

Government response: Online charitable giving summit: statement of meeting

Key discussion areas and next steps agreed at a summit about online giving held by the Charity Commission and the Fundraising Regulator

A number of concerns have been raised in the media and by parliamentarians about online giving, including possible fraudulent activity, oversight over the end-use of funds, and transparency about fees charged by sites. Recent events including terrorist attacks in Manchester and London and the Grenfell Tower fire have heightened these concerns given the large amount of money raised for victims on these platforms in a short amount of time.

On 27 September 2017, the Charity Commission and the Fundraising Regulator convened a meeting with senior representatives from 14 of the major giving platforms in the UK, to discuss these issues and collectively agree principles to increase public understanding and transparency about the different forms of donating on online platforms in order to secure public trust and confidence.

The Charity Commission and the Fundraising Regulator will report back to the Minister for Civil Society on the progress of discussions and their assessment of the adequacy of the current regulatory framework.

Online fundraising platforms not in attendance at the summit are warmly invited to confirm their commitment to high fundraising standards and join future discussions.

The following areas were discussed during the summit and a number of actions were agreed:

- the role online giving platforms play and will increasingly play in the future in connecting people and communities who want to give and those in need is of huge value.
- platforms acknowledge a tension between the speed of public response to disasters and high profile humanitarian events and the pace with which charities can distribute funds raised to beneficiaries. Platforms stand ready to contribute their expertise to further work reviewing the government and civil society response to humanitarian crises in the UK.
- platforms which offer the opportunity for crowdfunding and person to person fundraising as well as donating direct to a charity feel confident that the advice they give to individuals setting up pages about the choices available to them and the consequences of those choices is clear. More can be done, working collaboratively, to ensure clear and consistent advice across different platforms and generally to the public. It is critical to avoid confusion about, for example, accountability to the Charity Commission, eligibility for Gift Aid, and what happens in the event of a failed appeal. Platforms agree to work

with the Charity Commission and Fundraising Regulator to agree and disseminate clear and consistent public advice about the choices available for donating.

- all the sites confirm that they have robust counter-fraud processes in place and committed to providing regulators and ministers with more detailed information. Using reputable sites which meet high standards and have good fraud prevention and detection measures in place gives the best assurance for the donating public. The Charity Commission and Fundraising Regulator will work with the platforms in reviewing their resilience to fraud and to create a new forum to share advice and intelligence about potential fraud threats.
- platforms recognise their legal responsibility when acting as commercial participators for charitable donations to make it clear to donors upfront what proportion of their donation will reach the charity. Platforms consider that organisations and individuals setting up pages have good understanding and acceptance of the charges and fees involved but acknowledge that donors and the general public may not always be so clear and that it is not easy to compare fees and charges across different platforms and routes. Platforms confirm their commitment to transparency on fees and charges and will work together with government and regulators to explore how this can be improved.
- the Fundraising Regulator is reviewing the Code of Fundraising Practice and wants to update and expand the standards for online fundraising set out in the Code. Platforms will work with the Fundraising Regulator to contribute to the review of the Code.
- registration with the Fundraising Regulator is now open to third party fundraisers including online platforms and this offers an opportunity to demonstrate public commitment to meeting the highest standards for fundraising. The Fundraising Regulator welcomes those platforms which are already registered and invites those platforms which have not registered to consider doing so.
- the Fundraising Regulator occasionally receives complaints from the public related to online giving platforms and welcomes engagement with platforms to resolve complaints and address areas of growing public concern. Platforms will engage with the Fundraising Regulator to share information about their complaints processes and address any areas of concern.

Representatives from the following platforms attended the summit:

1. Just Giving
2. GoFund Me
3. Virgin Money Giving
4. BT MyDonate
5. PayPal Giving Fund
6. Total Giving
7. Charity Choice
8. Givey
9. Everyclick Ltd
10. Local Giving
11. The Big Give

12. Wonderful
13. The Good Exchange
14. Everydayhero