

# Sturgeon must spell out what she knew of Ahmed-Sheikh scandal

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
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Nicola Sturgeon must end her silence over allegations of financial impropriety involving a senior SNP candidate – and spell out what she knew of the growing scandal.

The Scottish Conservatives are calling on the First Minister to come clean today after it emerged that the party's candidate for Ochil and South Perthshire, Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh, is facing an official probe by the Law Society of Scotland.

It has been reported that the SNP knew about the probe by the Law Society before it was revealed in the press last week.

It also emerged that the SNP ignored a request for information on the allegations last week, and only replied once the deadline for nomination papers for candidates had passed.

By that point, Mrs Ahmed-Sheikh had been confirmed as the SNP candidate for Ochil and South Perthshire.

## **Scottish Conservative MSP Murdo Fraser said:**

"This whole episode stinks.

"It's quite clear that the SNP should withdraw all support from Mrs Ahmed-Sheikh in this election.

"However, there are now growing questions over the way Nicola Sturgeon handled this matter.

"Was the First Minister told about the investigation facing Mrs Ahmed-Sheikh? If so, why did she allow her to carry on as a candidate?

"And why did the SNP try to hide the facts of this matter last week when there was still time to replace Mrs Ahmed-Sheikh with another candidate?

"Everything here points to an official SNP cover-up going straight to Nicola Sturgeon's door. She thought she could brush this affair under the carpet.

"The SNP must now come clean. A failure to do so will demonstrate once again

that they are trying to take the voters of Scotland for a ride.”

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## Grow up or we'll walk away

Speaking today in the European Parliament plenary debate in Strasbourg on the European Council's adopted guidelines for the Brexit negotiations UKIP MEP Nigel Farage labelled Mr Juncker's behaviour as unacceptable and called for a change of tactics from the EU or the United Kingdom may be forced to walk away from the talks before the end of the year.

Nigel Farage MEP said: “In any other part of the civilised world frankly that behaviour would be considered to be bloody rude and the act of a bully. Well I'll tell you something, your attempt to bully the Brits through these negotiations is not working, sixty-eight percent now of the British people want Brexit to happen.

“Either we get some grown up, reasonable demands from the European Union or the United Kingdom will be forced to walk away before the end of this year. We can't spend two years with this farce, there is a big, big world out there.”

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## Press release: New charity investigation: The Jack Raine Community Foundation

The Charity Commission, the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales, has opened a statutory inquiry into [The Jack Raine Community Foundation, registered charity number 1106701](#). The inquiry was opened on 29 March 2017.

The charity has objects to promote community participation and recreation, in particular coaching in contact and non-contact martial arts, and education.

Concerns regarding the charity's financial controls were raised with the Commission after it was alerted by North Yorkshire Police that a financial investigation was being conducted into the charity. As a result, the Commission made an unannounced visit to the charity's premises in November 2016 to inspect the charity's books and records. The Commission found insufficient financial records and no evidence of trustee meeting minutes to

reflect any decisions taken by the trustee board.

The Commission has established further serious regulatory concerns which has escalated its engagement to an inquiry.

The inquiry will examine:

- whether the financial management of the charity is adequate, including whether appropriate financial controls are in place, and if funds were expended in furtherance of the charity's objects
- the general administration, governance and management of the charity
- whether the trustees have complied with and fulfilled their duties and responsibilities as trustees under charity law

In order to protect the assets of the charity, the Commission has taken steps to freeze the charity's bank accounts under section 76(3)(d) of the Charities Act 2011.

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](#).

Ends

PR 39/17

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## Notes to editors

1. [The Charity Commission](#) is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see our [annual report](#).
  2. Search for charities on our [online register](#).
  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.
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# £20 million extra every year for social services

The funding, which has been made available as a result of consequential funding from the UK Government's March budget, will help ensure the system is sustainable for the future and responds to the pressures facing local government.

The recurrent funding will be invested in three priority areas:

- £9 million will increase funding already made available to manage workforce costs, and promote the stability of the social care market
- £8 million will support work to prevent children from entering care and improve outcomes for those leaving care
- £3 million will be provided to local authorities to support respite for carers given the critical role they play

Prevention is at the heart of the allocation, with the investment designed to pay dividends in the long term.

The extra funding confirmed today means a total of £55 million of additional funding will be invested in social care in 2017-18.

Minister for Social Services and Public Health, Rebecca Evans, said:

"The Welsh Government has long recognised social services as a sector of national strategic importance, which is why we continue to invest heavily in this area. I am pleased today to confirm an extra £20 million each year will be invested in social services, as a result of the consequential funding we received following March's budget.

"Our focus is on prevention – the funding will have a significant positive impact on people's lives, while at the same time reducing costs for local government in the longer term.

"The investment will improve outcomes for the most vulnerable people in society. It will be used to improve the sustainability of the social care market, reduce the numbers of children going into care, and improve support for carers."

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# National online safety action plan for children and young people to be created – Kirsty Williams

The plan will provide a strategic overview of how the Welsh Government will work with partners to continue to improve online safety support in Wales. The plan will build on the extensive programme already underway in schools to support young people to stay safe online.

The latest figures from the National Survey of Wales show 95% of children aged 7 to 15 used the internet at home and the device most commonly used by these children was a tablet or similar (71%).

Over the last two and a half years, the Welsh Government has strengthened online safety practice in education with:

- 85% of all schools have taken up the 360 degree Safe Cymru tool, which allows schools to check their current online safety policies and provision against national standards and gives practical suggestions to improve and enhance online safety.
- Created the Online Safety Zone on Hwb, the digital learning platform for schools in Wales that can be accessed by teachers, parents and learners.
- Published the 'Online Safety Resource for Wales', with practical resources and lesson plans to support schools in their delivery of online safety in the classroom.
- Online safety training sessions have been delivered across all local authorities. Training approximately 2,300 educational professionals, these have provided new skills for teachers and governors in preparing them to deal with issues young people may encounter online.
- In September 2016, we published the Digital Competence Framework, the first element of the new curriculum to be introduced across Wales. This includes a Citizenship Strand that focuses on developing and applying critical thinking skills and strategies. It includes specific elements focused on online behaviour, cyberbullying together with health and well-being.

Kirsty Williams said:

"I am fully committed to keeping our children and young people safe online. It is our responsibility, as a society, to equip our young people with the skills to be able to think critically and navigate the digital world in a safe and responsible way.

"That is why we have a range of policies in place to help us achieve this, from providing training for teachers and governors to raise their awareness of the issues, teaching new skills to our pupils and providing resources to our schools and parents.

“While we are delivering an extensive programme of online safety activities, there is always scope for more. That is why I am commissioning a national online safety action plan for children and young people. This will provide a strategic overview of how we will continue to enhance online safety support in Wales.”