

# **A Compact for East Sussex**



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# Introduction to the Compact for East Sussex

## 1. Introduction

This Compact is an agreement on relations between the local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and Public Sector organisations in East Sussex. It was originally launched in October 2003 and it is a living document, revised and developed annually.

The Compact outlines a statement of principles which will serve as a solid foundation for effective and productive relationships between partners in the VCS and the Public Sector. The Compact is a means of strengthening and sustaining the VCS and supporting the aims and objectives of the Public Sector.

The East Sussex Compact and its Codes of Practice have been developed by a wide range of people, groups and organisations from across the county. All Voluntary, Community and Public Sector organisations in East Sussex are encouraged to sign up to this Compact and its Codes of Practice.

The Compact is not an end in itself but must be a living document that is part of a process, shaping and guiding the relationships of different partner agencies in East Sussex. Organisations will aim to work together to ensure that the Compact and the Codes of Practice will be implemented and promoted within a spirit of partnership working.

## 2. Aims

The aims of the East Sussex Compact are to establish a framework for partners to work together more effectively to achieve common goals, to develop and deliver services and to build strong, cohesive and self-determining communities. This includes:

- agreeing principles and an effective framework for partnership working;
- improving working relationships in order to provide more effective and co-ordinated services to communities;
- improving consultation, communication, collaboration, trust and respect; and
- assisting partner agencies in meeting common strategic aims.

## 3. Shared Principles

Partner organisations recognise the need for integrity and accountability, openness and objectivity, honesty and leadership in the process of working together for our community. This involves:

- **Recognising Diversity and Promoting Equality**
- **Effective Community Engagement**
- **Mutual Respect and Respecting Independence**
- **Investment and Public Accountability**

### Recognising Diversity and Promoting Equality

Partners recognise that within East Sussex there is a diversity of communities, organisations and rural and urban areas.

Fairness, equality, accessibility and inclusion must underpin all aspects of partnership working, and should be reflected in policies and the way that everyone involved participates. All partners need to recognise their responsibility to actively promote equal opportunities and inclusion for all people, regardless of race, age, class, employment status, disability, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, ethnic background, religious, social and economic status, or political beliefs.

All partners will undertake positive action to promote equalities and take account of diverse needs, to use the qualities and skills that exist across sectors, to have an inclusive approach to enable opportunities for anybody to participate, and to ensure the safety and protection of those using or involved in public, voluntary and community services and activities.

## **Effective Community Engagement**

The effective engagement of local communities is crucial in enabling partnerships to achieve real and sustained results. This will include having clear purposes and agreed methods of community engagement appropriate to the needs of participants, overcoming barriers to involvement, and ensuring that the results of engagement are fed back to the wider community and agencies affected.

There should be a commitment to continually improving the quality of community engagement by sharing skills and knowledge, learning from experience and building on good practice.

## **Mutual Respect and Respecting Independence**

Mutual Respect means all partners' views are equally important and valid, whilst recognising and respecting the distinct but complementary roles of each partner.

In particular partners recognise and support the independence and special contribution of the VCS. The VCS provides a range of vital services, works with those most at risk of social exclusion, responds innovatively to local needs and enables individuals to contribute to public life and the development of their communities. It also attracts funding not available to public agencies.

Partners also recognise the legitimate representative role of Elected Members, their decision making and democratic responsibility to set priorities for services within available resources and a context of sound and prudent stewardship of public money.

## **Investment and Public Accountability**

The Public Sector should consider overall value, including economic, environmental and social value, when reviewing service provision. As a concept, social value is about seeking to maximise the additional benefit that can be created by procuring or commissioning goods and services, above and beyond the benefit of merely the goods and services themselves.

The Public Sector should seek to avoid passing on disproportionate reductions - by not passing on larger reductions to the Voluntary and Community Sector and small businesses as a whole, than they take on themselves - and in particular:

- A Public Sector organisation intending to reduce or end funding (where 'funding' means both grant funding and any fixed term contract) or other support to a Voluntary and Community Organisation or small business should give at least three months' notice of the actual reductions to both the organisation involved and the public/service users.
- A Public Sector organisation should actively engage the organisation and service users as early as possible before making a decision on: the future of the service; any knock-on effect on assets used to provide this service; and the wider impact on the local community.
- A Public Sector organisation should make provision for the organisation, service users, and wider community to put forward options on how to reshape the service or project. The Public Sector should assist this by making available all appropriate information, in line with the government [transparency guidance](#).

The Public Sector recognises the need to invest in the ongoing development of the Voluntary and Community Sector infrastructure to support front-line VCOs involved in delivering public services and to build strong, cohesive and self-determining communities.

All partners to this Compact will, wherever possible, adhere to the principles of sound public accountability and open government, and, when required, explain decisions which could affect the public or other stakeholders.

## **4. Implementation**

Each partner organisation is responsible for complying with this Compact and promoting it within its own organisation. Each signatory to the Compact has at least one Compact Champion.

The Compact Champions have responsibility for promoting and assisting in the implementation of the East Sussex Compact within their own organisation/agency or network of organisations.

