FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

Casework insights and trends: 2025-26



Introduction

The Fundraising Regulator works to protect the public and build trust and confidence in charitable fundraising by setting, maintaining and promoting the standards in the Code of Fundraising Practice ('the code').

We investigate complaints about fundraising that has caused, or has the potential to cause, harm. We consider whether the code has been breached and take action where needed. We also respond proactively to emerging issues to help prevent harm and improve fundraising standards.

This report provides an overview of our casework from 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026. It highlights common concerns raised in complaints, findings from our investigations and how we work with organisations to address issues. It also shares practical learning to help fundraising organisations improve their practices and meet the standards in the code.

Report methodology

Following the introduction of the new code and changes to our reporting systems, we have revised how we categorise complaints. A single complaint can now be recorded under more than one complaint type or fundraising method to reflect the range of concerns raised.

Our casework now also places greater emphasis on assessing whether organisations meet the standards in the code and identifying improvements to fundraising practices, with less focus on mediating individual disputes.

> These changes to how we record and handle cases mean that the figures are not directly comparable with previous years. We therefore do not make year-on-year statistical comparisons in this report.

Number of cases

A **case** refers to any issue recorded with us, including complaints or self-reports.

During the reporting period, we received **1,005 cases**. We closed **940 cases** in total, including cases opened in earlier reporting periods.

Of the cases closed:

- **394 (41.9%)** related to charitable fundraising and fell within our regulatory remit.
- **546 (58.1%)** were outside our remit. These primarily concerned personal cause fundraising appeals, suspected fraud, or wider governance issues that were more appropriately handled by other regulators or organisations.

940

cases closed

1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026

394

within our remit

41.9% of cases closed

546

outside our remit

58.1% of cases closed

Self-reporting

Self-reporting is when a fundraising organisation proactively tells us about a suspected breach of the code that poses an actual or potential risk to the public, the charity sector, or public confidence in fundraising.

During the reporting period, we received 39 self-reports. One self-report led to a formal investigation and two led to compliance cases.

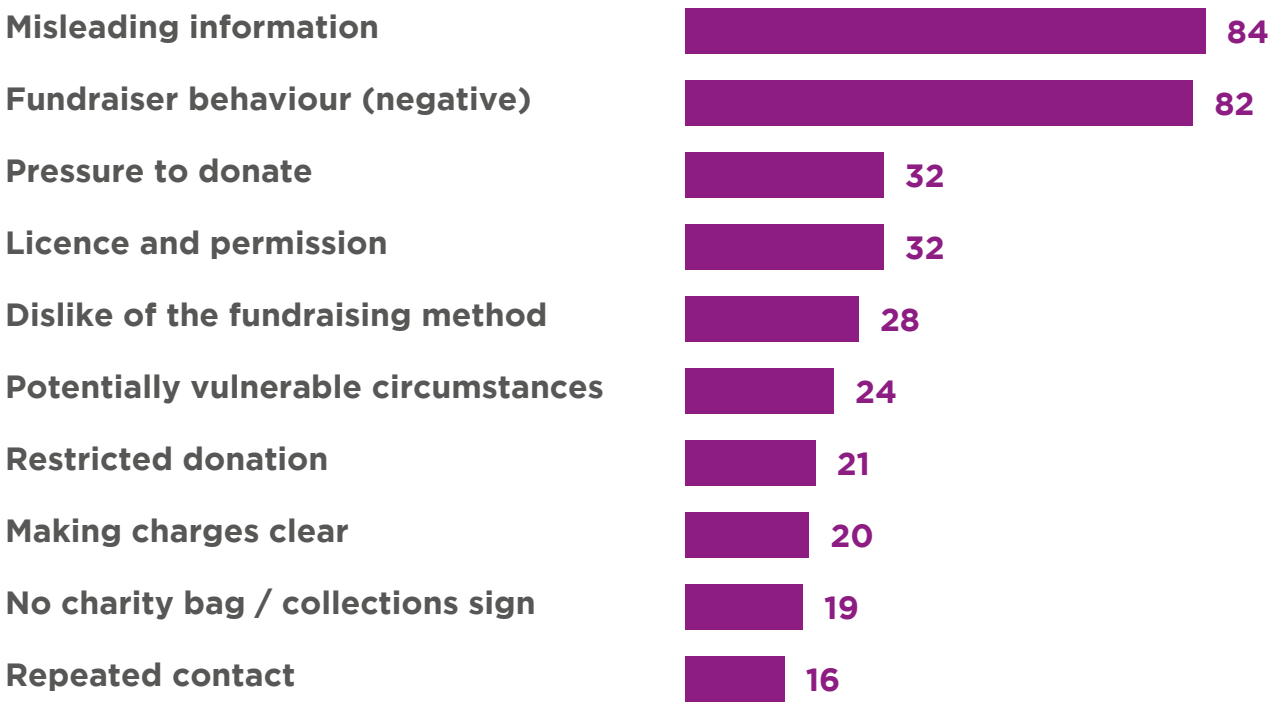
We received a total of 50 self-reports relating to a single data breach involving a customer relationship management (CRM) system used by several fundraising organisations, of which 17 were received during the reporting period.

