



The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

The MBE for volunteer groups



The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (QAVS) Guidance for Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenants

September 2020

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Foreword

This guidance aims to provide a practical manual to help Lord-Lieutenants (LLs), their Deputies (DLs) and staff carry out their role as local assessors for the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (QAVS). We hope that it will be of help.

We recognise that this can be a demanding role and are keen to support you in any way we can. Please do get in touch with us if you have any queries or would value some additional advice. Our contact details are set out in section 9 (p15).

A Note About Covid-19

Assessing groups under social distancing - The Covid-19 pandemic is likely to affect your ability to carry out local assessment visits in the normal way. Your safety, and that of the nominated groups, is of paramount importance. We will not expect you to carry out the usual assessment visit to a group unless this can be managed within social distancing guidelines and both parties are comfortable with the arrangement. It will be perfectly acceptable to assess any groups remotely and we circulated separate guidance on 18 September 2020 suggesting ways to do this (Annex H). We would like to reassure you that we would expect all assessments to comply with all national or local restrictions in place at that time, and however the assessment takes place, this will not have a bearing on the decision to make an award.

Celebrating positive Covid-19 contributions - On the positive side, we are aware that many voluntary groups have provided outstanding service to the community since the pandemic began - either through their normal activities or by modifying what they do. We plan to recognise these efforts through a special designation of the award on 2 June so have included three new questions in the local assessment form to draw out their stories.

Groups who have struggled - We also recognise that many excellent groups were not able to provide services during the general lockdown and are still restricted in their ability to serve their community. We do not want them to miss out on the recognition they deserve. If they have been prevented from operating (and/or remain restricted) please make this clear but do also describe in detail their achievements before the pandemic. Their previous history will be used as the key evidence for deciding their suitability for the Award. However, if the current situation is so bad that a group is on the verge of folding we will need to know this too, as we will not be able to make an award in June to a group that has ceased to exist. If you have any questions about any of these points, Marguerite will be able to give further advice. You can email marguerite.weatherseed@dcms.gov.uk or call her on 0207 211 2401.

The QAVS Team

1. Introduction

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (QAVS) is the **highest award given to local volunteer groups** across the UK to recognise outstanding work done in their communities. It was created in 2002 to celebrate the anniversary of the Queen's Coronation. It is the MBE for volunteer groups and is awarded for life.

Successful groups receive a crystal award and a certificate bearing Her Majesty's signature - both presented by the local Lord-Lieutenant. They gain the right to use the QAVS logo, subject to certain [guidelines](#). They are also invited to nominate two volunteers to attend a Royal Garden Party the following year.

The annual announcement of awardees is on 2 June to celebrate the anniversary of Her Majesty's coronation. A list of the successful groups with their individual citations is published in The London Gazette, available online at <https://www.thegazette.co.uk>, and promoted widely elsewhere.

Lieutenancies have a key role in the process. You are responsible for assessing local nominated groups, presenting awards and promoting awareness of QAVS locally. In doing this you will need to **access the QAVS website**. This will allow you to download forms, upload your reports and receive automatic notifications at key stages of the process. Advice on using the website is at Annex B.

The QAVS Team at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport administers and promotes the Award on behalf of the Royal Household. The Team is keen to support Lieutenancies in their role and is available to help with any queries or provide training events locally.

2. Overview of the QAVS Process

A brief description of the process is provided below. You can also find a diagram at Annex A.

Nomination (April - mid Sept)

Members of the public submit nominations via the QAVS website <https://qavs.culture.gov.uk>.

Eligibility checks (Aug - end Sept)

The QAVS Team reviews nominations to check that they are eligible and assigns them to the appropriate Lieutenancy.

Notification to Lieutenancies (end Sept/early Oct)

Lieutenancies with nominated groups in their area receive an email inviting them to log in to the QAVS website for details.

Local Assessment and Reporting by Lieutenancies (Oct - Jan)

This involves:

- initial checks on the group's governance and reputation, followed by a visit to see them in operation (**nb: for 2021 round please note guidance circulated on 18 September 2020 - Annex H**).
- completing the online local assessment report form
- decision whether to recommend/ not recommend
- written citation by the Lord-Lieutenant supporting the decision (or explaining why the group has not been recommended).
- online submission of the form by mid-January.

Review by the QAVS Independent Assessment Committee (Feb-mid March)

All the groups recommended by Lieutenancies are assessed in detail by the National Assessment Committee, resulting in a shortlist of proposed awardees.

Royal approval (end March)

The Committee's proposed list of awardees is submitted to Her Majesty The Queen for approval.

Successful groups and LLs notified in confidence (early April)

An e-letter is sent in confidence to leaders of successful groups, explaining that they are to receive an award, congratulating them and describing next steps, which includes keeping the news confidential until the official announcement on 2nd June. LLs also receive details of the successful and unsuccessful groups.

Media pack sent (mid-May)

Awardees and Lieutenancies receive a media pack explaining arrangements for the announcement and encouraging them to promote it. This includes template press releases, graphics for social media etc.

Unsuccessful groups notified (late May)

A letter signed by Sir Martyn Lewis CBE is sent to leaders of unsuccessful groups explaining that they have not been successful, but congratulating them on their work.

Formal Announcement (2 June)

The list of awardees with short citations is published formally in The London Gazette and announced on the DCMS website. The QAVS Team, DCMS colleagues, Palace, Lieutenancies and awardees use press and social media engagement to celebrate the Awards. This includes a promotional video, an interactive map of awardees, press releases for the UK and each devolved nation, as well as blogs/posts featuring inspiring case studies from the round.

Lord-Lieutenant presents Awards (June - Sept)

Lieutenancies contact successful groups to agree arrangements for a presentation event, usually at the group's premises. The Award crystal and certificate are sent directly to the LL in June.

Attendance at Royal Garden Parties (following May/June)

Two people from each successful group will be invited to attend a garden party in May/June the year after they receive the Award.

3. What Is The Award Looking For?

QAVS aims to celebrate the very best local voluntary groups across the UK. It is a prestigious award, only given to around 50% of nominated groups each year. We are therefore looking for groups whose level of initiative and impact are truly exceptional.

What type of groups are suitable?

The basic eligibility requirements are summarised below. These are paraphrased, so you should refer to the detailed version on the QAVS [website](#) if checking a specific case.

1. The nominated group must comprise 2 or more people and must provide a specific benefit in a local area
2. The group must have been operating at a high standard for a minimum of 3 years
3. The group may have some paid staff, but more than half of the people who work in the group must be volunteers
4. A branch of a national group can be nominated, but it will be expected to demonstrate that it has developed a distinctive approach locally
5. More than half the group's volunteers must have the right of residence in the UK
6. The group must be based in the UK, even if its beneficiaries are abroad
7. The group has the appropriate insurance(s) required for its work
8. The group satisfies requirements to safeguard children and vulnerable adults, if appropriate

Certain types of group are not appropriate for nomination, e.g. animal charities (except where clear benefit to humans is a core purpose of their work) and groups whose activity is solely fundraising. If you are unclear whether a particular group is eligible, do check the online guidance and the FAQs in Annex G. If you are still unsure, you can contact the QAVS team for further advice.

What are we looking for?

A successful group will normally have the following characteristics:

- **Volunteer-led:** The volunteers are in the driving seat, setting the direction for the group's work and spotting opportunities to develop it still further each year.
- **Making a considerable difference locally:** The initiative of this group and the efforts of its volunteers have changed the situation dramatically for its beneficiaries.
- **Exceptional compared with comparable groups:** This group is likely to be one of the best of its kind in the UK.
- **Well-run:** There are high standards of governance, financial management, safeguarding etc.
- **Outstanding reputation locally:** The group has a high standing in the community and has an excellent reputation with beneficiaries, service providers and council officials (if appropriate).

Some examples of excellent groups are at Annex F.

4. Local Assessment - a step by step guide

Please also note guidance on conducting assessments during Covid-19 - annex H)

We recognise that each Lieutenancy has developed its own way of approaching local assessment, reflecting the resources available to them and the geographical size and nature of their area. We do not want to be prescriptive about how things should be done, as the local situation will be unique. However, the following sections will give an idea of good practice.

Step 1: Decide who will take the lead on QAVS

Most Lieutenancies assign responsibility for QAVS to a DL with a keen interest in the voluntary sector. This DL, assisted by the Clerk if there is one, will take charge of inviting pairs of DLs to visit and assess any nominated groups. They might also co-ordinate the eventual decision making process and the uploading of final reports to the QAVS website.

Step 2: Ensure access to the QAVS website

The Lieutenancy QAVS lead should check that:

- the central QAVS Team has the correct email address for contacting the Lieutenancy (we email LLs periodically to check this).
- all potential users are registered on the QAVS website www.qavs.culture.gov.uk and can log in successfully (see Annex B).

Step 3: Access your nominations online

The central QAVS team starts to check the eligibility of incoming nominations during the summer and assigns them to the correct Lieutenancy. Once this has been done, you will be able to see the nomination when you log in. Some Lieutenancies like to make occasional checks during August so they can start planning. However, please note that the format of the local assessment form for the coming round will not be finalised until the end of September.

The closing date for nominations is in late September. At the end of the month, all Lieutenancies with nominations will receive an automatic notification advising them to log on to the website to view them. When you do this you will see a tab showing the name of your county and the current year (example below). To access your nominations click on this tab.



All the eligible nominations for your county will then appear.

2016 Nominations for 'XXX County'				
Group name	Nomination submitted	Current status	Nomination updated	
Alzheimers Dementia Support 'ADS'	12/09/2014 14:55	Eligible	19/09/2014 10:40	Download PDF

Simply click on the name of the voluntary group to view the nomination form and get the relevant details to start your assessment. **NB: If you think that a nomination should have been assigned to a different Lieutenancy, please let the QAVS Team know as soon as possible.**

Step 4: Assign groups and arrange visits

Usually, two DLs will be asked to assess a group. Try to arrange this as soon as possible so that they can agree a date for their visit in good time before the panel meets. A suggested email explaining the purpose of the visit is at Annex C. The contact details for the group leader will be on the nomination form. **The additional Covid-19 guidance circulated on 18 September 2020 suggests alternatives to a personal visit, if social distancing cannot be maintained.**

Step 5: Download the Local Assessment Form and start your initial research

Before the visit takes place you should download the blank Local Assessment Form, so that you can refer to it when planning your assessment. To do this, go into one of your nominations and click on the 'Download PDF' link at the top of the page. **Word versions of the form cannot be downloaded from the site, due to government digital rules. However, the QAVS team emails a Word version to Lieutenancies in September and can supply them on request.**



The form asks around 30 questions about the group and is the key working document for your assessment. If, having started your research you feel that the group does not meet the [eligibility criteria](#), please let us know.

We recommend that you prepare your answers offline and complete the online version once you are happy with them. To fill in the form click on the tab 'FILL IN LOCAL ASSESSMENT FORM'.



The screenshot shows the website for The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, Berkshire 2015 nominations, and Guidance notes. Below this, a message states: "Please download Local Assessment Form template for 2013 [here](#)." The main content area features a section titled "Review nomination" with three buttons: "Download PDF", "Fill in Local Assessment Form" (which is circled in orange), and "Status: Eligible". Below this, there is a section titled "Group you are nominating" with a form field for the group name (currently showing "Alzheimer's Dementia Support 'ADS'") and a label "I nominate the following volunteer group for a Queen's Award". A label "What makes their work excellent?" is also visible.

If you don't have time to complete it in one go, you can save a draft and return to it later using the 'SAVE DRAFT' button at the bottom of the page. **The page will log out if left idle so you should save your draft periodically (every 20 minutes) or before leaving your computer.**

NB: Very occasionally there might be multiple nominations for one group. If that happens, we will flag these in the list and recommend that assessors conduct one assessment as normal. You should decide the strongest nomination form and associate your report with this one. You can then incorporate information from the other nomination forms into your assessment and citation as necessary.

