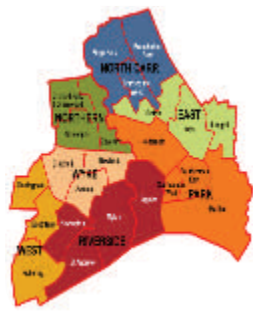


# What is a Constitution?



**Hull CVS**  
'community and voluntary services'



Constitution is a catch-all phrase referring to the governing document of an organisation. Different organisations may have different forms of governing document, such as a memorandum and articles of association or deed or rules. Whatever form of governing document exists, it is a legal document, enforceable in the courts, rather like a contract. Before your organisation adopts a constitution it is crucial that you bear in mind what the document is and why you need one.

A Constitution is:

- The *Governing Document* of the organisation
- The thing that defines the organisation (ie the organisation's *Objects* or *Purpose* – the reason it exists)
- The thing that defines the *association* between the people who form the organisation
- The thing that sets out the general rules by which these people *govern* the work and activities of the organisation
- *Binding* - once agreed and adopted by your group, you need to follow it
- Concerned with major *decision making and structures of accountability*
- Best got right from the start and *worth a bit of time, research and advice*
- Available in all kinds of *templates* to suit all kinds of groups so it can be created from scratch for each organisation

helping you make a difference



## A Constitution is Not:

- About day to day running of the organisation
- An action plan or a wish list of the things the people want to do
- Concerned with etiquette or behaviour at the organisation's activities
- Any use at all if people are not clear about what it is or what it says and don't follow it
- Just a piece of paper to keep funders sweet
- Concerned with day to day policies by which the organisation runs
- Something you want to have to change and amend very often
- Good copied from other organisations or hastily flung together

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