

Definition of Voluntary/Community Organisation

For the purposes of Woking Borough Council's Community Grants Scheme, a voluntary or community organisation is:

1. **Formal.** It has a formally-constituted character (excludes informal groups, households, families and friends) and may be a company limited by guarantee, a housing association, an unincorporated association, a friendly society, etc.
2. **Private.** It is not a part of government, established by statute or royal charter, or under a substantial degree of executive control by government (excludes universities and non-department public bodies); it may include consortia composed of local authorities and others (e.g. local regeneration and development bodies), if the consortium is formally constituted and, at the very least, given a name
3. **Self-governing.** It has its own decision-making system and usually a formal constitution with procedures for accountability to independent trustees or its own members or constituents (e.g., excludes any so-called "self-help groups" which are in fact directly run by clinicians)
4. **Non-profit-making and distributing.** It does not distribute any surpluses to owners or members but spends them on serving its basic purpose (excludes commercial concerns but includes organisations which charge users or the public for services, undertake contracts for statutory bodies or operate commercial subsidiaries which trade and transfer profits to parent organisations)
5. **Non-political.** It is not engaged in supporting candidates for political office (excludes political parties but includes campaigning and pressure groups, even though they are not eligible for charitable status e.g. Greenpeace, Child Poverty Action Group)
6. **Voluntary.** It has an element of involvement of volunteers (some voluntary and community organisations appear to be entirely reliant on paid staff; however, their trustees or committee members are, in fact, their only volunteers).

While this definition applies to formal organisations (those with constitutions or rules and which probably are registered with the Charity Commission, local authority or intermediary bodies, etc.), less-formal groups based in neighbourhoods or local communities are not necessarily excluded.