# Heartless Pudsey Bear conmen jailed for £500,000 charity scam but repay only a fraction



Heartless conmen dressed as Pudsey Bear have been ordered to repay a fraction of over £500,000 they fraudulently collected from the public, masquerading as charity fundraisers. The operation, led by David Levi, involved using the beloved mascot of Children in Need as a front to deceive unsuspecting shoppers outside supermarkets across England and Scotland. While professing to support reputable charities, including Great Ormond Street Hospital, less than 10% of the money raised actually reached its intended destinations.

Levi, 49, who claimed to have coordinated the activities from an office base in Blackpool, has been sentenced to five years in prison after admitting to charges of fraud and money laundering. His accomplice, 64-year-old Stephen Chesterman, also faced the court and could be looking at an additional 18 months behind bars if he fails to repay his ordered restitution of £102,618. Together, they were part of a larger group of seven individuals implicated in this extensive scam.

The gang's tactics were brazen; they would set up stalls with fake badges and banners, creating an illusion of legitimacy. Allegations indicate that they even threatened supermarket staff—claiming they would be reported to the media or lose their jobs—if they were challenged while soliciting donations. According to prosecutors, the criminal enterprise drew on the public’s goodwill, manipulating emotions tied to charity, particularly those helping sick children.

The financial repercussions extend beyond those directly involved. The BBC's Children In Need charity suffered significantly, losing approximately £47,000 as a direct result of this fraud. The scale of the deception is staggering, with a reported £500,000 traced through the gang's accounts, primarily siphoned off for personal luxuries such as expensive cars and holidays.

Adrian Foster, Chief Crown Prosecutor of the CPS Proceeds of Crime Division, expressed satisfaction that funds generated through deceit will now be redirected back to genuine charities, ensuring that the perpetrators do not retain any benefit from their actions. He remarked on the profound impact of the scam, stating, "These men preyed on the goodwill of members of the public, who believed their money was going to help people."

Levi, in an email exchange following his conviction, distanced himself from the con, asserting that he plans to fundraise legitimately in the future. His claims, however, appear hollow in light of the evidence presented during the trial. He once purportedly boasted to police that he earned extra money through escorting, describing it as 'very good money,' revealing a pattern of dishonesty that permeated both his personal and professional life.

Judge Andrew Jeffries KC condemned the actions of Levi and his associates, acknowledging how their actions preyed not only on the benevolence of the public but also fed on the grief often experienced by those affected by illness. His sentiments reflect a broader concern about the erosion of trust in charitable giving, as members of the public may think twice before donating in the future.