Champions also work alongside the Compact Steering Group.

The Compact Steering Group provides support, training, and guidance on implementing the Compact based on the needs and concerns of Compact signatories.

The Compact Steering Group is also responsible for developing the Annual Action Plan, monitoring of the activities listed in the plan, and reporting back to Compact signatories.

The scrutiny of the East Sussex Compact is undertaken by the East Sussex Strategic Partnership (ESSP). Compact Scrutiny is the process for ensuring that the East Sussex Compact Annual Action Plan activities are being achieved.

## **5. Codes of Practice**

There are six Codes of Practice to underpin the East Sussex Compact, outlining the aim and commitments for both the VCS and Public Sector in East Sussex. The six Codes of Practice are on:

- Funding and Procurement;
- Consultation and Community Engagement;
- Volunteering;
- Community Groups;
- Partnerships; and
- Equality and Diversity

## **6. Resolution of Disagreements**

As far as possible, partner organisations that believe other partners are not respecting the spirit of this agreement should seek to resolve the issue between themselves. Partners must agree to honour each other's right to raise concerns, to give time to each other to hear them, and to respond positively to them.

If you have any questions e-mail [compact@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:compact@eastsussex.gov.uk),

# Compact Champions

## What is a Compact Champion?

A Compact Champion is a person with responsibility for promoting and assisting in the implementation of the East Sussex Compact within their own organisation/agency or network of organisations.

## What are the role and responsibilities of Compact Champions?

1. To promote the East Sussex Compact, assist in the implementation and review progress within their own organisation/agency or network of organisations by:
  - ensuring they are familiar with the content of the East Sussex Compact and its Codes of Practice;
  - being able to identify the implications and impact of the Compact for their organisation/agency or network of organisations;
  - effectively promoting the Compact within their own organisation/agency or network of organisations (including staff, councillors, volunteers, trustees and other stakeholders where applicable);
  - co-ordinating their organisation/agency sign up to the Compact; and
  - being the initial point of contact for advice and support regarding Compact implementation for their organisation/agency or network of organisations.
  
2. To contribute to the work of the East Sussex Compact Steering Group by:
  - taking part in discussions and modelling good partnership working;
  - reporting on good practice and identifying problem areas which can guide the work of the Steering Group; and
  - seeking the views of the organisation/agency they represent, in order to make those views known to the East Sussex Compact Steering Group.

# Compact Scrutiny

*Compact Scrutiny is the process for ensuring that the East Sussex Compact Implementation Strategy 2007 - 2012 and Annual Action Plan are being achieved.*

## **Who is involved?**

Members of the East Sussex Compact Steering Group, Compact Champions and signatories to the East Sussex Compact.

## **Who does it?**

East Sussex Strategic Partnership Executive Board.

## **How does it work?**

The Compact Steering Group presents an Annual Review of the Compact to the East Sussex Strategic Partnership Executive Board for comment and will consider any recommendations made by the Board to improve the implementation and embedding of the Compact.

## **Why is it done?**

To ensure that both the Public Sector and the Voluntary and Community Sector are up-to-date and aware of how the Compact is being implemented and how they can inform future developments and activities.

## **What has it covered?**

All activities listed in the East Sussex Compact Annual Action Plan, and evidence of how the Compact commitments are being implemented and what Compact commitments look like in everyday working environment.

## **What outcomes are to be achieved?**

Awareness raising among both the Public and Voluntary and Community Sector members of the East Sussex Strategic Partnership Executive Board on existing Compact working and how it will be developed over the coming years. In particular how the Compact relates to delivering the Integrated Community Strategy "Pride of Place".

## **Why it better positions the County Council and District Councils?**

With the Scrutiny role sitting with the East Sussex Strategic Partnership Executive Board (which includes Borough, District and County Councils), it enables all local authorities to work collectively in ensuring that the Compact is understood, developed, and implemented across the entire county. The overall result being that policies and activities can be developed to include Compact commitments, which leads to improved relationships between local authorities and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

## **How do Members and Officers feel about this approach?**

Generally across all local authorities the Compact has been well received by Members and Officers. However a great deal of work still needs to be done to develop a working understanding of the Compact commitments reflected in the Annual Action Plans.

# Resolution of Disagreements

## Understanding the Process

The Compact Steering Group has developed this short guidance note to assist signatories in fully understanding the process for the resolution of disagreements.

The aim of this guidance is to provide reassurance and assistance to signatories on how the process should operate.

### **Section 6 (Resolution of Disagreements) of the East Sussex Compact states:**

As far as possible, partner organisations that believe other partners are not respecting the spirit of this agreement should seek to resolve the issue between themselves.

Partners must agree to honour each other's right to raise concerns, to give time to each other to hear them, and to respond positively to them.

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Regardless of the success of any cross sector and intra-sector relationship, concerns and disagreements will at times arise that we need to try to resolve.

Concerns and disagreements can help identify important issues, and by approaching them in a positive and non-confrontational way, they can help to improve the way we work together.

Unresolved concerns and disagreements can damage working relationships.

