

PROTECTING PEOPLE THAT MIGHT BE IN VULNERABLE CIRCUMSTANCES: SUPPORTER CARE AND FUNDRAISING POLICY

Introduction

Giving to charity is a hugely rewarding experience that should be accessible to everybody, whether they are a new or an existing supporter. Through engaging the public in the work of charities, fundraising gives people the opportunity to support the issues they care about, connecting them with the cause.

Refugee Action is registered with the Fundraising Regulator and we are committed to following the Regulator's Code of Practice and Fundraising Promise which set the standards for what behaviours are expected from fundraisers in our interactions with the public and our supporters.

Our Vulnerable Persons policy is also informed by the Institute of Fundraising's "Treating Donors Fairly: Fundraising with People in Vulnerable Circumstances" and is part of our wider commitment to fundraising that is legal, open, honest and respectful and our Fundraising Policy.

Every donor is an individual with a unique background, experience, and circumstance and every interaction between a fundraiser and donor is different. During those interactions we are committed to treating our supporters with respect and being responsive to their needs; we will apply the same principles with people that might be in vulnerable circumstances. Where we work with carefully selected partners to carry out our fundraising work, we will ensure that they also follow this policy.

This policy sets out how we identify such potential vulnerability and how we aim to respond in such circumstances.

The Fundraising Regulator Code of Practice

In the Code of Practice General Principles, it is noted that

- i) Fundraisers **MUST** take all reasonable steps to treat a donor fairly, enabling them to make an informed decision about any donation. This **MUST** include taking into account the needs of any potential donor who may be in a vulnerable circumstance or require additional care and support to make an informed decision.
- ii) Fundraisers **MUST NOT** exploit the credulity, lack of knowledge, apparent need for care and support or vulnerable circumstance of any donor at any point in time.

Persons that may be vulnerable or require additional support to make a decision

All individuals may, at some stage in their life, be considered vulnerable or require additional care and support, depending on their own personal circumstances, health, bereavements, life events and more.

Such persons can still have capacity to choose to donate to a charity, however, it is the context and circumstance that they may be in at the time of making a decision about whether to donate that is relevant.

For example, a recently bereaved person may need additional support, but this may change as time progresses. At the time of bereavement they could still have the capacity to make a donation, but might need additional support to help them make their decision.

How will we respond?

At Refugee Action we are committed to supporting people who may be in vulnerable circumstances as appropriate and in a manner appropriate to their needs, including: delaying acceptance of the gift to give the donor further time to consider their donation; including a 'cooling off' period if the donor changes his or her mind; or suggesting the donor gets advice from family/friends.

If based on our interaction with a donor we have reason to assume that additional support may be required or that they are in a vulnerable circumstance, we will adapt the manner of our communication in response to the individual's needs. This may include:

- Being patient and not rushing the conversation – it's better to have a longer conversation so as to not leave the person agitated or confused.
- Offering to contact the individual in a different way so that they have additional time to make a decision, if indeed they have the capacity to do so.
- Checking the person's understanding, for example by asking them to repeat back information to us.
- Asking the person if they need to speak with anyone else before making a decision.

All of the above ensure that the person's needs come first and that he or she has the time to make a decision if they have the capacity to do so.

Persons that may lack capacity to make a decision

In order to ensure that no one is excluded from the opportunity to support a cause they are interested in, we will communicate with all our supporters with the assumption that they have the capacity to make decisions as to their finances and level of charitable giving. We will however consider indicators that may show that they may be in a vulnerable situation or lack that capacity.

Some examples of indicators that we will look for are if the individual is:

- Asking irrelevant and unrelated questions, or displaying signs of forgetfulness
- Unable to read and understand the information they are provided with, and asking for it to be continually repeated
- Responding in an irrational way to simple questions
- Saying 'yes' or 'no' at times that it is clear they haven't understood

- Taking a long time or displaying difficulty in responding to simple questions or requests for information
- Repeating simple questions such as 'who are you', 'what charity is it' and 'what do you want'
- Wandering off the subject at hand and making incongruous statements
- Saying that they are not well or not in the mood to continue
- Displaying signs of ill-health like breathlessness or making signs of exasperation or discontent
- Giving a statement such as 'I don't usually do things like this, my husband/wife/son/ daughter takes care of it for me'
- Indicating in any way that they are feeling rushed, flustered, or experiencing a stressful situation
- Having trouble remembering relevant information, for example that they are already a regular donor to that charity or have recently donated

How will we respond?

If we reasonably believe that an individual is unable to make a decision then we will not accept a donation from that person. If the donation has already been made, and at the time of donating the individual lacked capacity (and the charity receives evidence of this) then we will return that donation.

Where we have reason to believe an individual is in a vulnerable situation and lacks capacity to make decisions around their financial giving, we will immediately ensure this individual no longer receives fundraising communications from Refugee Action, including appeal letters and emails.

If we are contacted on behalf of an individual who needs additional care and support or who is in a vulnerable situation (e.g. by family members / carers / Power of Attorney)

If we are contacted by a family member, carer or somebody with Power of Attorney regarding an individual who they believe or know to be in a vulnerable circumstance, we will assume that they are able to make decisions on that individual's behalf.

If there is any concern about the communications that such a person is receiving we will act upon this and follow their wishes in regards with future contact from Refugee Action. We will update our database to reflect their wishes.

Contact us

if you have any questions or concerns in regards with this policy please contact our Supporter Care Team by emailing giving@refugee-action.org.uk or calling 0845 894 2536.