Privacy Policy – Mercy Ships UK

Mercy Ships UK is committed to protecting your personal information and being transparent about what information we hold, whether you are a donor or a volunteer.

The purpose of this Privacy Policy ('Policy') is to give you a clear explanation about how Mercy Ships UK and all of its subsidiaries collects and uses the personal information (or personal data) you provide to us and that we collect, whether online, via phone, email, in letters or in any other correspondence or from third parties.

Developing a better understanding of our supporters and audiences through their personal information allows us to fundraise, raise awareness of our work, and recruit volunteers more effectively, which ultimately helps provide vital healthcare to those most in need. We have made improvements to this Privacy Policy so that transparency is at the core of what we do.

We ensure that we use your personal information in accordance with the law. This Privacy Policy explains:

- What information Mercy Ships UK may collect about you.
- How we will use that information.
- Whether we disclose your details to anyone else.
- Your choices regarding the information you provide to us.

If you have any queries about this Privacy Policy, please contact the Data Protection Officer at our UK head office at: Mercy Ships UK, The Lighthouse, 12 Meadway Court, Stevenage SG1 2EF.

1. Who we are

Mercy Ships is a faith-based international development organisation that deploys hospital ships to developing countries, delivering vital, free healthcare to people in need. Our registered Charity Number: 1053055 (England & Wales), SC039743 (Scotland). We are also a company limited by guarantee, registered in England & Wales, Company No. 3147724.

Our registered address is: The Lighthouse, Unit 12 Meadway Court, Rutherford Close, Stevenage, SG1 2EF, United Kingdom.

The charity and each of these subsidiaries may collect and decide for themselves how to use your personal information. The legal phrase that's used to describe an organisation that makes these decisions is 'data controller'.

2. Information collection

Mercy Ships UK is a Christian charity. As part of our mission to provide free healthcare services and share our faith values, we collect personal information to help us communicate with supporters, volunteers, potential supporters, and partners in ways that support our fundraising, brand awareness, and volunteer recruitment activities in a meaningful way.

We collect personal data in the following ways:

2.1 Information You Provide to Us

We collect personal information directly from you when you:

- Make a donation or set up a regular gift.
- Fundraise for us through third-party platforms.
- Purchase merchandise through partner sites.
- Register for events or volunteering opportunities.
- Contact us via phone, email, post, or social media.
- Provide your information at faith-based events, such as church tours, Christian festivals, or partner-led activities.
- Engage with us through corporate partnerships, philanthropic initiatives, or major donor relationships.
- Tell us your communication preferences - for example, choosing to receive updates by email, SMS, phone, or post.
- Complete a survey, research exercise or fundraising proposition test through our website, social media platforms or digital advertising partners.

The personal information you may provide includes:

- Name, title, postal address, email address, and telephone number.
- Date of birth and gender.

- Payment details for donations or purchases (e.g. Direct Debit, card payments).
- Gift Aid declaration status.
- Your communication and marketing preferences (email, SMS, phone, post).
- Information about your religious affiliation (e.g. whether you identify as Christian).
- Professional and business details (where relevant for philanthropy or corporate engagement).
- Information about your engagement with Mercy Ships UK (e.g. volunteering history, events attended).
- Survey answers and information about your response to fundraising, campaign or communication concepts.

2.2 Information We Collect Automatically

When you visit our website or interact with our digital content, we automatically collect:

- IP address, browser type, device information, and operating system
- Pages visited and links clicked on our website
- Interaction data with our emails, adverts, and social media content
- Analytics data to help us understand how supporters engage with our website and improve our services

2.3 Special category data (religious affiliation)

Because Mercy Ships UK is a Christian charity, we may ask whether you identify as Christian to ensure our communications and activities are relevant to you.

Under data protection law, certain types of personal information are considered more sensitive and require additional protection. This is known as 'special category data' and includes information such as religious beliefs, health information, ethnic origin, and biometric data.

At Mercy Ships UK, the only special category data we collect is information about your religious affiliation — specifically, whether you identify as Christian. We collect this information to ensure that our communications, volunteering opportunities, and faith-based activities are relevant and appropriate to you as a supporter of a Christian charity.

