

COMPACT

for HULL

Community Groups: a Code of Good Practice



Compact on Relations between the
Public Sector and the Voluntary and
Community Sector in Hull

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1. Introduction

The Compact for Hull

1.1 The compact for Hull is an agreement intended to provide a framework for developing effective relationships between the public and voluntary and community sectors in the city of Hull. Its objective is to create a level playing field and ensure that services are delivered in the best way possible and to the needs of local people.

1.2 As part of that process, the Compact sets out the key principles and undertakings which will underpin the relationship between the public and voluntary and community sectors in the city of Hull.

Status of the Compact for Hull

1.3 The Compact has been drawn up in partnership, following extensive consultation between the public and voluntary and community sectors in Hull. The Compact is deliberately not exhaustive, but recognises the diversity of the voluntary and community sector and its activities. It is both a general framework and an enabling mechanism that enhances the relationship between the public and voluntary and community sectors.

1.4 The Compact is an agreement about relations between the public and voluntary and community sectors. It is an agreed statement of intent, its authority is derived from its endorsement by all parties during the process through which it was drawn up, and with their ongoing involvement in its review and development.

1.5 The Compact has been supported by five codes of practice, covering:

- Funding and procurement;
- Consultation and Policy Appraisal;
- Volunteering;
- Black and minority ethnic (BME) voluntary and community organisations;
and
- Community groups.

1.6 All of these codes, within the principle of the Compact, have a commitment to equality and diversity. The Compact is committed to promoting equality and diversity, and believes that all people should be treated fairly and not be discriminated against. If you would like any advice or further information relating to equality or diversity issues please contact:

Hull City Council's Equalities Team

Telephone 01482 300300 or e-mail equalities@hullcc.gov.uk

or

Humber all Nations Alliance (HANA)

Telephone 01482 491177 or e-mail admin@hanaonline.org.uk

2. What is the Community Groups Code of Good Practice?

Aims

2.1 This code of good practice aims to promote better understanding of the work of community groups within the wider voluntary and community sector. This will have a positive effect on the way public sector partners (The Local Authority, educational establishments, Police, Health, Social Services) relate to community groups through their practices and policies.

2.2 It is important to understand community groups, what they do, how they operate and how they are different from voluntary organisations, so that the right conditions and support can be created to enable them to succeed.

2.3 This code will enable partners to:

- develop a basis for trust and acceptance of the roles and responsibilities of community groups and the public sector;
- recognise the diversity and contribution of community groups and their centrality to the life of their communities;
- recognise the contribution of more than 900 community groups across the city;
- recognise that the largest social contribution of all is made through the efforts of their volunteers, totalling around 20,000 people;
- see that working at community level means communicating with community groups with as little jargon as possible;
- include in local decision making community groups that can be overlooked because of their smaller size; and
- value the fact that community groups work at a local level where good working relationships are crucial.

The community sector and its importance

2.4 The community sector is made up of people sharing local communities and those who share common interests, their groups, networks and traditions. It is the community itself taking action to get things done. The community sector ranges from small informal groups to large community organisations.

2.5 The community sector is led by values which include;

- working together for the common good;
- equality;
- social justice;
- valuing and strengthening local communities;
- being able to make decisions themselves;
- independence;
- flexibility and responsiveness;
- encouraging wide participation;
- improving local democracy; and
- independence and challenge of the status quo;

2.6 The benefits to the City provided by its community groups include:

- giving a voice to communities and helping to strengthen local democracy;
- allowing individuals to see the benefits of working together for the common good;
- giving a fair assessment of the needs of local communities;
- making sure that resources intended for communities actually reach them;
- being the first link in breaking the isolation and social exclusion faced by many people;
- building local unity and community spirit;
- enabling communities to take responsibility for their own destinies; and
- providing services where:
 - a service cannot be provided by a public organisation;
 - a service supports and complements existing public and non-public services, and benefits from community involvement and management;
 - a community organisation grows larger and is able to deliver public and non-public services under contract; and
 - a quick response is necessary for an identified need.

