

## Friends of the Commonwealth

Friends of the Commonwealth ('Friends') is a people's organisation made up of individuals who want to assist others around the Commonwealth. Friends is rights based, internationalist in outlook and based on shared principles and values\*

(\*reflected in [the Singapore Declaration of 1971](#) and [the Harare Declaration of 1991](#))

Friends have the following objectives:

- communicate relevant news and opinions
- provide a forum for learning, discussion and participation in the work of the Commonwealth and its networks
- offer opportunities to become further involved through events, volunteering and networking
- create a motivated supporter base that will actively solicit support for the Commonwealth
- mobilise diversified resources across the Commonwealth.

As an organisation, Friends is open to everyone. In the UK, it is incorporated as a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. Governance is exercised through an independent, voluntary board of trustees. Individual Friends receive opportunities to attend events, an email newsletter, networking opportunities and other benefits.

Although Friends is a relatively new organisation, it already has Chapters in a number of Commonwealth countries and is planning to establish many more.

If you know of organisations which might like to consider becoming Friends National Chapters, we would warmly welcome initial enquiries from them. Enquiries should be directed to The Development Officer, Friends of the Commonwealth, Marlborough House, Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5HY or email [friends@commonwealth.int](mailto:friends@commonwealth.int)

### **National Chapter Accreditation Guidelines.**

#### Eligibility

1. There will normally be one recognised National Chapter per Commonwealth country.
2. Friends of the Commonwealth National Chapters (NCs) will generally come from existing national organisations
3. Existing organisations must have registered not for profit or similar status in their own countries
4. Such organisations must be able to provide a written constitution or similar document and an independently audited set of accounts.
5. Groups of individuals, or individuals, will be encouraged to link with other organisations in country in order to form a national chapter. The UK Chapter may be able to help facilitate introductions to other Commonwealth organisations on request.
6. NCs agree to follow Friends guidelines regarding use of logos, reporting mechanisms and other procedures.

### Accreditation Process

The process of accreditation is broadly as follows and should normally take no longer than three months:

1. An understanding is reached between Friends Trustees and an existing organisation or group of individuals intending to work towards forming a Friends National Chapter
2. Relevant accreditation requirements are met
3. A formal agreement is signed by both parties, for a period of three years, renewable subject to mutual consent.

### Responsibilities and Roles

While NCs are required to share Friends objectives, subscribe to Commonwealth values and principles, and meet their obligations under the eligibility criteria, they are free to conduct their own affairs within national boundaries. Each NC is fully independent and responsible for all its activities.

Friends Trustees will provide technical support and advice, coordinate communications between Chapters and all other practicable forms of assistance.