



The Stafford Borough Community Compact

An agreement between the Voluntary and Community Sectors
and Statutory Agencies within the Stafford Borough Council
area for the benefit of the whole community.





■ ■ Foreword from Councillor Judith Dalgarno



Developing the Stafford Borough Compact has been a real opportunity to work together in producing an agreement which the Council and voluntary sector have confidence in. We all recognise the immense contribution that the voluntary and community sector makes and the great benefits of working together and are fully committed to working in partnership to provide the best possible services to the residents of Stafford Borough and the Compact and Codes of Practice serves to demonstrate this.

The Compact and Codes of Practice are the end of one journey and the beginning of another. We have agreed how to work together and the practical steps we need to take together to make this happen. I see this as a very exciting time for the Stafford Borough Compact representing a starting point for us to now move on and turn the principles into actions. I am confident that the opportunity exists for the Compact to provide the framework through which all the stakeholders can work together more effectively to serve the people of Stafford Borough. The next stage of this journey is to fully implement the Compact integrating it into the everyday working practice of all partners. I believe this can be done.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who participated in the development of the Stafford Borough Compact.

■ ■ The Commitment

As members of Stafford Borough COMPACT partnership, we are pleased to sign this COMPACT and commit our organisations to act in accordance with the COMPACT principles, to underpin our involvement in partnership working to the benefit of the whole community of Stafford Borough.

Councillor Judith Dalgarno
Leader Stafford Borough Council

Councillor Patrick Farrington
Cabinet Member Community

Mike Allen
Chief Officer Stafford District Voluntary Services

Sue Nichols
Director Stafford and Stone Citizen's Advice Bureau

Bob Sharpe
Chief Officer Staffordshire Association of the Blind

Gill Wyatt
Chief Officer Carers' Association South Staffordshire



Introduction

■ ■ 1 A Shared Vision

To contribute to Stafford Borough as a place where people want to live and work by strengthening the relationship between the Voluntary and Community Sectors and Statutory Agencies, based on shared values, understanding and mutual respect.

■ ■ 2 COMPACT Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this local COMPACT is to assist the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Public Sector to work together effectively to promote the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the whole community of the Stafford Borough area.
- 2.2 It also provides a framework to guide our relationships, but does not detract from the aims and objects of each organisation individually; rather it aims to enhance all our work in delivering high quality services to our community.
- 2.3 The COMPACT is supported by Codes of Practice on a number of key areas and also by an Implementation Action Plan. This sets out some practical steps that need to be taken by the signatories to develop best practice between us within relevant timescales.
- 2.4 The COMPACT has been written with the intention of it being COMPACT PLUS compliant from the outset. By signing up to the COMPACT, the organisations are committing themselves to operate to the agreed Codes of Conduct and will be expected to uphold the principles of the Stafford Borough COMPACT.
- 2.5 Strong partnerships build working relationships, inform and improve policy development; and shape the development and delivery of services to the local community.
- 2.6 With greater partnership working already occurring at the local level, a framework exists within which the public agencies and the voluntary and community sectors can work together and ensure that we are more effective in achieving common goals. This will benefit the whole community.

■ ■ 3 The Shared Principles and Aims of the Stafford Borough COMPACT

- 3.1 Through a partnership approach, Stafford District Voluntary Services and Stafford Borough Council commenced work to develop a local COMPACT. Two separate sub-groups were formed in the voluntary and community sectors and together they now form the local COMPACT Steering Group.

