



21 July 2010

Position statement No 4

PFRA's use of the word 'chugger'

- **PFRA to use word 'chugger' in engaging with stakeholders, when "appropriate"**
- **Use of word by public has only become widespread since 2009**
- **Many people use it as a neutral, descriptive term, rather than with any negative connotations**

Little has the potential to outrage fundraisers like the word 'chugger' – a pejorative portmanteau word for street fundraisers that elides 'charity' and 'mugger'. It was coined in 2002 by journalist Keith Barker-Main – compiler of the 'Say What: News Words About Town' column in the *Metro* free newspaper – and was intended from the very start to be a negative and insulting term.

Many people who use the word now – on Twitter or other social networking forums, on blogs or in the print media – use it with exactly this intention.

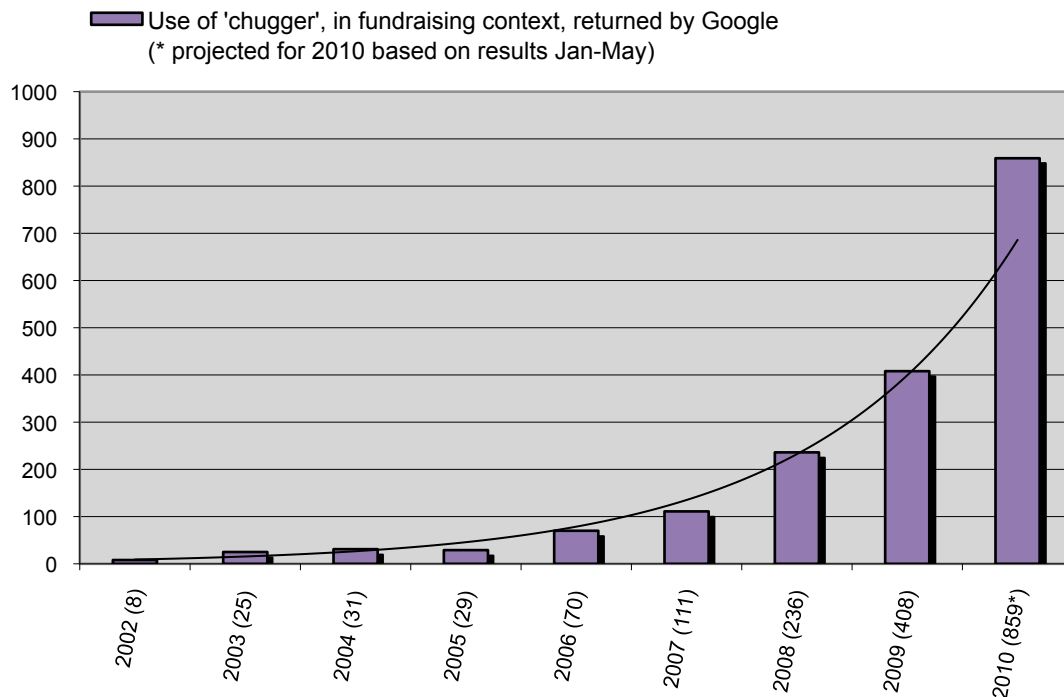
Because of this, use of the word 'chugger' to many fundraisers is and always will be a contemptible slur on the integrity of hardworking people trying to do a difficult job for good causes.

After several years of prohibition of the use of the word, the PFRA has begun, over the past six months or so, to use it in official communications, culminating with a section entitled '[Do you object to chuggers?](#)' on our revamped website, which was relaunched in June 2010.

Having been discussed and approved by our communications and engagement committee, PFRA has decided to do this for the following reasons.

1) Although it seems to people in the fundraising sector that 'chugger' has been in universal usage for a number of years, this is not the case. A Google search in the UK for 'chugger' in a charity context reveals that, since its invention in 2002, use of the word increased only gradually for the first six years and it is only since 2008 that it has become a lot more widespread (see bar chart below). Use of the word 'chugger' is now growing exponentially and, if usage follows a classic product life cycle, then we have only just left the 'early

adopters' stage and are entering the 'growth' phase. This suggests that peak usage of 'chugger' is therefore probably two or three years away.



2) Although fundraisers perceive that 'chugger' is predominantly used pejoratively, probably because this is how most of them encounter the use of the word, PFRA has detected a shift in its usage. We have been monitoring social media networks since November 2009. Early indications of this monitoring are that there is a median of eight or nine daily uses of 'chugger' in a fundraising context, about 50 per cent of which come through Twitter. However, only about a third of these are negative uses; the rest are classified as 'neutral'. This includes purely descriptive usage such as "there were a lot of chuggers in town today", or "my friend's just got a job as a chugger". If use of the word 'chugger' continues to grow at this exponential rate, although the proportions of 1:2 negative:neutral usage might continue, in absolute terms, there will be far more people than ever before using 'chugger' as a neutral, non-value laden word.

3) Until a quite recently, PFRA endorsed a total prohibition on the use of 'chugger' in our day-to-day operations. Indeed, we even posted a statement on our website telling visitors that 'chugger' was an insulting word that should never be used. However, it is now clear to us that many people do not use it as an insult and, if we want to engage with them and talk to them about street F2F fundraising, we need to be able to do so in language they use and understand. Our view is that it matters less how people refer to street fundraisers; what's more important is that they have a good understanding about how street fundraising operates and why charities use it. With so many more people now using the word 'chugger', PFRA believes we will be fighting a losing battle if we maintain our prohibition on its use.

4) Many people, especially outside of London and the south east, including the licensing officials and town centre managers with whom the PFRA interacts on a regular basis, are unaware of the word or what it means (we often have to explain it to them). If 'chugger' is to

become a more widely adopted term, then PFRA feels we need to be able to use the word in discussions with our regional stakeholders before they become more familiar with its minority pejorative usage.

5) However, we will only use 'chugger' where we consider it appropriate, in response to and engaging with people who are using it as a descriptive, non-pejorative term. We will not be adopting 'chugger' as our default term for a street F2F fundraiser.

ENDS

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Notes for editors

The PFRA www.pfra.org.uk

The Public Fundraising Regulatory Association (PFRA) is the nationally recognised self-regulator for all forms of face-to-face (F2F) fundraising activity – direct debit solicitation or data-capture – conducted in public spaces by charities and good causes anywhere in the UK. Supported by the Office of the Third Sector and the Charity Commission but without drawing on public funds, PFRA seeks to guarantee the sustainability of F2F with the donating public by working in partnership with local authorities, TCMs and BIDs to provide and enforce bespoke and free-to-user durable and Charities Act 2006-compliant local voluntary management solutions within the framework of the Institute of Fundraising national Code of Practice.

Our work and effectiveness is recognized by the Institute of Licensing, NALEO, and the Association of Town Centre Managers, all of whom occupy observer seats on our board of management. We were among the founder members of, and occupy a seat on the board of, the Fundraising Standards Board. We are a corporate affiliate of the Trading Standards Institute – committed to fair trading and consumer protection.