

Online Charity Commission complaint form

<http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/complaints/complaints.aspx>

**Charity Name:** Healing on the Streets – Bath

**Charity Number:** 1133098

**Reason for complaint:** Serious harm to beneficiaries and, in particular, vulnerable beneficiaries.

### **Summary of the evidence**

The claims made to heal through prayer and related activities by this organisation are irresponsible, misleading and potential life-threatening to its beneficiaries.

### **Please set out any additional facts and information about the serious issue that you wish to report**

Although healing is not one of their charitable objects (stated here <http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/Showcharity/RegisterOfCharities/CharityWithoutPartB.aspx?RegisteredCharityNumber=1133098&SubsidiaryNumber=0>), it is clear from the website that it is their main objective and activity, one of the non-specified 'Services' HOTS-Bath provides as part of its claim for charitable status.

Their promotional material (website and flyers) have recently been banned by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). [http://asa.org.uk/ASA-action/Adjudications/2012/2/Healing-on-the-Streets Bath/SHP ADJ 158433.aspx](http://asa.org.uk/ASA-action/Adjudications/2012/2/Healing-on-the-Streets-Bath/SHP_ADJ_158433.aspx)

The ASA ruling is evidence that their claims to heal – their main activity - are irresponsible and misleading.

The HOTS–Bath website stated "Our vision is to Promote Christian Healing as a daily life style for every believer, through demonstration, training and equipping. We are working in unity, from numerous churches outside the four walls of the building, in order to heal the sick".

The [ASA ruled](#) that 'A video on the website made claims that HOTS volunteers had successfully prayed for healing for people with cancer, fibromyalgia, back pain, kidney pain, hip pain, cataracts, arthritis and paralysis. We noted the testimonials on the website and in the video but considered that testimonials were insufficient as evidence for claims of healing. We therefore concluded the ads were misleading'.

The ASA also 'noted we had not seen evidence that people had been healed through the prayer of HOTS volunteers, and concluded that the ads could encourage false hope in those suffering from the named conditions and therefore were irresponsible.'

The ASA were concerned that 'the ads could discourage people, and particularly the vulnerable or those suffering from undiagnosed symptoms, from seeking essential treatment for medical conditions for which medical supervision should be sought.'

Although the ruling means that HOTS-Bath cannot advertise their activities in the same way, these are still their core activities. We are seriously concerned that there is potential for further risk to the welfare of vulnerable beneficiaries as HOTS-Bath continue to make claims without any evidence base, to offer false hope to people with serious conditions and to target the vulnerable.

We would also like to draw the Commission's attention to the fact that it is illegal to claim to cure cancer according to the Cancer Act 4.1.(a) 8 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/2-3/13/contents>

Despite the current statement on their website (<http://www.hotsbath.org/>), the ASA ruling – and our complaint - are not a case of ideological objections as HOTS-Bath claim, nor a restriction on their right to freedom of expression, which we would defend. They are claiming to cure specific diseases and conditions.

This is not a case of a religious group simply promoting its beliefs, which it is of course entitled to do. It is a case of them offering an activity or service that can have serious consequences for the charity's beneficiaries. The ASA response, which we agree with, was a scientific, evidence-based approach to protect vulnerable people from unproven (and unprovable) claims.

There is no conclusive evidence at all that prayer can cure what science cannot and no impartial scientific evaluation of these claims. There is no empirically tested, placebo-controlled, double-blinded, peer-reviewed evidence. There is evidence that faith provides a placebo that may make people feel better temporarily but does not actually cure serious conditions.

We strongly urge the Charity Commission to intervene to let HOTS–Bath know that their charitable status depends on limiting their activities to promoting the Christian faith and that they should not offer prayer healing as their main activity, whether on their website, in flyers or in their street activities. We do not believe that their activities constitute best practice in their stated aim to benefit society.

There have been countless other examples of people not taking medication or relying on prayer to cure them, sometimes with fatal results, for example: [http://www.asa.org.uk/ASA-action/Adjudications/2011/6/Medway-Revival-Fellowship/TF\\_ADJ\\_50621.aspx](http://www.asa.org.uk/ASA-action/Adjudications/2011/6/Medway-Revival-Fellowship/TF_ADJ_50621.aspx)

<http://www.secularism.org.uk/religion-and-hiv-aids--how-lives.html>

There is also academic evidence that prayer does not cure and that it can even make conditions worse, for example:

<http://www.ahjonline.com/article/PIIS0002870305006496/abstract>

We are willing for HOTS-Bath to be made aware of our identity as complainants