Healthy, sustainable communities are characterised by having a range of community groups and organisations.

2.7 Typical features of community groups and voluntary organisations.

2.7.1 The following table outlines the differences between community groups and voluntary organisations, generally speaking:

Community Groups	Voluntary organisations
Member-led and member-governed (where the community controls direction and purpose).	Staff-led and member-governed
Neighbourhood or community of interest.	Wider area.
Less formal structure.	More formal structure.
Lower or no income.	Higher income.
Membership-based	Client based
Self-help and mutual support	Support and development
Providing informal and independent services	Providing specialist or contracted services
Representing community interests, residents and community members	Supporting client groups

Typical features of community groups and voluntary organisations also include the following:

2.7.2 Some community groups develop into larger voluntary organisations, but many want to stay small. Many are not funded or registered charities – but this should not be a barrier to funding them.

2.7.3 The community sector covers the entire range of policy and services.

2.7.4 Faith groups represent a particular part of the community that is not often fully recognised. It is not justifiable to discriminate against faith groups simply because they are faith groups. While practicing their faith is a central activity for most faith-groups, many are also involved in running community services, promoting community development and representing community interests. Most faith groups will be able to show a boundary between activities that serve a wider public benefit and those that are for maintaining their own faith identity. Public agencies should avoid trying to enforce terms on faith groups which are charities that are not in line with the terms of their governing documents or their charitable status.

2.7.5 Involving faith groups is an excellent way of promoting social inclusion because they provide gateways to often excluded communities, they boost involvement in community life and help link the development of citizenship to faith traditions. Faith groups can offer local networks and knowledge, leadership in organising active communities, management capacity, buildings for community use and volunteers.

2.7.6 The importance of the work of black and minority ethnic community organisations can often be overlooked. It is important that public sector partners do all that they can to make meaningful links with these groups, and that their own decision making and policy making processes involve

consultation with these groups. A separate code of good practice is available on how to promote good working relationships with black and minority ethnic groups.

Local relations and partnership

2.8 Successful and varied community groups contribute to social unity, improve the quality of life and help build a more involved democracy. The quality of their relationship with local public agencies and the support they receive are important issues. This relationship, at local level, involves a range of agencies including the local council, health services, police and other public sector organisations which need to work together to support the development of community groups so they can succeed.

2.9 Public sector modernisation is an important factor in local relationships. Best value, community strategies, local strategic partnerships and Local Area Agreements are major building blocks for change. The focus of this modernisation is the community itself. This means that an important challenge for local public agencies is how to involve the community effectively and imaginatively. Finding the best ways of doing this should include using the expertise and experience in the voluntary and community sectors. Communities need to be properly involved (see Community Engagement Strategy). If they are, modernisation is more likely to be successful. If they are not, it may well fail.

2.10 Public sector partners should take account of a wide range of interests when assessing and designing best value reviews, and should, for example, include the voluntary and community sector. Similarly, third parties, such as the voluntary and community sector, also have an important role to play in

providing an external view of reviews, by questioning and challenging authorities' approach to reviews.

2.11 Success in community involvement can depend on the culture and behaviour within local authorities and other public agencies (at political and administrative level). Appropriate training and management support within these organisations is essential to achieve this.

2.12 Building better relationships:

2.12.1 Public sector partners should pay attention to developing their relationships with community groups and explain clearly to them why they are important to their organisations as partners. Training and practise issues include understanding community groups and how elected members and staff at all levels should communicate with them and involve them.

2.12.2 Some community of interest groups feel left out from one- to- one contact because their single policy issue is not on a public sector partner's agenda. It is important for some contact to be available because the community group may be picking up on issues that a public sector partner itself may have to tackle some years later. This contact helps identify issues that communities are concerned about, and can identify unexpected ways of helping them.