Fundraising complaints

A complaint is a type of case arising from public concerns or information from other sources. This section covers in-remit complaints closed during the reporting period.

The tables show the most frequently recorded complaint types and fundraising methods. Complaints may appear under more than one type or fundraising method. The figures reflect concerns raised, not findings of code breaches.

Types of complaints

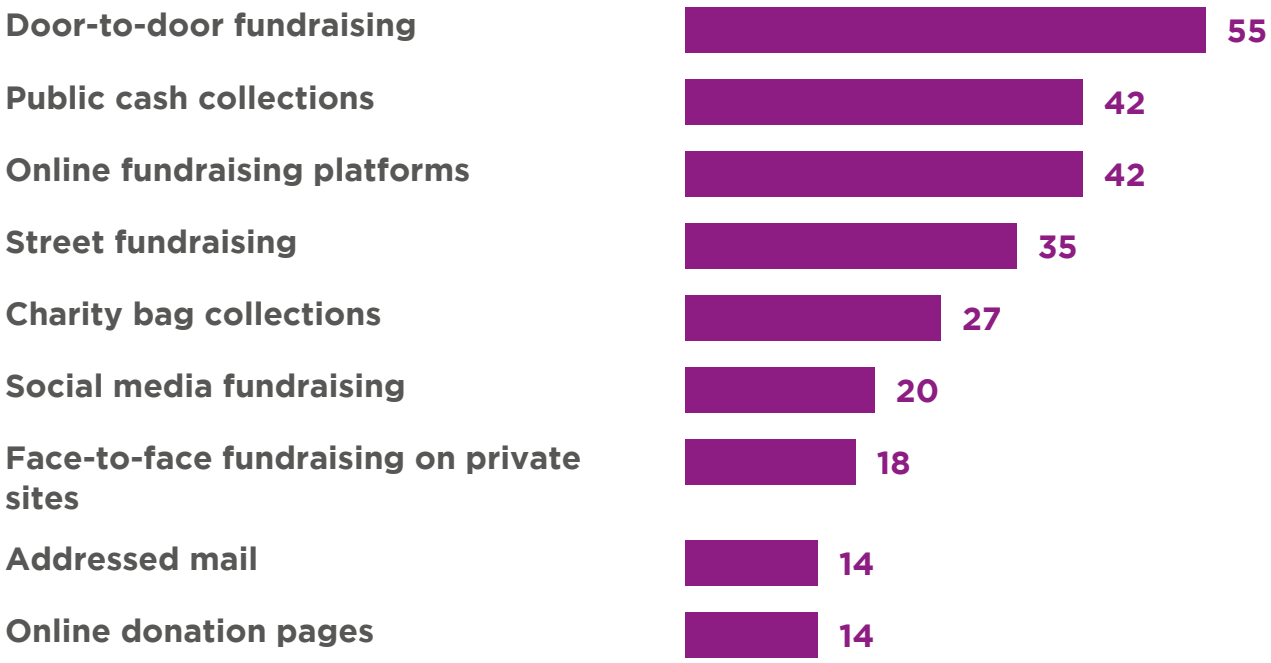


Misleading information and poor behaviour of fundraisers were the most frequently recorded types of complaint this year.

Concerns about misleading information centred on whether people had clear and accurate information about the organisation asking for donations, the work it carried out and how donations would be used. Related complaints concerned whether money given for a specific purpose was used as intended, and whether fees and charges associated with donating were clearly explained.

Complaints about fundraiser behaviour included concerns about how fundraisers spoke to people, conduct that made people feel uncomfortable and approaches continuing after someone had said they did not wish to engage. Other complaints questioned whether fundraisers had the necessary permission to collect.

