



Group Funds Policy

1. Overview of the Group Fund (aka 'Common Fund')

A Group Fund is the total balance of money donated to Common Change for the purposes of charitable distribution (aka *benevolence*) by a specific group.

- Each group must have a minimum of 3 members.
- There is no upper limit on the number of members.
- Each group has a facilitator/coordinator (most often the founder of the group)
- At all times Common Change will offer to its groups total transparency on donated balances, via the Common Change online platform.

A Group Fund is to be used to alleviate identified needs such as basic living, healthcare, housing, food, education and other such benevolent purposes.

The Common Change Trustees establish the policies, systems and fiscal oversight within which each Group Fund functions. The Trustees ensure monitoring, financial reconciliation and reporting are put in place for Group Funds. The Group Fund operates pursuant to the Terms of Service. Contributions to the Group Fund are non-refundable.

The Group Fund may receive income from two sources:

- Through the receipt of contributions to the Group from its members, and also
- Through the allocation or transfer of funds from the Common Change UK 'General Fund' when deemed appropriate by the Trustees.

2. Oversight and Accountability

Common Change Group members identify and recommend unmet needs, advocate for assistance, and collectively recommend where funds should be disbursed, via the online 'weigh-in' process. However:

- Ultimate responsibility for administration and distribution of funds rests solely with the Common Change UK Trustees.
- Therefore, Common Change UK ensures, to the extent of reasonable due diligence, that disbursements made conform to the charter and mission of Common Change.

The Common Change UK Trustees will review requests for compliance with internal policy and external regulations governing disbursements by a charitable organisation. Every reasonable effort is made to resolve any questions by contacting the Group facilitator. Once Common Change completes their due diligence and approves the request, the benevolence is processed and disbursed.

The balance available in the Group Fund and the history of requests made and discussed are available on the Common Change website. In addition, Common Change provides monthly reports to the Group facilitator of activity in the Group Fund. A copy of the latest monthly report can be requested by any group member at any time by sending the request to support@commonchange.com.

Contributions to and disbursements from the Group Fund are reported to and reviewed by the Trustees of Common Change on a regular basis.



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3. Intended Purpose and Limits of Assistance

The purpose of the Group Fund is to assist a variety of individuals by contributing to their financial needs. The Group Fund helps fulfil the vision of Common Change: that there is sufficient abundance and generosity in our world for all people to live without economic want and to participate in a framework of supportive relationships within their communities.

It is intended that recipients of assistance (“benevolence”) from the Group Fund shall:

- i. Be experiencing a financial hardship related to education, healthcare, housing, parental support, professional service/support, transportation, or basic living expenses,
- ii. Be nominated by at least one member of the Group through which the request is being made, and known to them by ‘one degree of separation’,
- iii. Not be making a request on their own behalf,
- iv. Be able to receive funds directly by cheque, bank transfer, moneygram or PayPal,
- v. Be able, upon request, to provide confirmation of receipt of the assistance by email, or mail,
- vi. Common Change recognises common humanity and insists there be no discrimination in the giving of benevolence on the basis of gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality, faith, or disability.

Generally, assistance from the Group Fund is intended to cover an individual’s or family’s needs. Common Change may choose, at its sole discretion, to place limits on any request, recipient, and/or requester as designated in the Terms of Service (www.commonchange.com/terms-of-service).

Limits of assistance

1. Groups cannot *limit* their purpose to the support of a *single* individual or family (e.g. a group cannot be formed for the sole purpose of crowdfunding for a single person with an illness, fundraising for a trip, etc.). Groups must be formed for the purpose of assisting a variety of individuals and families, and this commitment must be evidenced in the diversity of disbursements made by the group.
2. Benevolence requests must be for individuals or families, not for organizations.
3. To the extent possible, and at the discretion of Common Change, disbursements from the Group Fund shall be made directly to the party or entity to whom payment is due and not be given directly to the individual or family benefitting from the assistance. e.g., if assistance with rent arrears is needed, payment shall be made directly to the landlord whenever possible. This is to help ensure the funds are used for the intended purpose. There may, however, be times when the nature of the need requires that the funds be disbursed directly to the beneficiary. This is allowable, at the sole discretion of Common Change.
4. The Group Fund is intended as a source to eliminate personal economic isolation, and to be used when the individual or family receiving assistance has also explored other possibilities of assistance from appropriate sources (i.e., family, savings, investments).
5. Under no circumstance is assistance from the Group Fund to be considered a loan. No gift may be repaid, either in part or in full, in money or in labour.
6. Members submitting a need must be willing to grant Common Change permission to verify any of the information provided. Common Change will be sensitive to confidentiality issues as outlined in the Privacy Policy.



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4. Application and Approval Process

Group members must comply with the following process of submitting and ‘weighing in’ on benevolence requests:

1. Requests should not invade the privacy of the intended beneficiary. Care should be taken not to reveal personally identifiable information, including health or financial or other potentially sensitive information, unless permission has been received from the intended beneficiary. Where possible, only first names should be used.
2. Members of the group may comment, make suggestions, ask for clarifications and otherwise engage with the need and the request owner in determining whether to approve the request.
3. The number of positive votes required to approve any particular benevolence request is calculated based on the number of members in the group and the amount being requested as a proportion of total available funds. The corresponding approval matrix is maintained at the sole discretion of Common Change and may be changed at any time without notice. The current approval matrix is available to any group member by sending a request for the matrix to support@commonchange.com. Sufficient votes to “approve” must be made before the request time expires in order for the benevolence request to be approved.
4. In order for funds to be disbursed, the request owner must complete the “Payment Information” form on the request page. If payment information is not completed within 30 days of approval, the benevolence request will be voided and the funds will become available in the Group Fund for new benevolence requests.
5. Once a group has approved a request, Common Change will review and process the benevolence disbursement as described in the section titled “Oversight and Accountability” above.
6. The request owner should provide a follow-up report to the Group by adding a comment to the request explaining the impact the benevolence had on the need.