



MAY 2008 BULLETIN

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Beware of Bogus Charity Collections

Bogus charity collectors are duping residents into giving away clothing, warns Swindon Borough Council Trading Standards.

'Helping Arms' has delivered collection bags to homes across Swindon claiming any unwanted items will be given to eastern European and African countries **when they are really being sold for profit.**

Trading Standards Manager Phil Thomas said: "Many charities now ask householders for old clothes and other items, which can be sold for charitable purposes. However, not everyone who comes to your home, or drops in a plastic bag is operating on behalf of a charity. Some collectors will be businesses, asking for unwanted items that can be sold for profit.

"Our advice is for people to take unwanted items directly to the charity shops if they want to give to charitable organisations; or residents can check out the Charity Commission website for a list of authentic charities if they want to take part in a doorstep collection."

Many genuine charities rely on such doorstep collections for a substantial proportion of their shop sales. Typically, householders receive flyers through their letterboxes appealing for donations of unwanted clothes, footwear and other items that will then be distributed to individuals and families in Eastern European or third world countries. Householders are asked to leave the goods in a plastic bag by the front door and these are later collected.

The Association of Charity Shops estimates that the potential value of donated clothing and other items 'lost' to legitimate charities as a result of these bogus collections amounts to over **£1m per annum**

A Walcot resident reported Helping Arms to Trading Standards after she became suspicious of the material being delivered. She said: "I was about to fill the bag up when I noticed that the writing on the bag was in very bad English and had been printed over old writing. Helping Arms claimed it was a charity on the bag, but a collection notice that was posted at a later date said it was a company. I became very suspicious and telephoned Trading Standards which confirmed Helping Arms was not a legitimate charity."

For more information on bogus callers contact Trading Standards on (01793) 466155 or e-mail tstandards@swindon.gov.uk.