



DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL CRITERIA FOR RECOGNISING A COMMUNITY GROUP

“Community Group” means voluntary or community group

Down District Council is committed to improving community services and community relations in its area through a community development process, whereby the Council encourages community groups, and the local people they represent, to become significantly involved in the processes and decisions that lead to decisions affecting their everyday lives. The Council encourages and enables community groups to work with their local elected representatives (councillors), statutory and non-statutory bodies to identify the issues and needs in their area, and through a process of self help to provide for their community, a range of services, facilities and activities to address these.

Progressing community development and community relations work is very much dependent on the existence of a network of enthusiastic and concerned community groups. Down District is fortunate to have a very vibrant community sector. In recent years, due mainly to the funding now available to support a range of community endeavours, the number and nature of community groups in the area has steadily increased to the point where nearly every town, village and rural area in the Down District has a community group which seeks to represent the interests of local people.

In order to be recognised by the Council as a genuine community organisation and to be eligible to apply for and receive grant-aid from the Council, community groups must meet the following criteria:

- The group must be based in Down District.
- The group must be inclusive, non-party political, and open to a full range of local opinion. Membership of the group must be open to all those residing in the area which the group seeks to represent, regardless of ethnic origin, gender, religious or political belief etc.
- The group must be formed at a public meeting which must be properly advertised, with 7 clear days notice given.
- The group must hold Annual General Meetings, which must be properly advertised, with 7 clear days notice given. The interval between each AGM must not exceed 15 calendar months.
- The group must hold at least 6 meetings each year.
- Minutes must be kept of all meetings including the inaugural public meeting and the Annual General Meetings.
- The election of a committee and office bearers must be properly conducted.
- The group must have a constitution that has been adopted at a public meeting.
- The group must have a bank/building society account, and keep a proper record of its accounts.

- In the event of dissolution, acceptable arrangements must be made for dispersing the group's funds.
- The group must be committed to equal opportunities in terms of its own policies and the delivery of services to those it serves or represents.
- Groups whose activities involve working with children or young people should have a Child Protection Policy statement (where appropriate).
- The group must be accountable to local people through its constitution, membership, committee elections, accounting procedures and Annual General Meetings.
- The group must meet need and respond to demand that is not being adequately addressed by other organisations in the same area or neighbourhood.

Existing and emerging community groups should adopt and implement the above as good practice.

Council funding is only available to certain types of groups and for specific activities.

Enquiries should be directed to:

The Community Safety Officer
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24 Strangford Road
Downpatrick
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