

RCN Foundation

Title	Policy for fundraising communications with vulnerable supporters
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1. Our commitment

- 1.1. We are committed to ensuring that supporting and contributing towards the success of the RCN Foundation is a positive experience for both existing and new supporters. We also believe that any decision to support the Foundation should be made willingly with the full and informed consent of the supporter.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. To ensure that we take all reasonable care to protect vulnerable adults, the RCN Foundation complies with the Institute of Fundraising guidance set out in the document called *Treating Donors Fairly: Responding to the Needs of People in Vulnerable Circumstances and Helping Donors Make Informed Decisions*. The RCN Foundation requires its staff and any agencies contacting members of the public on our behalf to comply with guidelines provided by the Fundraising Regulator. These guidelines do not cover children and young people under the age of 18, and we do not actively seek donations from them.
- 2.2. The RCN Foundation receives donations from individuals towards our work. This support enables us to carry out our vital work supporting the nursing community and improving patient care. We aim to communicate with supporters in the ways in which they are most comfortable and this includes mail, email, SMS, phone and in person.
- 2.3. Every donor is an individual with a unique background, experiences and circumstances – and every interaction between a fundraiser and donor is different. The RCN Foundation does not identify vulnerable adults based on broad personal characteristics such as disability or age. We believe that everyone should have the opportunity to donate if they are willing and able to do so.

- 2.4. 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 communications from the agencies who we might take on from time to time to work on our behalf. This document outlines how we take all reasonable care to identify supporters who may be vulnerable, and what action we take if we suspect a person is vulnerable.

3. Complying with regulation and best practice

- 3.1. The Institute of Fundraising General Principles clause 1.2 e) states that:

“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.”

- 3.2. The RCN Foundation’s fundraising abides by the four key principles of the Institute of Fundraising’s *Treating Donors Fairly* guidance, which are:

- Respect – treating all members of the public respectfully. This means being mindful of, and sensitive to, any particular need that a donor may have. It also means striving to respect the wishes and preferences of the donor, whatever they may be.
- Fairness – all donors should be treated fairly. This includes not discriminating against any group or individual based on their appearance or any personal characteristic.
- Responsive – this means responding appropriately to the different needs that a donor may have. The onus should be on the fundraiser to adapt his or her approach (tone, language, communication technique) to suit the needs and requirements of the donor.
- Accountable – it is up to fundraisers and charities to take responsibility and care to ensure that their fundraising is happening to a high standard. When thinking about ways of communicating with different people and fundraising appropriately, different charities should consider what processes and procedures they may need in place. Charities may want to develop their own internal guidance on this area and consider how to ensure that their fundraisers are appropriately trained and supported.

4. What we won’t do / unauthorised activities

- 4.1. The RCN Foundation will not engage in house-to-house collections or street fundraising commonly known as ‘chugging’. In terms of any other forms of fundraising, the RCN Foundation also will not engage in aggressive marketing tactics and will adhere to best practice guidance when carrying out these activities.

5. Identifying vulnerable people

5.1. By 'a vulnerable adult', we mean those people who are lacking the ability, either temporarily or permanently, to make an informed decision about donating money to the RCN Foundation. There are a number of factors which can contribute to vulnerability. Examples of indicators which could mean that an individual is in a vulnerable circumstance or needs additional support could include:

- Mental illness and mental capacity concerns (both permanent and temporary conditions), including dementia and personality disorders
- Significant physical illness
- Physical and sensory disability
- Learning difficulties
- Times of stress or anxiety (e.g. bereavement, redundancy)
- Financial vulnerability (where a gift from a donor may impact on their ability to sufficiently care for themselves or leave them in financial hardship)
- Language barriers
- Influence of alcohol or drugs
- Where people live (for example, in supported housing)
- Age
- Caring responsibilities

5.2. It is not feasible to provide a comprehensive set of factors or characteristics which would enable fundraisers to always identify an individual who is in vulnerable circumstances. We will therefore follow the guidance on indicators of vulnerability, laid down by the Institute of Fundraising. This guidance includes:

- Indicators that an individual appears confused, such as:
 - Asking irrelevant and unrelated questions
 - Responding in an irrational way to questions
 - Saying 'yes' or 'no' at times when it is clear they haven't understood the meaning of what is being discussed
- Indicators that the individual may have physical difficulties, such as:
 - Unable to hear and understand what is being said
 - Unable to read and understand the information they are provided with
 - Displaying signs of ill-health like breathlessness or signs of exasperation or discontent
- Indicative statements that suggest a lack of mental capacity, such as:
 - Saying 'I don't usually do things like this, my husband/wife son/daughter takes care of it for me'

- Having trouble remembering relevant information, for example forgetting that they are already a regular donor to that charity (e.g. have an existing Direct Debit), or have recently donated.

6. Written communications

6.1. We can at times identify vulnerable adults through written communications. This includes:

- A supporter who has emailed or written to us to tell us they are permanently vulnerable (see earlier definitions)
- Letters we receive from people where their thoughts and wishes are not clear or consistent.

7. Family members/Carers

7.1. 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, by asking the supporter what kind of communication, if any, is acceptable.

8. What we do if we suspect a supporter is vulnerable

8.1. We follow the Institute of Fundraising guidance if we suspect that a donor lacks the capacity to make a decision about the donation which states that “a donation should not be taken. If after the donation is taken the charity receives evidence that the person lacked capacity to make the decision to donate, then the charity can and should return the donation because the original donation was invalid. ... If a donor is found to lack capacity, the organisation should put in place measures to ensure that donations are not solicited from them in the future.”

9. Monitoring

9.1. The RCN Foundation will measure/monitor this policy by recording:

- the number of complaints we receive;
- the number of people we choose not to accept donations from due to vulnerability, though this will need to comply with Charity Commission guidance on acceptance of donations; and
- the number of donors we choose to stop receiving funds from who were found to lack capacity to do so.