



The Thistle Foundation increases regular giving with Direct Debit

A couple of years ago, the Thistle Foundation received a large number of irregular donations by cash and cheque. As a result, the charities administration costs were high. However, now thanks to Direct Debit, the organisation has significantly increased the number and amount of regular donations it receives, and cut associated processing and financial costs. In recognition of this achievement and its commitment to Direct Debit, BACS has awarded the charity a Best Practice award at the 2006 BACS Direct Debit Charity Awards.

The Thistle Foundation was originally set up to help disabled ex-servicemen in Scotland live with their families instead of in hospitals. The charity has expanded its remit over the past 60 years to include people with disabilities who have no service connection.

From being a charity that mostly accepted cash and cheque donations, the Thistle Foundation now has almost 5,000 donors that regularly donate by Direct Debit. The organisation originally used a bureau for processing Direct Debit payments, but this incurred significant costs.

Lee-Ann Ashburner of the Thistle Foundation explains more; "Using a bureau was expensive and we found that being one step-removed from our Direct Debits gave us less control over payments. We quickly realised that if we brought the management of Direct Debit in-house, we could save money and take more control over the donations made to us. This would not only benefit us financially, but would enable us to offer better customer service to our loyal donor base."

Lee-Ann continued; "Standing Orders also accounted for a small number of regular donations we used to receive. However processing payments this way was quite restrictive, costly and time-consuming. Implementing Paperless Direct Debit gave us the ideal tool to upgrade our existing Standing Order donors."

To make Direct Debit as accessible as possible to our donors, the charity created two monthly payment date options. This move proved extremely popular and the Thistle Foundation quickly converted many of its donors to Direct Debit. This resulted in significantly reduced administration costs and a large number of donors upgrading the value of their donation.

Lee-Ann concluded; "Direct Debit has saved our organisation a substantial amount of money. It has also contributed to us realising almost 5,000 regular donors and enabled us to plan

future expansion. Thanks to Direct Debit, we can now provide those people who rely on our funding with greater long term security and a far better level of service.”

The Thistle Foundation is already planning its next Direct Debit campaign, which aims to raise the number of committed donors by 2,000. Direct Debit will play a vital role in helping the charity realise this objective and increase the level of support they can provide for people with disabilities in Scotland.

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