

The King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS) – Forfeiture Policy

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Contents
1. Purpose and Scope
2. Background
3. Legal Basis
4. Grounds for Forfeiture
5. Forfeiture Process
6. Consequences of Forfeiture
7. Appeals
8. Review

Section 1: Purpose and Scope

1. This policy sets out the procedures for the forfeiture of The King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS).
2. KAVS is the highest award given to local volunteer groups across the United Kingdom, recognising outstanding voluntary service to communities and holding equivalence to an MBE.
3. The purpose of this policy is to protect the integrity and reputation of the Award, and of His Majesty The King, by providing clear and transparent arrangements for circumstances in which an Award may be forfeited.
4. This policy applies to all past and present recipients of The King's Award for Voluntary Service and its predecessor, The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (QAVS).

Section 2: Background

5. QAVS was created in 2002 for Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee as the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service and renamed following the accession of King Charles III. Awardees are announced annually on 14 November, which is the King's birthday.

6. Awardees receive a commemorative crystal award and a certificate (Grant of Appointment) featuring the King's signature, presented locally by the Lord-Lieutenant. Additionally up to two representatives from the group may also be invited to attend a Royal Garden Party.

Eligibility Criteria & Assessment

7. In order to be eligible, each group must:
 - Consist of at least three people;
 - Be driven and steered primarily by volunteers rather than paid staff;
 - Have been operating continuously for three years or longer;
 - Provide specific clear, social, economic, or environmental benefits to the local community; and
 - Be based in the UK, Channel Islands or the Isle of Man.
8. Following a nomination, local assessors (normally Deputy Lieutenants) research and visit nominated groups before writing a report on their suitability. Local assessment panels in each lieutenancy then decide which ones to put forward to the National Assessment Committee.
9. The National Assessment Committee is chaired by Sir Martyn Lewis CBE and the members are appointed through the fair and open public appointments process. The committee will be responsible for evaluating up to 600 nominations of local voluntary groups from around the UK.

Administration of KAVS

10. KAVS is administered by the KAVS Team in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, who work closely with Lieutenancies in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The KAVS Team will notify the Prime Minister and seek approval from His Majesty The King once the National Assessment Committee has made their final recommendations at the committee meeting.
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Section 3. Legal Basis

11. KAVS was established by Royal Warrant (2023). The Royal Warrant provides that:

“It shall be competent for Us, Our Heirs and Successors by an Order under Sign Manual and on a recommendation to that effect by The King's Award for Voluntary Service National Committee of Assessors and Secretary of State, to cancel and annul an Award to any group should they bring the Award, His Majesty The King or the Royal Household into disrepute.”

Section 4. Grounds for Forfeiture

12. An Award may be forfeited where one or more of the following grounds are met. In considering forfeiture, regard will be given to whether issues relate to the group as a whole, or to an individual within the group, and whether the group has taken timely and appropriate action demonstrating sound governance.
13. For the purposes of this policy, a “significant individual” includes trustees, directors, office-holders, or any individual with substantial influence over the governance or public representation of the group. An Award may be forfeited on the basis of an action or actions that pre-dates the grant of the KAVS. This is similar to the rules that govern forfeiture for individual honours.
14. An award may also be forfeited where the actions of the group, or of significant individuals within it, bring or are likely to bring the Award, His Majesty The King, or the Royal Household into disrepute, such as undermining public confidence in the integrity of the Award.
15. This may include:
 - publication or promotion of offensive, derogatory or inflammatory material;
 - behaviour inconsistent with the expectations of publicly recognised voluntary service; or
 - failure to take appropriate action in response to reputational risks.
16. Other examples include:

Serious Misconduct or Governance Failure

17. Where a recipient group, or a significant individual within it, has engaged in serious misconduct or demonstrated significant failures of governance. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - safeguarding or child protection failures;
 - fraud, embezzlement or financial mismanagement;
 - hate speech or discriminatory behaviour;
 - serious breaches of trust by trustees, office-holders or senior volunteers; and
 - any activity that undermines the integrity or reputation of the Award.

Criminal or Regulatory Findings

18. Where a significant individual within the group has (including but not limited to):
 - been convicted of a criminal offence and sentenced to imprisonment of more than three months;
 - been convicted of a relevant sexual offence under the Sexual Offences Acts applicable in England and Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland;

- been censured, suspended or struck off by a professional, statutory or regulatory body where this is relevant to the integrity or reputation of the Award; or
- been found, following a trial of the facts, to have committed a relevant sexual offence and the group has failed to take swift and decisive action to remove the individual from all governance or participatory roles.