Therefore the purpose of this resolution of disagreements process is to:

- Encourage good practice
- Promote positive relationships
- Resolve any concerns as quickly and fairly as possible
- Learn from concerns and disagreements
- Improve the effectiveness of the East Sussex Compact

Ideally, outcomes from following the procedure will result in a review of, or change in, the issue concern or disagreement.

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## **Who are the Partner organisations?**

Organisations that are developing, undertaking or participating in an activity, service or project, that involves the Public and Voluntary & Community Sectors.

Concerns and disagreements are rarely deliberate and can occur for various reasons, such as:

- Organisations and individuals not being aware of the Compact commitments;
- Lack of communication between organisations;
- The concern or disagreement being unavoidable through a crisis or external causes overriding Compact compliance (but this should be explained); or
- A symptom of wider issues.

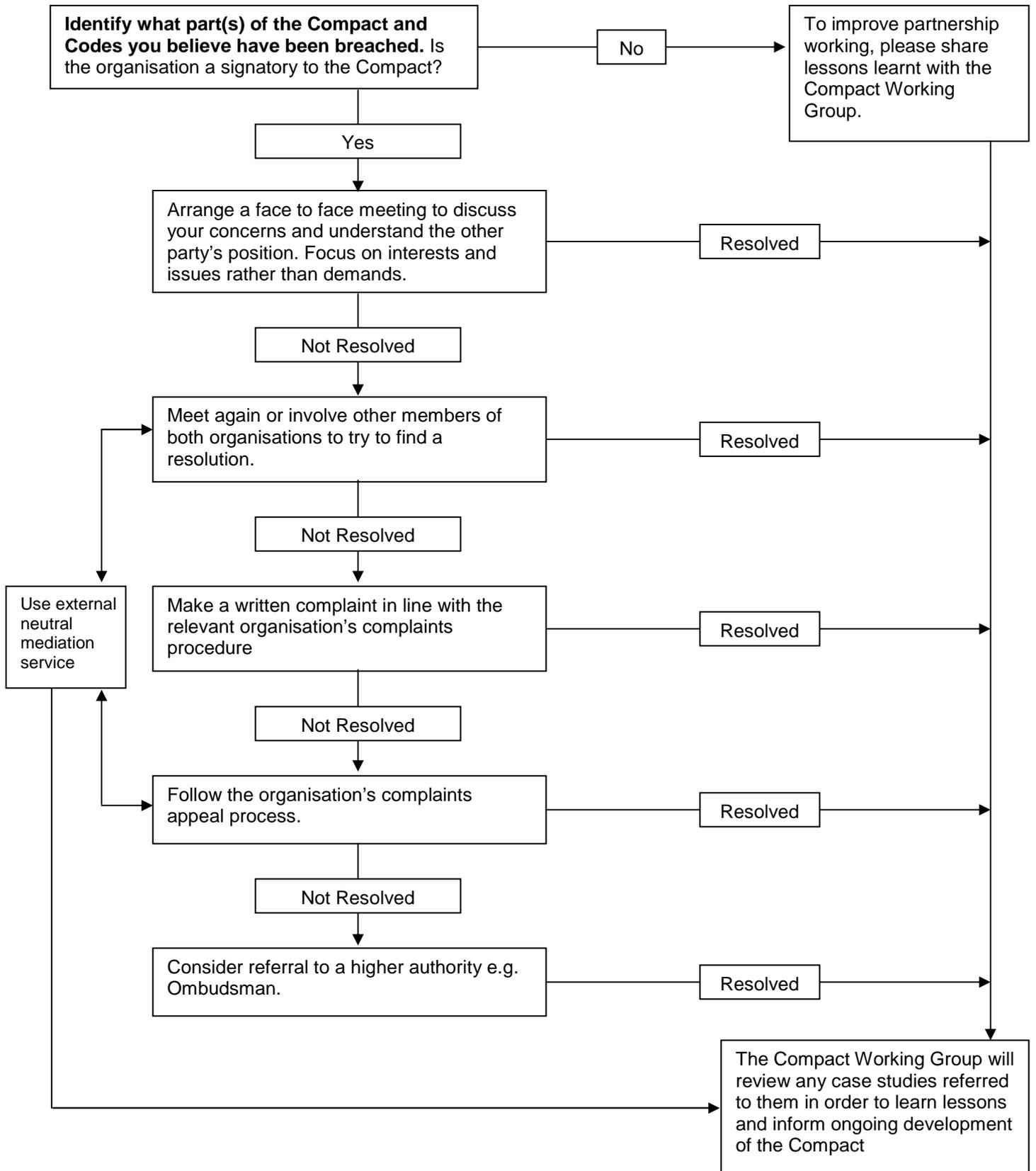
Raising and talking through an issue with the other organisation involved can settle many concerns and disagreements.

Any organisations raising concerns with another organisation or partnership who is a signatory to the Compact should feel confident that discussions will not be used against an organisation or negatively influence future relationships\* between organisations.

