

Newcastle CVS Response to Fundraising Preference Service

George Kidd
Chair of Fundraising Preference Service Working Group

Dear Mr Kidd

Newcastle CVS is the lead infrastructure organisation for Newcastle's voluntary and community sector. As well as developing and supporting voluntary and community organisations to be more sustainable and resilient, we organise networks and events and represent the voluntary and community sector in strategic discussions. We carry out research and produce policy studies. We have 640 members that are voluntary and community organisations that work in Newcastle. We are in regular contact with our members and this response reflects local discussions.

Most of our members have an income of well under £1million and do not use the kind of tactics which have been (rightly) queried. Being a charity is a privilege and the set of responsibilities that comes with that should be honoured. We are expected to behave in a moral and proper way.

The squeeze on public finances has affected all charities, and at the same time most of us have seen the demand for our services rising. There are relatively few ways we can generate income :

- Contracts – which have less value and more competition
- Grants – more competition, and the major funder in the North East, the Northern Rock Foundation, has closed down
- Trading/ earned income – not suitable for some charities as they don't have an asset to trade
- Legacies – not for the vast majority of charities, certainly smaller and local ones
- Public fund
- Interest and investment – interest rates are very low and many organisations are wary of investment and/ or have little to invest
- Public fundraising – which is being promoted as a source of income, sometimes to organisations who have never engaged in this previously
- Reserves – under increasing pressure and not sustainable

Modern forms of communication mean we can be bombarded by all sorts of marketing – PPI insurance, new boilers etc. Although people often tick the 'don't contact' box, this is getting increasingly difficult and overseas call centres can ignore the Telephone Preference Service. Charities can get caught up, often unwittingly, in 'nuisance mail'. Several people raised their annoyance at being contacted by a charity which they believed they had not directly contacted, but on examination they had actually donated to through sponsorship and had legitimately been contacted afterwards. There is a general dislike of 'chuggers' as they are not from local charities and annoy people. There have been a number of recent media stories about the behaviour of some national charities. So it is against this back-drop that small, local and highly needed organisations are trying to generate income – and it's hard.

In response to the specific questions:

Scope Agree with the propositions. There is general support for the principle of the FPS, but concern that certain large organisations will find a way to work around it – similar to the TPS. Feedback is important and it is courteous to thank donors (and indeed many would expect it). It is up to organisations to find a system of separating fundraising communications from donor management. Trading communications might be different.

Channels Agree with the propositions. Door to door/ face to face activity causes a level of irritation, and many members of the public will be surprised this can't be regulated. The charity could only contact those residents who have not registered with the FPS (i.e. the majority of people). A possible mechanism could be to have information readily available for those residents who wish to join the FPS. Undoubtedly some charities will use unaddressed mail as a mechanism of reaching people – should this be banned; there is insufficient research on the consequences of this, but it could save a lot of trees. Should the FPS not operate similarly to the TPS – single address

User experience and choice Agree with the propositions. The FPS information available to all charities should clearly show the individual's preferences, but not the reasons why. 28 days is reasonable. It is reasonable to respond to registrations setting out in plain English what has happened, why, and how this can be changed at a later date

Duration Agree with the propositions An annual reminder is realistic and appropriate

Application We agree organisations with an income of less than £1m should be exempt; nevertheless there should be best practice guidance issued for all charities that are involved in fund-raising so they can't use size to justify bad behaviour, particularly in relation to vulnerable people. Our research with local charities shows that some of our medium-sized members raise reasonable income from donations. When we looked at this further it was mainly through events and people donating small amounts on a regular basis. Much of this income from regular donors was not the result of mass fund-raising campaigns but targeted work

Vulnerable people Agree with the proposition; wherever possible the person's own preference must be taken into account. It is not for the FPS to decide who is vulnerable – this might not always be a fixed state. This is a difficult and sensitive area – a friend or neighbour could be closer than a family member, but there would need to be a clear demonstration of that relationship. Could there be a use for independent advocates? Everyone registered with the FPS should receive the annual update

I hope these views are helpful and will be taken into account.

Regards

Sally Young

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