

Compassion in World Farming: Supporters in vulnerable circumstances policy

Introduction

Our supporters are at the heart of all we do. Without their dedication, we couldn't continue our work to improve the lives of farm animals. In return, we're committed to offering the very best standards of supporter care and protecting our supporters' privacy, dignity and well-being.

Donor Charter

- We are always thrilled to hear from our supporters and will respond to all queries in a friendly, professional and timely manner.
- We are accountable. If you are ever unhappy with anything we have done, we will welcome any complaint you might choose to make and deal with it thoroughly, seriously and swiftly. We have a strict and structured complaints procedure. A copy of this can be sent to you on request.
- We act with integrity. We never exaggerate any of our claims and will always deliver on our promises.
- All your donations will be used wisely, in line with our mission to advance the wellbeing of farm animals across the world. We are happy to provide information on [how our income is spent](#).
- You can be safe in the knowledge that we promise never to give out, swap, rent or otherwise pass on your details to other organisations for their use. For more information on how we will (and won't) use your personal information [please click here](#).
- If you tell us that you do not want to be contacted in a certain way, this will be promptly recorded and your wishes will be honoured in future communications.

Supporters in vulnerable circumstances

We know that sometimes, some of our supporters might need a little more help. If we think a supporter may be in vulnerable circumstances that could affect their capacity to make a decision about supporting us financially, or indeed in other ways, we will do all we can to assist. Our guidelines for managing these situations are based on the [Code of Fundraising Practice](#) maintained by the Fundraising Regulator.

*“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.”*

Defining vulnerable circumstances

Vulnerability is not age, sex, race or ability related; anyone can be in a vulnerable situation, at any point of their lives. But vulnerability will also vary from one person to another.

Some examples of circumstances that might impact on a supporter's capacity to make an informed decision are given below:

- Physical and mental medical conditions (both permanent and temporary)
- Disability
- Learning difficulties
- Times of stress or anxiety (e.g., bereavement, redundancy)
- Financial vulnerability (where a gift or donation from a supporter may impact on their ability to sufficiently care for themselves or leave them in financial hardship)
- Homelessness
- Poor understanding of English
- Influence of alcohol or drugs

If we know that a supporter is in one of these situations, or another situation that might suggest vulnerability, Compassion will assess the supporter's ability to make an informed decision. But we know that the impact of these circumstances will vary from supporter to supporter. Some supporters may retain full capacity for decision-making, but some might not. Because of this, we will assess each situation on a case-by-case basis.

Older people are disproportionately affected by conditions such as dementia or hearing loss, which may make it harder to make an informed decision. But we do not assume vulnerability based on age alone. When communicating or fundraising with someone who is older, we will take reasonable steps to ensure that they understand the information and donation. We will look for signs that may indicate that the individual needs additional care and support to make an informed decision, and take appropriate steps to meet that need.

Behaviours suggesting possible vulnerability

We won't always know if someone is facing a vulnerable circumstance. So our staff might need to make a decision based on the way the supporter behaves. Some examples of behaviours that may indicate a lack of capacity to make an informed decision are given below:

- Unable to hear and/or understand what is being said
- Unable to read and/or understand the information they are provided with
- 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'
- Saying that they are not feeling well or not in the mood to continue

- Indicating in any way that they are feeling rushed, flustered, or experiencing a stressful situation
- Having trouble remembering relevant information, for example forgetting that they are already a regular donor to that charity (e.g., have an existing Direct Debit), or have recently donated
- Donating an unexpectedly large gift with no prior relationship (NB. 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 and charity.)

What will we do if we think a supporter could be in a vulnerable circumstance?

If a Compassion member of staff feels that a supporter is displaying any of these behaviours, they should respond in the way that most suits that supporter and that situation. Our first priority is to help the supporter to understand the decision they are being asked to make. Some examples of ways we may do this are given below:

- Talk in clear language, 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/ speed up their understanding
- Be patient and do not rush the individual
- Provide alternative formats of fundraising or campaigning materials (different language, accessible formats)
- Be upfront and tell the person why we are communicating with them and check they are happy to continue
- Ask if they would prefer to be contacted in a different form (email, letter) and offer to contact them 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

If the Compassion representative still believes the supporter is not able to make an informed decision about their support, they will:

- Bring the conversation politely to a close
- NOT take a donation
- Flag the concern and the reason for it to the Supporter Engagement Manager, who will decide whether and how to proceed regarding future contact with the supporter

If we receive information after a donation that makes us think the supporter's capacity to make a decision about donating was impaired, we will assess whether the donation should be returned.

Supporting Compassion whilst in a vulnerable circumstance

Supporting a charity can be a very positive and rewarding experience, and we don't want to stop supporters from engaging with us if they want to. We will therefore not automatically assume that someone in vulnerable circumstances should not receive any further contact from us. However, we might decide to restrict contact of certain types, especially requests for financial support, or certain content (for example, campaign material) if we think a supporter might find it upsetting. And, of course, if we are asked not to make any further contact we will act on this request immediately whilst advising of any correspondence that may already be in process and therefore may still be received.

If you feel yourself to be in a vulnerable circumstance, it is entirely your choice whether or not to mention this to us. However, if you do wish to discuss your circumstances to help us engage with you in an appropriate way, we will agree with you what information you would like us to record and we will hold this information securely.

If you have any questions about this Policy, or would like discuss how Compassion in World Farming engages with you, please contact our Supporter Engagement Team:

- By post: Compassion in World Farming, River Court, Mill Lane, Godalming, Surrey, GU7 1EZ
- By phone: on 01483 521 953 (lines open 9am-5pm, Monday – Friday)
- By email: supporters@ciwf.org