We will always make it clear when we ask for this information and will only collect and process it with your explicit, freely given and informed consent, in line with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

3. Children's data

Mercy Ships UK does not knowingly collect personal data from children under the age of 13. If we become aware that personal data has been collected from a child under 13 without parental consent, we will take steps to delete that information promptly.

4. Information we receive from third parties

4.1 Information received from third parties

We may receive personal information about you from trusted third parties who help us process donations, manage fundraising activities, deliver services, or support your engagement with Mercy Ships UK.

This may include:

- Donations or fundraising activities through external fundraising platforms.
- Product purchases from approved partners.
- Event registrations or attendance details through event organisers.
- Interactions with our content via social media or other online platforms.

In some cases, we may also use carefully selected data-supply partners and list brokers who provide contact details of individuals who may be interested in hearing about Mercy Ships UK, including our fundraising appeals, volunteer opportunities, campaigns, and wider mission. These suppliers are required to ensure that the data was collected lawfully, that individuals were clearly informed their information could be shared with charities for direct-marketing purposes, and that appropriate opt-out mechanisms were provided.

In many cases, these mailings are fulfilled by contracted suppliers who handle the third-party dataset on our behalf. Mercy Ships UK does not retain the full prospect list and only receives personal data if an individual chooses to respond to the mailing.

We rely on the lawful basis of legitimate interests to send occasional fundraising communications by post to these individuals. Every mailing clearly explains how to opt out of future contact, and all opt-outs are recorded promptly to ensure your wishes are respected.

4.2 Information from Publicly Available Sources

We may use information from publicly available sources — such as charity registers, company filings, professional networking sites, or published media — to help us better understand our supporters and ensure our communications are relevant and appropriate.

4.3 Aggregated and Anonymised Data

Wherever possible, we use aggregated or anonymised data for research, reporting, and service improvement purposes. This data does not identify individuals.

5. Debit and credit card information

When you make a donation or register for an event with Mercy Ships UK, your payment will be processed securely using trusted third-party payment service providers. These currently include:

- Worldpay – for processing online debit and credit card transactions.
- PayPal – for facilitating online donations and purchases.
- Woods Valldata – for processing postal donations and managing Direct Debit payments.

All payment processing is carried out in line with the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI DSS) to ensure your payment information is handled securely.

Mercy Ships UK does not store your credit or debit card details after your transaction is completed. Once processed, all card details and security codes are securely destroyed or deleted.

If you make a donation over the phone, only authorised and trained Mercy Ships UK staff will handle your card information, which is processed securely and immediately destroyed after use.

Please do not send credit or debit card details by email, as email is not a secure method for processing payments. Any emails received containing card details will be immediately deleted, no payment will be taken, and we will inform you of this.

All payments should be made via:

- Our secure website: www.mercyships.org.uk

- Or by calling our Supporter Services team on 01438 727800.

Where we engage third-party payment providers, we ensure that appropriate data protection agreements are in place, requiring them to safeguard your personal data and comply with UK data protection laws.

6. Website users

All Mercy Ships UK websites use tracking technologies to help our websites function properly, to understand how people use them, and to improve the user experience.

6.1 Information You Provide via Our Website

When you interact with our website - for example, by making a donation, signing up for a newsletter, applying to volunteer, or registering for an event - we collect the information you provide. This may include:

- Name
- Email address
- Postal address
- Phone number
- Date of birth and gender (where relevant)
- Communication preferences (email, phone, SMS, post)
- Religious affiliation (if you choose to share this with us, e.g., whether you identify as Christian)

This information allows us to process your request, manage your engagement with us, and tailor our communications to your interests.

Religious affiliation is considered “special category data” under data protection law. We will only collect and process this with your explicit consent and will always explain why we are asking for it.

6.2 Information We Collect Automatically

When you visit our website, we automatically collect certain technical information, such as:

- Your IP address, browser type, device, and operating system
- Pages you visit, links you click, and time spent on site

- Interaction with forms and website features

We use this information to understand how visitors use our website, to ensure it works smoothly, and to improve your browsing experience.

6.3 User Experience and Analytics Tools

We use analytics tools, such as Google Analytics, to understand how visitors navigate our website and interact with our content. This helps us improve usability and content relevance.

