

Trussell Trust Chairman gives hard-hitting evidence to ‘Panel on the Independence of the Voluntary Sector’



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On Tuesday 10th June, Trussell Trust Chairman Chris Mould gave evidence to the [Panel on the Independence of the Voluntary Sector](#), together with a number of other invited organisations.

His hard-hitting comments have since been covered in a number of media publications and have been widely shared on Twitter.

The Panel is chaired by Sir Roger Singleton. Other members present included Sir Bert Massie, former Chairman of the Disability Rights Commission and Andrew Hind, former Chief Executive of the Charity Commission.

The Panel's website reads: "The impact of independence can be huge. However, it may come under threat only gradually, almost imperceptibly, with its loss only being noticed once it's too late. That's why the Panel has been set up to ensure that independence is seen as a top priority by the voluntary sector and those with whom it works, to monitor changes and make recommendations affecting all those involved."

Chris Mould was invited to speak by the Panel after they observed The Trussell Trust's experiences over the last year. Chris had a 30 minute slot and [this article in Civil Society](#) provides an accurate reflection of the discussion.

Chris told the Panel that, in a face-to-face conversation in March 2013 with "someone in power", he was told that he must think more carefully about how The Trussell Trust speaks about its figures and welfare, otherwise "the government might try to shut you down".

Chris explained: "This was spoken in anger, but is the kind of dialogue that can occur. It exposes the way people think in the political world about their relationship with the voluntary sector when things are getting difficult. What can we do?"

Chris says: "I told the Panel that I had made the choice to disclose with care our experiences, rather than come to the Panel and keep what really mattered off the table for fear of the consequences."

"What is essential here is that charities are able to retain an independent voice so that they can freely share their experiences, speak up on behalf of their clients and give a voice to people who would not normally have the chance to be heard. The experience of charities, whilst sometimes not easy listening, should be welcomed as a helpful source of evidence for politicians across the political spectrum."

"Speaking out on difficult issues is not about party politics, and being free to say what we see as we provide our services should help to create a better future for the poorest and most vulnerable. That's why we chose to give evidence at the Independence Panel and why we value their work in helping to make sure that charities' voices are able to be heard."

Ends