\* Future relationships refers to dealings organisations or partnerships may have regarding consultations on services, grant funding arrangements, the tendering of services, and representation on partnerships or collaborative working including boards and committees.

## The Process

As far as possible, partner organisations that believe other partners are not respecting the spirit of this agreement should seek to resolve the issue between themselves. Partners must agree to honour each other's right to raise concerns, to give time to each other to hear them, and to respond positively to them. The following process should be followed:



# How to sign up to the East Sussex Compact

Now that you understand the Compact, the Codes of Practice and the commitments that organisations should follow to improve working relationships, it's time to sign up.

## Step 1

Put the Compact on the agenda of your next management committee/trustee meeting.

## Step 2

Provide all management committee members/trustees with a copy of the Compact (and the address to the East Sussex Compact web pages) at least two weeks before the meeting. For hard copies contact Paul Rideout – 01273 482911.

## Step 3

Have the management committee members/trustees discuss the Compact at their meeting, and agree to become signatories to the Compact. The meeting should also agree a Compact Champion<sup>1</sup> for the organisation.

This decision should be minuted.

## Step 4

Send a copy of the minutes, or an extract from the minutes, along with the name and contact details of your Compact Champion to the East Sussex Compact Steering Group c/o Paul Rideout.

## **Congratulations, your organisation is now a signatory to the East Sussex Compact!**

As a signatory to the Compact your organisation will need to be committed to the shared principles of the Compact which are:

- Recognising Diversity and Promoting Equality;
- Effective Community Engagement;
- Mutual Respect and Respecting Independence; and
- Investment and Public Accountability.

<sup>1</sup>The Compact Champion will:

- Act as the channel for promoting involvement, ensuring compliance and implementation; and
- Receive updates and information from the East Sussex Compact Steering Group.

If you have any questions on becoming a signatory or require any assistance please contact Paul Rideout on 01273 482911, or paul.rideout@eastsussex.gov.uk

# Codes of Practice and Checklists

## Codes of Practice

These are the ‘teeth’ of the Compact: guidelines that govern specific areas and make specific key commitments:

### Funding and Procurement

- Aims to promote and develop best practice in the funding relationship between the Public and Voluntary and Community Sectors.

### Consultation and Community Engagement

- Aims to develop and promote best practice in meaningful and effective consultation and engagement between the Public and Voluntary and Community Sectors.

### Volunteering

- Aims to set a framework for raising the profile and volume of volunteering in East Sussex, encouraging best practice in the management of volunteers and removing the barriers to volunteering.

### Community Groups

- Sometimes, smaller community groups are overlooked by both Public Sector and Voluntary Organizations, and find it difficult to get involved. This Code of Practice aims to address these shortcomings and promote better understanding and awareness of the diversity and contribution of community groups.

### Partnerships

- Aims to promote awareness and build knowledge and understanding between sectors about working in partnership, and to establish a framework for partners to work together more effectively to achieve common goals, develop and deliver services, and build strong, cohesive and self-determining communities.

### Equality and Diversity

- Aims to comply with the Equality Act 2010 which includes a new Public Sector Equality Duty.

## Using the Checklists

Both sectors are responsible for complying with the East Sussex Compact, and promoting it within individual organisations. The Compact Codes of Practice spell out in detail good practice in specific areas, and state the key commitments of both sectors.

The **checklists** will help you to understand how you can meet these specific Compact undertakings, in all aspects of your work.

The checklists should be used as a reference tool for the Code of Practice activity in which you are involved, for example:

- a Grant Funding Officer from the Borough Council will refer to the checklist for ‘Funding & Procurement’, to ensure that the commitments of this specific Code of Practice have been met
- a Consultation Officer at the local Primary Care Trust will refer to the checklist for ‘Consultation & Community Engagement’, to ensure that the commitments of this specific Code of Practice have been met
- individuals managing or supporting volunteers will refer to the checklist for ‘Volunteering’, to ensure that the commitments of this specific Code of Practice have been met

# Code of Practice on Funding and Procurement

## 1. Aim

Many Voluntary and Community Organisations enter into financial relationships with the Public Sector to deliver outcomes on their behalf, either through grant funding or by supplying services purchased through public procurement (contracts). This Code of Practice aims to promote and develop best practice in this relationship.

## 2. Commitments

1. The achievement of outcomes should be used as a key indicator of the success of funding.
2. Processes should be as simple as possible and in proportion to the amount of money involved.
3. Give equal consideration to the Voluntary and Community Sector budget as to other budgets, if budgetary reductions are necessary.
4. Make prompt payments in advance of expenditure, where appropriate and necessary.
5. Establish proportionate and consistent monitoring and evaluation arrangements.
6. Funders and purchasers should endeavour to join-up or standardise the funding or procurement chain.
7. Apply procedures that are consistent with the principles of good regulation and the need to provide effective protection of, and proper accountability for, public money.
8. Allocate funding and contracts against clear, relevant and consistent criteria within a Best Value framework.
9. Agree terms of delivery before a funding agreement is entered into including implications if funding is not at the level required and in terms of risk management.
10. Implement multi year funding arrangements; e.g. three year renewable annually.
11. There should be clear reasons for decisions made at each stage of the allocation process.
12. Inform applicants as soon as possible of funding decisions and give feedback on decisions made, whether or not they have been successful.
13. Advertise widely and provide information that promotes fair access to funding and encourages applications from organisations who have not applied in the past.
14. Consult on any new funding programmes or proposed changes to existing arrangements, and give timely information about future funding intentions.
15. Give enough notice where possible (minimum of three months) to withdraw the grant.
16. Recognise that if agreed delivery is delayed or prevented by circumstances beyond reasonable control, there should not be a breach of agreement.
17. Recognise that it is legitimate for Voluntary and Community Organisations to include the relevant element of overheads in their cost estimates associated to providing a specific service.

