

**Julie Spence OBE BEd LLB MA MBA
Chief Constable**

Tel: 01480 422319

E-mail: julie.spence@cambs.pnn.police.uk



Creating a safer
Cambridgeshire

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To all Chief Constables

Dear Colleague

I write to you as ACPO Citizen Focus Business Area lead to bring to your attention concerns raised with me recently by the Public Fundraising Regulatory Association (PFRA).

PFRA is the nationally recognised, not for profit organisation that regulates the face to face fundraising activities of many well known charities, including the British Red Cross, RNLI, Guide Dogs for the Blind, Macmillan Cancer Support and WRVS. These activities are restricted to those designed to collect funds from individuals by monthly direct debits, and include street based and door to door engagement with the public.

PFRA have been contacted by some of their members highlighting what is perceived as a growing trend of disproportionate attention by police patrols whilst they are involved in their business of securing financial support. Stop and account procedures are regularly being applied, alongside fairly intensive efforts to secure verification of the legitimacy of the request for funds by charity representatives. It is reported that this police activity is often accompanied by abrupt and insensitive attitudes, including occasions where conversations with the public have been interrupted. It is felt that less than discrete encounters, often involving more than one officer in high visibility clothing, sometimes raises suspicion amongst members of the public, causing concern that representatives may be acting unlawfully.

PFRA understand the benefits of early notification of the intention to conduct fund raising activities and will continue to market the benefits to their members of early proactive engagement with Local Authorities and Neighbourhood Policing Teams. In a reactive sense it is understood that the Police need to respond to calls from members of the public and businesses and that the use of stop and account procedures is a legitimate tactic to be used in these circumstances. The issue that remains to be resolved, however, is the insensitive manner in which officers seemingly have dealt with charity representatives in the past.

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I am sure that like me you expect a high level of professionalism from officers when engaging individuals in stop and account procedures, including applying principles of common sense and courtesy during any interaction. I hope, therefore, that you will see the benefits in highlighting across your organisation PFRA's concerns and encourage a sensitive, diplomatic and proportionate approach where charity representatives need to be engaged. I am not suggesting a halt to the checking of representatives where the need arises, but moreover recognition of the impact poorly managed police engagement can have on our image and the objectives of those working on behalf of charities.

Further information on PFRA and their activities can be found at www.pfra.org.uk. The PFRA Secretariat warmly welcomes any direct enquiries about their work.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie Spence', with a large, stylized flourish extending from the end of the name.

Julie Spence
Chief Constable
Head of Citizen Focus Business Area