



Fundraisers do not feel safe: we must act now



When some fundraisers meet donors, they don't feel safe. The reason they don't feel safe is because in the past they have been subjected to sexually inappropriate behaviour by a donor.

Why would this be? The simple fact is that there is a power differential in the relationship between fundraisers and donors. Fundraisers want something from donors, something that is within donors' power to grant or refuse. Donors thus have more power, and in any situation where one party to a relationship holds more power, there is always the temptation to exploit that power for personal gain. Even if they never do, the potential is there.

Sexual harassment is the most extreme form of donor behaviour that might make fundraisers feel unsafe. But it is not the only one. Bullying (both verbal and physical), making disparaging comments about a fundraiser's protected characteristics (such as their race or sexual orientation), interfering in their work or career, or co-opting them to the donor's agenda (such as by trying to get the fundraiser to give them benefits to which they are not entitled) might all harm a fundraiser's psychological wellbeing.

Even if the vast, vast majority of donors never abuse their power and threaten fundraisers' safety, the fact that a significant minority of them do means we have to act.

One way that the profession and charities could do this is to publish a donor code of conduct – something that sets out expected standards of behaviour from donors.

We are delighted that the Chartered Institute of Fundraising has offered us this opportunity to set out our case to you why we think some type of donor code of conduct will help fundraisers feel safer in their roles. 📍

- **Damian Chapman is chair of Rogare.**

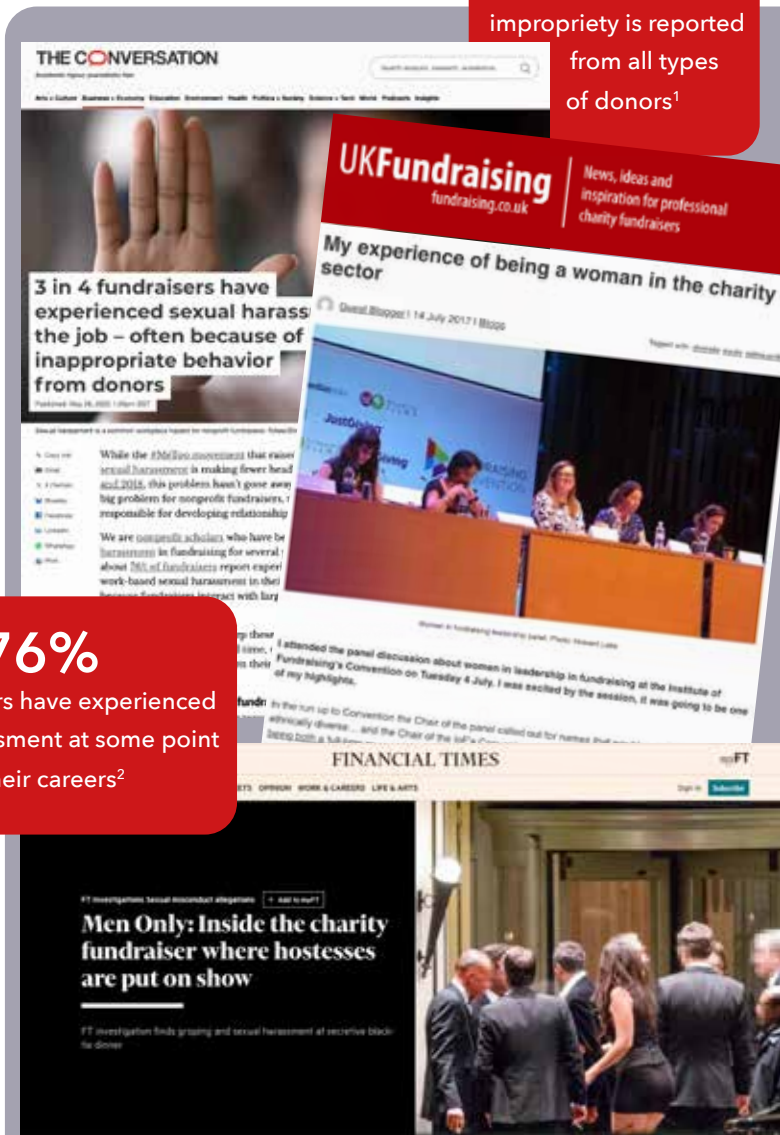
The stats in this brochure come from: 1) Rogare's donor dominance survey (<https://www.rogare.net/donor-dominance>) (These stats come from a self-selecting sample and are not representative); 2) *Speaking Truth to Power in Fundraising: A Toolkit* (https://afpglobal.org/sites/default/files/attachments/generic/AFP22_SpeakingTruth%20Report_final.pdf); 3) 'Sexual harassment is widespread problem for fundraisers, survey says.' *Chronicle of Philanthropy* (<https://www.philanthropy.com/article/sexual-harassment-is-widespread-problem-for-fundraisers-survey-shows/>).