# Funding and Procurement Checklist

This checklist guidance aims to promote and develop the best funding relationship possible.

## **Application process**

- When developing funding or contract opportunities, care is taken to identify any existing opportunities that are managed by other departments or partners, and that the potential for aligning or pooling opportunities is explored
- Information on funding or contract opportunities is advertised widely, promotes fair access and encourages applications from a diverse range of organisations
- The eligibility criteria to apply for funding or contract opportunities is clearly explained
- Clear written guidance on completing the applications and the scoring of applications is provided.
- Information asked for and provided on application forms is purposeful and directly related to deciding who will receive funding or be awarded the contract
- Proposed action by applicants meets the specific criteria set out in the funding or tender programme
- The application process is proportionate to the amount of funding available or the size of the contract
- An appropriate point of contact from both sectors is identified and support and guidance is offered throughout the application process
- Both sectors recognise that a proportionate amount of overheads can be included in project or service costs
- Organisations are informed of funding or contract decisions and given feedback on decisions by the agreed deadline stated in the application process

## **Conditions of the agreement**

- Both sectors discuss and contribute to the terms and conditions of delivery, with conditions being agreed and formally documented in good time
- Effective processes are in place for the control, accountability and audit of finances and funded projects
- A schedule for monitoring is set and clearly documented and, whenever appropriate, payments are made in advance of expenditure
- Potential risks are discussed up-front and responsibility for managing these risks is placed with the sector best able to deal with them

## **Monitoring and evaluation**

- The monitoring and evaluation framework is consistent and helps to maintain high standards of governance, openness and transparency
- The monitoring and evaluation framework is clear and specific in assessing the measurable outcomes of the agreement and is proportionate to the amount of funding received
- If agreed delivery is delayed or prevented by circumstances beyond reasonable control, it is recognised that there is not a breach of agreement
- Reasonable notice (a minimum of three months) is given for the end of grants and contracts and to any proposed changes to existing arrangements

# Code of Practice on Consultation and Community Engagement

Consultation and engagement plays a key role in partnership working. Listening to and engaging with partners helps to ensure that proposals are supported and leads to better planning and delivery of services. There should be a commitment to continually improve the quality of consultation and engagement, by learning from experience and building on good practice.

## 1. Definition

**Consultation:** a two-way process by which an organisation seeks views to check whether proposals are right and supported, gauge their impact and identify alternatives before decisions are made. This means options can be properly appraised in advance of policy or service changes or new laws being made. Consultation allows choice but not an opportunity to take part in implementing plans.

**Engagement:** this is active, ongoing and informed joint working and it means including people in decision making processes and working together to implement change and ongoing service delivery. Community engagement refers to activities designed to give communities an opportunity to contribute to local decision-making and service delivery.

## 2. Aim

To develop and promote best practice in meaningful and effective consultation and engagement between the Public and Voluntary and Community Sectors, so that:

- public services will better reflect the views and concerns of local people and be better planned, prioritised and delivered;
- the public will have a greater sense of ownership;
- public solutions will be sustained by the active involvement of the communities concerned;
- partnerships will be effective; and
- policy will be more realistic and robust and better reflect peoples' needs and wishes.

## 3. Commitments

1. Gather evidence of the need for consultation and engagement, the issues to be addressed and the resources available to support engagement and use this evidence to agree the purpose, scope and timescale of the engagement and the actions to be taken.
3. Give early notice of forthcoming consultations, where possible, allowing enough time for Voluntary and Community Organisations to involve their service users, beneficiaries, members, volunteers and trustees in preparing responses.
4. Allow twelve weeks for Voluntary and Community Sector responses, unless this is prevented by legislative restrictions placed on the Public Sector or by other restrictions outside their control (for further guidance on this please refer to 'How long to consult' document).
5. Agree and use clear procedures that enable participants and others with an interest in the consultation/engagement to work with one another effectively and efficiently.
6. Ensure that necessary information is communicated between participants and feed back the results explaining how respondents have influenced the design and development of policies, programmes and public services, including where respondents' views have not been acted upon.
7. Voluntary and Community Organisations should seek the views of service users, clients, beneficiaries, members, volunteers, and trustees when making representation to Public Sector organisations. Be clear on who is being represented, in what capacity, and on what basis that representation is being made.