2.12.3 For some community groups, getting recognition from their public sector partners is valued and can help develop their work. This is further increased where public sector partners already have a member of staff who is available to get involved with community groups struggling to find the right contact or to get a response, and to support them in building relations with the community sector.

2.13 Partnership Working

2.13.1 Neighbourhood renewal and similar programmes need to be lasting. Involving community groups is a way of achieving this. Community groups are a unique source of information about the communities they work in and working with them allows local people to influence decisions and develop a greater sense of ownership of local services and programmes.

2.13.2 Large voluntary sector umbrella organisations should encourage wider and adequate representation. Places for small community groups should be considered whenever a new partnership is being set up, with resources to support involvement. Local strategic partnerships should be a model for community groups' representation and they should review their involvement across the whole local partnership structure by;

- reviewing existing partnerships each year for community group membership; and
- making sure there is adequate financial and administrative support for involvement.

2.13.3 Councils and other public sector agencies should value working with community groups to boost outcomes on current projects and to build on local success in the future. Community groups should be made to feel fully included in partnerships, and attention needs to be given to openness, mutual respect and helping community groups take part from the start of a project.

2.13.4 One way of closing the gap between knowing how to work in partnership and actually doing it is to make sure that community groups always have the chance to show what they can offer (expertise, contacts, know-how and so on). The local compact guidelines contain pointers on partnership and joint working.

2.13.5 Involving community groups in specialist forums is a good way of continuing to receive feedback on policy. There are examples across the country of forums which allow community groups to get involved with each other and with local authorities. (These may be called a federation, association or a council of community organisations). They often work alongside, or as separate parts of, voluntary sector forums, as recommended by local compact guidelines. Other local public agencies (Such as Primary Care Trusts, other local NHS organisations, Learning and Skills Council and so on) should consider supporting these arrangements.

2.13.6 Community sector involvement in designing and delivering government partnership programmes at local level is a common aim for a range of new and existing work. This is often an effective way of involving people with first- hand experience of a problem or need in developing appropriate solutions. However, if it is to be achieved, care needs to be taken to:

- raise community groups' awareness so they are able to make sense of the many initiatives that exist;
- check that community groups have the resources for training, information and support (so they can take part in the partnership process) and, if appropriate, money up front for developing projects proposals; and

- give all relevant community groups the opportunity to be involved, including Black and minority ethnic, faith and women's groups.

2.13.7 Systems for making sure that community groups can get involved in particular programmes should be built into the procedures. This will help to avoid a gap between policy intentions and outcomes. The government will give a clear lead on this and make sure that the government offices also reflect this.

The following outlines the framework of partnership between the public sector and the community sector

3. Undertakings by the Public sector

3.1 The public sector promises to do the following.

3.1.1 In developing **local policy frameworks**, to:

- take account of the Community sector's needs and role, when setting policies or procedures or carrying out a regulatory role;
- develop policies towards communities that recognise the importance of communities of people that share a common interest or concern, as well as communities of place;
- help create and maintain the conditions and support that help community groups to succeed;

- make sure that regulations affecting community groups are in proportion to the size of the group, and the effects of new regulations are appropriately assessed before they are finalised;
- involve people with first-hand experience of particular problems in developing solutions (for example, disadvantaged people, socially-excluded and hard-to-reach groups, people with disabilities and so on, through self-help or user-led groups) and give the process resources as appropriate; and
- value the work, knowledge and expertise of the community sector, including its important role in helping the Government achieve its aims.

3.1.2 In being involved with **funding and other support** to:

- simplify the delivery of small-grant funding programmes for community groups, to increase access and to get as many local people as possible involved in administration and decision-making;
- recognise the value of the contributions of volunteer time to projects, as equivalent to match funding;
- take positive action to see fair treatment and equal access in applications to government funded programmes for all community groups, including faith groups and those who are not normally funded;
- be prepared to take risks to support new ideas and business within communities, but still use public money wisely and with due probity;

- recognise the importance of community ownership of assets, including land and property, as a basic for community enterprise and development at local level;
- consider how central and local government can make it easier for the resources needed to develop and maintain a community sector infrastructure at all levels to become available;
- recognise and promote the need for accessible learning and development support for community groups and active community members;
- encourage and promote local people to use suitable community buildings, such as community centres and other facilities, as much as possible; and
- encourage support for local voluntary sector infrastructure and networking, which encompasses an independent community sector.

