

Mystery Shopping Programme Terms of Reference

Interaction – Observation and Engagement

Mystery shoppers (Agents) allow up to one hour to complete the visit. This is to allow time to locate, observe and engage with the fundraisers. Guidance on how to carry out the mystery shop, what to expect during the interaction and what they must take particular notice of, is provided in the Shopper's Brief which Agents are required to read before beginning the assignment.

If they cannot find a fundraiser, the Agent will call their office, which then calls the IoF Compliance team. The IoF will call the relevant PFO to establish whether fundraisers are on a break, obtain exact details of their location or confirm that the site is not in use. The IoF Private Site Rule Op6 requires the PFO to establish the whereabouts of the fundraiser(s) and respond to the IoF within 30 minutes of the initial contact from the IoF. If they fail to do so penalty points are incurred.

The Agent will observe all fundraisers working at the site and note any actions which may breach rules such as the 3 step rule, failing to wear visible ID while working, working beyond site boundaries, smoking in branded clothing etc.

If a fundraiser does not engage the Agent, the Agent will approach a fundraiser. The Agent will carry out a sign up. The Agent records key aspects of the interaction by answering the relevant questions in a questionnaire.

When the engagement is completed the Agent will provide the details they used to sign up to their office which will then contact the relevant PFO to arrange cancellation of the direct debit.

Assessment

The completed report is made available to the IoF Compliance team which will carry out an assessment of the mystery shop. A member of the team will read through the responses to all of the questions noting when responses to questions and comments suggest that a rule has been breached. If a rule breach is noted but the report shows a score of 100% the Compliance Manager will request that the IoF CD Notes section at the very end of the report shows 'Yes' which will drop 3 marks from the score. They will also add a comment in this section explaining why this has been done. Once the report has been assessed it is made available on the portals of the agency and charity represented, or in the case of in-house teams just the charity.

Please Note: The Agent DOES NOT decide whether a fundraiser has been compliant with the IoF Compliance Rule Books. They simply record their observations and interaction with the fundraiser, IoF Compliance assesses the report and decides upon compliance.

Decision making

If it is clear from a mystery shopping report that a fundraising rule has been breached, details of the breach will be added to the penalty point record of the PFO concerned and an email will be sent notifying them of the points incurred. The penalties and sanctions regime is described in the IoF Compliance Rule Books.

If necessary, IoF Compliance may ask for additional information or clarification from the Agent and, if appropriate, from the PFO before deciding whether a rule has been breached or not.

Appeals

If a PFO disagrees with the decision to impose a penalty they are able to appeal to the IoF Compliance Head of Standards. The Head of Standards may also ask for additional information or clarification from the Agent and the PFO before deciding the outcome of an appeal. If they are unable to resolve the appeal to the satisfaction of the PFO, the appeal will be heard by a Penalty Appeals Panel whose decision is final. Details of the appeals process is described in the IoF Compliance Rule Books.

Please Note: To impose penalties IoF Compliance uses the civil standard of proof (i.e. on a balance of probabilities, or “more probable than not”). IoF Compliance will not require additional evidence (such as photographs, or audio/visual recordings) in order to impose penalties. Therefore, if a mystery shopping report is contested without sufficient supporting evidence, IoF Compliance will take the mystery shopper’s word on the balance of probabilities. This principle was decided and approved by the PFRA’s Standards Committee when the PFRA was still in existence and was confirmed as still being the case as recently as December 2017.

Privacy Notices

Mystery shopping reports contain information identifying the fundraiser who has been mystery shopped. This information may be used in communications with the mystery shopping supplier and/or PFO while processing the report.

PFO’s must provide a privacy notice to their employees explaining this fact along with an explanation of the mystery shopping programme they are participating in.