

Getting to grips with the terminology and acronyms can be confusing – especially when they are used in meetings or discussions by professionals on a daily basis. But how can we, as voluntary and community sector organisations join in the conversation if we don't know what they're talking about?

Whilst we will continue to strongly urge statutory services to use plain English and straight forward terminology, it remains the case that verbal and written shorthand for common terms, activities and phrases is still widely used by professionals.

To help groups better engage in these areas, Sobus have put together a series of helpful jargon buster for local organisations

Balance sheet	A summary of the assets and liabilities of an organisation at a particular date, usually the end of the financial year.
BAME or BAMER	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic or Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee
Benevolent societies	Societies established for charitable purposes. Benefits must be distributed wider than their members.
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (sometimes used instead of BAME)
Capital expenditure	Expenditure on equipment or buildings.
Charitable activities	The activities that charities undertake to provide public benefit. Incoming resources from charitable activities result when these activities are performed in exchange for a fee, or through a contract to deliver public services.
Charitable foundations and trusts	Charity whose primary purpose is awarding grants to other voluntary organisations, institutions or individuals.
Charities Act	In December 2006 the government passed the Charities Act, an overhaul of the 400-year-old charity law.
Civil society	Civil society is defined in many ways. It is usually used to refer to the sphere where people come together to pursue collective interests and make a positive difference to their lives and/or the lives of others. Civil society is also used to refer to the body of organisations that exist between government, individuals and businesses.
Community foundation	A fundraising and grant-making charity established to generate resources for local charities in a specific geographical area or community and to promote the effective use of these resources.

Community interest company	A limited company which operates as a business providing community benefit.
Company limited by guarantee	An incorporated organisation which has a legal personality separate to that of its members. In the even of business ceasing, guarantors are liable to contribute a (usually very small) amount towards winding up the company.
Co-operative	An autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise.
Current assets	Assets that can be converted into cash with a year (i.e. cash in bank, petty cash, money owed to organisations and goods for sale).
Depreciation	The gradual decrease in the value of assets held.
Earned income	Income generated in exchange for goods and services through trading.
Endowment	Restricted capital funds held for the purpose of generating income. Permanent endowment funds must be held indefinitely, while expendable endowments can be disposed of at the trustees' discretion.
Excepted charities	Charities with a small annual turnover and no significant assets. They are 'excepted' from registration but can choose to register if they wish to do so.
Exempt charities	Charities that are not registered and are not subject to the supervisory jurisdiction of the Charity Commission (e.g. universities, museums).
Fixed assets	Assets held on a long term basis. They can be either fixed assets for charitable use, which include buildings and equipment, or investments.
General charities	General charities are defined in National Account terms as "private, non-profit-making bodies serving persons". This excludes sacramental religious bodies or places of worship.
Gift Aid	A tax relief on money donated to charity. Charities can reclaim the basic rate of tax presumed to have been deducted by the donor, thereby increasing the value of the donation.
Housing stock	The number of structurally separate residential dwelling units available for non-transient occupation.
Inalienable assets	Assets which cannot be sold, usually because a charity is required to hold them indefinitely under trust aw as a result of a bequest.

Industrial and provident societies	An organisation conducting an industry, business or trade, either as a co-operative or for the benefit of the community, and is registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965.
Legacy	A gift or bequest of personal property or money made by a will.
LGBT, LGBTQ, LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning Asexual and Intersexual, plus others who do not identify with any of these categories
Liabilities	That which organisations owe to creditors, either long term (payable after 12 months) such as loans or personal provisions, or short-term (payable during the next 12 months).
Mutual society	An organisation which is owned by its members and run for their benefit.
Non-profit sector	All non-profit organisations including those for private benefit, and those that are non-commercial (e.g. housing associations). The category includes quangos and other organisations close to government (e.g. universities).
Registered charities	Charities registered with the Charity Commission. A charity must register if it has a permanent endowment, a total income of more than £5,000 a year or a rateable occupation of any land, including buildings.
Reserves	That part of a charities income funds which are freely available.
Restricted funds	Funds for which the donor has specified a use. These funds must be spent in accordance with the donor's wishes and trustees cannot make the decision to remove the restriction.
Social enterprise	Trading for a social purpose. A wide range of organisations fit the definition of social enterprise. These include co-operatives, community businesses, trading arms of charities and a variety of other businesses that use their trading activity to meet social goals.
Statement of financial activities (SOFA)	Financial statement introduced especially for charities in the SORP. It replaces the income and expenditure account.
Statement of recommended practice (SORP)	Official recommendation on the way a charity should report annually on its resources and activities.
Statutory organisation	An organisation that is required by law to provide public services (i.e. statutory services) and receives central or local government funding.

Statutory funding	Any funding that comes from a government source, including funding from bodies such as the United Nations.
Third sector	Third sector is a term used to describe the range of organisations that are neither public sector nor private sector. It includes voluntary and community organisations (both registered charities and other organisations such as associations, self-help groups and community groups), social enterprises, mutuals and co-operatives.
Trading subsidiaries	A company, owned and controlled by one or more charities, set up in order to trade.
Trustees	The group of unpaid people responsible for the control and management of a charity.
Unincorporated organisation	An association of people which has no legal constitution, and is not regarded as an entity separate from its members. Also known as informal organisations.
Unrestricted funds	Funds held for the general purposes of the charity, to be spent within the stated objects.
Voluntary income	Donations or grants that do not provide any return to the donor other than the knowledge that someone will benefit from the donation.
Voluntary sector	The group of registered charities that meet the general charities definition.
Volunteering	Volunteering is an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than or in addition to close relatives.

Acronyms & Abbreviations

BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
BLF	Big Lottery Fund
CAF	Charity Aid Foundation
CASC	Community Amateur Sports Club
CDDA	Centre for Data Digitisation and Analysis
CIC	Community Interest Company
CIF	Common Investment Funds

CIO	Charitable Incorporated Organisation
CLG	Company Limited by Guarantee
CSF	Common Strategic Framework
CVS	Council for Voluntary Service / Community and Voluntary Service
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
ESF	European Social Fund
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GVA	Gross Value Added
H&F	Hammersmith & Fulham – the geographical area, not the local authority
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
ICNPO	International Classification of Non-Profit Organisations
IPS	Industrial and Provident Society
IVR	Institute for Volunteering Research
LA	Local Authority
LBHF	The London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham (the Local Authority or "council")
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LMC	Local Management Committee
NAVCA	National Association for Voluntary and Community Action
NCVO	National Council for Voluntary Organisations

Jargon buster – VCS general

NESS	National Employers Skills Survey
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NHS	National Health Service
NI	National Insurance
NSCSE	National Survey of Charities and Social Enterprises
NPISH	Non Profit Institutions Serving Households
OBR	Office for Budget Responsibility
OCS	Office for Civil Society
ONS	Office for National Statistics
RPIX	Retail Prices Index (excluding mortgage interest payments)
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
SIC	Standard Industrial Classification
SORP	Statement of Recommended Practice
TLI	Transforming Local Infrastructure
TSRC	Third Sector Research Centre
VCOs	Voluntary and Community Organisations
VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector