

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Bogus charity clothes thieves caught red-handed with 11 tonnes of stolen donations**

**Clothes Aid recovers hundreds of charity bags after driver follows thief**

Social business Clothes Aid, clothes collector for the NSPCC and Make-A-Wish Foundation® UK in Bristol, recovered hundreds of bags full of clothes donations stolen by a bogus charity collector at a yard in Warmley, last Friday (25<sup>th</sup> March).

Clothes Aid's dedicated crime-fighting team, Collection Protection, was alerted to the yard after a Clothes Aid driver witnessed a man stealing NSPCC bags in Bristol last Thursday.

The driver followed him to a yard on an industrial estate on Victoria Road, Warmley, where he saw Clothes Aid bags being unloaded into a HGV curtain-sided trailer.

Collection Protection alerted the police and on Friday morning Avon and Somerset Police raided the yard, arresting one man who was later released on police bail pending further inquiries.

"Theft of charitable collections is a particularly despicable crime and we will always do our up-most to bring such mean-spirited criminals to justice," said Avon and Somerset Police spokeswoman Jenny Bigwood.

Inside the container they discovered 11 tonnes of charity bags belonging to Kidney Research, National Blind Children's Society, Age UK, PDSA, Great Western Air Ambulance, Cystic Fibrosis, Scope, Salvation Army and the British Heart Foundation, as well as Clothes Aid charity bags intended for the NSPCC, Make-A-Wish and Welsh charity the Noah's Ark Appeal.

The charity clothes bags stolen by the gang would have fetched around £12,000 on the black market.

Michael Lomotey, Business Manager at Clothes Aid, said:

“We’re delighted to have recovered so many charity clothes bags, not only for our charity partners, but for the many other charities who suffer regularly from bogus charity theft.

It is shameful when these thieves steal from genuine charities, who depend on the funds raised by clothes donations, but thanks to the vigilance of our driver we have been able to return these donations to their rightful owners.

Bogus collectors think they’re above the law but this incident proves that their days are numbered.+

Clothes Aid collects clothing across Bristol on behalf of charities Make-A-Wish and the NSPCC. Donated clothes and accessories are exported to nearby countries where they are sold in shops and boutiques to raise money for Make-A-Wish and the NSPCC. Clothing collections represent an invaluable source of income for charities and a convenient way for the public to give without costing them a penny.

With bogus charity collections costing charities up to £12 million a year, Clothes Aid is urging households to continue to give but to make their donation count by following these simple steps:

- Look out for the Clothes Aid collection bag (pictured) on your doorstep.
- Check your clothing donation is picked up by a registered, uniformed Clothes Aid Collector in a Clothes Aid Van. Always ask to see their ID if you are not sure.
- If you suspect a bogus collector or a theft you can call the Collection Protection helpline on 020 7288 8535. Try to note down a description of the individual or group, the time and place of the incident and any other relevant details to share with the helpline staff.

- Look for the Give with Confidence tick of approval from the Fundraising Standards Board on leaflets and bags. Reputable clothing collection businesses and genuine charities are likely to be members of the Fundraising Standards Board, an independent self-regulatory body for UK fundraising, backed by the Office for Civil Society, The Scottish Government and the Welsh Assembly Government.
- Don't let bogus collectors steal your charity spirit. Follow these simple steps to support charities and help stop bogus collectors from capitalising on good causes. Together, we can make it count.

**-ENDS-**

For interviews with spokespeople from Clothes Aid or for high-res images please contact: Megan Weston, Press Officer, on T. 020 7288 8538 or [mweston@clothesaid.co.uk](mailto:mweston@clothesaid.co.uk).

### **Notes to Editors**

- Clothes Aid is a social business which collects clothes door-to-door across the country, to raise money for a range of UK charities.
- Households across the UK donate clothes and fashion accessories using Clothes Aid's official collection bags, raising over £1.4m for charities every year.
- Clothes Aid guarantees each charity a minimum donation each year and there is no limit to how much they can give.
- Millions of garments are sent to landfill every year, creating huge waste and damaging the environment. Clothes Aid can give clothes a second chance, help reduce environmental damage and raise money for the causes you care about, all without costing you a penny.