- 3.2 The creation of this framework, within which relationships can be developed, is all within the context of the Government's agenda for the modernising of public services.
- 3.3 This is particularly relevant in relation to how the local community might influence the nature of the advice and services they need and receive.
- 3.4 The COMPACT will provide a framework that:
- Develops Codes of Conduct, which establish a benchmark for best practice in effective partnership working.
 - Ensures agreement is reached on accountability within partnerships, through the Codes of Practice that accompany this COMPACT document.
 - Promotes, develops and takes part in meaningful two-way communication which is essential for partnership working.
 - Ensures that the COMPACT is outcome focused.
 - Provides arrangements for performance monitoring and review of the COMPACT.
 - Agrees arrangements to communicate the COMPACT externally and within partner organisations.
 - Ensures that the principles contained within the COMPACT are written into partners' strategies and plans.
 - Maintains and develops a strong voluntary and community sector, whilst recognising its independence, that can support local communities and meet their own needs through sustainable communities activity.
 - Recognises the contribution made by volunteers and the services they provide, alongside those of the private and public sectors, particularly those in respect of some of the most vulnerable and under-represented sections of society.
 - Ensures all partners recognise the importance of promoting diversity and equality of opportunity for all people, regardless of race, age, ability, gender, sexual orientation or religion, remembering that all people have the right to engage with partners.

■ ■ 4 Clarity of Roles

- 4.1 The initial parties to this COMPACT are the Voluntary and Community Sector organisations, Stafford Borough Council and various partners under the Local Area Agreement. In the future this may encompass a wider partnership including other agencies and private business concerns.
- 4.2 It is recognised that all sectors have an important role to play by representing the communities they serve.
- 4.3 Voluntary and Community Organisations are independent organisations with their own accountable structures. Organisations are accountable not only to their membership, but also to the Charity Commission [where they hold charitable status], and to other bodies, that regulate their status [e.g. Companies House]. In addition, to funders for a particular project that the organisation is carrying out with their support.

■ ■ 5 Responsibilities

- 5.1 Shared responsibilities include:
- The maintenance of high standards of governance and openness.
 - To operate within the statutory and regulatory frameworks.

- To develop quality standards that are relevant to each organisation and that satisfy the needs of the commissioning bodies and funders.
 - To recognise that we have individual and complementary roles but a shared responsibility to make sure that the COMPACT works.
 - To promote the adoption of COMPACT principles to all relevant organisations.
 - To promote best practice.
 - To ensure that the agreed services are delivered.
- 5.2 Responsibilities of the Voluntary and Community Sectors are:
- To meet the reasonable reporting requirements of funders.
 - To be appropriately accountable to funders and service users.
 - To consult with the wider community where relevant.
 - To implement policies that promote best practice and equal rights in service delivery, employment, and the involvement of volunteers.
- 5.3 Responsibilities of the Public Sector are:
- To recognise, respect, and value the rights of the Voluntary and Community Sector to campaign within the law, to comment on policy, and to challenge policies, irrespective of any funding relationship, and to determine and manage its own affairs.
 - To actively encourage the participation of the voluntary and community sector in the development of policy strategy where appropriate, and the planning and delivery of services.
 - To consult the voluntary and community sectors on issues that affect it, or the communities of interest and geography that it serves.
 - To establish a co-ordinated, consistent approach to funding the voluntary and community sectors.

■ ■ 6 Community Participation

- 6.1 Effective partnership working is based on the involvement of all sectors of the community, and recognises that social or economic circumstances may make it more difficult for some people to participate than others.
- 6.2 We agree that:
- Community groups have particular needs that must be taken into account.
 - Community groups should have the opportunity to engage fully in partnership initiatives.
 - Community groups should be actively offered development and funding support from the local voluntary and community infrastructure agency.
 - Community groups can make a major contribution to service planning and resource allocation, as frequently they operate at grassroots level. However, partners need to recognise it is difficult for community groups to respond quickly, and should build adequate lead-time into their consultations

■ ■ 7 Implementation and Review

- 7.1 All signatories agree that:
- We are committed to making the local COMPACT work in practice as a means of strengthening relations between all the various partners.

- During the first twelve months of the COMPACT, the Steering Group will remain in existence to consult on, launch and implement the COMPACT and to give continuity in establishing relevant measures that implement, monitor and ensure compliance with the COMPACT.