3.1.3 In working in **partnership**, to:

- recognise that communities need resources for partnership working and involvement, and that this will be supported by a community development strategy progressed jointly with local community sector;
- make sure that communities themselves identify their own needs, and that community groups have opportunities to manage projects and have a say in what is considered a successful outcome;
- deliver race equality by involving black and minority ethnic groups;

- make sure that public sector employees working with communities are adequately trained to do so effectively;
- allow community groups, wherever possible, to have access to statistics and statistical interpretation so local groups can benefit from information that is relevant to the particular needs of their community;
- recognise the contribution community groups make to community strategies, local strategic partnerships, and in best value reviews and comprehensive performance assessments; and
- make sure that in assessing whether the voluntary and community sector can get involved, they take account of the needs and infrastructure of the community sector and of smaller community groups.

4. Undertakings by the Voluntary and Community Sector

Voluntary sector undertakings

4.1 The voluntary sector promises to do the following:

- within its remit to play an enabling role which supports the community sector in its diversity;
- consult the community sector and consider its different interests alongside those of the voluntary sector before responding to invitations

for representation on partnership organisations and other local structures;

- challenge timescales that prevent community groups getting involved;
- recognise that the interest of community and voluntary organisations are not always the same, and so make clear which part of the sector is being represented or discussed, when necessary;
- respond to the information, involvement, practical support, training and conference sponsorship needs of community groups, and count this as a service priority;
- ask for the views of community groups when reviewing organisational management and looking at forward planning, and include their views when being evaluated by funders;
- make sure that voluntary sector organisations co-operate with agencies specifically working with community sector, where these exist;
- respect the view of other organisations, including community groups, voluntary sector groups, government and local public agencies, and work constructively with them, especially when there are many viewpoints and interests;
- acknowledge how appropriate it is for voluntary and community representatives taking the chair of local networks and, in general, be aware of possible conflicts of interest;

- encourage active community members to carry out leadership roles in voluntary and community sector networks; and
- evaluate the difference made as a result of putting this code into practice, and draw on the result to revise the code as may be mutually agreed by everyone involved.

Community sector undertakings

4.2 The community sector promises to do the following:

- accept that, as they receive funding, there is a need for monitoring and evaluating their spending against agreed outcomes, in proportion to the size of the grant;
- encourage quality partnership working and community involvement;
- encourage the local community to get involved and take control wherever possible;
- tackle racism and other forms of discrimination, no matter where it comes from;
- be clear and open as to the community or constituency for whom a particular group speaks;
- recognise that the interest of community and voluntary organisations are not always the same, and so make clear which part of the sector is being represented or discussed, when necessary;

- where appropriate, and where it is able, channel information and views to and from its members or constituency; and
- make sure that where there is a development agency specifically working with community groups, it co-operates with appropriate voluntary sector organisations.

5. Joint Undertakings

5.1 The voluntary/ community sector and public sector are jointly committed to developing and maintaining best practice and mutual respect in their relationship. They both agree to the following;

- to keep the Compact, this and the other four codes of good practice as they apply to community groups, and expect local umbrella organisations for the community sector to show they are committed to promoting them;
- to make suitable mention of this code of good practice (along with the Compact and the other codes) as appropriate and legal, in all documents and in voluntary and community sector publications;
- to develop a partnership approach to tackle the Local Strategic Partnership's strategies for communities; and
- to promote community development based on the following definition:

“Community development is about building active and sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual respect. It is about changing power structures to remove the barriers that prevent people from participating in the issues that affect their lives. It promotes the active involvement of people through sharing power skills knowledge and expertise.” (Strategic Framework for Community Development published by the Standing Conference for Community Development in May 2001)

6. Other issues

Consultation and involvement

6.1 The government and the community sector recognise consultation as being at the heart of their relationship. A distinct code on consultation is included in this booklet. When engaging with community groups, public sector partners should follow the guidance in the LSP, community engagement framework and toolkit.

