

# GIVING SAFELY ON THE DOORSTEP

A guide to making sure your charitable donations really count

## Making your donation count

Charities and voluntary organisations do important work helping those in the greatest need. In turn, they rely on us to give what we can. The money raised is urgently needed. It houses the vulnerable, feeds the hungry, protects the natural world and alleviates the suffering of animals and humans alike. Without our donations many would soon struggle.

PLEASE  
DON'T STOP  
GIVING

The vast majority of collections and appeals are authentic and legitimate, but some are scams.

So what can you do to thwart the fraudsters and make sure your donations really do reach the causes that need them? Quite a lot. It's simpler than you might think to check the authenticity of a collector or charity.

But the most important message of all is still this: please don't stop giving.

## On the doorstep

Many legitimate charitable and commercial organisations go door-to-door, calling on homes and businesses, delivering envelopes, leaflets and plastic bags, seeking donations of money, clothing, books, CDs and DVDs, or to sign up donors by direct debit.

Here is what to look for:

- ✓ The charity's name, contact details and registration number (if it is a registered charity) should be on the collection bag and materials. Check this online with your national charity regulator.
- ✓ Does the fundraising literature contain spelling mistakes and poor grammar?
- ✓ If a charity uses a commercial organisation to collect on its behalf, any written materials should carry both names. There should also be information about what proportion of the proceeds will go to the charity.
- ✓ Make sure the collector is wearing a proper identity badge (not photocopied or handwritten).
- ✓ You will often be asked not for cash but to set up a direct debit. For this the charity needs your bank account number and branch sort-code, but that is all. Never give anyone card numbers, PINs or security codes.
- ✓ Collections usually require a licence, either from the local authority, the police (in Northern Ireland and London) or the Common Council of the City of London. Check with the licensing authority (or with the charity itself) that a collection really is being conducted in your area. A few charities (mostly large and national) are exempt from licensing: the Cabinet Office (England and Wales [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk)) or the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator ([www.oscr.org.uk](http://www.oscr.org.uk)) can tell you which ones.
- ✓ Never feel under pressure to give on the doorstep. You can always take your items straight to a local charity shop or official collection point. Find your nearest at [www.charityretail.org.uk/locator.php](http://www.charityretail.org.uk/locator.php).

## Reporting scams and bogus collections

If you become aware of a charity scam, or are the victim of one, you should report it to:

- Action Fraud ☎ 0300 123 2040 (textphone 0300 123 2050) [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk)
- Your local police [www.police.uk](http://www.police.uk)
- Your local authority trading standards department
- The appropriate charity regulator

If the scam affects a legitimate charity, notify the charity itself so that it can inform its supporters and prevent others from falling victim.

### Charity Commission for England and Wales

In England and Wales charities with an annual income of less than £5000 do not need to register. <http://m.charitycommission.gov.uk> (mobile phone access to register). [www.charity-commission.gov.uk](http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk)

### Charity Commission for Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland charities are not yet registered, but the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland does maintain an online list of organisations deemed to be charities because they are registered with HMRC for tax purposes. This list is not exhaustive. Registration is due to commence in 2013.

☎ 028 3832 0220 (textphone 028 3834 7639)

[www.charitycommissionni.org.uk](http://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk)

### Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator

In Scotland all charities must be registered. The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator also maintains an online list of charities exempt from holding licences for collections in public places.

☎ 01382 220 446 [www.oscr.org.uk](http://www.oscr.org.uk)