In the aftermath of this scandal, there will be a renewed focus on safeguarding the integrity of charitable collections. The authorities are keen to deter similar fraudulent activities, ensuring that the public can contribute to charitable causes confidently once more. The impact of this case serves as a stark reminder of both the vulnerabilities present in charitable fundraising and the potential for exploitation by those intent on personal gain.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14749849/pudsey-bear-conmen-ordered-pay-fake-donations.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/12/20/pudsey-bear-fraud-gang-fake-charity-collections/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14749849/pudsey-bear-conmen-ordered-pay-fake-donations.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/news/fraud-gang-jailed-after-stealing-charity-donations-organised-scam), [[4]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/david-levi-charity-scam-supermarket-children-b2467945.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14749849/pudsey-bear-conmen-ordered-pay-fake-donations.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/charity-mind-pudsey-bear-lancashire-police-preston-crown-court-b1128559.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14749849/pudsey-bear-conmen-ordered-pay-fake-donations.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/uk-news/2023/12/21/pudsey-bear-fraudsters-jailed-for-pocketing-charity-supermarket-collections/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14749849/pudsey-bear-conmen-ordered-pay-fake-donations.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/news/fraud-gang-jailed-after-stealing-charity-donations-organised-scam)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14749849/pudsey-bear-conmen-ordered-pay-fake-donations.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/12/20/pudsey-bear-fraud-gang-fake-charity-collections/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14749849/pudsey-bear-conmen-ordered-pay-fake-donations.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/12/20/pudsey-bear-fraud-gang-fake-charity-collections/), [[4]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/david-levi-charity-scam-supermarket-children-b2467945.html)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14749849/pudsey-bear-conmen-ordered-pay-fake-donations.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/charity-mind-pudsey-bear-lancashire-police-preston-crown-court-b1128559.html)
* Paragraph 9 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14749849/pudsey-bear-conmen-ordered-pay-fake-donations.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/news/fraud-gang-jailed-after-stealing-charity-donations-organised-scam)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14749849/pudsey-bear-conmen-ordered-pay-fake-donations.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/12/20/pudsey-bear-fraud-gang-fake-charity-collections/> - A gang of fraudsters, led by David Levi, posed as Pudsey Bear charity collectors, conning the public out of over £500,000 between 2011 and 2021. They set up bogus charity collections at supermarkets across England and Scotland, claiming to raise funds for organisations like Children in Need and Great Ormond Street Hospital. The gang used fake badges, banners, and even Pudsey Bear costumes to appear legitimate. Despite their efforts, less than 10% of the collected funds reached the intended charities. Levi and his co-defendants were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 18 months to five years for their roles in the scam.
3. <https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/news/fraud-gang-jailed-after-stealing-charity-donations-organised-scam> - Seven individuals were jailed for their involvement in an organised fraud that saw public donations worth hundreds of thousands of pounds stolen from life-saving charities. Led by David Levi, the group collected money from the public under the guise of supporting charities such as Children in Need, Great Ormond Street Hospital Children’s Charity, The Children’s Society, The Christie Charitable Fund, and MIND. In reality, a large portion of the funds was kept by Levi and other members of the group. The evidence showed that there had been no agreement with the charities that any of the money could be retained by the collectors.
4. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/david-levi-charity-scam-supermarket-children-b2467945.html> - A gang of charity fraudsters exploited public goodwill to collect at least £500,000 in supermarket bucket collections across the UK. Lead scammer David Levi, 47, and his bogus collectors used Children In Need, Great Ormond Street Hospital Children’s Charity, The Children’s Society, The Christie Charitable Fund, and Mind as fronts for their criminality. Levi contacted charities asking for permission to collect for them and to use their logo materials. Stalls and tables would be set up in supermarkets, but the fraudsters would also use their own fake ID badges, banners, and even a Pudsey Bear costume. Less than 10% of the £500,000 traced through the gang’s bank accounts was paid to the charities, Preston Crown Court was told.
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/charity-mind-pudsey-bear-lancashire-police-preston-crown-court-b1128559.html> - A gang of charity fraudsters who exploited public goodwill to collect at least £500,000 in supermarket bucket collections across the UK have been jailed. Lead scammer David Levi, 47, and his bogus collectors used Children In Need, Great Ormond Street Hospital Children’s Charity, The Children’s Society, The Christie Charitable Fund, and Mind as fronts for their criminality. Levi contacted charities asking for permission to collect for them and to use their logo materials. Stalls and tables would be set up in supermarkets, but the fraudsters would also use their own fake ID badges, banners, and even a Pudsey Bear costume. Less than 10% of the £500,000 traced through the gang’s bank accounts was paid to the charities, Preston Crown Court was told.
6. <https://www.shropshirestar.com/news/uk-news/2023/12/21/pudsey-bear-fraudsters-jailed-for-pocketing-charity-supermarket-collections/> - A gang of charity fraudsters who exploited public goodwill to collect at least £500,000 in supermarket bucket collections across the UK have been jailed. Lead scammer David Levi, 47, and his bogus collectors used Children In Need, Great Ormond Street Hospital Children’s Charity, The Children’s Society, The Christie Charitable Fund, and Mind as fronts for their criminality. Levi contacted charities asking for permission to collect for them and to use their logo materials. Stalls and tables would be set up in supermarkets, but the fraudsters would also use their own fake ID badges, banners, and even a Pudsey Bear costume. Less than 10% of the £500,000 traced through the gang’s bank accounts was paid to the charities, Preston Crown Court was told.