# Consultation and Community Engagement Checklist

Consultation and engagement plays a key role in partnership working. Listening to and engaging with partners helps to ensure that proposals are supported and leads to better planning and delivery of services. There should be a commitment to continually improve the quality of consultation and engagement, by learning from experience and building on good practice.

This checklist guidance aims to promote best practice in meaningful and effective consultation and engagement.

## **Planning and methodology**

- The purpose of the consultation and engagement is clearly stated
- The topic and issues to be addressed during the consultation and engagement are clearly stated
- The process for consultation and engagement is clearly described
- The target audience and format of the consultation and engagement is clearly explained
- Fairness, equality and inclusion underpin all aspects of the consultation and engagement policy
- Existing good practice has been respected and followed where appropriate
- All participants, especially those with a specific interest in the consultation and engagement subject, or who may be particularly affected, are involved in planning from the beginning of the process
- Enough resources are allocated to support the consultation and engagement process
- The scope and timescale of the consultation and engagement process are reasonable and clearly documented (12 weeks is usually accepted to be a reasonable minimum timescale)
- The delivery methods of consultation and engagement are clear in purpose, accessible and appropriate for the needs of the participants; when possible, attention should be paid to the importance of outreach work and face to face engagement

## **Involvement and support**

- It is clear whether the response to the consultation and engagement is based on views of the individual or on behalf of a group
- Any barriers to involvement are identified and attempts are made to overcome them
- Existing communication networks are maximised and participants work together to help facilitate quality responses

## **Feedback and monitoring**

- The consultation and engagement is monitored and evaluated against its initial purpose
- Results from the consultation and engagement are communicated back to participants in good time and conveyed accurately and in an appropriate format
- Any decisions that follow as a result of the consultation and engagement are clearly publicised and explained
- There is a commitment to continually improving the quality of consultation and engagement by learning from experience, building on good practice and developing a consistent approach across different agencies

# Code of Practice on Volunteering

## 1. Definition

**Volunteering** is 'any activity which involves spending time, unpaid, doing something which aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than or in addition to close relatives, or to benefit the environment'. [*The Institute of Volunteering Research.*]

## 2. Aims

This Code of Practice aims to set a framework for raising the profile and volume of volunteering in East Sussex, encouraging best practice in the management of volunteers and removing the barriers to volunteering.

## 3. Commitments

- Recognise that whilst volunteering is freely given, it is not cost free – volunteering needs to be effectively resourced and well managed to sustain and develop it.
- Recognise the diverse range and contribution of volunteers to improving public services, from consultation through to involvement in design and delivery.
- Recognise and give volunteers the support, training, management and other resources they need to be involved effectively.
- Recognise the important role volunteers play as trustees and committee members, and the need for appropriate training and support for them.
- Recognise the value of volunteering experience in recruiting new employees and promote volunteering opportunities to existing staff where appropriate.
- Work together to develop, promote and celebrate volunteering across East Sussex.
- Work to increase the diversity of people involved in volunteering and recognise that everyone has the right to volunteer without experiencing unfair discrimination.
- Work to increase the quality, quantity and scope of volunteering across all sectors.
- Work together to share, develop and implement good practice in volunteering.
- Involve volunteers in decision making related to their volunteering.
- Work to overcome the institutional, attitudinal and practical barriers to volunteering.
- Improve the measure of voluntary and community activity and assess and publicise, to staff and the wider community, the extent to which this plays a key part in achieving organisational objectives.
- Where Public Sector organisations directly manage volunteers, they will act on relevant undertakings for the Voluntary and Community Sector. They will not expect volunteers to do work that should be undertaken by paid staff.
- Follow good practice in the reimbursement of reasonable expenses and include these costs in any funding proposals.
- Ensure that volunteers are given thanks and recognition for their contribution and make visible the value of volunteers' contribution, including to volunteers themselves.

# Volunteering Checklist

Both sectors recognise the value of volunteering: high levels of volunteering can be seen as an indicator of healthy and active communities and add a unique contribution to the value of service delivery.

Raising the profile of volunteering, developing best practice in management and removing barriers to volunteering can help to get more people involved in various forms of voluntary activity.

This checklist guidance aims to promote and develop the best volunteering framework possible.

## **Volunteering as a result of free choice**

- Pressure is not placed on any individual asking about volunteering opportunities
- Support and guidance is given to potential volunteers to help them make an informed decision and find opportunities that best fit their individual needs, interests and abilities
- The recruitment and management of volunteers is based on mutual trust and respect
- Processes are in place that allow individuals to discuss any issues in confidence and make decisions freely
- A degree of flexibility is adopted for the management of volunteers: it is recognised that volunteers are acting through free choice and are not expected to carry out work that should be undertaken by paid staff

## **Volunteering is open to everyone**

- Volunteering opportunities are actively promoted in the wider community and any barriers to volunteering are identified and attempts are made to overcome them
- Work is carried out to help increase and promote diversity among volunteers, in terms of age, race, gender and disability
- The varied individual motivations for volunteering, and the support needs that different groups may have, are recognised and provided for
- Both sectors regularly monitor proposed legislation and regulation for potential impacts on volunteering, and any updates and / or relevant information is communicated between the sectors and key partners