All data collected through these methods is used for statistical analysis, service improvement, and personalised engagement, without identifying individuals wherever possible.

7. Job and volunteer applicants

7.1 Job and volunteer data capture

If you apply for a job or volunteer role with Mercy Ships UK, we will use the personal information you provide to process your application and to monitor our recruitment and volunteer engagement processes.

This information may include:

- Your name and contact details
- Employment history and qualifications
- References and right to work documentation
- Information relevant to the specific role (e.g., availability, skills, faith alignment for certain volunteer roles)

If we need to contact someone outside Mercy Ships UK for a reference or to verify information (e.g., previous employers or referees), we will inform you beforehand, unless we are legally required to disclose information without notification (for example, to the police or regulatory authorities).

7.2 Retention of application data

If your application is unsuccessful, we may retain your personal information for up to 12 months after the recruitment or selection process has concluded. This is to manage any follow-up queries or compliance obligations.

We keep statistical information about applicants to help us develop and improve our recruitment and volunteer engagement processes. This data is anonymised and does not identify individual applicants.

7.3 Successful applicants

If you commence employment or a formal volunteering placement with Mercy Ships UK, your personal information will be processed in accordance with your employment contract, volunteer agreement, and other relevant human resources or safeguarding policies.

8. How we use your information

We use your personal information for a number of purposes related to our charitable mission, including fundraising, raising awareness of our work, and recruiting volunteers. To process and acknowledge your donations and manage any Gift Aid claims.

- To provide you with information about our work, volunteering opportunities, fundraising appeals and events (where you have consented, or where we rely on Legitimate Interests — see Legal Basis for Processing).
- We may send fundraising, brand awareness or volunteer recruitment materials by post under the lawful basis of legitimate interests. This helps us keep supporters informed in a respectful and cost-effective way. Every postal communication includes a clear opt-out, and you can contact us at any time to stop receiving post.We may contact supporters by phone for fundraising, brand awareness or volunteer recruitment purposes under the lawful basis of legitimate interests. This may include thanking you for your support, sharing updates about our work, raising awareness of our programmes, discussing ways you can support Mercy Ships UK, or informing you about volunteering opportunities.
- Before making any marketing call we screen numbers against the Telephone Preference Service (TPS) in line with the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR). We only make marketing calls where it is reasonable to do so and where individuals have not objected to receiving phone communications from us. You can ask us not to call you at any time and your preference will be recorded immediately. To send you faith-based communications and event invitations, where relevant and with your consent.
- To manage your participation in events, volunteering, or partnerships.

- To fulfil orders or requests for resources or/and materials.
- For administration purposes, such as contacting you about a donation, event registration, or responding to an enquiry.
- For internal record-keeping, supporter care, and managing feedback or complaints.
- To invite you to participate in optional surveys, research or case studies, analyse your responses, and use the findings to test and improve our fundraising campaigns and communications.
- To personalise and improve your experience with Mercy Ships UK, including the use of digital tracking technologies.
- To use technical information (such as IP address and device data) for security, analytics, and content personalisation.
- To improve and personalise your experience when donating, by using data-driven tools (such as Fundraise Up) to optimise our fundraising journeys and engagement.
- To ensure we use supporter data effectively and responsibly, in line with your preferences and expectations.
- To analyse supporter data to improve our fundraising, communications, and supporter engagement strategies.
- To manage relationships with corporate partners, major donors, and philanthropic supporters.
- To carry out legal and regulatory obligations, such as legacy processing, financial audits and compliance with HMRC for Gift Aid.
- To prevent fraud and ensure data security.
- To introduce Mercy Ships to potential supporters through occasional postal communications where contact details have been provided by carefully selected third-party data suppliers.
- To promote Mercy Ships through digital advertising and remarketing campaigns on platforms such as Meta, Google and LinkedIn. These campaigns may promote fundraising appeals, raise awareness of our work, or highlight volunteering opportunities.

9. Data Profiling and Analysis

We use supporter data analysis and predictive modelling improve our fundraising, brand awareness, and volunteer recruitment strategies. recruitment materials This includes the use of trusted third-party tools, for which we have completed a Data Privacy Impact Assessment (DPIA) and Legitimate Interests Assessment (LIA). To help ensure our fundraising and communications are relevant and effective, we may analyse and combine the information you provide with other information we lawfully hold or that is available from trusted third-party sources. This helps us better understand our supporters and communicate in a cost-effective and respectful way.