Misrepresentation or Fraudulent Application

19. Where the Award was granted on the basis of false, misleading or incomplete information, or where significant information subsequently comes to light which would have materially affected the original decision.

Substantial Change to the Recipient Group

20. Where the nature, structure or activities of the group have changed materially since the Award was conferred, such that it would no longer meet the Award criteria. This includes:
- significant changes to governance or leadership structures;
 - adoption of an overtly political purpose;
 - support for terrorist activity or a proscribed organisation;
 - transition to a body primarily focused on worship or faith activities without a demonstrable voluntary service element; or
 - cessation of activity or prolonged dormancy.

Section 5. Forfeiture Process

Decision-Making Principles

21. In all cases, decisions will be made in a manner that is fair, proportionate and evidence-based. Consideration will be given to:
- the seriousness of the conduct;
 - whether the conduct relates to an individual or the group as a whole;
 - any mitigating factors;
 - the steps taken by the group to address the issue; and
 - the impact of forfeiture on beneficiaries and the wider community.

Receipt of Concerns

22. Concerns may be raised by members of the public, official bodies, Lieutenancies, regulators, or through internal KAVS processes.

23. Concerns must be submitted in writing to the KAVS Team and should include sufficient detail and, where possible, supporting evidence.
24. Information gathered as part of the forfeiture process will be handled in accordance with applicable data protection legislation and shared only where necessary for the purposes of the process.

Initial Review

25. Upon receipt of a concern, the KAVS Team will:
- acknowledge receipt;
 - assess whether the concern falls within the scope of this policy; and
 - determine whether there is a credible basis for further consideration.
26. Where a concern is considered to be outside the scope of the policy, clearly unsupported, or lacking a credible evidential basis, no further action will be taken. The decision and rationale will be recorded.

Preliminary Assessment

27. On receipt of a complaint, the KAVS Team will notify the organisation, which then has **14 days** to provide an initial response. The team will then conduct fact-finding and liaison with the relevant Lieutenancy to determine if there are grounds for a full review. This may include:
- proportionate fact-finding; and
 - checks with relevant regulators, statutory bodies or public authorities where appropriate.
28. The purpose of this stage is to determine whether there are reasonable grounds to proceed to a formal investigation. In reaching this decision, consideration may include:
- the seriousness and credibility of the concerns raised;
 - whether the issues relate primarily to the recipient group or to an individual associated with it;
 - whether the group has taken timely and appropriate action demonstrating effective governance;
 - whether the matters alleged may bring the Award, His Majesty The King or the Royal Household into disrepute; and
 - whether continued retention of the Award may undermine public confidence in the integrity of KAVS.
29. The KAVS Team may defer consideration of a case pending the outcome of criminal proceedings, safeguarding investigations, regulatory action or other official processes where appropriate.

Decision Point

30. The decision to proceed to a formal investigation will be made by the KAVS Team in consultation with the Deputy Director of the Public Bodies, Appointments and Honours Team.

Notification to the Group

31. Where a formal investigation is initiated:
- the group will be notified in writing;
 - details of the concerns under consideration will be provided; and
 - the group will be given 28 days to submit written representations and supporting evidence.
32. Where no response is received within the specified timeframe, the process may continue on the basis of the information available.

Formal Investigation

33. If a formal investigation is initiated, the recipient group is formally notified and given **28 days** to submit written representations and supporting evidence. Following this 28 days, the KAVS Team will seek to progress the investigation within a further **six weeks** of receiving the group's documentation.
- detailed evidence gathering;
 - engagement with regulators, statutory bodies or other relevant organisations where appropriate;
 - consideration of the group's written representations;
 - requests for further information or clarification where necessary; and
 - liaison with the relevant Lieutenancy, including where appropriate to support engagement with the recipient group.
34. This stage will explicitly consider:
- whether the issue relates primarily to the group or to an individual; and
 - whether the group has taken timely and appropriate action demonstrating good governance.
35. The forfeiture process is not intended to duplicate criminal, civil or regulatory proceedings. The purpose of the investigation is not to determine criminal or civil liability, but to assess whether continued retention of the Award would be likely to damage the integrity or reputation of KAVS.
36. Investigations will be conducted as efficiently as possible, while ensuring a fair, proportionate and evidence-based assessment of the available information. The KAVS Team will seek to progress cases in a timely manner, although timescales will depend on the complexity of the issues and the availability of evidence.
37. The investigation process assesses any remedial actions or mitigating steps taken by the group, such as effective governance responses to an individual's behavior, which may lead to the retention of the Award if the group's reputation remains intact. These remedial actions are monitored through the investigation process, which includes

engagement with regulators and Lieutenancies to assess the group's continued suitability for the Award.

