



Case Report

World Mission Agency - Winners Chapel International (1134421)

About the charity

World Mission Agency - Winners Chapel International (WMA-WCI) (registered charity 1134421) is a Christian charity based in London with churches across the UK. The charity holds weekly services, runs a Sunday school for children and young adults, delivers community based events and provides grants.

Why the commission got involved

Concerns were raised with us about the charity by an investigative journalist, who pointed to potential financial irregularities and potential concerns about the protection of vulnerable beneficiaries. The concerns revolved around allegations of:

- the transfer of large sums of the charity's funds to its sister organisation in Nigeria
- the conduct of the charity's founder, a pastor based in Nigeria, who was caught on camera slapping a woman accused of being a witch across the face in front of a congregation; at the time, the pastor was facing police action in Nigeria
- allegations that church members were encouraged to recruit vulnerable people into the church so that they would contribute to the charity financially
- conflicts of interest leading to individuals benefiting privately from the charity
- reputational risks to the charity resulting from adverse media coverage

We were also aware of allegations that £16 million had been misappropriated from the charity.

These issues were potentially of serious regulatory concern; it was important for us to establish the facts and determine whether the charity or its funds were at risk and whether the trustees were fulfilling their duties towards their charity.

The action we took

We assessed the charity, including by examining the charity's accounts, carrying out a books and records check and meeting with the trustees to put our concerns to them. The trustees and their legal adviser were fully co-operative and the charity's records were made available and were open and transparent.

What we found

Our review of the charity's financial information identified minor discrepancies. However, the trustees were able to explain and resolve these. We found no evidence that £16 million or any other amount had been misappropriated. We were satisfied the charity could demonstrate good financial controls, appropriate for a large and expanding charity. We provided the trustees with general financial advice and guidance on best practice with regards to categorising expenditure, gift aid and grant making in their accounts.

We confirmed the charity had an appropriate safeguarding policy in place which was based on the model provided by Churches Child Protection Advisory Service. The policy is extensive and covers all the recommendations in the commission's guidance.

During our case we did not identify any evidence to suggest beneficiaries of the charity are at risk. The incident occurred in Nigeria and there were no incidents involving this charity.

The charity managed the reputational risk of its association with the incident in Nigeria by taking legal advice, discussing the matter at trustee meetings, responding to press queries and issuing statements as appropriate.

We identified a potential conflict of interest arising from the employment of an individual who was related to the founder. However, we were satisfied with the trustees' decision making in respect of the employment. They demonstrated that the conflict of interest was managed and that they had appropriate policies which were applied.

Overall, its accounts were good and complied with the SORP for charity accounting; however our review of the accounts raised a number of issues to warrant further exploration including honorariums, transfers of funds, expenditure categories and gift aid. The trustees were able to provide satisfactory responses to the queries we raised on these issues.

Impact of our involvement

Our case, and this report, allows us to put on record that very serious concerns raised about a large charity were not substantiated.

We provided the trustees with advice and guidance on preparing accounts to ensure that the minor discrepancies we identified are not repeated in future accounting cycles.

Lessons other charities

This charity had sound policies in place to help protect it against risk and had good records to show how the trustees had acted and what decisions it had made. This put the trustees in a good position to respond with confidence to serious allegations and to co-operate with our enquiries. We expect this of all charities:

- charities working with vulnerable people must have appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures in place; the trustees must ensure these procedures are being followed - see our [guidance on safeguarding children and young people](#)
- trustees must put in place robust [internal financial controls](#)
- charity trustees should regularly review and assess the risks faced by their charity in all areas of its work and plan for the management of those risks - our [guidance on risk management](#) outlines the basic principles and strategies that can be applied to help charities manage their risks