

FRSB publishes report into charity fundraising practices

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On 20 January 2016, the FRSB published its long-awaited report following its investigation concerning the particular circumstances which led to Olive Cooke feeling overwhelmed by contact from charities and the complaints made to the FRSB following her death.

The FRSB invited evidence from member and non-member charities in relation to their relationship with Mrs Cooke and this evidence forms the basis of the FRSB's report. However, the FRSB note that Mrs Cooke was also being contacted by a large number of other charities who did not provide evidence to the FRSB.

The FRSB's report highlights that Mrs Cooke was a generous supporter of many charities – she was a regular donor to 48 out of the 99 charities who held her details. However, a number of those charities had shared her details and this led to an increase in mailings from charities – the FRSB's sample showed an increase from 119 mailings a year to 466 mailings a year between 2000 and 2014. This figure is lower than the one quoted by Mrs Cooke in an interview with the Bristol Post before her death and the FRSB consider that the figure from their sample was only likely to represent one sixth of the total number of mailings Mrs Cooke received.

The FRSB note that the level of contact from each charity per year is reasonable (six mailings), but that those charities who shared her details without her express permission must take some responsibility for the volume of communications. The FRSB noted that whilst only a minority (24 out of 99) of charities had passed Mrs Cooke's details on, 70% had obtained her details from a third party. Where charities had passed her details on, the default position had been that the onus was on Mrs Cooke to initiate an opt-out of data sharing, often without clear guidance on how to do it.

The FRSB's report highlights that many charities gave insufficient opportunities for Mrs Cooke to opt out of future mailings – only 14 charities were consistently providing opt-out boxes on mailings.

The recent report follows an interim report published in June 2015 about charity fundraising practices which led to the FRSB making recommendations to the Institute of Fundraising to amend the Code of Fundraising Practice. The report highlights that the vast majority of these recommendations have been incorporated into the Code.

The FRSB's report concludes by highlighting the need for a behavioural shift in the way that charities view their supporters and considers that the FRSB's fundraising promise can play a key role in this.

In the current climate, fundraising charities would be well advised to evaluate their fundraising practices to ensure that they are compliant with fundraising and data protection rules and reflect the charity's values and ethos. The FRSB's report particularly highlights that charities should:

- ensure that they do not share their donor's contact details without specific informed consent;
- ensure that all fundraising materials clearly show how individuals are able to opt-out of receiving mailings and having their data shared; and
- comply with the revised Code of Fundraising Practice.

The full report is available [here](#).

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