Vulnerable Supporter Policy

Giving to a charity should be a positive experience, whether someone is an existing or a new supporter. Embrace the Middle East is committed to fundraising in an honest and responsible way and we aim to communicate with supporters in the ways in which they are most comfortable, which includes, mail, email, phone and in person.

Embrace the Middle East believes that everyone should have the opportunity to donate if they wish and are able to do so.

All individuals will at some stage in their lifetime be considered vulnerable or require additional care and support. This may be as a result of personal circumstances, health, bereavement, life events or financial circumstances. However, an individual who may require additional care and support, or may be considered in a vulnerable circumstance, can still have the capacity to donate to a charity.

This policy, approved by the Trustees of Embrace the Middle East, applies to all staff and volunteers. It outlines how we take reasonable care to identify supporters who may be vulnerable, or requiring additional support, and what action we take to protect those individuals if we suspect they are vulnerable.

General Principles and best practice

Embrace the Middle East is a member of the Institute of Fundraising (IOF) and is registered with the Fundraising Regulator. We are committed to following the standards of the Fundraising Regulator Code of Practice.

The Code of Practice states that:

i. 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.

ii. 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.

Capacity to make a decision

Every donor is an individual with a unique background, experiences and circumstances – and every interaction between a fundraiser and donor will be different. A person's capacity to make a decision could be affected by personal circumstances and the context of the situation. Unless we have reason to believe otherwise, we will communicate with every supporter based on the assumption that they possess full capacity to make decisions around their own finances. However, we will also look for indicators that could show that an individual needs additional support or may be in a vulnerable situation.

We will identify people requiring additional support, or who are in vulnerable circumstances through written communication and conversations. For example:

- A supporter informs us they need additional support around decision making and are in a vulnerable situation.

- A supporter's family member, carer or person acting on their behalf informs us that they need additional support around decision making, and are in a vulnerable situation.
- Where we suspect that a person may be in vulnerable circumstances – whether through conversations or written communication - even though we have not been told so.

Acting on behalf of an individual who needs additional care and support who is in a vulnerable situation (Family members/ Carers/ Attorney)

There will be occasions when we are contacted by a family member, carer or attorney for an individual who they believe, or know to be, in a vulnerable circumstance. In these situations we will assume that they are able to make decisions on that individual's behalf.

If, for example, they are concerned about a person who is receiving requests for financial support, we will act upon this, asking what kind of communication, if any, is acceptable. Our database will then be updated to reflect their wishes.

Do we use age as an indicator of vulnerability?

Age does not indicate whether an individual is vulnerable or not. All individuals should be treated fairly and equally regardless of their age. Vulnerability is assessed on an individual's circumstances, not their age.

If a supporter is identified as being under the age of 16, we will remove them from all fundraising communications, including appeal letters and emails.

What do we do if we suspect a supporter is vulnerable and how do we respond

In the situation where we believe that an individual is in a vulnerable situation, and lacks capacity to make decisions around their financial giving, then a donation is not to be taken or accepted. We will also ensure, that the individual no longer receives our fundraising communications, including appeal letters and emails.

If, after a donation has been accepted, the charity receives evidence that an individual was in a vulnerable situation and lacked the capacity to make the decision to donate, then the charity will return the donation, deeming the original donation as invalid. The database will be amended, and information recorded that the donation has been refunded, and that no fundraising communications should be sent to that individual in future.

This is in line with Embrace the Middle East's Donation Acceptance and Refusal Policy.

We want to put the individual's needs first, and give them the time to make an informed decision if they are capable of doing so. Frontline staff follow Direct Marketing Association (DMA) guidelines on dealing with vulnerable customers and will therefore always respond:

- Patiently and respectfully - taking into account tone and not rushing conversations
- Without making assumptions
- Be clear and check their understanding of what they may have agreed to; for example, if talking on the telephone, asking them to repeat information back to us.
- Ask if the person needs to speak with anyone else before making a decision

- Offer the individual an alternative method of communication

A simple assessment checklist for frontline staff is provided that includes questions like:

- Does the individual understand the conversation you are having?
- Can the individual weigh up the information you have provided to make a decision?
- Can the individual retain the information you have provided?
- Does the individual communicate their decision?

If you wish to speak to us about this policy, then please do get in touch with our Supporter Experience Team on 01494 897950 or by email info@embraceme.org. You can also write to us at Embrace the Middle East, Old Library Building, Queen Victoria Road, High Wycombe, HP11 1BG