

# Inquiry Report

Bristol Somali Centre

Registered Charity Number 1129083



# A statement of the results of the class inquiry into double defaulter charities in particular Bristol Somali Centre (registered charity number 1129083).

Published on 18 December 2014.

## The class inquiry

On 20 September 2013, the Charity Commission opened a statutory class inquiry ('the Inquiry') into charities that were in default of their statutory obligations to meet reporting requirements by failing to file their annual documents for two or more years in the last five years and met certain criteria, including that:

- the charities were recently (or in the case of charities that would become part of it in due course, would be) given final warnings to comply by a specified date
- on the day after the specified date they were still in default (partially or otherwise)

At the point a charity met the criteria they would become part of the Inquiry. The commission started by looking at and sending final warnings to charities with a last known income over £500,000 and then moved on to those over £250,000 and other high income charities.

## The charity

Bristol Somali Centre ('the Charity') was registered on 8 April 2009. It is an unincorporated association governed by a constitution dated 16 September 2005 as amended on 7 March 2009.

The Charity's objects are:

- A the advancement of the Muslim faith
- B the advancement of education and training
- C the relief of unemployment for the benefit of the public
- D the relief of financial hardship and sickness
- E the promotion of good health, and
- F the provision of recreational facilities in the interests of social welfare with the objective of improving their conditions of life

More details about the Charity are available on the [register of charities](#).

## Issues under investigation

The Charity failed to submit to the commission annual accounts and reports and/or annual returns required for the financial years ending 7 March 2012 and 7 March 2013. The Charity was sent various computer generated reminders from the commission regarding the submission of their annual accounting documents.

In addition, the Charity was contacted by both telephone and final written warning on 8 April 2014 and asked to supply accounts by 1 May 2014. In both instances, the commission warned what would happen if the Charity remained in default on 2 May 2014. The Charity has been in default of its obligations under the Act for a lengthy period of time, in respect of more than one set of documents and in spite of receiving numerous reminders.

Information the Charity had submitted suggested its income was in excess of £6million, although this later turned out to be an incorrect submission on the Charity's part.

The Charity met the criteria and became part of the Inquiry on 2 May 2014.

The Inquiry is confined to dealing with the trustees' mismanagement and misconduct<sup>1</sup> and remedying the non-compliance in connection with the annual accounting documents.

The Charity filed the missing annual accounts and reports for the financial years ending 7 March 2012 and 7 March 2013 on 10 June 2014, the annual return for the year ending 7 March 2013 on 3 June 2014 and the annual return for the year ending 7 March 2012 on 4 July 2014.

After a further reminder, the Charity filed trustees' annual reports for the years ending 7 March 2012 and 7 March 2013 on 2 October 2014.

The trustees did not provide a reason for failing to comply with the filing requirements.

When the Charity's missing documents were submitted, the accounts were referred for scrutiny by the commission's accountants and any issues have been or are being followed up separately.

## Conclusions

The Charity's trustees were in default of their legal obligations to file accounting information with the commission. This was mismanagement and misconduct in the administration of the Charity and a breach of their legal duties.

The trustees did not provide a legitimate excuse for their non-compliance.

As a result of the Inquiry, the commission ensured the Charity complied with its legal obligations to submit their annual accounting information. Two sets of accounts were filed and as a result over £98,000 of charitable income is now transparently and publicly accounted for on the register of charities.

The Charity ceased to be part of the Inquiry when it was no longer in default of its accounting obligations. This happened on 2 October 2014 when the Charity filed the last missing documents.

## Regulatory action taken

The commission used its information gathering powers under section 52 of the Charities Act 2011 (the 'Act') to order and obtain bank records and financial information of the Charity relating to the missing years accounts. These will be used in connection with the commission's scrutiny of the accounts.

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<sup>1</sup> The terms misconduct and mismanagement are taken from section 76 of the Charities Act 2011. Misconduct includes any act (or failure to act) in the administration of the charity which the person committing it knew (or ought to have known) was criminal, unlawful or improper. Mismanagement includes any act (or failure to act) in the administration of the charity that may result in significant charitable resources being misused or the people who benefit from the charity being put at risk. A charity's reputation may be regarded as property of the charity.

On 9 May 2014 the Inquiry exercised powers under section 84 of the Act to direct the trustees to prepare and complete the relevant missing annual accounts, reports and returns for the Charity and provide copies of these to the commission.

The commission provided regulatory advice and guidance about the trustees' duty to file the Charity's annual accounting information.

## Issues for the wider sector

Trustees of charities with an income of over £25,000 are under a legal duty as charity trustees to submit annual returns, annual reports and accounting documents to the commission as the regulator of charities. Even if the charity's annual income is not greater than £25,000 trustees are under a legal duty to prepare annual accounts and reports and should be able to provide these on request. All charities with an income over £10,000 must submit an annual return.

Failure to submit accounts and accompanying documents to the commission is a criminal offence. The commission also regards it as mismanagement and misconduct in the administration of the charity.

For those individuals who were not trustees at the initial date of default, when they became a trustee, they became responsible for making good the default.

It is important that the financial activities of charities are properly recorded and their financial governance is transparent. Charities are accountable to their donors, beneficiaries and the public. Donors to charity are entitled to have confidence that their money is going to legitimate causes and reaches the places that it is intended to. This is key to ensuring public trust and confidence in charities.