

WaterAid Vulnerable Supporter Policy

Protecting vulnerable people

Understanding and protecting people in vulnerable circumstances is central to WaterAid's work. This ranges from those in very marginalised communities living without clean water, decent toilets or good hygiene, to those who may be interested in supporting our work.

We hugely rely on the enthusiasm, commitment and generosity of the public in supporting our work. Through this we may well come into contact with people who are potentially in a vulnerable situation. It's vital that we do our very best to be aware of these situations and take appropriate action to understand, support and ensure the most appropriate experience for people in such circumstances.

The goal of this policy is demonstrate our understanding of this area, ensure consistency and accountability, and provide reassurance.

What is vulnerability?

Vulnerability can affect different people in different ways, and cover a wide range of situations. Some can be permanent, some temporary, and they can include chronic illness, mental health and neurological conditions, and life events. Examples include autism, schizophrenia, depression, Alzheimer's disease, hearing loss and bereavement. We consider each situation, with reference to the Institute of Fundraising's 'Treating Donors Fairly' guidance notes.

Through awareness of the wide range of potentially vulnerable situations, we are better able to identify where a supporter may not have **the capacity to make an informed decision**. This may be due to a mental health condition or life event, and could be temporary, permanent or fluctuating.

Should a supporter not have the capacity to make an informed decision or not understand that they are making a donation, this donation should not be taken.

Identifying supporters in these situations allows us to take appropriate action, including:

- politely declining the donation
- offering a refund if the donation has already been made
- ensuring we do not contact the supporter in the future
- potentially signposting to other organisations for support with their situation

We will always respect and appreciate an individual's right to support our work if they choose, and not discriminate based on their situation, for example old age. If the

supporter is fully understanding that they are making a donation, this donation can be taken. However, through understanding vulnerability we can better protect those who do not have the capacity to make an informed decision at that time.

Our commitment

Our supporters are at the heart of everything we do. We do our very best to provide the most positive experience for them and people considering supporting us. We are registered with the Fundraising Regulator and adhere to their Code of Fundraising.

Key requirements are as follows:

- Fundraisers **MUST** take all reasonable steps to treat a donor fairly, enabling them to make an informed decision about any donation. This **MUST** include taking into account the needs of any potential donor who may be in a vulnerable circumstance or require additional care and support to make an informed decision.
 - Fundraisers **MUST NOT** exploit the credulity, lack of knowledge, apparent need for care and support or vulnerable circumstance of any donor at any point in time.
 - If a fundraiser knows or has reasonable grounds for believing that an individual lacks capacity to make a decision to donate, a donation **MUST NOT** be taken.
 - A donation given by someone who lacked capacity at the time of donating **MUST** be returned (legal requirement).
 - Organisations **MUST NOT** engage in fundraising which:
 - Is an unreasonable intrusion on a person's privacy
 - Is unreasonably persistent;
- Or
- Places undue pressure on a person to donate.

- Fundraisers **MUST NOT** continue to ask an individual for support if:
 - that person clearly indicates – by word or gesture – that they do not wish to continue to engage

Or

- they have reasonable grounds for believing, in the course of their engagement with the individual, that they are in vulnerable circumstances which mean they are unable to make an informed decision to donate.

We are very keen to give all supporters the choice in how we communicate with them, and to respect their preferences and privacy. We are happy not to contact those who choose this option. We never share or sell our supporters' details with other organisations for their use.

Should a vulnerable supporter not be in a position to make an informed decision we will proactively ensure WaterAid will not contact them in future. Our Donation Refund Policy states we will not take a donation from a supporter who does not have the mental capacity to make an informed decision. We will also refund the donation should it have already been made.

Our Vulnerable Supporter Policy is extended across all WaterAid staff, our volunteers and any external agency who may be representing us. We will monitor the policy's implementation and adherence to it.

WaterAid's Supporter Care Team is on hand to do whatever we can to help our supporters, and look after those in potentially vulnerable situations.

All supporter facing staff receive training on how to identify people in vulnerable situations and the steps to take to ensure they are treated fairly and appropriately. This is based on the Institute of Fundraising's '[Treating Donors Fairly](#)' guidance notes. Key points on how to identify potentially vulnerable situations, and ways to help supporters in these circumstances are given in the tables below.

We're here to help

If you would like any further information, or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our Supporter Care Team. They would be very happy to help, and are available on 020 7793 4594, 9am to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday. Alternatively, please email us at supportercare@wateraid.org

Please do let us know if there is a specific situation regarding a potentially vulnerable supporter where we could help.

Potentially vulnerable situations:

- Physical and mental medical conditions
- Disability
- Learning difficulties
- Times of stress or anxiety (e.g., bereavement, redundancy)
- Financial vulnerability (where a gift from a donor may impact on their ability to sufficiently care for themselves or leave them in financial hardship)
- English not being the donor's first language
- Influence of alcohol or drugs.

Conversational indicators that supporter may be in a vulnerable situation:

- Asking irrelevant and unrelated questions, or displaying signs of forgetfulness?
- Unable to read and understand the information they are provided with, and asking for it to be continually repeated?
- Responding in an irrational way to simple questions?
- Saying 'yes' or 'no' at times that it is clear they haven't understood?
- Taking a long time or displaying difficulty in responding to simple questions or requests for information?
- Repeating simple questions such as 'who are you', 'what charity is it' and 'what do you want'?
- Wandering off the subject at hand and making incongruous statements?
- Saying that they are not well or not in the mood to continue?
- Displaying signs of ill-health like breathlessness or making signs of exasperation or discontent?
- Giving a statement such as 'I don't usually do things like this, my husband/wife/son/ daughter takes care of it for me?'
- Indicating in any way that they are feeling rushed, flustered, or experiencing a stressful situation?
- Having trouble remembering relevant information, for example that they are already a regular donor to that charity or have recently donated?
- Donating an unexpectedly large gift with no prior relationship? (There being no prior relationship before a gift is made does not on its own constitute 'vulnerability': many legacy and major donor gifts to charities are given without the existence of a relationship between the donor or charity).

How to support a potentially vulnerable supporter during a conversation:

- Talk clearly, avoiding words and phrases that may be hard to understand (but avoid shouting)
- Repeat information
- Try to reflect the terminology used by the donor which may help to increase their understanding
- Be patient and do not rush the individual
- Provide alternative formats of fundraising materials (different language, accessible formats)
- Be upfront and tell the person why you are communicating with them and check they are happy to continue
- Ask if they would prefer to be contacted in a different way (email, letter) or at a different time
- Ask if they would like to talk to anybody else before making a decision
- Check their understanding at relevant parts of the interaction and ask if there is anything that needs further explanation