This analysis may involve the use of secure data insight platforms that apply statistical modelling and machine learning techniques to identify patterns in supporter engagement and help us communicate more effectively.

We use responsible data analysis and limited profiling to help us understand how supporters engage with our work and to improve our fundraising and communications. This may include the use of trusted data-insight partners to identify patterns in giving or volunteering — for example, how likely someone is to continue supporting, respond to an appeal, or consider a legacy gift. Profiling helps us communicate in a more relevant and cost-effective way and reduces unwanted contact. It does not involve solely automated decisions, and all results are reviewed by our fundraising team to ensure fairness and appropriateness. We only use the minimum data needed, such as donation history, engagement activity and demographics, and we never use sensitive or special-category data. We rely on legitimate interests as our lawful basis for this processing, and you have the right to object at any time to your data being used for profiling or analysis for direct-marketing purposes by contacting info@mercyships.org.uk.

We may use publicly available sources, such as charity registers, company records, media reports, and professional networking sites, to help us keep your information accurate, understand general supporter interests, and inform our fundraising and supporter engagement strategies.

We also work with trusted partners who provide services to help us analyse our supporter data and improve how we communicate with you. These partners only process your data under our instructions and strict contractual agreements.

We are committed to using this information responsibly and will not use it in ways that are intrusive or unexpected.

You have the right to object at any time to your data being used for analysis or profiling. To do so, please contact our Supporter Services Team (see section 19 for contact details).

10. Legal basis for processing

Data protection law requires us to explain the lawful grounds we rely on to process your personal information. Depending on the purpose, we may rely on one or more of the following:

10.1 Legitimate interests

We may process your personal data when it is necessary to support our charitable aims and operations, provided this does not override your rights and freedoms. This may include activities such as fundraising, raising awareness of our work, volunteer recruitment, supporter engagement, and marketing by post or phone.

We rely on the lawful basis of legitimate interests where it enables us to contact or engage with supporters in a fair, responsible and proportionate way. We carry out assessments to ensure that any processing under this basis is necessary, balanced and aligned with the expectations of our supporters, in accordance with UK GDPR, PECR and the Fundraising Regulator's Code of Fundraising Practice.

You have the right to object at any time to your personal data being processed on the basis of legitimate interests. If you wish to do so, or to learn more about how we apply this lawful basis, please contact our Supporter Services Team (see section 19 for contact details).

10.2 Consent

Where we rely on consent — for example, to send you marketing by email

or SMS, or where we handle sensitive information — we will always ensure this is clear and you can withdraw consent at any time.

10.3 Legal obligation

We may need to process your personal information to comply with legal obligations, such as tax or Gift Aid requirements.

10.4 Performance of a contract

In some cases, we process your personal data to fulfil an agreement with you, such as processing donations or event registrations.

11. Data retention and destruction

We will only keep your personal information for as long as is necessary to fulfil the purposes for which it was collected, including to satisfy legal, accounting, or reporting requirements.

11.1 How long we keep your data

- Donor and transaction information (including Gift Aid records) is typically retained for up to 7 years after the end of the financial year in which the last donation was made. This is to comply with HMRC and financial audit requirements.
- Supporter engagement data (such as communication history, event participation, and volunteering records) is retained for up to 6 years after the last meaningful interaction (e.g., donation, volunteering activity, event attendance) to ensure relevant and respectful engagement.
- Job and volunteer application data is retained for up to 12 months after the conclusion of the recruitment process, unless you become an employee or volunteer, in which case your data will be managed under our HR policies.
- Legacy pledger data may be retained for an extended period, reflecting the nature of legacy giving and stewardship, but only while there remains a clear purpose for doing so.

We review the personal data we hold on a regular basis and conduct annual data cleaning and accuracy checks with trusted third-party providers.