6.2 Voluntary sector involvement in forming policies has increased since the compact was published, but it is important that the community sector be given the same opportunity. Wider involvement of community groups in policy- making should make it easier to put this code into practice by:

- identifying how proposals may affect communities;
- demonstrating what role community groups themselves can play in putting this code into practise; and

- involving new people who might not otherwise take part.

6.3 Consulting community groups is important, particularly those who do not have the information and networking structures that come from being linked to an umbrella organisation or federation. Input from community groups who are in touch with current local opinion or strength of feeling can provide invaluable information.

6.4 In addition, when they are consulted, community groups need the most time to respond but often get the least because they are at the end of the communication chain.

6.5 The code of good practice on consultation and policy appraisal goes some way to tackling this. Particular attention should be given to the most appropriate ways of involving smaller groups who do not get much funding, and support for their organisation and involvement. This may include:

- extending the time for local public agencies to consult community groups where possible;
- giving easy access to summaries in community-friendly formats for those consultations with major implications for communities;
- providing clear and accessible summaries of consultation outcomes;
- taking consultation events and processes out to groups, especially those in remote areas, rather than expecting them to travel; and

- offering financial support for expenses for being part of the consultation process, such as financing meetings and offering payments for attendance or travel.

Funding and other support

6.6 Millions of people are giving their own time, resources, skills and support through community groups. This value can be boosted and made more effective by giving extra resources to groups, especially where a geographical community or community of interest does not receive enough resources. The local compact code of good practice on funding aims to have a positive effect on the funding relationship between public sector and the voluntary and community sector.

6.7 The funding code is for the whole voluntary and community sector. However, there are specific considerations that relate particularly to the community sector. Investment for community groups is needed to develop dedicated infrastructure and capacity building, training, access to networks, information, consultation, and to fund involvement with national and local public agencies and the voluntary sector.

6.8 Local public funders should publish clear guidelines on their grants to community groups and jointly review these with them. In particular, government funders should make sure that conditions and monitoring requirements are:

- not a barrier to community groups;
- in proportion to the size of grant;

- broadly consistent with other funding systems;
- flexible and encourage evidence of success that is meaningful to communities (known as creative evaluation for example, photographs, stories or even how people make new friends while doing a project); and
- non-discriminatory in terms of race, sex or other reasons, to make sure they have equal effects on all groups.

Small grants

6.9 Small grants (normally £10,000 or less) play an important role in stimulating community activity and encouraging new ideas and fresh approaches. Small grants can contribute to spending such as meeting costs, publicity, equipment and materials, training and networking opportunities, consultancy or a feasibility study, and sessional workers. Small grants programmes should offer a quick response where appropriate and a monitoring regime that is proportionate to the small size of the grant. There should be arrangements for one-off grants to individuals and groups who are not formally constituted and do not want to be.

Support for volunteers

6.10 Managing volunteers in community groups is very different to those voluntary organisations where paid members of staff are the managers. In community groups, the management committee (made up of volunteers)

generally takes on this responsibility. For example, managing most community centres is the responsibility of committee members who may also be charity trustees. They supervise paid staff and volunteers and are responsible for them in the same way as a paid worker is in a more formal volunteering structure. This needs to be recognised in developing policy and programmes to support volunteering.

6.11 As with other organisations, community groups must meet public requirements (such as health and safety). This needs an understanding of charity law, licensing, equal opportunities and other legislation. Councils for voluntary services, rural community councils, federations of community organisations, local volunteer bureaus and other organisations have a role in delivering training locally to volunteers in community groups.

