

Guide to Bucket Collections

A street collection involves you and some friends giving up a few hours to stand in town or city centres with buckets or tins collecting money from the general public. You can also collect at a variety of other places such as stations, shopping centres or arenas.



Collections can easily raise over £100 per collector in just a few hours, and are a fantastic way of raising awareness of both OPERATION SMILE UK and cleft condition. They can also be a lot of fun!

Hit the streets with some friends in fancy dress and you'll be surprised at how quickly the time flies by and the donations roll in.

How to get started?

Think about where you'd like to collect. If you have a vibrant town or city centre that's a great place to start, but bear in mind you may have to ask permission a few months (or even a year for some places!) in advance. If you live near a train or underground station that sees a lot of foot traffic, these can be a goldmine as you can make a fantastic amount just by collecting during peak hours when people are on their way to and from work, and take the time in between off! Is there a sports or music arena near you? Perhaps a racing course? Again this is a quick and easy way to fundraise as you only have to stay out for one or two hours before the start of the event, and there will be a huge number of people heading past you who can donate. In all cases, you will need to get permission to collect, and this may need to be done a few months in advance, so be prepared to be flexible with the date you want.

If you want to collect in a town or city centre

You will need a permit from the council. Have a look at your local council's website. If there isn't a section on charity collections or applying for a permit then just give them a ring, preferably to the licensing department if there is one. They are usually very helpful and should be able to explain how you can get a permit, as well as let you know if the date you want is free. If you need any help with this or are unsure about anything, get in touch with the Fundraising Team at OPERATION SMILE UK. We can apply for permits on your behalf and can help you with any information you need about OPERATION SMILE UK if you are applying yourself, including sending you an authorisation letter.

If you want to collect on private property (e.g. shopping centre, train station)

Ask to speak to the manager or the person in charge. They should be able to help you to book your collection in and can tell you if the date is available. Some places will have policies that do not allow bucket collections (for example, they may already have a charity supported by the company), but it is always worth asking.

Contact Us!

Besides the fact that we love to hear from anyone kind enough to fundraise for us, we can help you with your collection every step of the way. Give us a ring on 020 7833 4883 or email events.uk@operationsmile.org.uk and we'll give you a hand however we can.

Top Tips For Collections

- Get in touch with OPERATION SMILE UK's Fundraising Team to get all the materials you'll need for your collection – including tins, labels, fact sheets, leaflets and t shirts.

- Wear fancy dress! Even if you just stick on a pair of ears or some fairy wings, making an effort and dressing up is a great way to get attention on the day. Not only does it make you feel more confident with talking to people, but it makes people more likely to donate to you, especially if you're in a costume that kids will love!
- Be bubbly and positive – it'll rub off on the people you see and will cheer you up too. Smile at everyone who passes and do your best to make eye contact, as the day will be more fun for you and others if you are enthusiastic.
- Don't be shy – feel free to ask people passing for money (though don't overdo it!), and have a few stock phrases you can call out such as "Help children born with cleft lip and palate!" or "Any spare change for a great cause?" Often people will donate simply because it is for charity and not necessarily because of the cause, so saying things like "Do your good deed for the day here!" can be very effective.
- Say 'thank you!' nice and loud, and give a sticker to everyone who donates. Even if someone doesn't donate, thank them anyway – aside from being polite it may well make them donate later.
- Take your time to chat – remember, you're raising awareness as well as money. If someone asks what it's for, tell them what you know about OPERATION SMILE UK (ask us for some info sheets to help!), about cleft lip and palate, and how they can find out more. People may well have their own experiences with cleft lip and/or palate, and it is definitely worth spending time to talk to them, even if they have no intention of donating.
- Make it obvious you are collecting by holding your bucket at waist height and ensuring people can see the label. Be careful about shaking it, though – there may be a rule against it in that area, not to mention it can quickly get annoying for people nearby!
- Try to get a good position with lots of footfall where people can see you, but make sure not to obstruct the pathway. If you are outdoors, a busy intersection or directly outside a large shop works well. If you are indoors, standing at the entrance/exit or at the top of escalators will make sure a lot of people come past and have plenty of time to see you.
- Keep within eyeshot of another collector, and if there are a lot of you then feel free to stand near them (but not too near! Check the regulations, there may be a minimum distance you have to keep) as having a partner helps to keep your energy levels up. You can even make it into a competition between the two of you to pass the time – who can be the first to get ten donations? Who will get the most in an hour?
- Forget about rude people. Although it is very rare, some people may be rude or respond angrily. If this happens, just be polite, apologise and forget about them. The majority of people you will meet are lovely and have real respect for what you're doing – after all, you're a volunteer!
- Take breaks as and when you need them, and always remember you are volunteering, so although we hugely appreciate what you are doing the last thing we would want is for you to have a bad time. Regular breaks will make the time you spend collecting much more enjoyable.
- Never put yourself at risk. In the extremely unlikely event that someone tries to take your collection bucket/tin, please let them. Contact your collection organiser or OPERATION SMILE UK, and inform the police (as well as the venue if you are collecting indoors) of what happened.
- Always check the regulations for where you are collecting! You may need to follow certain rules about where and how you can collect. In all cases, make sure your bucket or tin is clearly labelled with OPERATION SMILE UK's logo and charity number, and that you have your letter of authorisation from us as well as your permit (if you have one) on you at all times. If you are unsure about any of this, contact us!