

Health and safety guidelines for collecting house-to-house

Get to know your street

If you're not already familiar with the area, find out about the street you will be collecting and any potential safety issues. If your church, local committee or group collected in that street last year, they might have some information and advice.

Communication

Make sure a friend, relative or member of your church, committee or group knows when and where you will be collecting. If you have a mobile phone, take it with you but keep it concealed so that it's not a target for thieves.

Driving

If you drive to the street where you're collecting, park your car in a safe, well-lit area, as near as possible to the street where you are collecting. Avoid walking for a long distance carrying money.

Timing

It's illegal to collect after 9pm – and we recommend that you only collect during daylight hours anyway. This is not only safer for you, but potential supporters may also feel more comfortable opening the door to you while it's still light.

Weather

Consider postponing your collection if the weather makes it hazardous.

Safe access to properties

If a property is hard to access (due to, for example, dangerously-stacked rubbish, building works or an unstable path) it may be better not to visit. You might be able to contact a householder via a neighbour instead.

Always be aware of any hazards that could cause you to slip or trip up, as well as falling items, unstable structures, machinery, moving vehicles and things that restrict visibility, such as heavy undergrowth.

Dogs and other pets

We suggest you use a ruler to push envelopes through letterboxes. If, while delivering or collecting, you become aware that there's a fierce dog or other pet at the property which isn't being controlled or restrained by the householder, move quickly to a place of safety.

Personal security

Where possible, bring someone with you – it's always safer (and more fun) to collect in pairs, especially in an area that's isolated or has a high crime rate.

Don't take risks, be guided by your instincts, and if you begin to feel unsafe it may be better to postpone your collection and return to a place of safety.

Don't enter anyone's home, and avoid dark, unlit areas or places from which you could find it difficult to escape. Consider precautions such as carrying a personal safety alarm.

Dealing with confrontational, violent or aggressive behaviour

If you encounter anyone who's aggressive, confrontational or hostile, stay calm and remain polite. Keep a safe distance from the person and find a way to withdraw safely from the situation as soon as you can.

If you see that someone's becoming agitated, try to defuse the situation and avoid saying or doing anything that might make it worse.

Money

Please be aware that old paper £10 notes are no longer legal tender. However, if you do get any old £5 or £10 notes, Barclays and most banks will still accept these so they are still worth having.

Use a discreet bag/container that allows you to keep the money you collect concealed. If a supporter wishes to make a large donation on the door, it's better for them to write a cheque.

If at any point you feel threatened or challenged for the money you've collected, don't take any personal risks. In the event of a threat or theft, call the police as soon as you can safely do so.

Health

If you're too unwell to collect, or are aware of a health condition that may make it unsafe, postpone your visit until you're well enough, or arrange for another member of your church, committee or group to do it instead.

Reporting accidents, near misses and incidents

In the unlikely event that an accident or incident occurs during your house-to-house collection, it's important that you report this immediately to the leader of the church or other group that's organising the collection.

Safeguarding advice for house-to-house collections

We want giving to Christian Aid to be a positive experience for all. It's possible that during your house-to-house collections you will meet people who may be in a vulnerable circumstance, or who need additional support to make an informed decision about giving.

There could also be times when you inadvertently approach people who may not have the mental capacity to make a decision to donate. To treat donors fairly and safely, please follow the following advice when collecting:

- Make sure you are familiar with your church's safeguarding policy, and have the phone number of your safeguarding officer to hand.
- If you suspect that a person you are collecting from is lacking capacity or is in vulnerable circumstances, please leave politely and immediately without making a request for a donation. This should be done without any direct enquiries about the individual's capacity to make a decision or the existence of vulnerable circumstances.
- If they wish to support Christian Aid in another manner, you can give the number of your local office who will be able to help.
- If questions arise about someone's capacity to give a donation after they have made it, please contact your local office. We will investigate and return the donation if appropriate.

Further reading

Treating Donors Fairly – Guidance for fundraisers responding to the needs of people in vulnerable circumstances and helping donors make informed decisions, Care Act 2014.