7.2 Voluntary and community organisations, and their partners from other sectors should see an improvement in their day-to-day communications, contacts and working relationships.

7.3 During the first twelve months the Steering Group will:

- Establish the principle of annual meetings between all delegates of the public agencies and the Voluntary and Community Sector to consider developments and how the COMPACT is working;
- Establish a process to produce an annual report for the annual meeting;
- Establish mechanisms to jointly review the work of the COMPACT and to feed this into the work of the Steering Group.
- Ask the public agencies to establish mechanisms to review the work of the COMPACT from its perspective and will feed this into the work of the Steering Group;
- Ask the public agencies to appoint 'COMPACT Champions' to promote the principles of the COMPACT and to disseminate information;
- Plan a formal review of the Stafford Borough COMPACT after three years.

■ ■ 8 Resolving Disagreement

8.1 Breaches of the COMPACT will be dealt with in the spirit of engendering learning and cultural change.

8.2 Should disagreements and misunderstandings occur, it is important that, if the COMPACT is to work, we are able to resolve any disputes through relevant complaints procedures, scrutiny review and other means of mutual resolution and mediation. A Code of Practice will cover this area of the COMPACT.



Code of Practice

Community Groups and Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Organisations

■ ■ What does this Code of Practice aim to achieve?

- Promote better understanding of community groups within the VCS as a whole and to make a positive impact on relationships
- Sets a framework for recognising the diversity, needs and contributions made by community and BME groups
- Aims to give specific attention to the needs of the BME sector and to make a positive impact on those relationships
- A commitment to taking forward race equality including sharing best practice

■ ■ What is a Community Group?

There is a wide and diverse range of community and BME Groups, including:

- Geographical community groups [urban and rural]
- Community groups of interest or identity
- Self-help groups
- Faith groups
- Refugees
- Travelling community
- Asylum seekers

Whatever their background or structure, community groups play an important role in engaging local people in improving and developing their communities and environment.

■ ■ Joint undertakings

All partners are committed to

- Recognise the contribution that community groups make
- Recognise that a lack of time and resources may limit the participation of some community groups

- Respect the autonomy of each group and their right to work within their own boundaries
- Work with VCS infrastructure organisations and networks who are able to provide a bridge between the various sectors
- Recognise the core costs inherent in running community groups
- Recognise the ever-changing diversity of the BME sector in relation to race, culture and faith as well as other issues
- Develop a partnership approach to take forward government strategy for achieving race equality and community cohesion by promoting and sharing best practice and celebrating success
- Promote and support compliance with Race Relations and other equalities legislation which promotes a civil society
- Contribute to initiatives to promote understanding and learning between communities
- Encourage and support volunteering by and within BME communities

■ ■ Public Sector undertakings

a] General:

- Value the knowledge, work and expertise of the community sector
- Recognise the importance of communities that share a common interest or concern, as well as communities of place
- Recognise the range of community ownership of assets, including land and property, as a basis for community enterprise and development at a local level

b] Value the work, knowledge, experience and expertise of the BME sector

- Raise general staff awareness and knowledge of the BME communities and sector through training, information and signposting
- Provide opportunities for the BME sector to supply information and training on BME issues to public sector bodies
- Ensure that knowledge and links exist with the BME sector at a strategic level within individual agencies
- If requested, information is made available to people who speak other languages in the most reasonable methods available
- Tailor information and communication to the specific needs and capacity of different groups being targeted.
- Use appropriate umbrella bodies and networks to channel and target information effectively to the sector.
- Support BME organisations' access to information, training and organisational development advice and guidance.
- Support the development of infrastructure where possible which responds to the specific needs of the BME sector and which complements, but does not duplicate, existing provision.

c] Improve the BME sector's access to resources

- Ensure that the commitments made in the Funding and Procurement Code of Practice is equally applied to the BME sector.
- Work to improve the co-ordination of funding to the BME sector.