Step 6: Initial research

We recommend that you start by doing some due diligence online, researching the group's reputation and governance and identifying any points to check with them. Annexes D and E provide further advice on this.

Step 7: Visit the group (if possible)

The visit allows DLs to check key facts (e.g number of volunteers, governance) and talk face to face with volunteers about the quality and impact of their work. The process will take about 2-3 hours and you should try to arrange it during their normal working hours. Please read the detailed local assessment tips at Annex C. **If social distancing requirements prevent a visit, please try to arrange phone and video conversations to help you get a good feel for the group's volunteers and activity.**

Step 8: Complete the local assessment form and share with LL (and panel, if there is one)

After the visit, you should agree your answers to the local assessment questions and enter them onto the online form (see step 5 above). Click on the download PDF option if you need to share them with any colleagues without access to the website. **DO NOT CLICK SUBMIT AT THIS STAGE.**

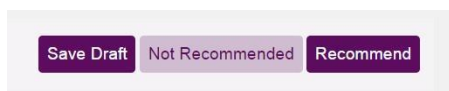
Step 9: Decision to recommend

The LL/panel should consider the information from the nomination and local assessment forms, as well as central guidance on the aims of the Award, when deciding whether a group is exceptional enough to be recommended. This can be hard to benchmark, so we would encourage you to research similar groups online and consider the examples of previous awardees at Annex F. Sometimes, you might feel that the group needs more time to mature. If so, this can be explained in the LL's citation and the group encouraged to seek renomination in 3 years. If you decide that the group is unlikely to be considered outstanding at the national level, please mark it as 'not recommended'. Unsuccessful groups are not told at which stage they were rejected, so this will not jeopardise your future relationship with them. Nor will the detail of your reports and citations be made available, since these are treated as confidential and are considered exempt from FOI requests.

Once the outcome is decided, the LL's citation will need to be drafted and agreed by the LL. Some advice on drafting the citation is at Annex D. We ask for 400-600 words. If it is under 400 words, the National Assessment Committee might have insufficient evidence to judge the merit of the group and as a result they may be unsuccessful.

Step 10: Online submission of local assessment form & citation

The form and citation must be returned via the website by the closing date, or the group's nomination will not be sent to the National Assessment Committee. The completed version can be uploaded by the Clerk, but the LL must have reviewed and approved it. Please state your recommendation for the group, either 'Not Recommended' or 'Recommend', using the buttons on the bottom of the form. Only 'Recommended' groups will go on to be assessed by the National Committee.

A screenshot of a web interface showing three buttons in a row. The first button is dark purple with white text and says 'Save Draft'. The second button is light purple with dark text and says 'Not Recommended'. The third button is dark purple with white text and says 'Recommend'.

Further advice

Some tips on conducting the visit and completing the Local Assessment Form are at Annexes C and D.

5. National Assessment and Announcement

National Assessment Committee

All nominations recommended by LLs will be considered by the National Assessment Committee. The Committee is formed of around 30 members from across the UK with a breadth of experience and expertise in the voluntary sector. They are appointed on a pro bono basis. The Lord-Lieutenant of Dorset, Angus Campbell, currently sits on the Committee as the representative of the Lord-Lieutenant's Association. He does not get involved in assessing the nominations. His role is to contribute the views of the LLs to discussions on the administration and development of the Award. Sir Martyn Lewis CBE is the Independent Chair of the Committee. His role is to observe and oversee the committee assessment process to ensure it is fair and consistent.

Nominations are allocated to sub-committees with 3-4 assessors in each. The assessors will consider all the material in the nomination form, local assessment form and LL citation in advance. They will then come together at a meeting to compare views on each group and decide which ones are worthy of the Award. **The bar is very high and only around half the nominations considered are likely to be successful.**

Attending as an observer

It can be very useful for Lieutenancy representatives to attend the sub-committee meetings as observers. The QAVS Team will email LLs about this in November each year. Only one person from each Lieutenancy can attend. They will be given priority if:

- they are on the waiting list from the previous year
- their Lieutenancy hasn't been before
- their county has historically low levels of awardees.

If a group from their Lieutenancy is discussed, the observer should keep the outcome strictly confidential until the announcement date on 2 June - especially since the outcome could change at the final Committee meeting in March. Observers must not interrupt Committee members' discussion and should keep any questions to the end of the session. Lunch will be provided, but observers cannot claim travel expenses. NB: We are currently considering holding video meetings for the 2021 round.

Preparations for announcement

Once the final list of awardees has been agreed by Her Majesty, we will send an e-letter to the leaders of successful groups (usually in early April) to let them know this and to check certain pieces of information (we will already have the citation). We will also send a spreadsheet with both successful and unsuccessful groups to the relevant Lord-Lieutenants. Please note that:

- this information should be treated as **confidential until 2 June**.
- successful groups will be aware, but **unsuccessful groups will not be told until May**.

If you see any errors (e.g. spelling mistakes) please let us know as soon as possible.

6. Engaging With Unsuccessful Groups

Groups that have been nominated and then recommended by the local Lord-Lieutenant will invariably be of a very high quality. However, not all of them will receive the Award because they will be up against the very best groups from across the UK. Unsuccessful groups will be notified by a letter signed by Sir Martyn Lewis shortly before the Awards are announced. The letter is carefully phrased and very positive in tone. Also, since 2020 we have posted this in hard copy, rather than emailing it. However, groups will nonetheless be disappointed and we realise that Lieutenancies are in the frontline in terms of managing this.

If you are contacted by unsuccessful groups, please try to reassure them that there is nothing wrong with the group - it's just that the bar is very high when awarding to groups across the whole UK.

You may be asked to get detailed feedback about the National Committee's assessment. Please avoid getting drawn into this, since QAVS is part of the Honours system where feedback should not be expected. We do try to make some notes about each decision so that we can provide these in confidence to Lieutenancies on request, to help them understand the outcome. Please bear in mind that, with several hundred groups in the process, these will not be very detailed.

Further suggestions

Some Lord-Lieutenants choose to write an appropriate letter to unsuccessful groups in their area once the Awards are publicised. We very much support this.

Some Lieutenancies also hold an event for all the nominated groups before the outcome of the assessment process is known. This presents a good opportunity for networking and cross-fertilisation of ideas. It also re-enforces the point that all the nominated groups are worthy of local recognition, regardless of the outcome.

7. Presenting the Awards

Nb: We issued guidance on 25th June 2020 about making presentations under social distancing restrictions and will keep this under review for 2021 (see Annex H). The usual approach is described below.

If there is a successful group in your area, you will need to get in touch with them to arrange for the LL to present the Award on behalf of Her Majesty The Queen.

Format

There are certain protocols to be followed at the presentation stage, but the overall format of the event can be very relaxed. Possible options could include an informal drinks reception, afternoon tea, community picnic or a local civic event. It is up to the group to decide the best option for them and to make the arrangements. No central funding is available, so groups will normally wish to keep it fairly simple. The formal presentation will only take around 10 minutes, leaving plenty of opportunity for the group to showcase their work through presentations, tours, videos and interviews.

Making the arrangements

You should aim to contact the group in early June to congratulate them, explain how the award ceremony works and suggest some dates when the LL will be available. **NB: The ceremony should not take place before mid-July (see below).**

The group should decide the format, venue, guests, refreshments and check the final date with the Lieutenancy. The Lieutenancy should give a steer on who else might be invited (e.g. DLs involved in the assessment, other civic dignitaries).

Dispatch of crystals and certificates

An engraved crystal and handwritten certificate for each group will be delivered to the Lieutenancy during June. Do let the QAVS Team know in good time if you have any special requirements (e.g. delivered to LL home address). Depending on the number of Awards, deliveries might continue into early July, so **we recommend not organising the presentations until mid-July onwards**. If your ceremony is imminent and the materials have not arrived, please contact the QAVS Team.

Publicity

This is a wonderful chance to celebrate the work of the group and to bring volunteers, beneficiaries, supporters and other groups together. It also provides a good opportunity to promote the group and the Awards via the local press/social media and to complement the national publicity work carried out by DCMS via our Twitter and Facebook accounts. Do take the opportunity to promote the event through your own channels and remind the group to do the same. The QAVS Team will share any relevant social media posts. Our media resource pack, circulated to Lieutenancies in May, will provide ideas and resources including format for local press releases. There are also suggestions in the FAQs at Annex G.

8. Encouraging Future Nominations

As LLs and DLs you can play an important role in encouraging nominations. You could do this in the following ways:

- If you come across an outstanding volunteer group, encourage someone to nominate them. We prefer nominations to come from members of the public. If absolutely necessary, a DL can make a nomination, but they should not be involved in the subsequent local assessment or panel decision. (NB: LLs cannot submit a nomination).
- Ask your contacts in local government or CVS groups whether they know of any good groups to nominate.
- Take the opportunity to promote QAVS and ensure that people are aware of it. We send out logos and templates annually in May, but you can ask for them at any time. Social media can be a very effective way of encouraging nominations. It's helpful to create your own posts as shown below, or to share posts and tweets from the QAVS team social media accounts (see p15).

NB: Some Lieutenancies have asked us whether success in QAVS relies on them getting personally involved with making large numbers of nominations. This is **definitely not the case**. We are looking for high quality nominations rather than large numbers. Rather than encouraging very large numbers of nominations, please instead put the word out to people in your local community who might know of groups that are genuinely worthy of an MBE and have the level of volunteer leadership and exceptional impact expected for the Award.



9. How the QAVS Team can help

We hope this guidance and the detailed annexes will help you carry out your role. In addition, the QAVS Team will be very happy to provide the following:

- Offer a visit or video conference to brief LLs and clerks in a particular region. This will depend on the time of year and the availability of staff.
- Offer training on the website for new LLs and staff who want to refresh their skills.
- Send PDF leaflets for you to use in encouraging nominations.
- Add your Lieutenancy to a list of observers at the National Assessment sub-committee stage.
- Answer questions about all aspects of the process via phone or email.

The Queen's Award Team is organised as follows

Jayne Law - Head of Honours & QAVS

Senior oversight along with Honours
jayne.law@dcms.gov.uk

Marguerite Weatherseed - Policy Advisor

Day to day responsibility for QAVS
process and development of policy
marguerite.weatherseed@dcms.gov.uk
tel: 020 7211 2401

Fiona Darcy - QAVS Administrator

QAVS administration and social media;
interface with public
queensaward@dcms.gov.uk
tel: 020 7271 6206

Contact details

For day to day queries about nominations, procedures or the QAVS website, please contact Fiona on 020 271 6206 or email queensaward@dcms.gov.uk