Complaints by fundraising method



Door-to-door fundraising was the method most frequently recorded in complaints. Public cash collections, online fundraising platforms and street fundraising also featured prominently.

Complaints about in-person fundraising concerned approaches at people's homes, near station entrances, outside supermarkets, and at fundraising stands in shopping areas. The fundraising involved both requests for immediate donations and approaches seeking regular giving. Concerns about how fundraisers treated people were reported in door-to-door, street and private-site fundraising.

Complaints about digital fundraising involved online platforms, social media and donation pages. They covered sponsored activities and campaigns promoted through social media and online advertising. Some complaints involved more than one method, such as an appeal promoted on social media that linked to an online fundraising platform.

Insights from investigations

If we have information that indicates a serious breach of the code or if an organisation will not engage or co-operate with us about compliance with the code, we may open an investigation. We publish summaries of completed investigations into potential breaches of the code to support learning across the sector and increase transparency for the public.

This section sets out the key themes and emerging issues identified through our investigations over the past year. It highlights the trends we are seeing across cases and provides learning to help organisations strengthen their fundraising practices and meet the standards in the code.

People in vulnerable circumstances

Fundraising communications

Oversight of fundraising carried out by others

Fundraising by some community interest companies (CICs)

People in vulnerable circumstances

Protecting people who may be in vulnerable circumstances was again a theme in our investigations this year. Several cases examined how organisations recognised and responded to a donor's circumstances, and whether they had appropriate policies, procedures and training to support this.

In some cases, we found that organisations had not adequately considered a donor's needs before accepting a donation. Our investigations also identified opportunities to strengthen safeguards even where we found no breach of the code.

Example investigation

A complainant contacted us about a large telephone donation made by their parent after the parent's spouse had died. They were concerned that their parent had been in vulnerable circumstances and that the charity had not properly considered this before accepting the donation. They were also unhappy with how the charity had handled their complaint.

Our investigation found no evidence that the donor lacked the capacity to understand their decision, or that staff had overlooked signs of vulnerability when accepting the donation. We found no breach of the code, including in the charity's handling of the complaint.

However, we identified areas for improvement. The charity had not kept a sufficient record of the telephone conversation. We recommended that it improve how staff record their consideration of a donor's circumstances and any relevant donor history. We also recommended improvements to its processes for handling complaints on behalf of donors and sharing relevant policies.

Before our investigation concluded, the charity received further information about the donor's health and circumstances and refunded the donation as a gesture of goodwill. This did not mean that accepting the donation had breached the code.

Learning for fundraising organisations

Consider a donor's circumstances at the time they are deciding whether to give. A longstanding relationship with your organisation does not remove the need to consider whether their needs have changed or whether they need support to make an informed decision.

Policies and training should help fundraisers recognise when a donor may need support and respond appropriately. Everyone fundraising on your behalf, including agency staff and subcontractors, should know how to respond when someone appears to have difficulty understanding information or communicating a decision. This may mean explaining information differently, allowing more time or pausing the donation. Do not accept a donation if you know or reasonably believe the person cannot make an informed decision.

Keep accurate records covering the key, relevant details of each case, including any concerns identified, the information and points of view considered, and the reasons for accepting, refusing or returning a donation. This is particularly important for telephone donations where calls are not recorded. Records should help you explain your decisions if questions arise later, and information about a donor's circumstances must be handled in line with data protection requirements.

When a donor or their representative raises concerns, consider any new information carefully and review the original decision. Staff should understand how to handle complaints made on someone else's behalf and what authority is needed to discuss the donor's information. If you later establish that a donor could not make an informed decision when they donated, return the donation. Use what you learn to improve your training, procedures and future fundraising.

Fundraising communications

Several investigations this year examined whether organisations gave donors clear and accurate information about their fundraising. These included how organisations described their activities, explained how donations would be used and communicated what would happen if a fundraising campaign did not achieve its aim.

In some cases, important information was missing or unclear. In others, organisations made claims they could not support with evidence. These cases highlighted how the wording and images used in fundraising communications can give donors a misleading impression of what their donation will support.

Example investigation

We investigated complaints about a charity raising money to establish an emergency service. Its website used wording and images that could lead donors to believe the service was already operating, when it was still being developed.

The charity also made unsupported claims about other organisations providing similar services, unfairly criticised them and encouraged donors to redirect existing donations to itself.

During our investigation, further concerns arose about social media posts promoting fundraising events. These promised activities that the charity did not have the means to deliver when it made the promises. We found that these posts and the website content breached the code.

