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Health regulator slammed for giving a top NHS job to a fraudster under investigation for paying her husband £11,000 in public funds to write a research paper he never completed

- Paula Vasco-Knight was NHS England's national lead for equalities and diversity
- She paid her husband £11,000 for a research document he never completed
- While under investigation for fraud, Vasco-Knight was given another NHS job
- She and her husband later received suspended jail sentences for fraud

By [DAILY MAIL REPORTER](#)

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Paula Vasco-Knight, was convicted of fraud after she used public funds to pay her husband Stephen £11,000 for a 'business leadership' document he never completed

The health regulator has been criticised for allowing an **NHS** chief executive to take another senior role while facing serious misconduct charges.

Paula Vasco-Knight was later convicted of fraud after she used public money to pay her husband Stephen £11,000 for a 'business leadership' document he never completed.

Vasco-Knight, from Liverpool, had been NHS England's national lead for equalities and diversity and was also in charge of the South Devon Foundation Trust when the fraud was committed in 2013.

Despite being accused of nepotism at an employment tribunal, after which she resigned, she went on to get a job as acting chief executive of St George's University Hospitals Foundation Trust in 2015.

Meanwhile, whistleblower Clare Sardari, who had raised concerns about Vasco-Knight hiring a relative's partner at the Devon trust in 2014, was unable to return to her job.

A Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman report, released today, says regulator the Care Quality Commission must review how it ensures NHS trusts are employing 'fit and proper' directors.

The ombudsman's inquiry found the CQC's handling of checks on bosses was 'not transparent, fair or proportionate'.

The report said it should apologise to Miss Sardari and offer her £500 in compensation. A CQC spokesman said it recognised the case had not been handled adequately.

Vasco-Knight and her husband were both handed suspended jail terms at Exeter Crown Court in March last year.