For questions about policy, please contact Marguerite Weatherseed

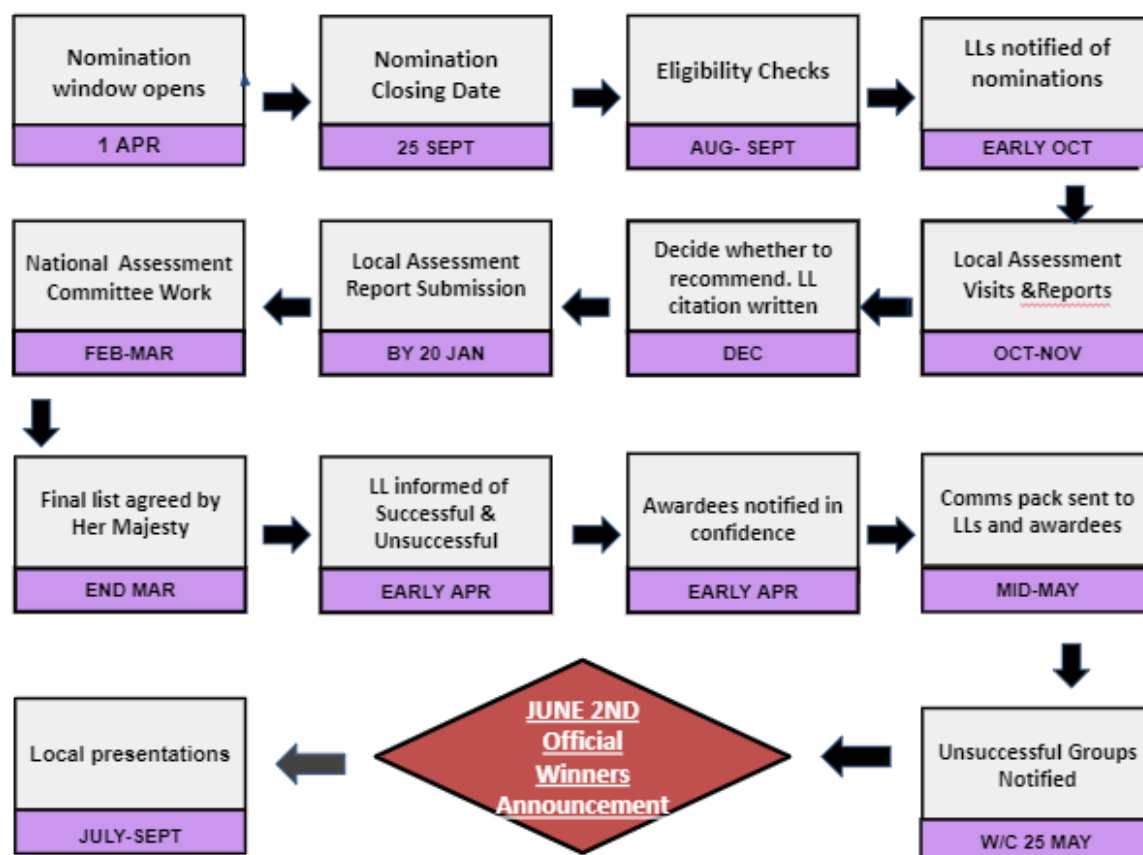


@QueensAwardVS <https://twitter.com/QueensAwardVS>



@QueensAwardVS <https://www.facebook.com/QueensAwardVS/>

ANNEX A: DIAGRAM OF THE QAVS PROCESS FOR 2021



ANNEX B ACCESSING AND USING THE QAVS WEBSITE

Website address: www.qavs.culture.gov.uk

1. The website is essential to the administration of QAVS. It is used for:
 - receiving and storing nominations from the public
 - sharing nomination details with the relevant Lieutenancy
 - receiving and storing local assessment forms and citations
 - making this information accessible to the national assessors
 - submitting additional information to the QAVS Team (e.g. Royal Garden Party attendees)
 - displaying guidance on the Award and its procedures

Anyone nominating, assessing or administering QAVS needs to be able to log in. See instructions below.

Getting access to the QAVS website

2. Several people from the same Lieutenancy might need to access the website. However, each person should have their own account, using their own email address and password for security reasons. If you do not currently have your own account, please register as a new user.

New Users: Click **REGISTER** on the home page (top right hand corner) and enter your email address and a new password. Upon registering, you will automatically be given the standard '*Nominator*' level of permission. Please email queensaward@dcms.gov.uk so we can give you 'Lord-Lieutenant' user permissions, which will allow you to view your nominations and access the assessment forms.

Previous Users: Click **LOGIN** (top right hand corner) and enter your email address and password. If you have forgotten your password, you can re-set it yourself by simply clicking on the '*forgotten password*' link on the on the sign-up page and following the instructions: <https://qavs.direct.gov.uk/users/password/new>. NB: Password reset emails will go to the email address you used to sign in. If you do not receive the email, please check your spam and junk mail.

Using the QAVS website to access and upload material

3. The step by step guide in section 4 describes in detail how to do this.

Asking for help

4. We are planning improvements to the website, but in the meantime we have included some advice on common problems below. Please do not hesitate to call the QAVS Team on 0207 271 6206 if you are having difficulties.

TROUBLESHOOTING

1. Email Address already in use

You might have used your email address to nominate a group in the past. If you now want to use this email address for your Lieutenancy role, do get in touch with us so that we can give you the correct admin access.

2. Password is not strong enough

The password needs to come up as 'very strong' before it will be accepted. We suggest a long password for greater security. Consider using a phrase or a song lyric, adding numbers, symbols or more letters to make it stronger e.g. **Qavs2021££**. The '£' sign is generally a good option for passwords, as it is less likely to be used by international hackers.

3. Forgotten password

You can click on the password reset button to reset your password. The website will send a password reset link to the email address that your account is registered with. If you cannot see the link, check your spam folder. If you are having problems, contact us at queensaward@dcms.gov.uk and we can re-set it for you.

4. Locked account

Contact the QAVS Team at queensaward@dcms.gov.uk and we will help you.

5. Can't find nominations for my Lieutenancy

There are several reasons for this:

- a. You might have clicked on the NOMINATE button rather than the NOMINATIONS button. To see the nominations for your county click the NOMINATIONS button sited under the Crown.
- b. You might have already completed the Local Assessment Form and submitted it (possibly accidentally). This means that the form will no longer be editable. However, you should be able to see the group's entry in the Former Nominations list. If you need to do further editing, please contact us and we will change its status.
- c. Eligibility checks may not have been completed yet or there may be no nominations for your county. Please contact us to see how we can work with you to promote QAVS in your area.

6. A quick note about Google Chrome

If you are having problems with the QAVS website, do try accessing it via an up-to-date version of the Google Chrome browser (rather than Internet Explorer or Mozilla Firefox). This often sorts the problem.

Further troubleshooting advice is included in Annex G (FAQs).

ANNEX C TIPS FOR CARRYING OUT THE LOCAL ASSESSMENT

The guidance below explains the normal approach, but please modify this in the light of guidance at Annex H about carrying out assessments during the Covid-19 pandemic.

PREPARATION

1. Contact the group as early as possible in order to discuss suitable dates and possible formats for the meeting. You could email or call them along the following lines:

Dear (Group Leader),

You may be aware that (group) has been nominated for the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. Congratulations! I am contacting you on behalf of the (County / City) Lieutenancy, as we have responsibility for assessing any nominated groups in our area.

The next stage of the process will be for me and a colleague to visit your group to meet you and other representatives. Ideally we would want to see the group in action and discuss its work with representatives of the management committee, some volunteers, paid staff (if any) and some of the people who benefit from your activities. We will probably need around 2 – 3 hours.

At the meeting, we will be keen to see certain documents, so it would be helpful to have available:

- *your public liability insurance*
- *a record of the DBS (or equivalent) checks of your volunteers if appropriate*
- *your annual report and accounts*
- *any surveys or evidence to show the impact of your group and the need for its work*
- *the latest volunteer and staff numbers (including hours worked, if possible)*
- *a list of the roles carried out by volunteers and staff.*
- *any promotion material such as leaflets.*

Please could you reply to this email by (date) with suggestions for possible dates for the meeting? Alternatively, you could call me on ().

We very much look forward to meeting you and your group.

Ensure that the agreed arrangements will allow you to talk with representatives of the group's governing committee, the volunteers, the beneficiaries, paid staff (if any).

NB: Sometimes a group will explain that this is not a good time for them to be considered (e.g. they have a large building project or there are health problems for the leader). **If that is the case do contact the QAVS team straight away, as we can**

withdraw them and allow for renomination the following year. However, once the local assessment is properly underway, this is less straightforward.

2. Prepare for your visit by

- reading the nomination form
- making yourself familiar with the Local Assessment Form
- conducting any online due diligence in advance (see Annex D)
- ensuring you have a clear understanding of the requirements of the local assessment process and the information required, so that you can develop appropriate questions.

3. When reading the nomination form ask yourself:

- Is there evidence that would set the group **above and beyond** the normal type of activity that you might expect from a group of this type?
- Are there any sections of the nomination form where you would like more detail or evidence about the group's activity and how it is outstanding?
- What 'open' questions will you need to ask at the visit in order to get this information?
- Is there any information that needs clarifying e.g. volunteer hours worked, volunteer/staff ratios? (If you think the group may not meet eligibility requirements please check with us.)

THE VISIT

4. When visiting the group, take with you:

- A copy of the group's nomination form
- The Local Assessment Form asking specific information about the group (the annotated version at Annex D suggests additional questions to ask).
- A list of your own additional questions

5. Try to see the group in action first and talk to some of its clients/ beneficiaries. Then work through your questions with representatives of the management committee and the volunteers who deliver activities.

6. Don't try to fill in the assessment form during the discussion. Instead, make notes of the examples, evidence and information provided so that you can fill in the form later.

7. It's helpful to start by checking the basic details set out on the nomination form to make sure that local and national assessors have accurate information. Key things to check are:

- The correct name of the group
- The correct number of volunteers and their roles

8. It would also be good to discuss the citation for the group at the start (we are now asking for this to be provided via the local assessment form, rather later in the process). Please explain that this is a short summary of their activity that will be used

for the certificate and the published announcement, if they are successful. There are various guidelines for the length and style of the citation, set out below:

- *Aim for no more 15 words. If the group name is long, the citation will need to be shorter, as the group name will take up space).*
- *The group name should not be included in the citation, as it will already be quoted.*
- *Ensure that the citation accurately reflects the work of volunteers (as opposed to the wider organisation)*
- *The citation should not appear boastful e.g. "world-class volunteers", "unbeatable service"*

Do manage the group's expectations. There is no certainty that they will receive a QAVS, as the bar is very high. We are just getting the citation at an early stage to avoid a last minute rush and because DLs will be familiar with the usual style of the sentence.

9. You can then move onto the key questions, asking about the group's activities, organisation, and the difference it makes. Try to ask a series of 'open questions' that encourage detailed answers, rather than "yes" or "no". Annex D suggests possible questions for you to use. **Key things to pull out are:**

- **Is this group really volunteer led? Are volunteers really driving it?**
- **Is its impact exceptional?**
- **In what way is it doing things better than other similar groups?**

10. Try to get examples and numbers to back up statements about the group (e.g. actual things that the volunteers have done, numbers helped). This will give the LL and national assessors a better feel for its work and impact.

EXPLAINING NEXT STEPS

11. At the end of the visit, it is helpful to explain what will happen next and when the group will hear the outcome.

- *Next step is for us to write up a report.*
- *This report then goes to the National Assessment Committee, along with the nomination form, the letters of support and a citation from the Lord-Lieutenant.*
- *The National Committee considers all nominations via a series of sub-groups. It then decides which groups will be recommended to Her Majesty The Queen.*
- *Your organisation will therefore be assessed at a UK level, alongside other groups doing similar types of work.*
- *The Awards will be announced on 2 June. You will be contacted shortly beforehand about the outcome.*
- *The National Assessment Committee receives several hundred nominations each year and only around 50% of nominated groups are granted the Award. It's a competitive process at a very high standard and there is no guarantee at this point that you will be successful in achieving a QAVS.*

12. Even if you think the group is outstanding, **please keep your comments as neutral as possible in order not to raise expectations.** The local assessment contributes to, but does not determine, whether the group will receive a QAVS. You should take care not to create an expectation that an Award will definitely be granted.

WRITING THE REPORT

13. After the visit, use your notes to make a first draft of your responses to the local assessment questions (the 'report') and consider whether you need to check details or seek further information from the group. You will need to complete all the fields, but do just use 'N/A' if the question is not relevant.
14. Remember that your report will be read by members of the QAVS National Assessment Committee, who will not have detailed knowledge of the group, nor the local context in which it works. Reports should explain context, impact and avoid local jargon.
15. Some Lieutenancies identify a central person to quality control/proof-read the draft report as a 'critical friend'. This can ensure that there is a consistent approach.

