

Public Collections



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1. General

Anyone collecting money or selling articles on behalf of your Group/District/County, in a place to which the public have unrestricted access, must first have a license from the Local Authority. It is an offence to collect money without a valid permit.

Please contact the local licensing team, within your Local Authority for assistance.

If you are in London you may need to contact the local police or Licensing Team of the City of London if you want to collect in this area.

You must be over 16 (or 18 in London) to be involved and it is illegal to carry out a public street collection without a permit.

It is advisable to contact your Local Authority as soon as you have a rough outline of what you want to do, where and when. They will be able to guide you as to the type of licence/permit you require and all of their requirements, such as who is allowed to collect, wearing of badges, etc.

1.1 Street Collections

Street collectors can be defined as people standing in a street or public place with a collecting tin, hoping that the public will donate to their charity.

The Legislations covering Street Collections are:

- **Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1972 / Police Factories etc Act 1916**
- **Charitable Collections (Transitional Provisions) Order 1974**

1.2 House-to-House Collections

House-to-house collectors can be defined as people calling at houses asking for donations at the door, sometimes leaving an envelope to be collected later. They sometimes collect clothes or other articles for charity. Carol singing at people's

doors is house-to-house collecting. The legislation covering house-to-house collections is:

- **House to House Collections Act 1939**
Anyone collecting from house-to-house (or pub-to-pub) must have a permit from the Local Authority or a Home Office exemption order issued to large charities.
- **Charities Act (1992) Section 60 part 2**

2. Planning

Before approaching the Local Authority for a licence/permit you first need to have an idea of what you want to do. Do you want to have a stand in your local high street or do you intend to knock on doors in your local village during Halloween?

These ideas need to be presented to your Local Authority well in advance of the formal application so as to ascertain whether or not you will be able to do it, and also that you will be able to do it when you want to. Popular times such as Christmas or Saturdays will book up quickly.

The Local Authority will also be able to give you further guidance on all reporting and collection requirements. Once your permit has been granted it is imperative that you follow all the instructions and guidance on it.

2.1 Where and When

The Local Authority makes sure there are not too many public collections going on at the same time in the same place. In theory, you can organise as many collections as you like on private property, but there are changes to what is defined as 'public' and 'private' Charity Act 2006 .

For example, 'public places' now include privately owned land, such as railway station ticket halls and supermarket forecourts.

Think about when you are planning to hold the collection and what else is going on around that time. You may want to team up with another event, or make sure it does not clash with something that will be taking everyone away from

your planned area. Your local tourist information centre should have details about dates of other events. Your Local Authority may also have details about what times are better, from their previous experience

Depending on the place you are holding the collection, some times may be busier than others. For example, a carnival may build momentum during the day, while a farmers market on a Saturday may be busiest in the morning.

3. Collectors

The more help you have the more money you will collect. Having a few more collectors than you think you need will help with cover if some of the collectors cannot make it. Work on an average that each helper will collect £25.

Create a simple rota so that everyone is collecting for one or two hours at a time on the day. Even the most dedicated helper will find it tiring and will start to flag after a while, especially if it is cold, wet or windy.

Remember to allow time for getting set up, clearing away and counting the money.

You may want to consider making sure each collector is stationed somewhere they are able to keep sight of another collector, so they can work as a team and make sure everyone stays safe and well, although there may be restrictions in the permit on the distance between collectors. Perhaps some collectors could work in pairs. It can be a lonely activity, which is more sociable if people are able to have a couple of minutes chat every so often. You may split the helpers into teams, if you have a large number, and then you could identify a leader for each team who will help to coordinate that shift.

Brief them on what you would like them to do at what time and what to do if things do not go to plan.

Make them aware of the guidelines about not following people or coercing them. Let them know what to do with the money once they have finished their shift.

4. Gift Aid

If your Group/District/County is registered for Gift Aid, please ask donors/sponsors to sign a Gift Aid Declaration. This enables you (and higher rate tax payers) to claim tax back from the Government and increases the overall value of the gift to the

charity. You can incorporate this into any forms you have.

5. Be Creative

Public Collections are great opportunities to show off Scouting skills to your local community. If you are collecting on a busy Saturday for example you want to make sure that you stand out and get noticed. Think about things you may be able to do that will not only enable you to collect money, but also show off Scouting.

- You may get permission to display information about your Group/District/County you are fundraising for and draw attention to the collection at the same time?
- Does someone in your Group juggle, walk on stilts or sing opera? You could get some music playing, but you may also need a Public Entertainments Licence for this – check it out with your Local Authority before confirming your plans.

6. Fundraising Materials and Publicity

All of your fundraising materials should make it clear who/what you are raising the money for. If your Group/District/County is registered with the Charity Commission remember to include your registered charity number on your fundraising materials.

7. Getting Prepared

Get the collection boxes ready in advance, ensuring they are:

- sealed;
- clearly show the name of the Group/District/County the money is going to;
- are numbered; and
- make a note of which helper has which numbered collection box. That way you can let them know how much they personally contributed to the total once the money has been counted.

It is useful to have a base for the collection. This could be a trestle table within walking distance of the collection or the boot of someone's car. Helpers can then pick up and drop off collection boxes at the start and finish of their shift. They could also leave bags, coats or other clothing if they needed to. It may be helpful for the base to also have some light refreshments available to keep helpers going. Confirm with helpers that they know where to go and at what time to avoid confusion on the day.

8. Taking Care of the Money

Have a plan for what you will do with the money collected during the day and at the end, making sure it is always safe. The Local Authority should be able to assist you with their expectations on how the money is to be stored, and all donations recorded. Please ensure you also record any legitimate expenses, such as the cost of collection boxes.

Decide who will help you to count the money and where, being aware that this may take several hours if you have a lot of collectors and it needs to be a secure place to count. Money should be counted by at least two people, who can check each other's counting and record it as soon as possible after the event.

9. Risk Assessment

Once you have finished planning, go back through your rota and identify what could go wrong during the day and the risks associated with each aspect. Then write a straight forward risk assessment, deciding how these could be prevented, dealt with, and what you will do in the worst case scenario. If helpers can see each other, they can look out for each other and identify potential problems sooner.

10. On the Day

- Get the base set up with collection boxes ready to give out to collectors, with any promotional materials for your Group/District/County that you may have.
- Keep the rota handy and remember to have the permit available for inspection in case anyone asks to see it.
- Follow the information you have been given by the Local Authority including restrictions on the permit.
- Make sure everyone is where they are supposed to be at the right time and follow up if this is not the case.
- Smile – it may be a long day, especially if you are coordinating the collection, but people are more likely to give if you look happy.
- Follow your plan for keeping the money raised safe during the day and at the end of the collection. Count the money in a secure place, with at least one helper, as soon as you can, and process it as soon as possible.
- Remember to thank each and every collector, ideally at the start and end of their shift. Think about how you can say thank you – it does not have to be expensive. Have something prepared in advance, tucked away ready at the base to present before they leave. You will be amazed at how few people remember to

say thank you properly and how pleased collectors are when you do.

11. Follow up

Get in touch with helpers, either in person or by sending them a card, to thank them again for their efforts and to let them know how much they raised and how much was raised in total. People like to know how the overall event went and their contribution to it. If they feel you appreciate their hard work, they are more likely to help you again in the future.

You can promote your Group/District/County further by having collectors do an official hand over of the final total. Make an event of it by asking the bank to produce a giant cheque that you can present to the Group/District/County, while giving you the opportunity to officially thank all your helpers and all of those who donated. Ask the local press along to write an article and take photos. You can use this as another opportunity to inform the local community about your Group/District/County.