- Consider the specific support needs of the BME sector in accessing funding, for example by providing training.
- Wherever possible, provide in kind practical support, e.g. legal and human resources advice, venues.
- Monitor levels of funding to the BME sector.
- Support and work in partnership with BME groups to promote diversification of funding within the BME sector.

d] Ensure that public sector bodies and practices do not discriminate against the BME sector

- Ensure that policies and practices are promoted and monitored through an effective and transparent equal opportunities strategy.
- Ensure that processes are open and accountable and have effective feedback and complaints systems.
- Ensure that each agency actively addresses equal opportunities issues and has access to appropriate expertise and resources.
- Consult with the BME sector in relation to appropriate policy and strategy developments.
- Where appropriate, involve the BME sector from pre-consultation to implementation stage, thus ensuring that the implications for BME communities and race equality are considered and addressed
- Provide feedback from any such consultation carried out with the BME sector.
- Monitor the impact and influence of the BME sector on such strategic developments.

e] Improving the employment and learning opportunities available to the BME sector

- Ensure that the commitments made in the Volunteering Code of Practice are equally applied to the BME sector.
- Create and utilise opportunities for mentoring, apprenticeships and work shadowing wherever possible.
- Wherever possible, work with other partners to provide practical learning support for BME sector managers and management committees.

■ ■ Community Group undertakings

- Recognise that community groups are part of the wider VCS
- Accept the value of and the need for appropriate monitoring and evaluation

■ ■ Voluntary and Community Sector undertakings

- Consider the different interests of the voluntary and community sectors before responding to invitations to engage from partners
- Challenge timescales which prevent community groups from being involved
- Recognise that the interests of community and voluntary organisations are not always the same and make it clear which sector is being represented or discussed



Code of Practice

Funding

■ ■ What does this Code of Practice aim to achieve?

To make a positive impact on the funding relationships that exists between the Public, Voluntary, and Community Sectors [VCS]. It is based on the National Code of Practice and embodies the key points for an effective funding framework.

It covers the funding relationships that exist, whatever terms are used for these - such as grants, service level agreements or contracts.

■ ■ What is Funding and Procurement?

The complexity of funding relationships between the sectors can be broadly explained as follows:

- **Purchasing** Public Bodies draw up 'shopping lists' for services it wishes to buy and, wherever possible, encourages the VCS to enter into a contract to deliver these services. This process is also known as procurement.
- **Investing** The public body may wish to invest in local VCS organisations, through loans or other forms of funding that support the public body's strategies.
- **Grant Aid** The public body provides a time limited sum of money to the VCS organisation to support projects and or running costs of the services.

■ ■ What is full cost recovery?

Principally, delivery organisations should be able to recover the full costs associated with providing a service [or other outcome]. These include:

- Direct costs [frontline activity]
- Direct support costs [Line management support]
- Indirect support costs [core functions such as Payroll, IT, etc]
- Governance and development costs [accountability and planning]

■ ■ Joint undertakings

All partners are committed to working together to continually improve the effectiveness of the funding relationship. The partners commit themselves to:

- Identify needs and priorities for public sector funding streams
- Discuss the implications of funding changes to local or national priorities/programmes as soon as possible
- Attract funding from external sources wherever possible
- Apply consistent procedures within the principles of good regulation that provide effective and proper accountability of public funds
- Provide effective and high quality services
- Be clear about the type and terms of the funding relationship
- Agree clear definitions of what is meant by 'core funding' and 'full cost recovery' and agree on how these costs will be met
- Reach an agreed position regarding the level of reserves a VCS organisation can hold when applying for funding, taking note of Charity Commission recommendations
- Wherever possible, promote and develop opportunities and innovative approaches that are beneficial to all concerned in relation to 'in kind' support, such as training and premises. Financial and other implications of providing this 'in-kind' support should be taken into account
- Work together to improve VCS sustainability and the ability to undertake long term planning
- Communicate regularly on funding opportunities which may become available to the partners