LOCAL DECISION STAGE

16. It is helpful for the LL to be supported by a panel when considering nominated groups, particularly if there are several nominations. Some Lieutenancies find it helpful to include one or two external people on the panel with good knowledge of the voluntary sector.
17. Any DLs involved in the decision should not themselves have nominated or visited a group. This guarantees impartiality.
18. The LL and panel are asked to consider the DLs' report and decide whether the group meets the high standard required for a QAVS at a UK level (equivalent to an MBE). We do ask you to take a rigorous approach. Unsuccessful groups will not be told the stage at which the decision was made and your reports will remain confidential. Your decision will therefore not jeopardise your future relationship with the group.

LL CITATION AND FINAL SUBMISSION

19. Once the panel has made its decision, the LL will draft a citation explaining the reasons for the decision. If the decision is not to recommend the group, then the citation can be fairly basic. However, if the decision is to recommend, then do take this opportunity to highlight the outstanding features of the group and their volunteers for the national assessors. They will read all the material, but this is the last comment they see and it is a good opportunity to convey the 'wow factor' for the group. See guidance in Annex D
20. The final stage is to submit the assessment report and citation to the QAVS team via the website by the stated deadline (usually mid-January). Please try to do this in good time. And thank you!

ANNEX D: COMPLETING THE LOCAL ASSESSMENT FORM - DETAILED ADVICE

The local assessment form below has been annotated with suggested questions and sample responses from previous rounds. **The advice is in purple text.**

Group Name: Please check that the name given by the nominator is correct.

Assessor's Name and Contact Details:

CITATION SUMMARY

1. Please discuss and provide a short summary of the group's work in one sentence that could be used for their certificate if they eventually receive a QAVS. The format should be similar to the examples below:

"Providing advice and practical help to women at risk of domestic abuse." "Transforming derelict land into a vibrant community park" "Providing a valuable befriending service to local elderly people" Max 15 words

The citation is required for the published announcement and certificate. Previously we asked for this in April, but the timescale was very tight. Instead, please help the group to decide a suitable citation sentence at this stage (noting the examples), which will also act as a useful summary for the national assessors.

WORK OF THE GROUP

2. Please describe the range of services and activities provided by the group (suggest 100 words) NB: If this is a project/branch of a larger organisation, make sure this refers to the work of the project rather than the larger organisation.

During your conversations with the group, please check that the nomination form correctly describes their activity and confirm this in your report. Do take this opportunity to add more detail about their activities in order to give a better feel for what they do.

Possible questions:

- Does the nomination form give a complete picture of what you do?
- Are there aspects that need more emphasis? Other things that should be mentioned?

Sample answers:

(a) "[The group] is providing significantly more services than those described in the nomination form. In addition to the invaluable work done by its men's shed team, it has several other all-volunteer groups who undertake community projects ranging from litter-picking to landscaping/gardening, recycling and heritage work. The group's

engagement with their local community in the improvement and maintenance of their local environment is extremely impressive with over 150 active volunteers from all age groups (including children). They are constantly looking for new community projects, the most recent being their heritage work in refurbishing areas of the harbour/seafront in [town]”.

(b)“There are 3 key strands to the work they do: 1. providing mutual support and social events for local sufferers; 2. raising awareness of the hazards of smoking in particular to local schools and youth groups, and 3. campaigning and educating health professionals and politicians at a local and national level to provide better care and support for lung disease patients. The first strand is typical of other [similar] groups but the latter two are what characterises this group as exceptional.”

3. What evidence is there of the need for the group’s work? (e.g. gaps in local provision, lack of similar facilities)

Possible questions:

- How and when was the need for your group’s work established?
- Do you actively review whether the need is still there, or whether it is changing?
- Are there any facts/figures about the local area/target group and the level of need?
For example, any local surveys or community audits?

Sample answers:

(a)“[The local area] has lost many services in recent years including post offices, police stations, greengrocers, butchers and many other shops. In May 2019, the bank in [village] closed. The nearest bank is now 9 miles away in [town]. The bus services to [town] have halved and undiscounted round trips cost £7. Complicated healthcare boundaries mean reaching specialist health services involve round trips of up to 56 miles. Against this background, the [group] makes two major contributions. It provides essential access to services – physically through transport, and virtually through the volunteers in the Hub itself – and it provides reasons for people who feel isolated to get out, get together, build friendships and enjoy new activities.”

(b)“Statistics clearly show that young boys, where a father is absent and who have no appropriate male role model, will struggle as teenagers and are at a higher risk of low self-esteem, and /or dropping out of education, and everything that leads to, 76% of all men in prison in England and Wales had an absent father. This outstanding programme that has been developed and implemented by the volunteers has been very well evaluated and the results are very impressive. Working with cohorts of 8 boys, substantial improvements were seen in self-esteem, confidence, managing emotions, behaviour, relationships, motivation and school habits. At the beginning of the programme none of the boys had regular contact with their fathers and by the end 50% were in regular contact.”

4. **What difference does the group make in meeting the need described above?** Please include direct benefits, but also any indirect benefits, such as preserving heritage or environment, promoting community cohesion among volunteers themselves or contributing to crime reduction. Please ask the group for evidence to support this (e.g. number of people helped, visitor numbers) and provide details below.

Possible questions:

- How has your group made a difference to individual people and/or the local community?
- Have you done anything particularly different or innovative compared with similar groups? What stands out about your group's approach or impact?
- Do you have any evidence, data or examples to show the impact? (e.g. number of people helped, surveys)?
- Do you benefit other groups by sharing your facilities or providing advice?

Sample answer:

(a) "The group provides direct benefit to both individuals (in the Town Shed) and the wider community (through its other activities). A number of individuals were questioned at the Town Shed and all were unanimous in their praise for the work there; the impact on their lives and wellbeing was very obvious and clear to see. Their environmental (litter picks, recycling, gardens) and heritage work can be seen in a variety of locations across [the town] and is an excellent example of work which promotes community cohesion. Specific indirect benefits for the wider community are the improved public spaces with maintenance and improvement of gardens, seafront, harbour and the local railway station. e.g. the Litterpicks group have collected over 3,000 bags of rubbish from the beaches and in [the town] plus the Gardens Team have planted over 6,000 plants."

(b) "[The county] includes some of the most deprived areas in Scotland and has a large number of people suffering from lung diseases. The support given to sufferers and their families has a huge impact on their lives and is above and beyond what the NHS can provide. The proactive work, in particular smoking prevention amongst young people, not only helps reduce future lung disease but also provides current sufferers with a sense of purpose in their lives."

5. **If they are a branch of a wider organisation, in what way have they made their work distinctive from that of other groups?**

NB: This is specifically for branches of groups. If the group is not a branch, do still ask about distinctiveness and draw this out in your response to question 4.

Possible questions:

- How much control does your parent group have over the way you run your services? Do you have the freedom to make your local approach distinctive? If so, how have you done that?
- Are you aware of doing things better or differently from the other branches in your

organisation? If so, please describe this.

6. Does the group operate all year round, or just at certain times of the year (e.g. a festival)? Please describe.

Nb: This is absolutely fine, but it's helpful for us to understand that the volunteers might work intensively at a particular time, rather than at lower levels throughout the year.

Possible questions:

- What are the work patterns for the volunteers? Do some of them work all year round with additional volunteers giving their time nearer to the event? What is the typical time commitment made by volunteers at the busiest time?

Sample answer:

"The core team of 15 volunteers average in excess of six hours each per week, equating to around 5,000 hours per annum. This fluctuates greatly throughout the year, with volunteers working full time in the period leading up to and during the Festival. In addition the surge in wider voluntary support (up to 500 more volunteers) during Festival time adds a further 2,000 hours to the total."

7. Please describe the area that the group serves and any challenges such as deprivation, rural isolation, lack of community, unequal opportunities. Please give examples.

This is an important opportunity to describe the context in which group operates and any implications this has for its work. It's helpful to be specific. For example, if describing a rural setting, how far away is the nearest large town and what is its population size? Do volunteers have to travel large distances? Is it hard to muster volunteers for various reasons? If describing deprivation, you might want to use one of the online deprivation measures for a local postcode.

Sample answers:

"[The group is in] a remote rural community, with declining local services, and poor access to towns and bigger facilities for the low-income household or less mobile residents. The challenges of remote rural communities such as this are so significant that the County Council has recently established a Commission to look into their future sustainability. [The village] and the surrounding area have a median age of 54 years old, thus a much more elderly population than the national average. There are nine daily bus services to [the town], the last one around 6.30pm – without a car, this is the only way to reach a supermarket, hospital, council offices, cinema or cultural activities. The village has a doctors surgery, pharmacy, various independent retailers (many of them economically marginal) and a post office, but the bank has now permanently closed."

"[The city] was ranked the 30th most deprived area in England according to the 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation, with five wards in the top 10% of the most deprived neighbourhoods in England. The latest census shows that [its] foreign-born population is 13.4%, 67% of whom have arrived since 2001. The vast majority of asylum seekers/refugees are to be found in the poorer areas of the city where deprivation levels and social isolation are worst, and community networks are weakest."

8. How has the group's operation been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic? [for 2021 only]

This is a very important section because national assessors will need to understand the impact of the pandemic on the group and any ways in which it has been prevented from functioning. We recognise that this is outside the group's control and will still award QAVS to outstanding groups based on their historic activity. **Please provide as much detail as you can here.**

9. During the pandemic has it been able to offer any additional or different services to the community? [for 2021 only]

Many groups will have modified their activities in order to keep supporting their beneficiaries during lockdown and the ongoing restrictions (e.g. providing telephone support or online educational resources). Others might have adapted their activities totally in order to respond to new needs (e.g. making PPE, collecting prescriptions).

10. What is the impact of this additional support during Covid-19 (e.g. how has it helped, how many people have been supported, creation of beneficial partnerships etc?).

Please provide as much detail as you can about the positive impact the group's contribution has made during the pandemic. References in news articles, quotes or messages of thanks (particularly from other groups/authorities) would be particularly helpful.

11. Are the group's beneficiaries based abroad, or in other parts of the UK?

If the answer is 'no' please skip to question 11

If the answer is yes, please answer the further questions below:

NB: For most QAVS nominations the answer will be 'no'. The online form will then automatically skip the next questions.

(a) If its beneficiaries live elsewhere, is the group itself based entirely locally?

QAVS is aimed at local groups of volunteers, so this question aims to confirm that point.

(b) In what ways does its existence benefit the local community as well as people elsewhere?

Is this group benefiting the local community in some way, as well as beneficiaries in other areas? For example, is it significantly improving community cohesiveness through organised events, combating loneliness through volunteering opportunities, developing skills?

Sample answer:

[The group] is all about providing benefit overseas but there clearly are some local benefits. The opportunity for local people to make a difference overseas. These volunteers have their lives enhanced by their experience and induces a feel good factor in their community and in the local press. There are some wider benefits in terms of awareness and satisfaction for other members of the community: local school children have direct learning opportunities when visited by returning volunteers. To judge from the response to occasional requests for donations of equipment, toys or clothing, members of the community love the opportunity to give to a good cause.

ROLE AND STATUS OF VOLUNTEERS

12. No of volunteers

No of full time paid staff

No of part time staff

13. Do at least half the volunteers have the right of residence in the UK? (this is an eligibility matter for the Honours System that needs simple confirmation with the group)

Yes ☐

No ☐

14. What roles do the volunteers cover and what does this involve?

It's probably easiest to ask the group to provide a list. You can then summarise the main points for your report. Their list could include:

- A list of the roles undertaken by volunteers (e.g. their role titles)
- Descriptions of what these roles involve (e.g. provision of food/meals; befriending; activity leader etc).

15. What roles are covered by paid staff? - As above. It's helpful for national assessors to understand who does what within the group.

16. Please give an idea of the volume of work put in by volunteers. Ask the group for metrics if possible, e.g. 'x' number of volunteering hours are provided by 'y' volunteers each week; and/or number of volunteers expressed as full time equivalents (FTEs)

If you can include any metrics, that's very helpful as they create a more complete picture than just the overall number of volunteers.

