

Guidance about donors in vulnerable circumstances

Usually, you should presume that all adults 18 and over (16 in Scotland) have capacity to donate unless you suspect that this is not the case. Guide Dogs have a duty of care to ensure we take into account the needs of any possible donor who may be in vulnerable circumstances or need extra care, and support to make an informed decision.

Below is some guidance relating to what to look out for and how to act. If you have any cause for concern relating to a donor's circumstances, pause and contact your Community Fundraising Relationship Manager to discuss.

What are vulnerable circumstances?

According to the Fundraising Regulator, a vulnerable circumstance is:

'A state in which a person is especially susceptible to harm due to their personal circumstances. It is a state which can vary from day-to-day, which may affect the person's behaviour or decisions and needs a flexible response. In fact, any person can find themselves in a vulnerable circumstance e.g. after a death or due to emotional stress, and we need to be aware of this.'

What to look for

Physical difficulties - e.g. poor hearing, poor reading, ill health, showing signs of exasperation or discontent, disability.

Circumstances - e.g. medical condition, learning difficulty, stress, language issues, financial situation, accommodation, under influence of drugs or alcohol, under 16 years of age.

Other - irrationality, repetition, clear lack of understanding, signs of forgetfulness, asking irrelevant and unrelated questions, unable or slow to answer simple questions, unwell, flustered, wandering off the subject.

How to respond - Do's and Don'ts

Don't:

- Don't exploit the trust, lack of knowledge, apparent need for care and support or vulnerable circumstance of any donor at any time.
- Don't take a donation if you know, or have good reason to believe, that a person lacks capacity to make a decision to donate or is in vulnerable circumstances which mean they may not be able to make an informed decision.

Do:

- Consider:

- any physical or mental-health condition the person may have.
- any disability the person may have.
- any learning difficulties the person may have.
- whether the person is facing times of stress or anxiety (for example, following the death of a loved one or redundancy).
- whether a donation is likely to affect the person's ability to sufficiently care for themselves or leave them in financial hardship.
- how well they can communicate and understand what they are being told.
- whether the person is under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- the person's age
- Take all reasonable steps to treat the donor fairly.
- Meet individual needs, which may involve providing extra care and support.
- You must be confident that the donor has made an informed decision.
- Contact your Community Fundraising Relationship Manager at the earliest opportunity to discuss any concerns. It might just be a gut feeling, but we would encourage you to call us, so we can advise on next steps.

Top Tips

- Speak to your Community Fundraising Relationship Manager. They can help to gather information about the donor and check donation history.
- Remain impartial.
- Suggest discussion with family and friends. Don't rush. Encourage a cooling off period if in any doubt.
- Use a follow up call to check that they want to continue before banking the donation. Double check that the donation and amount was intended.
- Use clear language and donor's terminology, be patient, repeat, check understanding, ask if they need further explanation or information, use alternative formats.

If a donor donates while they do not have the capacity to make an informed decision, Guide Dogs have a duty to return their donation. You should not arrange any returns without speaking with your Community Fundraising Relationship Manager.

Ask yourself, does it feel right? If not, talk to your Community Fundraising Relationship Manager.

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