11.2 Data destruction and anonymisation

When personal data is no longer required, we take appropriate steps to securely delete or destroy it. This includes:

- Secure deletion of electronic records
- Secure shredding of physical documents
- Anonymising data for statistical and analytical purposes where identification of individuals is no longer necessary

We will retain minimal information, where necessary, to honour opt-out requests and ensure we do not contact you again if you have asked us not to.

12. Data sharing with third parties

Mercy Ships UK works with trusted third-party service providers who help us deliver our fundraising, communication, and operational activities. We only share your personal data with these partners when it is necessary for them to perform services on our behalf and always under strict data protection agreements.

Mercy Ships UK is part of the wider Mercy Ships global network. Where necessary, we may share data securely with our international offices to support coordinated engagement and stewardship. Any data sharing is subject to appropriate safeguards and agreements.

These partners may include:

- **Payment service providers and processors** who handle donations, payments, and Direct Debits securely.
- **Mailing houses and fulfilment companies** who help us send fundraising appeals and supporter communications.
- **Supporter research, analysis, and engagement partners** who help us analyse supporter engagement and improve how we communicate with supporters. These partners operate strictly under our instructions and under contractual data protection agreements.
- **Gift Aid service providers** who assist with processing Gift Aid claims in line with HMRC requirements.
- **Digital marketing and media partners** who help us plan and deliver online fundraising campaigns.
- **Data cleaning and quality assurance providers** who help keep our supporter data accurate and up to date.
- **Legacy administration and stewardship partners** who support our legacy fundraising programmes.
- **Regulatory bodies or law enforcement**, where we are legally required to do so.

Where possible, we share only the minimum personal information necessary for each purpose. These third parties are not allowed to use your information for their own marketing purposes.

We may also share aggregated or anonymised data (which does not identify you) for reporting, analysis, or strategic planning.

We do not sell or rent your personal information to any third parties.

13. Social media and third-party platforms

When you engage with Mercy Ships UK on social media platforms (such as liking our pages, sharing content, or participating in discussions), your interactions are subject to the privacy policies of those platforms.
We recommend reviewing the privacy policies of any social media platforms you use, as we do not control how those services process your personal information.

14. Links to other website

Our website may contain links to external websites operated by other organisations.
Please note that Mercy Ships UK is not responsible for the privacy practices or content of these external sites.
We encourage you to review the privacy policies of any websites you visit via links on our site.

15. International data transfers

Mercy Ships UK primarily stores and processes personal data within the United Kingdom (UK) and the European Economic Area (EEA).

In some cases, we may engage trusted partners and digital advertising platforms based outside the UK or EEA to help deliver our services or support our fundraising, volunteer recruitment and brand awareness activities. Where this involves the transfer of personal data, we ensure that appropriate safeguards are in place to protect your information and that such transfers comply with data protection laws.

This may include:

- Using partners who are located in countries that the UK Government has deemed to provide an adequate level of data protection.
- Implementing UK International Data Transfer Agreements (IDTAs) or Standard Contractual Clauses (SCCs) with additional safeguards where adequacy decisions do not apply.
- Ensuring robust data processing agreements with all partners.

Anonymised Data Transfers

We may share anonymised data (which cannot identify individuals) with international partners for analysis and media planning purposes. For example:

- We work with Full Hearts Media Agency, based in the United States, who support our paid social media campaigns. The data shared with Full Hearts is anonymised and does not contain any personal information that could identify individual supporters.

As anonymised data is not considered personal data under UK data protection law, these transfers do not fall under the same legal restrictions. However, we remain committed to managing data responsibly and ensuring it is protected.

16. Your rights

Under UK data protection law, you have a number of rights relating to your personal data. Mercy Ships UK is committed to upholding these rights and ensuring your personal information is handled in a fair, transparent, and secure manner.

Your Rights Include:

16.1 The right to access

You have the right to request a copy of the personal data we hold about you, along with information about how we use it.

16.2 The right to rectification

If you believe the personal data we hold about you is inaccurate or incomplete, you can ask us to correct or update it.

16.3 The right to erasure ('right to be forgotten')

In certain circumstances, you have the right to request that we delete your personal data, for example if it is no longer needed for the purpose it was collected.

16.4 The right to restrict processing

You can ask us to limit how we use your personal data in certain situations, such as when you contest its accuracy or object to our processing.