■ ■ Public Sector undertakings

General

- Respect the VCS independence and right to campaign within the law and guidance set by the Charity Commission, irrespective of any funding relationships that exist
- Support appropriate investment in the VCS infrastructure where possible
- Develop compatible procedures for the application, for monitoring and evaluation of funds
- Develop effective co-operation between funders who jointly fund the same organisation
- Consider the impact on VCS when assets or buildings currently utilised by VCS are disposed of
- Ensure that all SLA's, grants, and contracts awarded use clear and transparent processes

Procurement

- Ensure that procurement processes follow existing Standing Orders, legislation and guidelines

Grant Application

- Ensure fair access to funding opportunities for all
- Explore joint funding opportunities
- Support the provision of funding advice to the VCS, recognising that the public body may not have the resources to directly fund this provision
- Allow, where possible up to 12 weeks lead in time for applications. If this is not possible give clear reasons why

- Provide clear objectives and eligibility criteria for all funding programmes, and match application processes to the size and scope of funding being applied for
- Keep all applicants informed of contact leads and timescales
- Notify applicants of any delays encountered
- Notify applicants of decisions and reasons for them and provide opportunities to discuss decisions and implications
- Provide formal confirmation indicating what has been awarded, when it will be paid and any conditions that apply
- Publicise list of grant recipients

Agreeing payment terms and costings

- Offer multi-year funding arrangements wherever possible
- Where multi-year arrangements are agreed, recognise the impact of including inflationary increases and, if not, the impact on delivery
- Wherever possible, ensure payments are made in advance to VCS organisations
- Recognise the value of volunteering time when it is included within a funding bid

Agreeing terms of delivery

- Clearly explain and agree terms of delivery with VCS organisations before contracts or funding arrangements are entered into. This should include any actions that will be taken if the VCS organisation fails to deliver
- Discuss risk and place responsibility with the organisation best able to manage them

Agree monitoring and reporting

- Be proportionate to the size of funding, size of provider and perceived risk in monitoring requirements and focus on outcomes
- Ensure that monitoring arrangements are agreed by all parties and are effective in providing continuous improvement
- Consider joined-up, or standardised, monitoring requirements with other funders
- Should any additional information be requested by the public body, this will be reasonable and allow sufficient time to gather data and respond

Concluding a financial relationship

- If a funding relationship is terminated earlier than its agreed term, provide three months notice with reasons where this is within the control of the public body
- Communicate with VCS organisations who are not meeting targets on what actions can be taken to improve delivery and support these changes
- If performance does not improve as a result of these interventions, or if the effective use of public funding is being placed at risk it will be legitimate to withdraw the funding and terminate the contract early and acknowledge that final payments can be used to pay for relevant winding down costs such as redundancy

■ ■ Voluntary and Community Sector undertaking

Programme design

- Contribute constructively to the design of funding programmes focussing on the needs of end users or beneficiaries

Application and tender process

- Ensure eligibility and that applications meet the aims of the programme and that funding requirements are understood
- Ensure timescales and decision processes are understood
- Have clear lines of accountability, especially when there are joint bids

Agreeing terms of delivery

- Agree terms of delivery at the outset, ensuring the funder is kept informed of any emerging risks associated with delivery
- Recognise legitimacy of funders asking for public recognition in appropriate circumstances
- Recognise that funding may end if outcomes are not delivered

Agree payment terms

- Ensure clear understanding of payment terms including the treatment of under-spends
- Have robust systems to manage and account for the use of funds

Agree monitoring and reporting

- Monitor and evaluate activity against agreed objectives, providing timely and accurate reports as required by funders
- Make funders aware of any changes in circumstances or difficulties encountered that effect delivery at an early stage
- Notify funders as early as possible of any likely under-spend or shortfall

Concluding a financial relationship

- Recognise that funding may end as funders priorities change over time
- Recognise that funding arrangements are for specified periods and do not assume they will be renewed



Code of Practice

Partnerships

■ ■ What does this Code of Practice aim to achieve?