Sample answer:

"The group meets every Wednesday morning, 50 weeks a year, this provides a base figure of about 150 hours per volunteer and 4800 for the group. Each volunteer will work additional hours depending on the tasks that they are engaged in. The group's officers, in particular the Chairman, work considerably over and above three hours a week."

17. Which aspects of the group's work rely on volunteers' input?

Please ask for examples that demonstrate the essential contribution of the volunteers. How does the group rely on them?

Sample answer:

"The contribution of volunteers to this organisation can only be measured by the fact that without them the Museum would not exist. Valuable artefacts would fall into disrepair and dereliction. Knowledge of historical skills and crafts would be relegated to academia with little opportunity for practical demonstration sites. The Museum is open all year round on Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays. Special events are organised for occasions such as May Day, Mother's Day, Halloween, Christmas etc. The museum is opened during the week at special request by groups. School groups book in for their own bespoke training day with children of all ages...Given that many of the volunteers are involved in governance, archiving of exhibits and maintenance of materials in addition to education sessions, for many this is a full time commitment."

18. We look for groups that are volunteer-led, with volunteers having a key input in decision making at all levels. How are volunteers represented in key leadership roles? In what ways are volunteers leading, setting direction and acting as an inspiration to the rest of the group?

19. What evidence is there that the other volunteers can feed in their thoughts and ideas to the leadership through a regular forum or reference group? Does it feel like their own project, or are they just following instructions from paid staff?

Possible questions:

- What are the official roles on the group's governing committee (e.g. Chair, Treasurer, Secretary etc)?
- Is an AGM held annually and is it open?

- It's useful to check the way strategic decisions are made, when considering the extent of volunteer leadership.
 - Where there is a formal board with Trustees, ask about their relationship with the rest of the organisation. Are they very actively involved with the group, or do they focus on providing high level oversight? If it's the latter, are paid staff effectively running things?
- Also ask whether there are mechanisms for volunteers at lower levels to influence decisions.
 - Who decides how things are done on a daily basis? Are paid staff being directed by volunteers? Or is it the other way round?
 - Are volunteers who directly provide the service represented on the governing body/ management committee?
 - Are there ways in which other volunteers can contribute their ideas / learning / opinions / suggestions about the running of the organisation?

Sample answers:

(a) "The Group is completely managed by volunteers. The board comprises 9 volunteers. The part time manager does attend the board meetings in an advisory capacity... (their) role is to obtain & contract with the various organisations that will use the facilities... Everything else is done by the volunteers apart from a small amount of maintenance."

(b) "In addition to the trustees (also volunteering), all volunteers are invited to inform on strategy via an annual Consultation Survey. Volunteers are also invited to become [group] Members... who meet on a quarterly basis to inform on strategic direction. All volunteers meet quarterly to discuss relevant issues and ideas and suggestions are taken seriously..."

20. Are there procedures for electing and refreshing the governing body?

Sometimes the leadership of a group becomes a closed shop and isn't open to other people's ideas or involvement. A good group will be aware of this and will take steps to avoid it.

EVIDENCE OF A WELL-RUN ORGANISATION

Before your visit, it is helpful to check how the group is set up (e.g. unconstituted group, registered charity, community interest company, charitable incorporated organisation) as the statutory requirements and published information about the group will be different in each case.

See Annex E of this guidance for specific advice about this. If the group is a registered body, then there will be various useful information sources online (e.g. annual report and accounts).

21. Is the group affiliated to a wider group e.g. as a branch/member/partner? Does the larger group control the activity of the nominated group, or simply act as a source of advice/quality assurance? Please describe the relationship and the degree of control.

QAVS is aimed at local groups who are setting their own direction. A group might be affiliated to an umbrella group or national group (e.g. NSPCC, MIND). Alternatively, it might be part of a larger organisation such as a hospital/hospice. All this is perfectly acceptable, but the group needs to demonstrate that it has a considerable degree of autonomy and is not just following a national template or taking instructions from the main institution.

Possible questions:

- What is the relationship between your group and the parent/partner body?
- Which aspects of your work are within your control?
- Please give examples of ways in which you have taken the initiative to develop your own approach.

Sample answer:

“It functions under the overall umbrella of SCAS, to whom the Group reverts for 6 monthly re-assessments and ongoing training.”

22. Where does the group get its funds from?

23. Are there any concerns about their financial stability? Please describe.

You will not need to be an expert on finance for this aspect of the assessment. Basically, it involves:

(i) checking that the group is maintaining proper accounts (whatever its size or status) and submitting these to their official registering body such as the Charity Commission (or national equivalent) or Companies House if required.

(ii) seeking confirmation from the group that their income streams and any reserves are sufficient for the work they do and that they have plans for sustainability in the future.

We recommend that you ask to see a copy of their accounts (or find them on the group's website or via the official registering body e.g. Charity Commission, Companies House etc) and check the following points with the leadership:

- Are they meeting all requirements for maintaining and submitting accounts? Are they published and discussed at an AGM?
- What are the sources of funding?
- Are the funds used for the purposes for which they are intended?
- What is your policy for maintaining financial reserves?
- Can the group survive for the foreseeable future with current reserves?

Once you have checked these points, you do not need to provide a large amount of detail in your report. A statement along the lines of the first example below will be fine, although the detail provided in the second example is also very helpful.

Sample answers:

(a) "The group has had the enormous task of raising the necessary funds to restore and adapt this building. They have now cleared the final amounts that were due for the restoration & they can start to build up reserves for any emergency maintenance and use the income they generate to promote the various activities they undertake. As a result, although they do not have very much cash in the bank, they have cleared their debts & they seem to have excellent management and so we believe that their financial future is secure."

(b) "The group is a registered charity... The statutory accounts are audited and published in accordance with regulations... The group's main source of funds is grant income (approximately 70% of total income)... This is supported by [] subscriptions (8%), advertising revenue (2%) and fundraising (7%). Revenue is also provided through the trading subsidiary, [], which contributes around (3%). Various ad hoc financial support is given throughout the year. Unrestricted funds are maintained at a level equivalent to three month's expenditure. The trustees consider that reserves at this level ensure effective governance is maintained and allows for opportunities to consider ways in which additional funds may be raised."

24. Does the group have safeguarding procedures to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are well protected? What are they? This may include criminal record checks and/or having a policy on child protection and insurance indemnity.

This is very important. Even if the group doesn't work directly with vulnerable people, they might deal with them as visitors (e.g. museums), so they should have a clear policy setting out their approach.

Possible questions:

- Does your group work with groups at risk, such as children, young people or vulnerable adults? If not directly, might the volunteers have contact with them without a responsible adult/carer present?
- Do you have a safeguarding policy (a document that outlines how they will keep vulnerable groups/people safe)? Can I see it? How often do you review it to check that it is appropriate and being followed?
- What checks do you make if recruiting/assigning volunteers to roles working with children and vulnerable adults (e.g. DBS checks)?
- What training is given on how to keep children or those at risk safe?

25. Does the group have adequate insurance to cover volunteers and members of the public with whom they interact? (e.g. public liability insurance or employee liability insurance?)

Any volunteer group needs to make sure that all aspects of its work are covered. For example, are volunteer drivers covered in case of accidents, if the group manages a park, is there protection in the case of falling branches?

Possible questions:

- Which (if any) aspects of your work require insurance?
- What policies do you have in place?

Sample answers:

(a) "[X] members of the group have DBS clearance, enabling some vulnerable adults to work with members of the group. All children's groups are accompanied by teachers or organisation group leaders."

(b) "All volunteers are vetted by the Disclosure and Barring Service before any training is given. Thereafter, every individual's status is reviewed every 6 months, along with a biannual checking of driving licences and car insurance."

(c) "There is a comprehensive insurance policy in force... covering Employer's Liability of £10m, Public/Products Liability of £5m. There is also a seven page, formal Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and Procedures document in place covering the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults. We have seen the document. The Annual Charity Commission Report confirms that enhanced DBS checks on all Directors, employees and volunteers in eligible positions have been obtained. There is a strong safety culture with experienced H&S representation on the Board and standards set by Directors/Trustees could not be higher."

26. If relevant to the services delivered, has the group been successfully accredited by a professional body or regulator eg Ofsted, Care Quality Commission, HSE?

27. Has the group achieved any quality mark eg, from a national sports body or a national umbrella organisation?

28. Has the group achieved any other recognition or gained any awards either nationally or locally?

External recognition or accreditation can be a useful indicator of excellence, so please do ask about this. It's all helpful evidence.

Sample answer:

"ITV Meridian coverage, Kent Charity Awards finalist, Thanet Heart of Community Awards, Kent Charity Awards [date]."

29. During your assessment **please check to see if any local bodies such as the local authority, police, health, faith or other community organisations have any involvement/support in the activities of the group. If so please check their views** and include your findings below.

30. As far as you are aware, **is there any adverse information that might affect the reputation of the group or its volunteers? Are they involved in any disputes or other complaint procedures. Is there any negative publicity about them?**

We recommend that you check for any publicity in the local press or social media at the start of your research (positive and negative). You can then explore any issues with the group.

Possible questions:

- What sort of relationship does the group have with the local council, local health trust, police, schools, other organisations, businesses in the area?
- Does it work in partnership with any of these organisations? If so, consider asking these organisations whether the partnerships are positive and constructive.
- Does it have local sponsors/funders (indicates positive reputation)?

Sample answer:

"We are not aware of any adverse information. This group of volunteers works with and alongside, directly or individually, the Police, health, faith and many community organisations in providing its services to local, regional and international young people. It has been in existence since [date] with its present operation and remit. Website comment is positive and complimentary. The group has connections to the Local Authority and benefits from the patronage of a number of [organisations]. There has been considerable support from (the Local Authority) where the Mayor nominated [the group] as her charity of the year."

INCLUSIVITY

31. How are volunteers recruited?

32. Does the group actively plan to encourage a wide range of people to volunteer (ie: from a range of ages, backgrounds, ethnicities and abilities)? (examples might include placing leaflets in social centres/libraries, welcoming messages on social media/website, providing training opportunities for unemployed volunteers etc)

These questions have replaced previous questions asking about the diversity of volunteers. Instead we will be sending a short anonymised questionnaire to the group, explaining that this is not connected to the assessment and is instead for central monitoring so that we can establish whether any targeted outreach is needed.

Possible questions:

- How do you recruit volunteers? How would people become volunteers?

- Do you take any steps to include a wide variety of people in the volunteer group and welcome people who might be marginalised?

Sample answers:

(a) *"The group makes clear that new volunteers are always welcome and invites people to show their interest via a link on their website."*

(b) *"They run a special scheme giving training opportunities to ex-offenders and the long-term unemployed...."*

(c) *"All are welcome, [the group] does not discriminate. [] people are encouraged to volunteer, partly to give of their experience and partly to give them confidence on the possibility of a return to work."*

(d) *"Volunteers are aged 14-83 and all abilities welcomed. The group has an excellent website which is kept up to date and they produce a monthly newsletter. They attend community events with their excellent notice boards depicting their activities. They advertise their services with leaflets in local pubs, the caravan site and the library. The local pub also displays their relationship with the group.... Last year, by sending over 100 Christmas cards depicting a local scene to homes nearby, there was an increase in goodwill and volunteers... One of the volunteers who has a real interest in red squirrels contributes to the group discussions, despite his poor communication skills."*

(e) *"The disabled community – especially young people with disabilities – are represented in the volunteer groups and gain immeasurably from the inclusive welcome they receive and their integration into the [group's] 'volunteering team'. This is an organisation built on inclusivity and they go out of their way to enable people with physical and non-physical disabilities to engage."*

33. Does the group reach out to potential beneficiaries that might face barriers to accessing the group's services? For example, people with mental health conditions, disabled people, lonely or isolated, older people, unemployed etc. Please describe the measures used.

Possible question:

- How does the group advertise their services and who gets to hear about it – local radio / social media/ leaflets & posters etc?