The charity removed the misleading website content and social media posts and updated its communications processes. We also recommended that it clearly explain its progress towards establishing the service and contact regular donors to make them aware of our findings and check whether earlier communications had misled them. The charity agreed to comply with our recommendations.

Learning for fundraising organisations

Make sure your fundraising communications give donors an accurate picture of your organisation's work and what their donations will support. Where you are raising money to establish a service or achieve a future goal, explain your progress clearly so that donors can distinguish between what you already deliver and what you hope to achieve.

Review your wording and images together, including on your website, social media and fundraising platforms. Remove claims that are misleading or that you cannot support with evidence, including older content that remains available to donors. Do not unfairly criticise other organisations.

Explain clearly how donations will be used and keep this information consistent across your fundraising materials. For campaigns with a specific aim, explain what will happen to donations if you raise less or more money than you need. Where fundraising proceeds will first cover costs or fees, make this clear rather than implying that all the money raised will benefit the stated purpose.

If you identify misleading communications, consider whether donors who relied on them need to be contacted as well as correcting the material itself.

Oversight of fundraising carried out by others

Several investigations this year examined how organisations oversaw fundraising carried out in their name by agencies and other third parties. These highlighted gaps in how organisations checked, managed and monitored those fundraising on their behalf, particularly where agencies passed work to subcontractors.

In some cases, organisations had detailed agreements and monitoring arrangements with their main agency, but these did not extend effectively to everyone involved in fundraising activity. This limited their ability to oversee fundraising and check whether the same standards were being followed throughout.

Example investigation

We investigated concerns about a charity's door-to-door fundraising arrangements after a journalist raised questions about fundraiser behaviour and oversight. The charity worked with a lead agency, which used a network of subcontractors, some of which passed work to other companies.

The charity had carried out appropriate checks on its lead agency and had a detailed contract setting out expectations for fundraising standards and monitoring. However, checks on companies further down the supplier chain were insufficient. The charity did not routinely review their contracts and was not fully aware of one subcontractor's role until we asked about it.

Although monitoring took place and action was taken when concerns arose, the contracts across the network did not consistently set out the charity's requirements. This weakened its oversight. We found breaches of the code relating to checks on fundraising partners, contracts and monitoring.

The journalist's footage also showed poor fundraising behaviour by two companies in the network. However, it did not show fundraising for the charity being investigated, and we therefore did not hold the charity responsible for the behaviour shown.

The charity engaged constructively with our investigation and had already ended its relationships with those two companies and taken steps to strengthen oversight. We recommended further improvements to its checks, contracts and monitoring across all levels of subcontracting.

Learning for fundraising organisations

Make sure you understand who is fundraising on your behalf, including where an agency passes work to subcontractors or those subcontractors involve other organisations. Appropriate checks on your main agency are important, but your oversight should also extend to those carrying out the fundraising further down the supplier chain.

Your written agreements must set out whether subcontracting is allowed and the standards that apply. Review the arrangements throughout the supplier chain to check that expectations about fundraiser behaviour, compliance with the code and complaints handling are reflected in the relevant contracts. Responsibilities for checking, training and monitoring subcontractors should be clear, including what information they must report and to whom.

These agreements need to be supported by regular checks on fundraising practice. These could include reviewing training materials, checking welcome calls and visiting agencies or observing fundraisers at work. Consider which checks will help you assess whether everyone fundraising in your name understands and follows the standards expected of them.

Complaints can help you identify where these arrangements are not working. Make sure you have access to complaints received by your fundraising partners, including subcontractors, and look for recurring issues and their causes. Use this information to address concerns and strengthen your oversight, while recognising that complaints alone may not reveal every problem.

Fundraising by some community interest companies (CICs)

Concerns about fundraising by some community interest companies (CICs) were again a theme in our investigations this year. Cases included inappropriate fundraiser behaviour, collections taking place without the necessary permissions and misleading information given to potential donors.

Several investigations drew on information from local authorities as well as complaints from the public. These cases highlighted recurring weaknesses in how some CICs managed their fundraising and responded to concerns about their practices.

Example investigation

We investigated a CIC after a local authority raised concerns about a fundraiser collecting cash outside a shop. The authority reported that the fundraiser had behaved aggressively towards one of its officers, had not shown appropriate identification and had refused to leave when asked.

Our investigation found that the CIC did not have the necessary permission to fundraise on public land. It said the shop had given verbal permission for fundraising on its private site, but could not provide evidence of this.

