

Safety Matters in Charity Retailing

Information Sheet No. 1



Introduction

Aims

This pack has been written for those responsible for managing a charity retail operation, whether that is a single shop or a chain of shops. Its aim is to disseminate information that will help to reduce the risk of accidents in charity retailing.

The purpose is to enable charity Retail Operations Managers to understand:

- the principles of Health and Safety (H&S) Management and Risk Control
- how to comply with UK legislation
- how to prevent work-related harm

One particular aim is to show how these principles can be applied to the peculiarities of charity retailing. The pack takes account of the fact that charity shops have a higher proportion of vulnerable workers than commercial shops. The main focus is on charity shops and the sale of donated products such as clothes, books and bric-a-brac. However, it also covers the sale of furniture and ancillary activities such as stock collecting and processing stock at depots.

Contents

There are 11 additional Information Sheets:

- Health and Safety Law
- Managing Health and Safety
- Risk Assessment
- Hazardous Substances
- Manual Handling
- Active Monitoring
- Accident Reporting and Investigation
- Training
- Signs, Posters and Notices
- Fire Safety
- Asbestos

The contents are not meant to be a substitute for guidance provided in leaflets and booklets by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

The intention is to provide specific advice for charity retailers that is based upon HSE guidance. The advice is not compulsory, but should be helpful to charities when considering what to do. The Information Sheets contain examples of good practices that have been adopted by a number of charities.

This pack should not be considered a replacement for the guidance that can be obtained from a competent, suitably qualified H&S Advisor. It is also not meant to be a generic H&S Manual for Charity Retailing.

For H&S to be managed effectively each organisation needs to develop its own policies and procedures.

Health and Safety

Health and Safety at Work is not merely the absence of injury or illness.

If a shop that has been trading for 5 years has not had a serious injury or accident, this does not mean that the shop is a safe one (just as a car driver who has not had an accident in the last 5 years is not necessarily a safe driver).

Health and Safety at Work is:

an environment created by effective management:

- **identifying causes of harm and**
- **involving all persons at work in**
- **taking positive action to**
- **prevent people being harmed**

This pack will cover the following in more detail:

- what **effective management** of H&S means
- how to **identify causes of harm**
- how **all persons at work** can be involved
- what **positive action** could be taken to prevent people being harmed

• Volunteers

Volunteers have the status of employees for H&S purposes and should be treated as such to ensure compliance with legal duties. HSE's guidance document on voluntary workers states:

'In general, the same H&S standards should be applied to voluntary workers as they would to employees exposed to the same risks. However, if the risk assessment shows that the risks to voluntary workers are different, the preventive and protective measures taken should reflect the different risks.'

In some circumstances, therefore, a charity may have to take **more** precautions for a voluntary worker than for an employee. In practical terms the enforcing authorities can legally enforce the same H&S standards for employees and voluntary workers, only the technicalities of how they do it differ.

In this pack the term "employee" refers to volunteers as well as paid staff.

Acknowledgements

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Supported by:



All references to charity good practices are in italics. Thanks are due to the following charities for providing them:

- *Acorns Children's Hospice Trust*
- *British Heart Foundation*
- *British Red Cross*
- *Oxfam*
- *The Pasque Charity*
- *The Princess Alice Hospice*
- *PDSA*
- *Save the Children UK*
- *The Shaw Trust*
- *Shelter*

Feedback

These Information Sheets are updated on a regular basis. Views on this pack, therefore, would be most welcome – as would examples of good H&S practices from other charities.

Further Advice

All the Information Sheets in the pack can be viewed on the Association's website (www.charityshops.org.uk) and they can be downloaded free of charge. Additional materials available on the website are:

- A Self-learning Workbook for Shop Managers
- A set of 3 posters for shop backrooms
- Sample Risk Assessments for a Shop and a Collection Service, with Guidance Notes

The Environmental Health Officers in local authorities can be approached for advice or guidance on health and safety at work. The HSE also operates a free Infoline:

Tel: 0845 3450055

e-mail:

hseinformationservices@natbrit.com

They can also be contacted at:

**HSE Information Services
Caerphilly Business Park
Caerphilly CF83 3GG**

www.hse.gov.uk

Further Reading

Charity and Voluntary Workers – A guide to health and safety at work. HSE publication ISBN 0 7176 6185 7

Additional reading is recommended at the end of each Information Sheet. HSE publications are available by mail order from:

**HSE Books
PO Box 1999
Sudbury
Suffolk CO10 2WA**

Tel: 01787 881165

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