

Charity validation – a guide to our services

Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) is a not-for-profit organisation that helps people give money to good causes. We help make the process of giving smooth and efficient, so that donations go to legitimate charities in a position to make a real difference.

Our validation processes are a really important part of this. We've written this factsheet to explain more about validation and how it works. We hope you find it helpful. If you need any more information, or if you have any questions, please do get in touch.

What is validation?

Validation is the process by which we check a charity is legitimate. It's often the most important reason our clients choose to work with us, because it means they can be sure their donation will be tax efficient and put to good use. The process is especially valuable for donors who want to give money to overseas charities. Some organisations operate in countries that don't have a charity regulator, or where laws on financial crime and money laundering are weak. Our validation work makes it possible for donors to give confidently to non-regulated charities.

Validation also protects charities, because we make sure every donation complies with all relevant UK laws.

How does validation work?

Our validation team runs checks on every organisation we send donor money to. We use our standard validation process if the organisation is registered with:

- the Charity Commission for England and Wales
- The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland
- the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR)

OR registered in the UK as a:

- school
- church
- charitable entity
- Community Amateur Sports Club (CASc)

Our standard validation process involves confirming the organisation is registered with its regulator. We may also look at publicly available information about the charity.

If the organisation is not a registered UK charity – including Jersey and the Isle of Man, which have different tax laws – then we use our non-standard validation process, which

involves carrying out further checks. We'll ask the organisation to fill in a Grant Eligibility Application (GEA). We also ask for a number of important documents, such as audited accounts and a copy of their governing document. All this information helps us check the charity is a legitimate one.

How long does validation take?

Our standard validation process, which we use for UK registered organisations, is usually speedy. We've already validated thousands of UK charities, meaning we can pass on donations almost immediately. If an organisation is not on our validated list but is registered as a UK charity, then we can usually validate them within a week and pass on donations very quickly after.

If an organisation is not registered in the UK, then validation takes longer. This is because we use our non-standard validation process, which involves more checks. We allow a maximum of three months for organisations to complete the GEA and send us the relevant documents. Once we receive the information, we can usually complete our checks within two days. We'll then let the donor and organisation know whether we'll be passing the money on.

How I can help speed up the validation process?

If you're a donor, you can help us by making sure your donation request includes:

- the full name and address of the organisation you're donating to
- their charitable registration number (if they have one)
- for non-UK registered organisations, the name and email address of a person at the charity. It also really helps if you let them know you're intending to make a donation, and that we'll be in touch with them.

If you're a charity, you can help us by:

- sending us all the information we ask for quickly
- only sending us information in English. As a UK-based charity, we won't be able to translate any material which is not in English.

Do you carry out revalidation of charities?

Yes. We carry out revalidations from time to time, to check the charity is still legitimate and that any donations will continue to be put to good use. For UK charities, we regularly monitor publicly available details, periodically consult the organisation's regulator, and carry out further checks when

we're told about any changes at the charity. Normally revalidation is quick, and we can do it without having to get in touch with staff at the charity.

We also carry out periodic revalidation of non-UK organisations. This involves repeating the initial non-standard validation process, so we'll ask for a full GEA as well as relevant documents.

Once a non-UK registered organisation has been validated, how quickly can repeat donations be made?

Once an organisation has been validated through our non-standard process, repeat donations can normally be made quickly. We'll check the organisation is still legitimate and that the money will once again be put to good use. But, so long as a revalidation isn't due, we can usually make these checks without getting back in touch with the charity.

Just how quickly a repeat payment can be made will depend on the size of the donation, and on the current circumstances in the country the organisation is operating in. We do sometimes need to ask for more information on the donation, including details of how previous donations were spent.

Can you validate a non-UK registered charity before a donation request is made?

Yes. We can carry out our non-standard validation before a formal donation request is made. We call this pre-validation, and it means a donor can decide whether they would like to fund their account to give money to an organisation.

We do need to carry out validation checks again once a formal donation request is made, though. This is because there may have been changes since the pre-validation: the circumstances in the country the organisation operates in could have changed, for instance. It means we may have to ask an organisation to fill in the GEA twice – once for the pre-validation, and again once the donation request is made.

“You can rely upon organizations like CAF, who will go out and do all the homework for you. It's unfortunate that charities don't come with a “Tripadvisor” page where people make comments on how good or how bad they are. You need good organizations to go out do the right research... so that people like me can actually donate money and know it's going to the right cause.”

Professor and philanthropist Peter Virdee of The Virdee Foundation.

Frequently asked questions

In what languages can I send information to CAF?

Please only send information to us in English. As a UK-based charity, we are not able to translate material from other languages.

What is a Grant Eligibility Application (GEA)?

We use the Grant Eligibility Application (GEA) form as part of our non-standard validation process. It asks a number of important questions about the organisation. The answers help us decide whether the organisation is a legitimate charity, and to be confident that any donations will be put to good use.

Why does the charity being validated have to complete the Grant Eligibility Application (GEA)?

The GEA helps non-UK registered organisations prove they will only use donations for charitable purposes, so complying with all relevant UK laws.

Why do charities registered in Jersey and the Isle of Man have to go through the non-standard validation process?

The Channel Islands and the Isle of Man have different tax laws to the UK. That means we need to use our non-standard revalidation process to make sure any donations are tax efficient.

Why is a receipt needed for some donations?

We ask for receipts for any donations made to non-UK registered charities, or for a report confirming how donations have been used. We're required to do this by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), the UK's tax, payments and customs authority. If we ask you for a receipt or report, please send this to us as quickly as you can – any delays can hold up further donations.

Why do you need a paying-in slip before you can pass on a donation?

We make UK payments via BACS, as it's fast and secure. Before we can do that, we need to see a paying-in slip, a cancelled cheque, or a bank statement. This helps us to verify the organisation's bank details so we can pass the donation along quickly.

Who can I contact for further information?

If you have any queries or need any more information about validation, our customer services team will be happy to help. Just email us – enquiries@cafonline.org – or give us a call on **+44(0)3000 123 000**