, cooling and hot water systems for buildings
- Upside Energy – connects existing personal devices to manage flow of energy at peak times
- Digital Node – provides advice, support and insight on digitised solutions for the construction industry

Why Australia

Australia was chosen because it is highly urbanised. It has taken a country-wide approach to smart city creation following the release of its government's 2016 Smart Cities Plan.

Currently, 89% of the population live in urban areas in the country, which means it already faces a number of challenges. These include:

- an ageing population
- climate change
- water scarcity
- urban sprawl
- housing affordability
- congestion

Many of these challenges also affect the UK and their impact will grow as we head into the future.

Innovate UK’s missions

Our missions are intended to improve businesses’ access to knowledge, markets, skills and partners based outside of the UK to help remove the barriers to global growth.

They give businesses the opportunity to meet with potential collaborators and learn about local markets, new technologies and opportunities.

Previous missions have seen delegations taken to India and South East Asia.

This future cities mission to Australia is run by Innovate UK with the Department for International Trade and the Knowledge Transfer Network.