

## 5. Where can I find further information?

You can contact the charity regulators as follows:

- The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator:  
01382 220 446
- Charity Commission for England and Wales:  
0845 3000 218
- The Department for Social Development in  
Northern Ireland: 028 9082 9427

### It's your choice

If you're concerned or suspicious, consider giving your donation direct to the charity or taking your goods to a charity shop. Some charities have reception points for goods and most offer ways for you to give money and allow the charity to claim tax relief on your donation.

Above all, don't feel pressured to give on the doorstep – it's your choice. All genuine charities will be happy to receive your donation by other means.

## How to contact OSCr

For further information on charity regulation in Scotland, visit our website, [www.oscr.org.uk](http://www.oscr.org.uk), or contact us as follows:

Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator  
2nd Floor  
Quadrant House  
9 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
DD1 4NY

Tel: 01382 220446

Fax: 01382 220314

Email: [info@oscr.org.uk](mailto:info@oscr.org.uk)

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## Charity Doorstep Collections

Making an Informed Choice



We're often asked to donate cash or goods on the doorstep – whether answering the door to someone with a collecting tin, or being asked to buy a magazine 'for charity'. Increasingly, householders also receive leaflets or envelopes for cash, or plastic bags through their letterboxes asking for donations of goods.

Whether you decide to give is entirely up to you, but it's important to know that not all these organisations are charities. Some may be collecting on behalf of a charity and some may be businesses who sell your donations for profit.

**If it matters to you** that your donation goes to charity, there are some key questions to ask before you give. The three charity regulators in the UK have joined together to produce a check list to help you make a choice.

## 1. Do I want my goods or cash to go to charity?

- An organisation doesn't have to be a charity to carry out a public collection. Some collect on behalf of a charity, while others will sell your items for a profit – some may give an amount of the proceeds to charity and others may keep it all.
- Regulated charities in most of the UK must supply details including their most recent accounts, to their regulators, who monitor this information.
- In Northern Ireland, charities are not yet required to supply accounts for inspection, though the proceeds of collections must be accounted for to the body authorising the collection, usually the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

- Where a business collects goods to sell, it's up to them to decide how much, if anything, will actually go to the charity or any beneficiaries.

## 2. Does the organisation state that it is a charity, or that it is collecting on behalf of a charity?

- An organisation can't call itself a charity if it isn't one. Regulators have powers to act against this and would be happy to receive any evidence.
- 'The needy in developing countries' and 'poor families in the Third World/Eastern Europe/Africa' are not specific charities – look for a charity name.
- Where the organisation states clearly that it is a charity, look for the charity number. In Northern Ireland, the HM Revenue and Customs charity reference number is sometimes shown.
- Where a collection is for 'charitable purposes' or is 'on behalf of a charity', are you told which specific charity will benefit and how much of your donation will reach them?
- Ask if the charity has a formal agreement with the collector. If in doubt, you can give the charity a call to check if they're aware of the collection.

## 3. Can the collector reassure you of their credentials?

- Be wary of ID that looks photocopied or home-made, or leaflets with no address or land line telephone number.
- Make sure the collecting tin is sealed and undamaged.

- Where a leaflet or envelope appears to be from a charity, check the contact details – it's been known for a charity's name to be falsely used with different addresses or telephone numbers.
- Some organisations make a small donation to charity and use the subsequent 'thank you' letter as proof of an agreement with the charity – it's not.
- If the organisation is reluctant to answer your questions or give you information, think twice about giving.

## 4. How can I check if the organisation is a charity?

- All charities registered in Scotland can be checked on the online Scottish Charity Register published by The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator at [www.oscr.org.uk](http://www.oscr.org.uk)
- All charities registered in England and Wales can be checked on the Charity Commission's online register at [www.charitycommission.gov.uk](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk)
- In Northern Ireland, charities are not registered at present although there are plans to do so. Collections are regulated by the Police Service of Northern Ireland and if you have concerns you can also contact the Charities Branch of the Department for Social Development at [www.dsdni.gov.uk](http://www.dsdni.gov.uk)
- Note that a company number is not a charity number – it just means that it's a registered business. Check that any number given is the registered charity number for that charity.