

How to Establish if a Collector or Charity is likely to be Bogus



1. About House to House Collections

House to House collections are primarily regulated by the House to House Collections Act 1939. This Act defines a collection as *an appeal to the public made by means of visits from house to house (which includes a place of business) to give money or other property.*

Charities and/or collectors who collect for charity (*i.e. any charitable, benevolent or philanthropic purpose, whether or not the purpose is charitable within the meaning of any rule of law*) by means of visits from house to house must have a permit from the Council unless they are exempt.

2. Do they have a Licence?

The Council is responsible for issuing collection permits for any collections that take place in the borough. If you are unsure whether a collector or charity is authorised to collect in your area, you can check on the Council website's [Public Access](#) service or contact the licensing section on 01242775200 or licensing@cheltenham.gov.uk.

Some charities are however exemption from requiring a consent from the Council to collect in the borough. You can view a list of those charities that are exempt on the Government's [Cabinet website](#).

3. How to tell if a Collector or Charity may not be Genuine

Please Note: *The points raised in this note are merely broad indicators as to what could be signs of bogus/unlawful collections. None of the points below will enable you to prove without doubt that a collector or charity is genuine (or not). They are only guidance to establish the probability of a collection being bogus.*

3.1 Poor Spelling & Grammar on Collection Bags

Leaflets or bags that contain spelling mistakes or are badly written make it more likely that the collections are bogus.

3.2 Limited Company or Charity Status

Some advertising leaflets will give the impression they are from a charity but provide a company registration number. This is not the same as a charity registration number and may be a sign that the organisation is operating commercially for profit and is not charitable.

Bear in mind though that some charities are also limited companies which is perfectly fine because they use commercial operations to plough profits back into the charity.

As a rule of thumb where a limited company can be connected to a charity (*i.e. Salvation Army Trading Co Ltd*), that is normally a sign of the collection is charitable.

[Check Limited Company Status](#) | [Check Charity Status](#)

3.3 Charity/Collector Contact Details

Postal Addresses - Leaflets/bags that do not show a full postal address may be an indication of a bogus collection. [Do an address search](#)

Phone Numbers - Leaflets/bags that only give a mobile number may be an indication of a bogus collection. Reputable collectors/charities will give a landline number to verify the authenticity of the collection. If you are unsure, call the number. A constant busy tone, answer phone or out of service tone is normally an indication of a bogus collector.



Email address - The use of email address from free email providers (such a @gmail, @hotmail, @hotmail etc.) normally indicates bogus collectors/charities. Reputable organisations tend to use their own web address for emailing (i.e. @salvationarmy.org.uk).

Websites - A website may indicate that the collector/charity is real although it is easy and cheap these days to get a professional looking website. However, there are indicators that could suggest that the collector/charity may be bogus:

1. The website does not work.
2. The website uses .com or .co.uk domain names which usually indicate a commercial organisation (instead of .org or .org.uk which usually indicate a not-for-profit organisation). www.charity.co.uk is different from www.charity.org.uk

3.4 Types of Goods Sought

Reputable collectors/charities will not normally ask for items of high value such as jewellery or electronics.

3.5 Transport Livery

Most reputable collectors/charities will have their collection vehicles liveried with their name and logo although beware that a bogus collector could have the names and logos of genuine charities on their vans. Vehicles with no livery may indicate bogus collectors.

3.6 Collector Identification

Cheltenham Borough Council's House to House Collection regulations require every collector to visibly display an identity badge.

Collectors who does not wear or cannot produce personal identification could indicate they may be bogus or not collecting on behalf of a charity they are claiming to be collecting for.

3.7 Name of Collector/Charity

Most genuine collections will be raising funds for a specific individually named charity. Be aware of leaflets/bags that do not use the words 'registered charity' but instead use pictures or wording that give the *impression* that the appeal is charitable.

You should be wary of any leaflet/bag that does not state the name of the charity your donations will go to. If a collection is for a registered charity, *legally this must be stated on any leaflet/bag*. Genuine leaflets will usually provide a charity registration number.

4. What do I do if a collection is bogus/unlawful?

If you suspect that a collector/charity is collecting in your area without a licence, please contact the Council's **Licensing Department** on 01242 775200 or licensing@cheltenham.gov.uk.

To complain about a misleading leaflet appealing for clothing donations, contact your local **Trading Standards Service**. If you receive a bogus leaflet that falsely uses the details of a genuine charity, the collection may be unlawful and you should report this to the **police**. In either case, please also notify the Charity Commission so that we can gather information on offenders and work with our partners to combat and raise awareness of fraud.

5. More Information

[Institute of Fundraising](#)

[Charity Bags](#)

[Licensing Public Access Information](#)