Sample answers:

(a) *"The group also advertises its services via leaflets in the library and GP surgeries."*

(b) *"There is a bursary system to fund music workshops for two gifted children each year."*

(c) *"In addition to broadcasting, the group trains a diverse range of people in the [area]. In November 2019 it began training projects with those who have long term mental health issues, out of work adults, women and older people at risk of isolation."*

34. Does the group take any practical steps to make the group's services accessible? For example, physical access to buildings, adjusting opening hours, means of contact and providing materials in a second language/alternative format

Possible questions:

- Is everyone in the community who might need the service able to access it?
- Is there easy access to the premises – ramp/lift/wide doors/special facilities?
- Can it be accessed by public transport?
- What are the opening hours?
- Is there a charge for using the facilities / programmes?
- Does the group give equal treatment to people of different religions & cultural backgrounds, BAME, LGBTQ, people with disabilities, etc.

Sample answers:

(a) "The two resource centres are in central locations, open on weekdays, and where transport is an issue the charity seeks to visit or collect users as appropriate."

(b) "There is no disabled access to the bottom of the Dene, though some visitors with electric wheelchairs do manage to get up and down the fairly steep path. However, a wheelchair accessible observation platform has been built for viewing the lower Dene and the wildflower meadows planted on the Dene top. The area is accessible at all times, and well served by buses with a bus stop at the entrance to the Dene."

EXCEPTIONAL QUALITIES

35. Which, if any, of the features of the group and its volunteers described above would you see as 'excellent'?

Sample answer:

"The manner in which this small Museum is so professionally run is quite remarkable given that similar organisations, even though they may be bigger, employ technicians, curators and historians. The attention to detail and restoration of equipment is an area of excellence in addition to the educational offer. The restoration of the loom and original Spinning Jenny has enabled volunteers to replicate the weaving process from wool through to yarn and thread and to weave a distinct and unique cloth that is now being bought by a local clothing company. They believe this to be the only case of it's kind in the UK. The clog maker is one of only two in the UK, making these traditional shoes from the piece of wood through to the finished product. All of this expertise is available to school children and visitors to experience and learn about the old crafts. The site is recognised nationally as being of historic interest."

36. Are any of these exceptional (ie: likely to be among the best in the UK)?

The bar is very high, as groups are up against the best in the UK. It's helpful to look at comparable awardees from previous years (see Annex F).

37. Does any member of the group stand out as being worthy of an individual honour? Please give their name

Lord-Lieutenant Citation form (to be inputted into the online database)

The purpose of the Lord-Lieutenant's citation is to summarise the local panel's opinion about the nominated group and to explain the decision to recommend or not recommend it. If the decision is to recommend, then these opinions will be essential to the Awarding Committee when making their judgements.

The national assessors will read all the information about the group (nomination form and local assessment report) in one long document. The citation comes at the end, and therefore provides an important opportunity for you to draw out the key points for them to notice and remember; points that show how the group is exceptional and has the various characteristics sought for this Award (see below).

The citation is always carefully considered when members of the Awarding Committee are making their judgements, particularly if the decision proves to be difficult when comparing similar groups in a category from all over the UK. Please consider the following:

- The citation does not need to repeat all the detail provided in the nomination and local assessment report, since the national assessors will have studied this material carefully as well.
- Instead, the citation should try to capture what is exceptional about this particular group. For instance, the impact it has made on local people (particularly if the local context is challenging); the ways in which its work or approach is distinctive or different from other groups doing similar things; anything outstanding about the way the group is run; any exemplary qualities in the volunteers themselves.
- Also, if the group was unsuccessful previously and is being re-nominated after 3 years, please highlight the ways in which it has developed and improved its services during that time.
- The citation should be around 400-600 words. It should not be longer than that, but don't make it too short either, as this is an important opportunity to 'bring the group to life' for the national assessors. If it is under 400 words, the National Assessment Committee might have insufficient evidence to judge the merit of the group and as a result they may be unsuccessful.

Example:

“[Group] is an extraordinary organisation in that it has raised over £1.6m to restore one of the UK’s best Greek Revival buildings (Grade A listed) in [town]. In doing so not only has [the group] rescued a building – a Presbyterian Church that was only years from dereliction, but it has also provided a solution to the ongoing cost of maintenance by running it as an Arts and Heritage Centre - it is the largest independent Arts centre in Northern Ireland as well as in County Down.

With very strong leadership and over 128 volunteers delivering over 3000 hours of voluntary work a year, and with the help of two part time employees, [the group] provides a diverse program of events to a locality which suffers from the very highest levels of deprivation and rural isolation. Beneficiaries are not just those who attend events, but the whole town benefits as the building is a tourist attraction in its own right. It is estimated that [the group] contributes around £90,000 a year to the local economy, over and above the money it makes for itself. [The group] supports an essential resource as [the town] is at the end of a 35 mile peninsula and so has suffered severely during recent downturns.

As a voluntary organisation, [the group] displays those rare strengths that has enabled it to deliver with ambition. Tenacity has been required: the acquisition of the building involved delicate conversations between the Presbyterian Authorities who were against the sale of the building to a body funded by the National Lottery, but with the skill of the volunteers and the flexibility of the local congregation, a solution was found that enabled the building to continue to be used as a church while at the same time allowing it to be run commercially going forward. Over 56 grant applications were written to deliver funding. Control has been strongly evidenced: the restoration, complicated by contractors going bust during the process, involved the delicate balancing of cash flows. Flexibility in its volunteer base also allows an enormous variation of contribution: from organ playing to weeding, from regular guiding to learning how to use a sound desk. The centre would just not operate without them.

Arts funding is probably at its lowest point in a decade. Therefore, the fact that the volunteers’ work allows the largest independent Arts venue (it has over 300 seats) in County Down to operate is essential. [The group] has been a success because of its programme of activities: whether traditional Irish music, a string quartet or a summer Rock School for children, the programmes are well designed to appeal to both locals as well as those travelling from further afield. In 2018 around 3,500 people attended 35 events, in 2020 they are aiming for 40 performances. Not only the attendees benefit: the Centre is a community hub that acts as a conduit for helping an area that suffers from rural isolation.

The vibrancy of [the group] can be seen in its very popular and talented 30 strong choir. Made up of volunteers it performs publicly at least three times a year.

As an almost entirely volunteer based organisation, [the group] has delivered on an extraordinary ambition and it still continues to do so. It is a shining beacon of what can be achieved when volunteers and the local community act together to benefit the whole. Its importance is immense, not only to the Arts in N.Ireland and to the Presbyterian congregation but to the whole community in [the town] and the [area]. I have no hesitation in recommending [the group] for the Queens Award for Voluntary Service.”

ANNEX E: ASSESSING GOOD GOVERNANCE IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF GROUP

This annex aims to help you assess whether a nominated group is well run and meets key expectations for governance, finance and safeguarding. It has 4 sections:

1. Different types of voluntary organisations and their key characteristics
2. What to expect in terms of good governance (see Annex D for further tips) and where to find key information
3. Sources of advice on safeguarding
4. Additional information for groups providing care or education

1. Types of Voluntary Group

The table below aims to describe the main types of voluntary groups that might be nominated for QAVS. All of these could be eligible, as long as they are not national groups with branches and meet the other nomination criteria.

Type of Group	Description
Unregistered group	Smaller voluntary groups may choose to remain as an unincorporated charitable association or unregistered group. This is fine for QAVS. However, they should still have clear statements of purpose, policies appropriate to the arena in which they work and evidence of good financial management, as described below.
Registered charity	These are registered with the Charity Commission (England and Wales), Charity Commission NI or The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator . Registered groups must be established and operated for a stated charitable purpose and cannot use their funds for any other purpose). There are certain key requirements, e.g. to have at least 3 unpaid trustees (best practice is 5) and to submit annual accounts to the registering body each year. In return, there are some tax advantages for the group. Registered charities vary widely in their size and function, so your expectations should vary accordingly.
Community interest corporation (CIC)	A CIC is a company working for the benefit of the community. It must be registered with Companies House . Like a charity, it can accept donations and grants. However, it can also receive income from products and/or services sold as part of the company. Its assets must be used for the benefit of the community. A CIC's governing body is comprised of directors and non-executive directors, some of whom may be paid. It can also make dividend payments. There are no trustees. CICs have to publish an annual report describing their activities and the benefits provided to the community; the remuneration paid to directors; dividends paid; consultation with shareholders and more. There are fewer reporting and administrative requirements than for a registered charity, but no tax incentives.

	CICs are more common when the work involves public sector tendering or significant earned income activity.
Charitable incorporated organisation (CIO - England & Wales or SCIO - Scotland)	A CIO or SCIO is a group that operates commercially but aims to benefit the community rather than private shareholders. CIOs are registered with the Charity Commission (England and Wales) and SCIOs with The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator , so you will be able to find relevant information about them there. The CIO/SCIO option is relatively new and was introduced to allow groups to become legal entities without having to be incorporated. There are no CIOs in Northern Ireland.
The nomination for a named 'volunteer project' that is hosted by a larger (perhaps public sector) organisation	If it is part of a larger organisation, the project may not have a separate legal status. We would expect the project to show a degree of independence and self-management which could be demonstrated within, for instance, a formal agreement or Terms of Reference for its work. The project should have significant control over its own budget and the finances should be reported separately within the host organisation's accounts. It helps if the project itself generates some of its finance. The good governance suggestions below need to be interpreted within that framework. It is not sufficient for the project to have a member sitting on the host organisation's governing body. Good management could be shown by the project volunteers adhering to the host organisation's policies.

2. Assessing Good Governance

As the table above shows, groups vary considerably and our expectations for a well-run group will need to take into account:

- whether they are an all-volunteer or 'staffed' group
- their size (in finance and personnel)
- the degree of regulation affecting the arena in which they work
- the reasonable expectations of their users/funders/partner organisations.

The table below lists some key indicators of good governance to look for during your assessment and how these might be evident in different types of organisation. Groups are not necessarily expected to meet all of them, but an exemplar larger group might be expected to have most of these.

Good governance - what to look for	
Clearly written governing documents/constitution	Any group should have a clear statement describing its purpose, charitable aims and beneficiaries. This applies even to small unconstituted groups.