73%

of fundraisers report sexual impropriety as coming from major donors, but sexual impropriety is reported from all types of donors¹

76%

of fundraisers have experienced sexual harassment at some point in their careers²



What you can do

1. Find out more about Rogare's work on gender issues by visiting <https://www.rogare.net/gender-issues>, where you can download a copy of this brochure
2. Share your insights and experiences – <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/fundraiser-safety>
3. Raise awareness of these issues by putting them on your team meeting agenda and/or internal communication channels, and by talking about them on social media
4. Start creating change today by building your own code of conduct based on the template suggested by Rogare.

65%
of fundraisers who
had experienced sexual
harassment said a donor was
responsible at least once³

Rogare's template Donor Code of Conduct

Two years ago, Rogare published our *Blueprint for Dismantling Patriarchal Structures in the Fundraising Profession*. Donor codes of conduct were a key recommendation, and the Rogare project team wrote our own code of conduct as an example of the type of thing charities/nonprofits and professional institutes could do themselves. You can take a look at that on the back page.

One of our project team was fundraiser Jessica Rose, who had researched what she calls 'donor-perpetrated sexual harassment' at the Cambridge Centre for Social Innovation. It was because she found that many of the fundraisers she interviewed said some kind of donor code of conduct would make them feel safer that we made this a core recommendation in the Blueprint. ^③



What we want our Donor Code of Conduct to do

- **Raise awareness of the issue among the fundraising profession, charity leadership, and the nonprofit sector.**
- **Stimulate discussion within the profession about how to redress these challenges and make fundraisers feel safe.**
- **Raise awareness among the majority of donors that the behaviour of a minority of their peers is unacceptable, so they may be in a better position to counter such behaviour if they ever encounter it, and be an advocate among their peers.**
- **Act as a template or inspiration for other organisations to come up with or tailor a code that fits their needs or works best for them. Feel free to adapt what we have done, or use it lock, stock and barrel, if you wish.**
- **Our template code goes beyond fundraiser safety and covers matters such as influencing a nonprofit's mission and/or operations. Other codes don't have to.**

What types of sexual impropriety have fundraisers encountered?¹

Sexual innuendo and banter, or unwanted comments – 24%

An improper proposition – 10%

Inappropriate or unwanted physical contact – 15%

Sexual assault – 0.5%



This is a terrible idea – we absolutely DO NOT NEED IT!

We think a donor code of conduct is a proportional response to the problem of fundraisers' safety and psychological wellbeing, and likely to be effective at redressing the matter. But we are aware there is some disquiet about the need for something like this. So may we try to dispel some of the arguments against a code of conduct for donor behaviour that have been put to us.

- **It takes away donors' autonomy!** – It doesn't. Donors are free to support whatever charities they wish in the way they wish to do so. All our version of the code says is that they ought not use their power to divert a charity from the things it needs to do towards the things the donor wants it to do. That seems fair enough to us.
- **It is an attack on donors' rights!** – We really don't see this, unless anyone thinks someone should have a right to make fundraisers feel unsafe.
- **All the issues addressed in the Donor Code of Conduct can (and in fact, should) be dealt with by fundraisers off their own bats using their own resources!** – While some people will be strong enough to stand up to even the worst kinds of inappropriate behaviour, many – perhaps most – will not. Good luck to you if you can do this, but we are thinking about those who can't. ^③

42% of fundraisers have experienced sexual harassment within the previous two years²

A clear public statement from charities to fundraisers: "We will support you!"



CloF ceo Katie Docherty explains why the Chartered Institute is supporting a campaign to raise awareness of the need for donor codes of conduct.

At the Chartered Institute of Fundraising, we are all too aware of the challenges faced by fundraisers, and the particularly regrettable situation that a sizeable and significant number of fundraisers do not feel safe. In this short brochure, both Damian Chapman and Cara McKeown present convincing arguments why some form of donor code of conduct needs to be part of a set of solutions that will help fundraisers to feel safer.

The Chartered Institute of Fundraising is fully behind and supports the concept of a donor code of conduct. A key reason why we do is that such a code is a clear and public statement that inappropriate behaviour towards fundraisers will not be tolerated. Fundraisers need to know they can go to charities with concerns and feel they are being supported, with their voices heard. That's why Rogare is collaborating with us on a sector-facing campaign to raise awareness of these issues and to engage charity leadership on the best ways to protect their fundraisers.

We'll formally announce details of this campaign in the weeks following convention. But one thing that you can expect from this is that we'll be looking for charities to sign a pledge to implement a code that sets out expected standards of donor behaviour. 🗣️

University of Edinburgh's Cara McKeown explains why she lobbied for the implementation of a donor code of conduct.



Do we really need a Code of Conduct for donors? Regrettably, yes

The idea of a code of conduct to 'regulate' donors' behaviour might sit uneasily with some fundraisers, because of the implicit - yet ubiquitous - narrative we promote that places donors on pedestals, and positions fundraisers as the 'servants' to donors, who must meet donor needs at all costs. Put simply, we are trained to be professional 'people pleasers'.