## **The mutual benefits of volunteering**

- Volunteering policy promotes and allows for volunteers to benefit from their contribution to the community by: gaining a sense of worthwhile achievement, increasing their skills and experience for future employment, being reimbursed for reasonable expenses and having fun
- Volunteers are offered appropriate and relevant induction training and support on a regular basis to enable them to carry out their role
- Volunteers are invited to be involved in processes for improving public services, from consultation through to involvement in design and delivery
- Both sectors work together to share and develop best practice to benefit future volunteers

## **Recognising the value of volunteering**

- Thanks and recognition is given to individual volunteers, but is also given publicly to highlight the contribution volunteering can make to a community, an organisation or a particular project
- Efforts are made to gather relevant and valuable data on volunteering and the impact of voluntary activities in communities
- The long-term contribution of volunteers is recognised and addressed when making decisions around sustainable long-term funding

# Code of Practice on Community Groups

## 1. Definition

Community organisations are usually active on a local or community level, small, modestly funded and largely dependent on voluntary, rather than paid, effort. They can be seen as distinct from the larger, professionally staffed agencies which are most visible in Voluntary Sector profiles. Hence the phrase 'Voluntary and Community Sector' to encompass the full range. The range of community groups includes neighbourhood-based groups and groups based on common interests or experience, such as faith, ethnic origin and disability through to arts and leisure interests.

## 2. Aims

Sometimes, smaller community groups are overlooked by both Public Sector and Voluntary Organisations, and find it difficult to get involved. This Code of Practice aims to address these shortcomings and promote better understanding and awareness of the diversity and contribution of community groups.

## 3. Commitments

1. Recognise that community groups enable local people to contribute to the development of their communities, enable groups of people to work together to find solutions to common problems, promote active citizenship and community leadership.
2. Recognise that a community voice can enable communities to participate in decision-making and increase the accountability of service providers.
3. Work to increase the confidence and capacity of individuals and small groups to get involved in activities and build mutually supportive networks that hold communities together (Social Capital).
4. Ensure that local communities are in a position to influence service delivery and, where appropriate, participate in their own forms of service delivery.
5. Encourage communities in building a common vision, sense of belonging and positive identity where diversity is valued.
6. Promote community development as a means of building active and sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual respect.
7. Adhere to the principles of fairness, equality, accessibility and inclusion as central to the effective development and engagement of community groups.
8. Share skills, knowledge, experience and good practice and recognise that learning is key to the success of sustainable community development.
9. Ensure that community groups have access to appropriate support and resources to enable them to develop.
10. Involve groups with first hand experience of particular problems in developing and delivering solutions and give the process resources as appropriate.
11. Remember that community groups may have limited capacity, and respect their other commitments and the needs of their volunteers.
12. Encourage active community members to carry out leadership roles in Voluntary and Community Sector networks.

# Community Groups Checklist

The Community Sector contributes greatly to improving social inclusion and cohesion. Community groups help local people to contribute to the development of their communities, promote community leadership and have a voice in local decision-making.

It is essential to make sure that service development and delivery can benefit from the skills and experience found in community groups.

This Code of Practice aims to promote a better understanding of the contribution of voluntary and community groups.

## **Ensuring a voice for the community**

- Fairness, equality and inclusion are central to methods of engagement with, and development of policy for, community groups
- Methods of engagement are clear in purpose, accessible and appropriate for the needs of the community group involved. Innovative methods of engagement, which are more suitable for the target audience, should be looked into and adopted if appropriate
- Appropriate support is provided to enable community groups have their say, and any barriers to involvement are identified and attempts are made to overcome them
- The differences in working with paid workers and volunteers in a group need to be taken into account; this may include capacity and knowledge of the issue
- Community groups with first-hand experience of particular issues are invited to be involved in the development and delivery of solutions at an early stage
- Local infrastructure organisations ensure that they will represent the interests of the community inclusively, fairly and honestly when asked to speak on its behalf

## **Enabling positive community identity**

- The diversity, needs and independence of individual community groups are recognised and respected
- It is clear whether a specific community group or the sector as a whole is being represented when participating in any activities
- Community members are encouraged to carry out leadership roles in community networks
- Both sectors raise awareness of the contribution and diversity of community groups within the wider community

## **Supporting community networks**

- Local infrastructure organisations and community networks are used as a means of contact, information sharing, training and advice for community groups
- Community groups are given support in accessing resources – for example, meeting spaces, workers with community development skills, small grants or appropriate learning opportunities – to help them take ownership of assets
- Both sectors work together to share and develop best practice and learn from experience to further benefit community groups

# Code of Practice on Partnerships

## 1. Definition

A partnership is usually defined as an arrangement involving Public Sector agencies working together with the Private, Voluntary or Community Sectors where a commitment is given to achieving a common purpose.