Other Support

6.12 Practical support for community groups is especially important. Funders should have policies which allow for other kinds of support to be offered as well as grants where regulations allow. The support would include equipment, office space, a meeting place or access to training and professional services, the loan of workers time; or perhaps loans on favourable terms, where this will promote income generation and enterprise. Organisations (including those within the voluntary sector) that make charges for their services and events should consider the effect on community groups. Funders can also work together to provide a package of support and should work effectively when approached by groups that cross authority boundaries. The right of groups to choose the agencies (if any) they receive support from should be respected.

6.13 Easy access to support is particularly important to community groups. This is shown by the situation of groups run by and for refugees and asylum seekers. They play an important role in supporting their own communities, and at the same time can make a significant contribution to social inclusion, cohesion and integration. To be able to access the necessary information and support, they need targeted outreach so they can be properly consulted and funded so they can access interpretation and translation services where necessary.

6.14 Community groups should have the opportunity to give views on their support needs when funders are reviewing something that affects them (for example community centres or other neighbourhood umbrella organisations). Local umbrella organisations should regularly review the priority they are giving to community groups to make sure that some are not being left out simply because the community sector has not been clearly identified. Funders should also consider this in monitoring, evaluating and assessing the level of resources for both the voluntary sector and the community sectors, in the light of increased pressures from partnerships and expanding involvement in public service delivery.

Using the code

6.15 There is a meeting each year between the public sector and representatives of the voluntary and community sector to review how the compact works and develops, including this code of good practice. A review of working relationships will be submitted to the local strategic partnership board.

6.16 The public sector and the voluntary and community sector should take account of the particular need to build confidence among community groups

that this code will be followed. The development of action plans to put in place the good practice guidance in this code will be the responsibility of individual departments and agencies, and the range of voluntary organisations and umbrella organisations in the community sector. If they do not follow this good practice, they must be satisfied that they have good reasons for not doing so.

6.17 The compact steering group will promote the implementation of the code while working in partnership with strategically funded national community sector organisations and with support of local umbrella organisations, especially Hull Developing our Communities, Hull Federation of Community Organisations, Hull Council for Voluntary Service and the North Bank Forum.

6.18 The compact working group and public sector will work together to promote awareness and use of this code among everyone it is relevant to, through:

- general sharing and promotional activities and events;
- targeted campaigns;
- monitoring and reviewing how it is used; and
- including its terms in the local compact guidelines (when they are revised) and in other guidance as and when appropriate.

7. Glossary

Best Value- A framework, based on a set of nationally determined indicators to help local authorities measure, manage and improve their performances.

Community Engagement Strategy/ Community Engagement Framework- A long-standing framework for regeneration, development and service improvements across the city.

Community Strategies- The plans which local authorities are now required to prepare for improving the economic, environmental and social well being of local areas and by which the councils are expected to coordinate the actions of the public, private, voluntary and community organisations that operate locally.

Learning and Skills Council- The government agency now responsible for adult training in England.

Local Area Agreements- These are made between central and local government in a local area. Their aim is to achieve local solutions that meet local needs, whilst also contributing to national priorities and the achievement of standards set by central government.

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP)- Partnerships between the local authority, private sector and the community and voluntary sector. The LSP also develops ways to involve local people in shaping the future of their neighbourhood.

Neighbourhood Renewal- How local people, local authorities and businesses work together to improve neighbourhoods, particularly those most disadvantaged , and to narrow the gap between the city and other parts of the country.

Primary Care Trusts- These have responsibility for assessing health needs in an area, planning and providing most community and primary care services, and commissioning secondary and specialist health services, usually from local NHS Trusts.

Public Sector Modernisation- A long term government programme for reforming public services.

For further copies of this document please contact:

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There is a national version of the Compact (including five national codes of practice) that outlines the agreement between the Government and the voluntary and community sector to improve their relationship for the benefit of each other and the communities they serve. To view the national Compact please visit the Compact website www.thecompact.org.uk