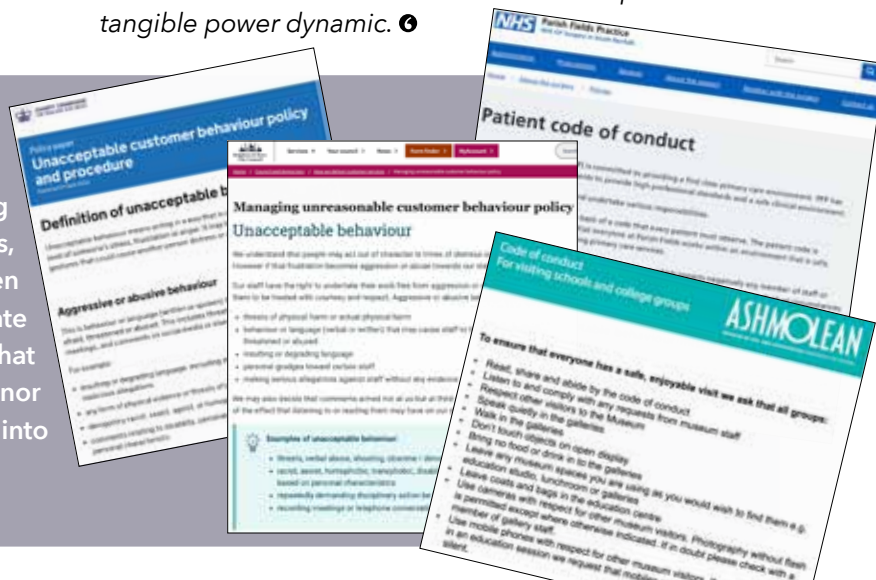
Fundraisers who have not had negative experiences - such as discrimination, harassment or the crossing of professional boundaries - with donors might not see the need for any such code. And yet many fundraisers - particularly young women - have been subjected to the kind of behaviour described in this brochure from donors in positions of power.

It goes without saying that these behaviours are completely unacceptable. But if we don't tackle them, they won't stop. I am advocating for the creation of donor codes of conduct, because they are rooted in meaningful action - something that fundamentally shifts the way nonprofit organisations support their fundraising and advancement teams.

To influence change at my own institution, I have worked with a team of excellent colleagues at Edinburgh to develop a bespoke alumni/donor/volunteer code of conduct, which I hope will be included on our website and within gift agreements in the near future. Alongside other safety tools, this work ensures we are protecting our fundraisers in situations where there is a proven and tangible power dynamic. 🗣️

We wouldn't be alone

Charities would not be unusual in doing something like this, since museums, art galleries, councils, public transport and many others - even the Charity Commission - have policies that state how they expect their customers to behave, and that abuse of staff will not be tolerated. Adopting donor codes of conduct would bring the charity sector into alignment with many other industry sectors.



DONOR CODE OF CONDUCT

We are absolutely delighted that you are so engaged with and inspired by our cause that you have decided to join with us by supporting our mission with a donation. As one of our valued donors, we have various duties and obligations to you – such as to thank you for your support, use your donation for the purpose for which you gave it, and not to put you under undue pressure to make further gifts. These duties and obligations are set out in our codes of practice and systems of ethics. In this relationship between us, the nonprofit organisation and its staff, and you, the donor, you also have concomitant obligations and duties to us. We are therefore asking you to abide by this code of conduct and behaviour.

R. I am making a voluntary donation to a nonprofit organisation/charity, not buying a product or service. I therefore understand that fundraisers are not selling me a product or service, and that the professional relationship between us is therefore not a customer-sales relationship.

R. I will treat fundraising staff as knowledgeable professionals and always accord them the professional respect they deserve.

R. I will never discriminate against or harass in any way fundraising professionals or other charity staff based on their sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, class, (dis)ability, religious belief (or lack of), age or any other protected characteristic.

R. I recognise that I have considerable potential power in this relationship, because I am in the position to give a large donation. I therefore promise not to exploit that power for personal gain.

R. I will not put conditions on my donation for the personal benefit of myself, my family or my friends, nor threaten to withhold it unless I get what I want.

R. I will not use my power as a donor to divert the nonprofit/charity from its core mission. I understand that my gift does not entitle me to a seat on the nonprofit/charity board or to otherwise have influence on the operations or leadership of the organisation.

We hope you will agree these are reasonable considerations. You might be surprised that we are even asking you to adhere to this code of conduct. The fact that we are indicates that charities do encounter forms of 'donor dominance' from a small number of donors. We hope that by agreeing to abide by this code of conduct, this will raise awareness of the challenges that fundraisers sometimes face, and encourage discussion of this matter among your peers.

Associate Members - working with Rogare to help us Rethink Fundraising