	<p><u>Groups that adopt a legal status</u> should have a written form of constitution that determines how the trustees/directors operate. It will also state if the group is required to hold an Annual General Meeting open to the public.</p> <p><u>Unconstituted groups</u> do not need to have trustees or a board, but you would still expect a document that describes the leadership team (e.g. leader, treasurer etc) and procedures for meeting and making decisions.</p> <p>There might also be a vision and/or mission statement that sets out the aspiration of the organisation and what it is set up to do. Also, a description of the organisation's values that sets out how it carries out its work and the way it interacts with beneficiaries, staff and stakeholders. These could be evidence of high standards in the group.</p>
Clear account of its activities, i.e. Annual Report	<p><u>Registered groups</u> have to produce accounts each year, which ideally should be externally audited. Sometimes this may include an annual report describing key activity during the year, though this could often just be recorded as the 'Chair's Report' and 'Treasurer's Report' at an Annual General Meeting.</p> <p>The annual report can be a good indicator of the drive and vision of the group, as well as the impact of its work. A well governed group will include a "governance statement" in the annual accounts describing how the group is governed.</p> <p><u>Unconstituted all-volunteer groups</u> may not have publicly available information, but should be able to describe how they report on their activities and financial accounts to leaders, members, volunteers and users.</p>
Clear information about the leadership and how they are appointed	<p><u>Registered groups</u> should have a document describing the board's structure and ways of working e.g. length of tenure, rotation, re-election. Large organisations would normally aim to achieve diversity on their governing board, as well as the rest of the organisation.</p> <p><u>Any good group</u> (including unconstituted) will have clearly defined roles for its board and leadership team. It will also have procedures for refreshing the board and ensuring it's not a closed shop.</p>
Evidence of effective and inclusive decision-making	<p><u>All types of group</u> should have proper records and minutes of meetings of their governing body. For QAVS, we would also expect to see decision-making procedures that involve staff and volunteers working on service delivery. We are looking for</p>

e.g. minutes, annual report	<p>evidence that volunteers at all levels have some agency over their own activities, such as being regularly involved in consultations with the governing board/ leadership.</p> <p>NB: Annex D suggests things you might explore with the group when assessing whether volunteers at all levels are steering its work.</p>
Well-managed finances	<p><u>All groups</u> should have clearly presented accounts, even if they are not required to submit them. They may be posted on the group's website or presented at an Annual Meeting open to the public and, for registered groups, must be sent to the registering body. Annex D suggests some things to check with the group. All groups should have insurance appropriate to the arena in which they work.</p> <p>For <u>larger groups</u>, it would be good practice to have a separate finance committee and clear financial policies (e.g. on monitoring of assets).</p> <p><u>Good groups</u> will also have evidence of a long-term strategy, e.g. a forward financial plan, particularly where the group has limited income but owns a significant asset such as a community hall. There should also be a sound approach to risk management.</p>
Evidence of good policies and procedures	<p>A good group will have written policies or procedures describing its approach to certain activities - particularly where these activities affect other people, e.g. health and safety, safeguarding. Table 3 has more information.</p> <p>There should also be internal controls in place to monitor how well these are working (e.g. whistleblowing policy, regular reviews).</p>
Other indicators of good governance	<p>Good attention to risk management covering a variety of areas, eg. financial, environmental, data protection, safeguarding.</p> <p>A governance code: If the group has also adopted a regulatory body's suggested governance code, this can show an awareness of best practice, or at least that external guidelines have been followed.</p> <p>A quality award – sometimes awarded by a national umbrella body, but could also be Investors in People or a score from regulatory audit by, for instance, the Care Quality Commission or Ofsted.</p>

Sources of information

NB: Information on small all-volunteer organisations is less likely to be found in the public domain and will need to be requested directly. However, for larger/registered groups the following online sources of information will be helpful:

- The group's annual report and accounts (where these are submitted)
- The group's website or social media
- [Charity Commission](#) for England and Wales, [Charity Commission NI](#) or [OSCR](#) for Scotland
- [Companies House](#) (for CICs)
- Third sector publications e.g. Third Sector, Civil Society News, charity section of national press etc.

3. Safeguarding

Whatever their status, groups need to have appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures and adequate insurance to cover their activities in particular arenas. If groups work with young or vulnerable people, provide care or education, you should check that they are aware of the requirements for safeguard described in the table below and are adopting them.

Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	
Expectations	<p>Protecting people and safeguarding responsibilities should be a governance priority for all voluntary groups. It is a fundamental part of operating as a charity for the public benefit. Groups who have contact with children and vulnerable adults will need to have a policy on this and, if appropriate, make background checks. See the links below for more information:</p> <p>England: Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 SCIE guidance on safeguarding vulnerable adults</p> <p>Northern Ireland: Working with Children and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Board Northern Ireland</p> <p>Scotland: Protection of Vulnerable Groups National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland</p> <p>Wales: Wales Child Protection Procedures</p>

4. Groups Providing Care or Education

Groups that provide some form of education or training for adults and children of all ages normally need to undergo assessment and inspection by regulatory bodies. This includes registered childminders.

Registered care providers	
Inspectorate	Groups that are registered care providers will be regulated and inspected by the organisations below. You should be able to find out information about the group (e.g. inspection reports) on the regulator's website, in addition to the registering bodies mentioned in table 1.

	England: Care Quality Commission (CQC) Northern Ireland: The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) Scotland: Care Inspectorate Wales: Care Inspectorate Wales (Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru)
Providing education/training	
Inspectorate	England: Ofsted or Ofqual Northern Ireland: ETI Scotland: Education Scotland Wales: Estyn

Further sources of information about voluntary group structures and the variations across the UK

More information specific to each country is available from the [Charity Commission](#) for England and Wales, [Charity Commission NI](#) and The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator ([OSCR](#)).

Other sources of useful advice:

England: [The National Council for Voluntary Organisations \(NCVO\)](#) [Volunteering Matters](#)
Northern Ireland: [Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action \(NICVA\)](#) [Volunteer Now](#)
Scotland: [Volunteer Scotland](#) [The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations \(SCVO\)](#)
Wales: [Welsh Council for Voluntary Action \(WCVA\)](#) [Third Sector Support Wales \(TSSW\)](#)

ANNEX F: EXAMPLES OF EXCEPTIONAL VOLUNTEER GROUPS

Type of work	Group name and website
Counselling	The Aisling Centre http://www.theaislingcentre.com The Magdalene Project https://www.themagdaleneproject.co.uk The Lowdown http://thelowdown.info PF Counselling https://www.pfcounselling.org.uk Devon Rape Crisis & Sexual Abuse Service http://www.devonrapecrisis.org.uk
Community gardening	Patchworking Garden Project http://patchworkinggardenproject.co.uk Mudlarks Community Garden https://mudlarksgarden.org.uk Garadh a' Bhagh a Tuath (Northbay Garden) http://www.garadh.co.uk Gro Organic CIC https://www.gro-organic.co.uk
Family work	The Chiltern Child Contact Centre https://chilternchildcontactcentre.org.uk West Sussex Mediation Service https://wsms.org.uk FACES Bedford https://www.facesbedford.org Grant A Smile https://www.grantasmile.org.uk
Homeless support/ food bank/ low income support	Roundabout (West Midlands) http://www.roundaboutevesham.org.uk Re:dish https://redishcharity.wordpress.com Hambleton Foodshare https://hambletonfoodshare.org.uk
Arts festival	North East Open Studios https://www.northeastopenstudios.co.uk Bedfordshire Festival of Music, Speech and Drama https://www.bedfordshirefestival.org.uk The Antrim Festival Group https://www.facebook.com/antrimfestival
Youth engagement	Hafway https://www.hafway.org Free@last https://www.freeatlast.st OYAP Trust http://www.oyap.org.uk The Prince of Wales Youth Club https://www.princeofwalesyouthclub.co.uk/
Music/dance engagement	Bloco Ashê Bury Community Samba Group www.blocoashe.co.uk Kearsley Youth Brass Band https://www.facebook.com/KearsleyYouthBrassBand
Enhancing and supporting community life	St Tudy Community Shop https://www.sttudyshop.co.uk/ Benn Partnership Centre https://www.bennpartnership.org.uk Eardisland Community Shop http://www.eardisland.org.uk/index.php/65-community/eardisland-community-shop Richmount Rural Community Association http://www.richmountruralcommunityassoc.btck.co.uk Rural Coffee Caravan Information Project http://ruralcoffeecaravan.org.uk

Animal charity benefiting humans	<p>Wag & Company North East Friendship Dogs https://www.wagandcompany.co.uk</p> <p>Battersea Dogs & Cats Home Chelsea Pensioner Visiting Volunteers ("BCPVV") https://www.battersea.org.uk</p>
Mental health	<p>The Open Door Centre http://theopendoorcentre.org</p> <p>Sport in Mind https://www.sportinmind.org</p> <p>Buckinghamshire Mind https://www.bucksmind.org.uk</p>
Supporting/em powering those with disabilities	<p>Autism Bedfordshire https://www.autismbedfordshire.net/</p> <p>Mae Murray Foundation http://www.maemurrayfoundation.org/</p> <p>Somerset Sight https://www.somersetsight.org.uk</p> <p>Drama Express http://www.drama-express.org</p> <p>DanceSyndrome http://dancesyndrome.co.uk</p>
Activities and services for elderly or socially isolated	<p>Activity in Retirement (AIR) Macclesfield https://airmacclesfield.com</p> <p>OPAL https://www.opalservices.org.uk/</p> <p>CARE in East Grinstead and Lingfield https://www.careineastgrinstead.co.uk</p> <p>Ham and Petersham SOS https://hamandpetershamsos.co.uk</p> <p>Neighbours in Poplar https://www.neighboursinpoplar.com</p> <p>Get Older Adults Online (GOAL) https://theprojectgoal.org</p>
Work with the vulnerable, ex-offenders, those with addictions etc	<p>Futures Unlocked https://futuresunlocked.org</p> <p>The Right Key www.therecoverycafe.org.uk</p>
Sport	<p>Coaching 4 Christ http://www.coaching4christ.co.uk</p> <p>Marshall Milton Keynes Athletics Club http://www.mkac.org.uk</p> <p>March Amateur Boxing Club https://www.facebook.com/MarchAmateurBoxingClub</p> <p>Monkstown Boxing Club https://www.monkstownboxingclub.com</p> <p>Alpha United Juniors Football Club http://www.alphaunitedjuniors.com</p> <p>Sport Aberdeen https://www.sportaberdeen.co.uk</p>
Supporting emergency services	<p>Merseyside and Cheshire Bloodbikes https://mcbloodbikes.org</p> <p>SERV - Suffolk and Cambridgeshire https://servsc.org.uk</p> <p>Crowborough Community First Responders https://crowborough-cfr.co.uk</p>
Minority group support	<p>Yemeni Community Association www.yca-sandwell.org.uk</p> <p>LGBT Foundation Village Angels and Haven Volunteers https://lgbt.foundation/villageangels</p> <p>Reading Refugee Support Group http://www.rrsg.org.uk/reading-refugee-support-group</p> <p>Cooltura- Polish Community Centre https://coolturani.co.uk</p>

Supporting hospitals, hospice or those with long term health conditions	<p>Berkshire Healthcare NHS FT 'Volunteers' https://www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk</p> <p>Breathe Easy Clackmannanshire https://en-gb.facebook.com/BreatheEasyClackmannanshire/</p> <p>Stranraer Cancer Drop-in Centre http://scdic.org.uk</p> <p>Bay Trust Radio https://www.baytrustradio.org.uk/</p> <p>Manx Cancer Support Group http://manxbreastcancersupportgroup.com</p> <p>Horatio's Garden, Salisbury https://www.horatiogarden.org.uk/the-gardens/horatios-garden-salisbury/</p> <p>Volunteers of St Luke's Hospice, Sheffield www.stlukeshospice.org.uk/volunteer/about-volunteering</p>
Improving the local environment	<p>Lichfield & Hatherton Canal Restoration Trust https://www.lhcrt.org.uk</p> <p>Portishead in Bloom https://www.portisheadinbloom.org.uk</p> <p>Friends of Red House Ramble http://www.redhouseramble.org.uk/about</p> <p>Friends of Pontypool Town https://www.facebook.com/friendsofpontypooltown</p>
Theatre/arts facility	<p>Portico of Ards www.porticoards.com</p> <p>Progress Theatre http://progresstheatre.co.uk/</p>
Museum/library volunteers	<p>Harbury Village Library and Biblio's Cafe http://www.harburyvillagelibrary.org.uk</p> <p>The Friends of Langham Dome https://langhamdome.org</p> <p>Ullapool Museum Trust http://ullapoolmuseum.co.uk</p>

ANNEX G: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ELIGIBILITY

Q: What if the group's activity is largely about fundraising?

Groups involved in fundraising activities are only eligible for the Award if their work extends beyond fundraising (i.e. this is not the only thing they do). In particular, their fundraising activity should

- involve volunteers
- focus on creating or hosting a series of events or local activity, rather than simply asking for donations
- provide a clear benefit to the local community.

Organisations whose purpose is to make grants, rather than provide services themselves, are not considered eligible for QAVS (e.g. community foundations).

Q: Are 'national' organisations eligible?

The Award is aimed at local groups of volunteers, rather than national charities. However, we do recognise that a local branch of a national charity might develop a distinct identity and devise initiatives that go much further than the national 'model'. In those circumstances, we would consider their nomination and, if successful, award it to the local group rather than the national charity.

Q: Are animal charities eligible?

