

CHARITIES UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT:

WHERE DOES THE CANON COLLINS TRUST STAND?

In the third week of January, charity fundraising was again all over the news. A small minority of ‘big name’ charities have brought the sector into disrepute. We at the Canon Collins Trust would like to emphasise that we have never – and will never – engage in practices like selling our mailing lists to third parties, which is at the heart of the latest controversy. And, recognising that many of our donors are senior citizens and perhaps potentially vulnerable, neither do we cold-call people to ‘persuade’ them to give more.

INTRODUCTION

In response to allegations made over the summer by the Daily Mail in relation to the unethical practices employed in fundraising activities, the Government set up the Etherington Review into the regulation of Charity Fundraising. The Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, chaired by Bernard Jenkin MP, has also held an inquiry, to examine both the regulation of charity fundraising and the way in which trustees of large charities govern fundraising. Accepting the Etherington Review, the Committee described this as the “last chance” for charity Trustees to exert greater control over their charities and sub-contractors if regulation is to be avoided.

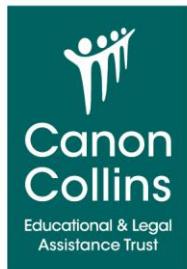
BACKGROUND

Stories picked up by the Daily Mail reporters and other media are now well known, including that of the elderly poppy seller who was allegedly receiving more than 250 letters a month asking for money. She went on to commit suicide, and though her death was initially blamed on the postal pleas for help she was getting, this was later discounted and denied by her family.

The media also unearthed several instances of the Telephone Preference Service being ignored by a few charities and the call centres they use. Stories emerged of vulnerable people being “harassed” into making bigger donations than they could afford.

PROBLEMS FOR THE CHARITY SECTOR

Sensational stories like these, involving a few, can colour the public’s view of charities generally. It is already well known that most charities are finding it harder and harder to recruit and retain loyal donors, and fundraising has never been more difficult. In theory, it is understandable that charities should look to diversify their sources of income, and replace what is being lost with new sources of revenue. However, in the view of the Canon Collins Trust, some of the ‘big name’ charities have



gone too far and departed from their core values, often as a result of using third-party fundraising and marketing companies. Unfortunately, this has resulted in making the public even more sceptical of the charity sector as a whole.

THE CANON COLLINS EDUCATIONAL & LEGAL ASSISTANCE TRUST

At the Canon Collins Trust, we too have seen a steep decline since 2009 in the number of individuals who feel able to continue supporting our work regularly. Sadly, many of our earlier supporters have passed on, though some have kindly chosen to leave bequests in their Wills which are incredibly helpful to small charities like ours.

Like other charities we have had to adapt and look for different types of income to compensate for the decline in personal giving. However we would never resort to selling our mailing list to any other organisation, no matter how tough things get. We also respect the fact that people give to us out of choice, and give what they feel they can afford, and should not be 'pressurised' into giving more – particularly by professional fundraisers who have no direct connection with the Trust.

The Canon Collins Trust is concerned that a majority of the public feels that "some of the fundraising methods used by charities make me uncomfortable". We fervently hope and believe we have never put members of the public in that position. We look forward to the prospect of a new regulator with more powers than the Fundraising Standards Board and welcome any efforts to increase the scope of the Charity Commission in cracking down on unscrupulous behaviour, no matter how worthy the cause might be.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stuart".

Stuart Craig

Chief Executive, Canon Collins Trust