We found breaches of the code relating to fundraiser behaviour, permissions and identification. The local authority had also questioned whether the collection bucket was properly sealed, but there was insufficient evidence to find a breach on this point.

The CIC accepted that the fundraiser had acted inappropriately and told us it had removed them. We recommended that it obtain the correct permissions before fundraising, keep written records of permission for private sites, strengthen its training and ensure fundraisers wore appropriate identification.

The CIC accepted our findings. We said we would follow up on its implementation of our recommendations and share our findings with the local authority and the CIC Regulator.

Learning for fundraising organisations

Before collecting donations, make sure you have any licences and permissions needed for the activity and location. Keep records so that you can demonstrate permission has been granted. For fundraising on private sites, obtain permission from the owner or manager of the site, and make sure your fundraisers understand where they are authorised to operate.

Training should clearly explain the behaviour expected when fundraising on the street or on private sites. Make sure fundraisers have appropriate identification for their activity, check their conduct regularly and take action where poor practice is identified.

Where you use personal stories or images to ask for donations, check that you have appropriate permission and that the way you present them does not mislead donors. This includes checking content on social media accounts that are no longer actively used.

Have a clear, publicly available complaints procedure and a system for recording and responding to concerns. Use what you learn to address the causes of poor practice and check that the changes are put into effect.

Our casework approach

Where information we receive suggests that a breach of the code may have occurred, we may open a compliance case or a full investigation, even if no formal complaint has been made or if a complaint has been withdrawn. In some situations, a full investigation may not be required but improvements are still needed. In these cases, we work with the organisation to agree specific actions.

What is a compliance case?

We open a compliance case when:

we need further information to understand the concerns, or

we believe improvement can be achieved without a formal investigation.

Compliance cases may involve a single issue that can be resolved quickly or a concern that is not systemic but may take longer to address. We work with the organisation to support positive change.

Example case: Clarifying how donations would be used

A complainant contacted us about a fundraising call from a large international development charity. They understood that they were being asked to support work responding to a particular humanitarian crisis. When they asked how their donation would be spent, they were told it would go towards the charity's general funds. They felt the call had been misleading.

The charity reviewed the call and considered that it had explained how donations would be used. It nevertheless updated its script to make this clearer. After listening to the recording, we remained concerned about whether the call made its fundraising purpose clear from the outset and adequately distinguished between support for a specific crisis and donations for general use. We also questioned whether it clearly explained the role of the charity's partners in delivering support.

We opened a compliance case and reviewed the charity's original and revised scripts. We met with the charity and agreed changes to clarify the purpose of calls, explain the options available to supporters and describe work carried out by partners more accurately.

The charity engaged constructively with us, including seeking advice on changes to call introductions. It provided amended scripts reflecting the agreed changes, and we closed the compliance case without a formal investigation.

Example case: Responding when an appeal cannot achieve its purpose

A complainant contacted us about an emergency appeal launched by a small international development charity. They were concerned that the charity had not adequately considered whether it could deliver the promised support and had only explained an alternative use for donations after the appeal had launched. They also questioned whether donors had received clear information about how the funds would be used.

We opened a compliance case and met with the charity to understand its planning and response to the difficulties it faced. The charity explained that it had prioritised launching the appeal quickly and believed it could deliver the intended support. It said that a deteriorating political situation had subsequently prevented it from doing so. It acknowledged that the appeal had not initially included a secondary purpose explaining how donations could be used if the original aim could not be achieved.

The charity was already working with the Charity Commission for England and Wales on how to manage the funds raised. We contacted the Commission to clarify its involvement. The Commission set out the steps the charity needed to take to contact relevant donors and seek consent for a new purpose for the funds.

The charity engaged openly and constructively with us. It provided a report explaining its decisions before launching the appeal, its process for contacting donors and resolving the use of funds, and the learning and corrective action from its review. It also shared its disaster appeal policy.

After assessing this information, we closed our compliance case without a formal investigation. The process for agreeing a new purpose for the funds remained a matter for the charity and the Commission.

External review of our decisions

Parties involved in a case can request a review if they believe there was a material defect in our decision-making process, our decision was manifestly unreasonable, or we refused to reopen a case in response to new evidence. If they remain dissatisfied with our response, they can ask our independent external reviewer to consider whether there are grounds for review.

During the reporting period, one case was considered by the external reviewer, who supported our conclusion that the grounds for review were not met.