To make a positive impact on the relationships between the various sectors and their joint commitment to establishing effective partnerships by:

- Understanding what makes a partnership effective
- Encouraging good practice in managing and servicing partnerships
- Enabling full participation of all sectors

■ ■ What makes a multi sector partnership?

Common success factors for such partnerships include:

- Active agreement that a partnership is necessary
- Shared, clear and defined purpose
- Confidence in the commitments and actions of different partners
- Commitment to achieving the best outcomes for end users
- Leadership by respected individuals
- A clear and open decision-making process
- The development of a shared vision of what might be achieved
- Time to build the partnership
- Shared or overlapping agendas
- Good communication between partners
- Effective partnership management

■ ■ Joint undertakings

All partners are committed to:

- Identify common goals and shared priorities that could be effectively addressed through multi sector partnerships

- Develop and take part in multi sector partnerships where they can add value to existing arrangements
- Develop open and representative partnership processes and structures
- Ensure that the needs of hard to reach groups are considered by the partnership
- Recognise the value specific skills and expertise of all the sectors
- Clarify the boundaries and limitations of the partners operating within the partnership
- Provide for induction of new partners including the use of this code
- Ensure each agency is clear about their role and commitment within the partnership
- Ensure that individuals are clear about their role and commitment within the partnership
- Identify and support the training and development needs of the partnership
- Accept joint responsibility for the partnership including
 - ■ Clear Terms of Reference for partnership
 - ■ Clear and agreed administrative and secretariat function
 - ■ Strategic Plan
 - ■ Communication Strategy
 - ■ Reporting mechanisms
 - ■ Performance management
 - ■ Accessible meetings
 - ■ Costs of participation
- Clearly Identify the role of the Chair
- Accept ownership for all decisions made by the partnership
- Promote the Compact and comply with its undertakings

■ ■ Public Sector undertakings

- Recognise the value and skills that VCS organisations bring to partnerships
- Recognise that some VCS organisations have a strategic as well as a delivery role
- Reference and use the representative structures and processes within the VCS when seeking to identify VCS players

■ ■ Voluntary and Community Sector undertaking

- Ensure VCS representatives consult and represent the wider views of the sector wherever possible including hard-to-reach groups.
- Seek to understand and respect the statutory requirements and frameworks [including monitoring] within which the public sector operates.
- Ensure that issues concerning VCS funding are raised only when directly relevant to the partnership and that more appropriate routes of redress are sought when necessary.



Code of Practice

Policy and Consultation

■ ■ What does this Code of Practice aim to achieve?

- To implement effective consultation processes in order to enhance partnership working.
- It aims to set a framework for
 - ■ Understanding the need and purpose for effective consultation
 - ■ Encourage better practice in planning and undertaking consultation
 - ■ Enable policy development and service planning to take account of the needs of a diverse range of groups

■ ■ Joint undertakings

- All partners are committed to
- Adhering to the key principles as outlined above.
 - Plan ahead and consult at the earliest opportunity.
 - Use methods and materials that can be easily understood by the intended audience
 - Ensure that hard to reach groups are considered and included.
 - Allow where possible 12 weeks lead in time. If this is not possible, give clear reasons why.
 - Publicise any major consultation exercises in advance to encourage wide participation.
 - Give feedback to those who have been consulted.
 - Evaluate consultation methods with a view to improving co-ordination and develop good practice.

■ ■ Public Sector undertakings

- Involve partners at the development stage of relevant policy, strategy and service development to identify implications for the partners and volunteers.
- Involve partners where appropriate when reviewing policies, strategies and services.
- Be aware of additional resource implications for other partners when disseminating consultations.

