

Guidance – House to House Collections

A permit is required to undertake a 'house to house' collection, under the House to House Collections Act 1939.

Whereas street collection permits are normally issued to cover a period of one or two days, a house to house collection permit can be granted for any period up to one year. With regard to vetting and checking to ascertain whether the organisation applying is genuine or not, the same procedures apply as for street collections.

As with street collection permits there is a requirement for the promoter of the collection to make a return following the collection.

Collections generally take place from door to door or from one public house to another.

Some of the larger well-known charities such as Christian Aid, Help the Aged etc, have a Charity Commission exemption from having to apply for a permit, but by and large most of the smaller, and particularly local, groups and organisations need a permit before they can collect money (or articles which they intend to sell later), from door to door.

Unlike street collections, there is a statutory right of appeal against the refusal to grant a house to house collection permit. In this case, the right of appeal is to the Secretary of State, and the grounds for refusal are set out in the Act itself.

One of the key grounds for refusal would be where the total amount likely to be applied for charitable purpose, as a result of the collection, is inadequate in proportion to the value of the proceeds likely to be received. So, for instance, where an applicant intends to claim a fair proportion of the proceeds of the collection for expenses, a permit could be refused. There is no statutory guidance to local authorities on what would be a reasonable amount for expenses.

Promoters and collectors

In the context of house-to-house collections, a promoter is a person who enlists others to act as collectors.

A promoter must:

- make sure persons authorised to act as collectors are suitable to handle such responsibility
- make sure collectors comply with the regulations
- only allow someone to act as a collector once that person is issued with a prescribed certificate of authority and a prescribed badge - both can be obtained from HM Stationery Office.

- (if money is being collected) only use an account of the organisation they are representing, matching the account already identified in their application.

Collectors must not:

- be under the age of 16 years
- be over persistent in the course of collecting
- remain at the door of any house if requested to leave by any occupant.

Unlicensed collections

There should be no more than two charitable collections running concurrently in any one area of Test Valley.

A number of companies advertise that they collect clothing and other items for the poor in third world countries. However, we are led to believe that many of these companies sell the items for their own gain.

Leaflets advertising collections will often include a company registration number. These companies, although registered, are not legitimate and might have been dissolved.

Some of these leaflets give misleading information. If you believe you have received such a leaflet, you should contact the Advertising Standards Agency.

Effect on charities

This practice of unlicensed collections has a serious effect on bona-fide charities that have a genuine house to house collection licence issued by us.

We would urge people to give direct to a local charity shop instead, or donate to a charity shop collection sack.

These should make clear reference to the charity registration number and many will also carry the code of charity retailing logo.