Forfeiture Committee

38. Once the investigation is complete, a report is prepared for the KAVS Forfeiture Committee. The committee is then convened to review the evidence and determine whether to recommend forfeiture to the Main KAVS Committee, which is the National Assessment Committee.
39. The KAVS Forfeiture Committee, comprising:
 - Chair of the KAVS Committee (Chair);
 - Senior Civil Servant from DCMS (Deputy Director, Public Bodies, Appointments and Honours Team);
 - Lord-Lieutenant representative;
 - KAVS National Assessor; and
 - DCMS Legal representative (advisory only, non decision making).
40. Members of the Forfeiture Committee must declare any conflicts of interest and, where appropriate, recuse themselves from the decision-making process.
41. The Committee will:
 - review the available evidence;
 - determine whether grounds for forfeiture are met; and
 - decide whether to recommend forfeiture.
42. The KAVS Forfeiture Committee will apply the following standards regarding evidence and proof:
 - **Evidential Threshold:** Decisions must be fair, proportionate, and evidence-based. Initial reviews, carried out by the KAVS Team require a credible basis for further consideration, while the preliminary assessment (also carried out by the KAVS Team) must establish reasonable grounds to proceed to a formal investigation.
 - **Reasonable Belief/Credible Evidence:** The process focuses on whether continued retention of the Award would likely damage the integrity or reputation of KAVS, rather than determining criminal or civil liability. For example, the KAVS Team conducts fact-finding and checks with regulators to ensure the seriousness and credibility of concerns.
 - **Standard of Proof:** While a specific legal "standard of proof" (such as "beyond a reasonable doubt") is not explicitly named, the policy requires a formal investigation to include detailed evidence gathering and engagement with statutory bodies to ensure a robust assessment.
43. The Committee may also recommend that relevant information be referred to appropriate regulators, statutory bodies or public authorities where this is considered necessary and proportionate.

Ministerial and Prime Ministerial Consideration

44. Where forfeiture is recommended:

- the case will be submitted to the responsible Minister;
- subject to Ministerial agreement, a recommendation will be made to the Prime Minister;
- the Prime Minister may make a formal recommendation to His Majesty The King;
- While specific timings for these high-level approvals are unpredictable, we will keep the relevant parties informed of the progress through these stages; and

Approval by His Majesty The King

45. Forfeiture of an Award will only take effect following approval by His Majesty The King under the Royal Warrant.

46. Once approval has been granted, the forfeiture will take effect from the date specified in the formal approval process and the Award will be treated as forfeited for all official purposes.

Notification and Publication

47. Following approval by His Majesty The King:

- the recipient group will be notified in writing;
- arrangements will be made for the return of the Award, including the certificate (Grant of Appointment) and crystal award;
- the group must cease using the KAVS title, emblem and branding;
- any past output with the emblem should be withdrawn or reissued;
- a notice of forfeiture will be published in The Gazette; and
- official KAVS records and relevant references to the group on GOV.UK and the KAVS website will be updated to reflect the forfeiture.

48. Additional publication of forfeiture details may be made where considered appropriate.

Section 6. Consequences of Forfeiture

49. Upon forfeiture, the group must:

- cease use of the KAVS (or QAVS) title, emblem and branding; and
- return all physical Award items (for example, the crystal trophy and certificate) to DCMS at their own cost.

Can KAVS be forfeited posthumously?

50. If a significant individual involved with a group has been accused of a crime after their death, the Forfeiture Committee can consider the case with a view to issuing a

statement that confirms action would have been taken had the individual been convicted.

51. The Committee is able to consider a case where allegations of criminal behaviour are drawn to its attention within ten years of the death of the significant individual connected to a group with a KAVS award. The crime must be reported to the police, and the police must make the decision that the seriousness of the allegation warrants taking a full witness statement from the accuser(s).
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Section 7. Appeals

52. Recipient groups have the opportunity to make written representations during the investigation process. Once a final decision has been approved, there is no further right of appeal.
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Section 8. Review

53. This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure continued relevance and effectiveness.