- Make it clear whether you are seeking representative views or views direct from service users or organisations in direct contact with them.
- Be sensitive to the resource implications for organisations if they are expected to consult with their members.
- Be aware of any potential conflict of interest arising from the subject of consultation and those being consulted with.

■ ■ Voluntary and Community Sector undertaking

- Strive to play a full and active part in consultation exercises.
- Use the most appropriate method suitable for the audience.
- Make it clear whether you are reporting representative views or views direct from service users or organisations in direct contact with them.
- Ensure consultation responses are accurate and unbiased.
- Consider implications for partners when developing or reviewing policies or procedures.



Code of Practice

Volunteering

■ ■ What does this Code of Practice aim to achieve?

To make a positive impact on the relationship between the partners and their commitment to volunteering.

- Understanding the broad range of volunteering including organisations that are volunteer - led
- Valuing the role of volunteers
- Raise the profile of volunteering
- Ensure that volunteers are well managed, supported and trained
- Enable access to volunteering opportunities
- Actively encourage a diverse range of people to volunteer

■ ■ Joint undertakings

All partners are committed to

- Working together to develop a modern and dynamic volunteering infrastructure, recognising that this is essential for successful volunteering work
- Increasing the choice and diversity of volunteering opportunity
 - ■ Increase access by challenging real or perceived barriers to volunteering
 - ■ Encourage volunteering from those currently under represented
 - ■ Support those who have additional needs
- Ensure mutual benefits of volunteering
 - ■ Show commitment to volunteers and volunteering at every level throughout the partner organisation
 - ■ Recognise that managing volunteers requires resourcing and ensure appropriate financial provision in funding programmes and applications
 - ■ Ensure that all new or revised policies and procedures are checked for their impact on volunteers and volunteering before being adopted
 - ■ Involve volunteers in decision making and information flows
 - ■ Ensure that volunteers are not out of pocket as a result of their volunteering activity

- ■ Ensure that volunteering activities complement not replace the role of paid staff
- Recognition of the real cost of volunteering
 - ■ Accept that although volunteering is given freely it is not cost free
 - ■ Support initiatives to widen the profile of volunteering
 - ■ Aim for greater publicity for the achievement of volunteers
- Providing support for volunteers
 - ■ Provide volunteers with the induction, support, management, training and other resources needed to work effectively
 - ■ Identify a named person within each partner agency to be responsible for volunteer involvement

■ ■ Public Sector undertakings

- Respect the independence of partners
- Adopt policies so that specialist volunteering infrastructure can develop realistic sustainable long term funding
- Recognise that to enable active encouragement of a diverse range of people in volunteering needs support and resources
- Recognise volunteer time as added value within funding bids
- Recognise the contribution towards objectives made by volunteers
- Recognise the time implications for organisations that include volunteers when responding to consultation requests

■ ■ Voluntary and Community Sector undertaking

- Seek to widen opportunities for volunteering in conjunction with other partners
- Work to develop a diverse volunteer base
- Ensure that volunteers are valued members of organisations
- Ensure that adequate resources for volunteering is included in funding bids

Fundamental Principles of Volunteering:

There are five principles fundamental to volunteering:-

Choice ■ **Diversity** ■ **Mutual Benefit** ■ **Recognition** ■ **Support**

Choice. Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. Any encouragement to become involved in volunteering should not result in any form of coercion or compulsion. Freedom to volunteer implies freedom not to become involved.

Diversity. Volunteering should be open to all, whatever their age, disability, gender, race, religion or sexual orientation. Implementing equalities policies and schemes and a welcoming approach are basic to supporting diversity.

Mutual Benefit. Volunteers offer their contribution unwaged but should benefit in other ways in return for their contribution to the community. Giving voluntary time and skills must be recognised as establishing a reciprocal relationship in which the volunteer also receives. Benefits that volunteers can expect to gain include a sense of worthwhile achievement, useful skills, career enhancement and enrichment, personal and social development, experience and contacts, sociability and fun, and inclusion in the life of an organisation.

