

Charity Shop Volunteer Guide

Refund Procedures: Best Practice for Volunteers

Introduction

Welcome to the team! As a valued volunteer in our charity shop, your role involves providing excellent service to our customers while supporting our charitable mission. This guide outlines the correct procedures for handling refunds, ensuring we uphold both legal requirements and the standards of our organisation.

1. Understanding Refunds in Charity Shops

Unlike high street retailers, charity shops are not always legally obliged to offer refunds unless items are faulty, not as described, or unfit for purpose. However, some charity shops may choose to offer refunds or exchanges as a gesture of goodwill. Always follow the shop's specific policy.

2. When Are Refunds Permitted?

- If an item is faulty or damaged and this was not made clear at the time of sale.
- If an item is not as described (e.g. wrong size or material stated).
- For electrical goods, if the item does not work as intended.
- Where the shop's policy allows for refunds or exchanges for other reasons (e.g. within a certain time frame, with a receipt).

3. Steps to Process a Refund

1. Assess the Request: Politely ask the customer about the reason for the refund. Inspect the item and ask for proof of purchase (a receipt or till slip).
2. Check the Policy: Confirm the shop's refund policy. Some shops only offer credit notes or exchanges, not cash refunds. If unsure, ask your shop manager or supervisor.
3. Record the Details: Log the refund in the refund book or electronic system, noting the item, reason, date, amount, and customer's name (if required).
4. Process the Refund: Return the money using the original payment method (cash/card), or issue a credit note/exchange as per shop policy.
5. Remove the Item: Take the returned item off the shop floor and set it aside for inspection or disposal, depending on its condition.
6. Thank the Customer: Always thank the customer for their understanding, regardless of the outcome.

4. If a Refund Cannot Be Given

- Explain politely why the refund cannot be processed (e.g. "I'm sorry, we are unable to offer refunds on this item unless it is faulty, as per our policy displayed at the till.").
- Offer an alternative if possible, such as an exchange or credit note.
- Refer the customer to your manager if they wish to discuss further.

5. Important Reminders

- Always be courteous and empathetic, even if you must refuse a refund.
- Never process a refund without logging it in the refund book/system.
- Do not offer personal opinions or make promises outside of policy.
- For any uncertainty, consult your manager or supervisor immediately.

6. Frequently Asked Questions

- Do we have to offer refunds on all items? No, unless the item is faulty, not as described, or unfit for purpose. Always follow the shop's written policy.
- What if a customer is unhappy? Listen patiently, explain the policy clearly, and offer to escalate to a manager if needed.
- What about donated electrical goods? These must be PAT tested and guaranteed to work. Refunds are permitted if they are faulty.

7. Displaying Refund Policy

Ensure the shop's refund and exchange policy is clearly displayed at the till and on receipts where possible. This helps prevent confusion and supports volunteers in handling difficult conversations.

Conclusion

Handling refunds professionally protects the charity's reputation and ensures fair treatment for customers. Thank you for your commitment and for supporting our cause. If in doubt, always seek guidance from your manager.