

## **It's easy to nominate a group of volunteers for the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service**

- You've been impressed by a group of volunteers in your local area. You, a relation, a friend or your wider community have benefited significantly from their work. You feel strongly that they deserve recognition.
- **Don't hesitate. Get nominating the group for a QAVS.**
- You've found the nomination form on the QAVS website and it looks rather daunting on first sight. True, it may take a little time and thought to complete, but it's not difficult and you don't have to do it all on your own. Here's one way of setting about it.
- **Tips on completing the form:**
  1. Start by reading the helpful Guidance Notes and especially check the eligibility requirements to make sure your nominee group fits the criteria.
  2. The nomination process is not secret. So, you can enlist the help of the organisation itself to deal with certain questions e.g. the number of volunteers actively involved, the age profile of volunteers, the number of people who have benefited over a certain period of time.
  3. You can also engage with individual volunteers to find out e.g. what training they receive, what support they get, how much time the work involves, what motivates them
  4. You may feel that your own direct experience is sufficient to enable you to answer some of the questions dealing with e.g. the way the group is meeting an obvious need or the determination to overcome obstacles. But, here again, you need not be alone because you can talk to other beneficiaries and include their experience of the group's work.
  5. Some questions need only short answers – not more than 50 words. Others specify not more than 200 words. That doesn't mean it has to be 200 words or even nearly 200 words. It is perfectly possible to be precise or to make a powerful case in, say, 100 words.

### □ **The two letters**

1. As you will see from the form, the nomination requires two letters. The Guidance Notes, under the heading 'What proof of support must I show?', are helpful in setting out the kind of observations that should underpin the force of the nomination.
2. Without actually prescribing it, the way that advice is set out suggests a structure and content for the letters.
3. The letters could come from beneficiaries or from people well-placed to observe the work of the group in detail, e.g. a doctor, teacher, social worker or archaeologist.
4. Describing one or two detailed examples of how the group has enhanced the lives of, for example, vulnerable people or improved the life of the local community would bring to life the work and impact of the group.

**Don't hesitate. Start nominating now.**

Dr John Cottrell, High Sheriff of Bristol 2011-12