Groups operating solely for the benefit of animals are NOT eligible. However, if the group's work also provides a social, economic or environmental service to the community, then they can be nominated, eg. therapy pets.

Q: Are groups in a statutory setting (e.g. hospital, prison, court) eligible?

Yes - although as with all nominations, they should highlight the specific role of volunteers as compared with paid staff. The volunteers should be operating independently of the organisation and doing more than boosting the normal operations of the statutory group.

Q: What if the main work of the group is done by one person?

It might be more appropriate to nominate them in confidence for a National Honour. You can do this by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/honours>.

NOMINATIONS

Q: Can a LL or DL nominate a group?

Ideally, a member of the public - especially a beneficiary - should make the nomination. If they have a close knowledge/experience of a group then a DL can nominate them, as long as they are not involved in the assessment visit or any subsequent panel discussions/decisions. Please note that LLs should not make nominations, as this will create a conflict of interest when they write the citation.

Q: Can a group be nominated again if they received a QAVS in the past?

QAVS is a national Honour awarded for the life of the group. It does not expire, so the group should not be re-nominated. Our systems do not currently allow us to spot this easily, so if you are aware that a nominated group already has a QAVS do let us know straight away.

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Q: Can I see incoming nominations before the closing date?

You will be able to see these once the QAVS Team have confirmed their eligibility and assigned them to your Lieutenancy. We start doing this in August, so you can start logging in and checking at that point. However, you might prefer to wait until mid-September, when all the nominations have arrived. We will send a notification to all relevant LL offices after the closing date to invite them to log in. **Please do not download the local assessment form before that time as we tend to update it each year and you might inadvertently use an old version.**

Q: Can I have a copy of the assessment form?

The assessment form can be downloaded as a pdf from the website. Instructions are in the guidance pack for LLs. The QAVS Team can supply a Word version on request.

Q: How much attention does the National Assessment Committee pay to the LL's citation and local report? Do they also see the nomination form?

The National Assessors consider all the relevant information about each group, including the full nomination form. They take the LL's citation and local assessment report very seriously, as they are a vital source of objective information about the group.

Q: Who do the notification emails get sent to?

- An acknowledgement email is sent to the nominator once the application is submitted.
- The e-letter informing successful groups in confidence is sent out via the QAVS website and goes to the group leader email address provided to us by the nominator. This goes only to the group and DOES NOT get sent to the nominator.
- The e-letter informing unsuccessful groups is sent to the group leader and nominator.

Q: When are the groups informed?

Successful groups will be informed in confidence in early April. Unsuccessful groups will be informed at the end of May.

Q: How are LLs informed?

When notifying successful groups in early April, we also email LLs in confidence with details of the outcome. After the announcement we will contact them separately about any members of the groups who might be suitable for an individual Honour.

Q: What is the normal ratio of successful/ unsuccessful groups per county?

The picture is very varied. Only a very few counties will have 100% successful nominations. Most will have a mixture of outcomes, with some getting none.

UNSUCCESSFUL GROUPS

Q: Are LLs expected to contact unsuccessful groups once the results are known?

There is no obligation to do so. We leave this to your discretion. Please bear in mind that unsuccessful groups are not notified until the end of May.

Q: Can I have more detailed feedback on unsuccessful groups?

The National Assessment Committee considers several hundred nominations and we do not have the capacity to record detailed feedback for each one. However, we do keep brief notes and can use these to provide very basic feedback to individual Lieutenancies on request. Feedback is not provided to the groups themselves, as this is not expected in the National Honours system. Please explain this to the groups if they are asking for information.

CERTIFICATES, CRYSTALS AND PRESENTATIONS

Q: I have received the crystals but not the certificates

The crystals and certificates are made by different suppliers and sent separately. As the certificates are handwritten and bespoke to each group, they tend to take longer to arrive.

Q: I am worried that the crystals and certificates will not arrive in time for the presentation event

We can sometimes arrange for deliveries to be prioritised. Please get in touch with the QAVS office as soon as possible to discuss. In general, we recommend not scheduling any presentations until mid-July onwards.

Q: Who pays for and hosts the presentation?

The group normally hosts the event at their premises. It does not need to be a grand or expensive affair. Tea and cake is a common format.

LEAFLETS AND PROMOTION

Q: Are there any flyers or leaflets you can send me?

We are able to send people attachments of flyers that they can print off. We can also provide hard copies for an event, if given sufficient notice. Please contact us to discuss your needs.

Q: Does QAVS have social media?

We use social media extensively and would encourage you to follow us and share our posts

Twitter: @queensawardvs

Facebook @queensawardvs

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/dcmsgovuk/>

Q: How can I promote QAVS on social media?

You can follow the QAVS posts on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram and share them. You could also create your own posts to tell people how to nominate, remind them to do this, publicise the closing deadline and, especially to celebrate local awardees and presentation ceremonies.

Tips:

- Make sure you use the QAVS hashtags so that we can like, repost and comment
- Use the group's hashtags in your activity to raise awareness and celebrate success
- Encourage the groups to use social media and to use the QAVS hashtags
- Use the @DCMS hashtag along with regional larger organisations (Mayor, CVS, Councils etc.) to help spread the word
- Use photographs, video and images - the more colourful the better

The QAVS team can supply graphics and templates and suggested content to help with this.

ANNEX H: ADVICE CIRCULATED IN JUNE AND SEPTEMBER 2020 ABOUT PRESENTATIONS AND LOCAL ASSESSMENTS UNDER COVID-19

Please ensure you follow any additional local restrictions when deciding how to apply the guidance below.

25.6.20: MAKING PRESENTATIONS

We have been asked for further advice about holding presentations for awardees under the current social distancing arrangements. We do not want to be too prescriptive about this, as local circumstances will vary widely. Instead, we are happy for arrangements to be left to the Lieutenancy and the group to decide between themselves. Possible options might include:

- an event in a garden with appropriate distancing
- a decision to delay things for a few months until the situation is clearer and (hopefully) things have relaxed further
- a zoom celebration, with the crystal and certificate dropped off to the group at some stage. We would be happy with any of these formats and recognise that all this will depend on what will work best for you and the group.

Timing: The crystals and certificates are due to arrive with Lieutenancy offices in early-mid July. Normally we would expect presentations to be held in summer-autumn but, again, we will completely understand if this is delayed into early 2021 (please don't forget, though!).

18.9.20: CONDUCTING THE QAVS LOCAL ASSESSMENT

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic will affect the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (QAVS) in a number of ways. This guidance covers the following areas:

- Practical advice **about conducting the local assessment visit**
- How to assess **groups adversely affected by Covid-19**
- Plans to **celebrate outstanding efforts by groups during Covid-19** - questions for local assessment.

NB: Advice on conducting socially-distanced presentations was circulated on 25th June 2020. Do get in touch with us if you would like us to forward it again. The introduction of further restrictions from 14 September (along with any additional local restrictions) might affect the format chosen for your presentation. Please check the latest official guidance listed at the end of this document and contact the QAVS team if you would like any specific advice.

1. Conducting local assessments

Normally DLs will arrange a personal visit to a nominated group in order to meet them, go through the questions with the leaders and view their work first-hand. However, we recognise

that social distancing requirements, as well as shielding advice for certain sections of the population, might prevent this.

Your safety, and that of the nominated groups, is of paramount importance. We will not expect you to carry out the usual assessment visit to a group unless this can be managed within social distancing guidelines (see links at the end of this guidance) and both parties are comfortable with the arrangement. **It will be perfectly acceptable to assess any groups remotely.** A suggested approach is described below.

There are two principles that we would like all assessments to adhere to, regardless of the format taken:

1. The format of the assessment should always comply with the restrictions in place at that time (be those local or national)
2. The assessment of the group and the final recommendation should not be impacted by the format of the assessment, to ensure all groups are treated fairly.

Suggested approach

Contact the group leader and talk about the best way to proceed. Explain that the process usually involves some initial checks on their reputation, governance and finances. Normally this would be followed up with a visit to the group to meet a selection of its volunteers and to get a feel for its activity and impact. How can we make this work? Are the group's volunteers elderly and/or shielding? Are video meetings an option, or are phone calls the only way? Would a visit to the premises be workable or not?

Please feel free to identify a solution that works best for those involved. However, a possible way forward might be:

- i) **An initial chat or email to agree a suitable approach** (as described above).
- ii) Follow this up with **an email outlining the various things you will need to check in order to provide reassurance about the group's policies, insurance cover, governance, reputation and finances.** Identify any key documents that you would want to see (e.g. constitution, annual accounts) and ask the leader to send you copies of the documents or appropriate website links. Links to newspaper and other media coverage would also be helpful.
- iii) **A video meeting or phone conversation with the group leader to go through the due diligence and governance questions.** We would recommend the use of video calls wherever possible, to most closely replicate the usual assessment process and interviews.
- iv) **A socially-distanced meeting (adhering to local restrictions) or video conference with the leader and a few key members of the group, eg Trustees, managers.** At this meeting you could cover the other questions in the local

assessment form, i.e. the group's work and impact; the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic; recruitment and roles of volunteers etc.

v) **Ad-hoc chats with front line volunteers (by phone or video conference).** This would give you a feel for the volunteers' experience of the group, their commitment and ability to influence the direction of its work.

vi) **Viewing additional material online.** There may be articles about the group online, a video, blog etc that would give you a good feel for its work and impact. Ask the group to send you links or copies of anything that might help, if they haven't already done so.

As long as you are able to have these discussions and get a feel for the group online, then this will be perfectly fine and the group will not be disadvantaged in any way. You can reassure them on that point. If you are having problems finding a way forward, do please get in touch with Marguerite in the QAVS team (marguerite.weatherseed@dcms.gov.uk) so that we can talk about possible solutions.

2. **Groups adversely affected by the pandemic**

Groups that have not been able to operate

Many excellent groups were not able to provide services during the general lockdown and are still restricted in their ability to serve their community. We do not want them to miss out on the recognition they deserve.

If they have been prevented from operating (and/or remain restricted) please make this clear in your report and instead provide plenty of detail about their achievements before the pandemic. Their previous history will be used as the key evidence for deciding their suitability for the Award. Please reassure them that any ongoing interruption to their normal activities will not count against them in the final assessment, so they should not be concerned about that.

Groups that are in danger of folding

However, if the current situation is so bad that a group is on the verge of folding we will need to know this in good time, as we will not be able to make an award in June to a group that has ceased to exist. If you have any questions about any of these points, Marguerite will be able to give further advice. You can email marguerite.weatherseed@dcms.gov.uk or call her on 0207 211 2401.

3. **Recognising positive Covid-19 contributions**

On the positive side, we are aware that many voluntary groups have provided outstanding service to the community since the pandemic began - either through their normal activities or by modifying what they do. We are keen to celebrate these efforts in a special way on 2 June,

and as such the Secretary of State and the Palace have both agreed to this year awarding a special Covid-19 designation of the Award to groups that have shown exceptional contributions at a local level to the national pandemic response. Groups will still need to meet that high standard expected of QAVS winners as a baseline, but will additionally be recognised for these efforts. As such we have included three new questions in the local assessment form to draw out their stories (in the 'Work of the Group' section). These are:

- How has the group's operation been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic?
- During the pandemic has it been able to offer any additional or different services to the community?
- If so, what is the impact of this additional support during Covid-19 (e.g. how has it helped the local effort, how many people have been supported, has it created beneficial partnerships etc?).

If the second question applies, please encourage the groups to describe anything they were able to do, whether big or small, and record these in your report. We normally encourage concise answers in the report, but in this case feel free to include plenty of detail and quotes from the group or beneficiaries and try to give a sense of the impact on the community. This will help us to capture their experiences fully and consider how best to acknowledge them. We will provide further details about this extra recognition in due course.

Links to official guidance on restrictions in the different parts of the UK:

[England](#)

[Northern Ireland](#)

[Scotland](#)

[Wales](#)