Recognition. Explicit recognition of the value of what volunteers contribute to the organisation,

to the community, to the social economy and to wider social objectives, is fundamental to a fair relationship between volunteers, organisation and government policy and practice.

Support. Good support, management and training of volunteers are an essential part of volunteering. For volunteers to have a worthwhile experience and to feel valued, as well as being able to contribute to an organisation's objectives, they must be well supported.



Code of Practice

Conflict Resolution Procedure

■ ■ What does this Code of Practice aim to achieve?

The COMPACT recognises that from time to time differences may arise which need to be resolved. It is intended to provide a framework for facilitating discussions between each of the parties involved and aims to move them towards a mutually agreeable outcome. The process is about developing understanding and awareness between the parties involved.

It is a staged process; only when one stage has not provided a mutually agreed outcome should the process proceed to the next stage.

The Joint COMPACT Steering Group will agree the membership of the COMPACT Conflict Resolution Group annually.

■ ■ What is the conflict resolution process?

Informal stage:

Initially, if an organisation who is a signatory to the COMPACT considers that a potential breach of the COMPACT has occurred, or is likely to occur, then they should in the first instance contact the organisation[s] concerned and attempt to resolve any COMPACT issues via open dialogue.

Should these actions fail to provide an outcome satisfactory to both parties, then either organisation can refer the COMPACT issue on to stage 1.

Stage 1

- If organisation 'A' is concerned that organisation 'B' has breached the COMPACT in a material way, they should seek to resolve that difference directly with organisation 'B'.
- Organisation 'A' should contact organisation 'B' formally and explain to them the nature of their concern, clearly stating which COMPACT commitment they believe has been breached.
- Organisation 'B' should then follow its usual internal procedures for dealing with complaints.
- Should these actions fail to provide an outcome satisfactory to both parties, either can refer the issue on to stage 2, by writing to the Joint COMPACT Steering Group asking that the matter be referred to the COMPACT Conflict Resolution Group:

- The letter should identify the organisations concerned, the COMPACT commitment[s] over which the difference has arisen, the nature of that difference and what has already been done to try to resolve the matter.

Stage 2

- On receiving the complaint, the Joint COMPACT Steering Group will endeavour to convene a panel from the CCRG within 2 weeks.
- This panel will consist of 2 members from each sector, and will appoint its own chair from amongst them. The panel should not include anyone directly connected with the dispute.
- This panel will determine whether the complaint does relate to commitments and undertakings held within the COMPACT. If so, the panel will set a date to hear from both parties involved in the dispute. This should be no later than 8 weeks from the date when the complaint was received by the Joint COMPACT Steering Group.
- The panel will invite both parties to nominate up to 2 representatives each to attend the meeting. One of these may be someone from another organisation who is brought in to support the organisation concerned.
- The panel will seek to mediate between the parties in order to reach a mutually acceptable solution. If the matter cannot be resolved at the first sitting, further meetings may be arranged if this will help reach a resolution.

Stage 3

- If it is not possible to resolve the dispute at stage 2, the CCRG will seek to provide the parties with information on any further resources available which might assist them in resolving the conflict. Such resources may include the national Compact Advocacy Programme and the national Compact Mediation Scheme.

■ ■ How will this procedure be monitored and evaluated?

For purposes of monitoring and evaluating the COMPACT, all organisations should notify the Joint COMPACT Steering Group of any differences arising from the COMPACT, even where these are resolved within the organisation's own procedures.

Written records will be kept of all cases referred to the COMPACT Conflict Resolution Group but the details of those cases will remain confidential to the CCRG. The Chair of the CCRG panel will keep the Joint COMPACT Steering Group informed of any action being taken by the CCRG and the issues arising from the cases dealt with.

A summary report of the issues will be presented to the Stafford COMPACT Annual Meeting.

Process for Resolving Differences Arising from the Stafford COMPACT