16.5 The right to object

You can object to:

- Receiving direct marketing communications from us (we will always respect this).

Processing of your personal data based on legitimate interests, unless we have compelling legitimate grounds that override your interests.

16.6 The right to data portability

Where processing is based on consent or contract and carried out by automated means, you have the right to request that your personal data be transferred to you or another organisation in a commonly used, machine-readable format.

16.7 The right to withdraw consent

Where we rely on your consent to process your personal data (e.g., for email or SMS marketing, or collecting religious affiliation), you have the right to withdraw that consent at any time.

16.8 The right to lodge a complaint

If you are unhappy with how we have handled your personal data, you have the right to lodge a complaint with the **Information Commissioner's Office (ICO),** the UK's data protection authority.
More information can be found at: www.ico.org.uk.

16.7 How to exercise your rights

To exercise any of these rights, or to make a data protection query, please contact us using the details provided in the **"How to Contact Us"** section below.

We will respond to your request within one month, in line with legal requirements. In certain complex cases, this period may be extended by a further two months, but we will inform you if this is necessary.

17. Security of your personal data

Mercy Ships UK takes the security of your personal data seriously.
We have implemented appropriate technical and organisational measures to protect your personal information from loss, misuse, unauthorised access, disclosure, alteration, and destruction.

We are proud to be Cyber Essentials Plus certified, which is an independently verified accreditation demonstrating that we follow best practice standards in IT security to protect against common cyber threats.

Our security measures are reviewed regularly to ensure they remain appropriate and effective.

18. Cookies

Mercy Ships UK uses cookies and similar technologies in accordance with UK data protection and e-privacy regulations. These help improve website performance, analyse usage, and support relevant digital advertising.

When you visit our website for the first time using a new browser or device, you will be presented with a cookie banner that allows you to provide consent for non-essential cookies. Your preferences are recorded and can be adjusted at any time.

Cookies allow us to:

- Understand how visitors interact with our website so we can improve usability and performance
- Enable essential website features and remember your preferences between visits
- Measure the effectiveness of our fundraising campaigns, brand awareness campaigns, and volunteer recruitment communications.
- Support digital advertising and remarketing through platforms such as Meta (Facebook and Instagram), Google and LinkedIn
- Show relevant Mercy Ships adverts to people who have previously visited our website or interacted with our content
- Create advertising audiences using limited information such as hashed email addresses, helping us reach people who may be interested in supporting our work.

Most web browsers accept cookies automatically, but you can modify your browser settings to decline cookies or notify you when one is being sent. If you choose to disable cookies, some website features may not function as intended.

19. How to contact us

If you have any questions, concerns, or requests relating to this Privacy Notice, or how Mercy Ships UK handles your personal data, you can contact us in the following ways:

By Post:
Mercy Ships UK
The Lighthouse
Unit 12 Meadway Court
Rutherford Close
Stevenage
SG1 2EF
United Kingdom

By Email:
info@mercyships.org.uk

By Phone:
01438 727800

Data Protection Enquiries

For specific queries regarding your data protection rights, including access requests, objections, or consent withdrawals, please contact our Data Protection Officer (or relevant contact):

Email:
info@mercyships.org.uk
(Please clearly state “Data Protection Enquiry” in the subject line.)

20. Complaints

At Mercy Ships UK, we are committed to maintaining the highest standards in all our activities. We value feedback and take complaints seriously, using them as an opportunity to improve our services and operations.

20.1 How to make a complaint

If you have a complaint or concern regarding our services, fundraising activities, or the handling of your personal data, please contact us using one of the following methods:

By Post:
Mercy Ships UK
The Lighthouse
12 Meadway Court
Stevenage
SG1 2EF
United Kingdom

By Email:
info@mercyships.org.uk

By Phone:
01438 727800

We aim to acknowledge all complaints within five working days and to provide a full response within 20 working days. If we are unable to meet this timeline, we will inform you of the delay and provide an estimated response date.

20.2 Data protection complaints

If your complaint relates to how we have handled your personal data, and you are not satisfied with our response, you have the right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), the UK's independent authority for data protection issues.

Contact Details for the ICO:

Website: www.ico.org.uk
Phone: 0303 123 1113
Address:
Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

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