



# CARE International UK

## Vulnerable Contacts Policy



### Introduction

As fundraisers we connect individual supporters with the people they help overseas through a variety of communication channels including mail, email, SMS, phone and from time to time in person.

As a charity we protect the dignity of vulnerable people living in poor communities overseas and this protection of dignity applies to supporters in the UK who choose to donate or raise funds for CARE.

Fundraising should be a positive experience for the supporter – nothing beats the feel good factor of giving to a cause and knowing that you are helping someone in need. The UK is one of the most charitable nations in the world and giving is part of the public's DNA.

It is inevitable that we will come into contact with people who are vulnerable and not able to make informed decisions about their giving. This can happen either through our own communications or through the agencies who work on our behalf.

This document outlines how we protect vulnerable supporters, how we can identify such persons and what action we take if we suspect a person is vulnerable.

### Our guiding principles

We are members of the Fundraising Standards Board and this is what we promise our supporters:

- We will always **respect your privacy**; if you prefer not be contacted by certain methods please let us know.
- We will always **protect your data**; we will not sell your personal details to any other organisation.
- We have a **supporter care** team who are dedicated to you. We always love to hear from you.
- We will **share stories** of how your support is helping to change lives for the better.
- We will be **honest** with you. If we face challenges or make a mistake we will let you know; we are always learning.
- We are **accountable** to the people we reach through your support.

### The IoF Code of Practice

We always abide by the Institute of Fundraising Code of Practice. The general principles state:

“Fundraisers OUGHT to take all reasonable steps to treat a donor fairly, enabling them to make an informed decision about any donation. This OUGHT to 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.

“Fundraisers OUGHT NOT to exploit the credulity, lack of knowledge, apparent need for care and support or vulnerable circumstance of any donor at any point in time.”

## Vulnerable contacts

**If one of our fundraisers reasonably believes that a supporter is unable to make a decision or is in a position which does not allow them to make a donation, then a donation is not to be taken or accepted.**

We have a duty to treat supporters fairly and respond to their needs. See below for definitions of vulnerability and ways in which vulnerability can be identified.

### TYPES OF VULNERABILITY

By 'a vulnerable adult', we mean those who are lacking the ability, either temporarily or permanently, to make a decision.

There are a number of factors which can contribute to vulnerability. The following can be classed as permanent vulnerability according to the British Medical Association's 'safeguarding vulnerable adults' paper:

- A particularly frail person
- An individual with a mental disorder, including dementia or a personality disorder
- An individual with a significant and impairing physical or sensory disability
- An individual with a learning disability
- An individual with a severe physical illness
- An individual who is homeless

In addition we define an individual as vulnerable in the case of the following factors:

- An individual who is experiencing financial vulnerability
- An individual with a severely reduced understanding of English

**Where an individual is permanently vulnerable – we will flag their record on our database as 'Do not call' and they will never be called again. In the case of street fundraising – the fundraiser will not continue to ask the person to donate to CARE.**

The following can be classed as temporary vulnerability:

- An individual who is experiencing a time of stress or anxiety, eg bereavement, unemployment, family breakup, etc
- An unpaid carer who is overburdened, under severe stress or isolated
- Where an individual finds the subject matter of the call upsetting
- An individual under the influence of drugs or alcohol

**In the cases of temporary vulnerability, we opt the person out of a phone call and do not continue. However, temporary vulnerability does not necessarily mean that the person does not want to be contacted again. Therefore, the supporter is asked if they will allow us to call them in the future.**

**In the case of street fundraising – the fundraiser will not continue to ask the individual to donate.**

### HOW TO IDENTIFY A VULNERABLE CONTACT

There are several indicators which can help to identify vulnerable adults by different communication channels.

#### ***Communicating by telephone or face to face***

Indicators that a person may have a mental health issue:

- Asking irrelevant and unrelated questions
- Responding in an irrational way to simple questions

- Asking for questions or information to be repeated
- Taking a long time to respond or finding it difficult to respond
- Repeating questions they have asked
- Wandering off the subject
- Displaying signs of forgetfulness

Indicators of physical difficulties:

- Unable to hear or understand what is being said
- Unable to read and understand the information provided to them
- Displaying signs of ill health e.g. breathlessness or discontent

### ***Written communications***

We can at times identify vulnerable adults through written communications:

- A supporter who has emailed or written to us to tell us they are permanently vulnerable (see earlier definitions)
- The supporter's family member or carer has indicated that they are vulnerable
- Handwriting is particularly shaky and hard to read – this is an indicator that the supporter is frail and to be cautious we mark them as 'do not call'

### ***Family members / carers***

We may also be alerted to a supporter being vulnerable by a family member or carer. Where we have been given this information we act upon this, asking what kind of communication, if any, is acceptable. Our database is then updated to reflect their wishes.

## **STAFF TRAINING**

Training is provided for fundraisers at the beginning of each campaign and mystery shopping takes place regularly to ensure guidelines are being adhered to.

## **DO WE USE AGE AS AN INDICATOR OF VULNERABILITY?**

No. Age does not indicate whether a person is vulnerable or not. There are many older people who are active and leading comfortable lifestyles. So we cannot make a judgement based on age. Equally a much younger supporter could be in a vulnerable position. Vulnerability needs to be assessed on the person's circumstances.

If a supporter is identified as being under the age of 16, then we must remove them from fundraising appeals and calls and they are not to be approached to donate through street fundraising.

## **Responding to the needs of a vulnerable contact**

- Be patient and do not rush the conversation – it's better to have a longer call or conversation than to cut this short and leave the supporter confused or agitated in any way.
- Ask if the individual would prefer another method of communication, eg offer to have some information sent in the post, via email or SMS, so they have time to take in the information.
- Ask if they need to speak with anyone else before making a decision.
- Check their understanding of what they have agreed to – eg ask them to repeat back what they have agreed to.

All of the above will help to make sure that the individual comes first and give them time to make an informed decision, if they are capable of doing this.

## Fundraisers checklist – telephone conversations