## 2. Aims

- To promote awareness and build knowledge and understanding between sectors about working in partnership.
- To establish a framework for partners to work together more effectively to achieve common goals, to develop and deliver services and to build strong, cohesive and self-determining communities.
- **Commitments**
  1. Recognise that partnership working should be based upon an understanding of accountability, representation and methods of participation clearly defined by, and appropriate to, each partner agency.
  2. Fairness, equality, accessibility and inclusion must underpin all aspects of partnership working, and should be reflected in policies and the way that everyone involved participates.
  3. Partnership activities should have clear and agreed purposes and a variety of methods to achieve these purposes appropriate to the needs of participants.
  4. All participants should be given the opportunity to develop and share their skills and knowledge in order to: ensure practice of equalities principles; share ownership of the agenda; and enable all viewpoints to be reflected.
  5. Ensure that representatives involved with partnerships maintain a continuing dialogue with those they represent, share information with them and have legitimacy and authority to take decisions and actions on their behalf.
  6. Ensure that relationships between partners are based on trust and mutual respect, valuing what each brings to the partnership and supported by leadership that enables rather than controls.
  7. Identify joint objectives whilst recognising the distinct but complementary roles and operational autonomy of partners.
  8. Commit to the accurate and timely dissemination and presentation of information in appropriate formats. This must include ways in which the results of partnership activities are fed back to the wider community and agencies affected.
  9. Recognise that partnership working needs to be properly resourced and supported with administrative arrangements, joint training and continuing local Compact development to enable it to work.
  10. Create a context in which differences of perspective can be aired and discussed freely.

# Partnerships Checklist

This checklist guidance aims to promote and develop effective partnership working.

## **Initiating partnership working**

- Key partners are identified and the representative for each partner is offered the support they need in order to participate effectively in partnership activities
- The purposes of the partnership activities are clear, agreed by all representatives and documented.
- Care is taken to identify any other existing partnerships and whether the proposed activity duplicates that of any other partnership
- Measurable objectives for the partnership activities are identified and appropriate methods for achieving these objectives are agreed
- Enough resources and administrative support are allocated for the partnership activities
- Any barriers to involvement are identified and attempts are made to overcome them

## **Partnership working in practice**

- Each representative is given the opportunity to contribute to the agenda for partnership activities
- Fairness, equality and inclusion underpin all aspects of partnership working and activities
- The relationship between partners is based on mutual trust and respect; all representatives can share skills and knowledge and discuss freely any differences of perspective
- Each representative maintains a continual dialogue with those they represent and has the authority to take decisions and actions
- The independence and operational autonomy of partners is recognised and respected
- Partnership activities are supported by leadership that enables rather than controls

## **Improving partnership working**

- If any specific issues are highlighted during the partnership activities, training is discussed as a possibility for all partners and organised if necessary
- Information resulting from partnership working is communicated in good time and conveyed accurately and in an appropriate format
- There is a commitment to continually improving the quality of partnership working by learning from experience, building on good practice and developing a consistent approach across all partners

# Code of Practice on Equality and Diversity

## 1. Protected Characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 has extended the protection from six equality strands to nine 'protected characteristics', which are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion and belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Under the Act people are not allowed to discriminate, harass or victimise another person because they have any of the protected characteristics.

## 2. Aims

This Code of Practice aims to comply with the Equality Act 2010 which includes a new Public Sector Equality Duty which states that public bodies, and those bodies who carry out work on their behalf, must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different groups

## 3. Commitments

1. Recognition that the Voluntary and Community Sector represents diverse people, communities and families in East Sussex, including faith groups and refugee and asylum seekers. There will also be a range of views, in terms of cultural, economic and social background.
2. As some protected groups of the Voluntary and Community Sector are underdeveloped in comparison with mainstream Voluntary Sector, all sectors must work with individuals and communities, as well as with organised voluntary and community groups.
3. Acknowledgement that joint action between all sectors is crucial in achieving equality of opportunity, fostering good relations and eliminating discrimination.
4. Promote better understanding and awareness of the diversity, independence and contribution of people with protected characteristics.
5. Establish principles that underpin joint action to effectively achieve equality of opportunity, foster good relations and eliminate discrimination.
6. Help develop the capacity and infrastructure of protected groups in the Voluntary and Community Sector.
7. Actively promote the involvement of individuals, communities and small groups who are affected by partnership activities but not yet organised to participate.
8. Establish and implement equality objectives and publish equality information.
9. Ensure equality of access to quality public services and the active involvement of protected groups in service planning, performance management and scrutiny processes.
10. Actively promote equal opportunities and raise awareness of diverse communities and equality issues within their own organisations.
11. Operate effective equal opportunity monitoring and evaluation systems.

# Equality and Diversity Checklist

Both sectors recognise the important role of people with protected characteristics and diverse communities in ensuring the Voluntary and Community Sector is more representative of society.

Effective consultation and engagement with diverse communities ensures that Public Sector organisations can tailor their services to meet community needs.

This checklist is specifically for working with people with the protected characteristics

## **Ensuring a voice for diverse communities**

- The specific needs of protected groups are recognised and appropriate support is provided to enable these groups have their say
- Protected groups with expertise in a particular issue are invited to be involved in the development and delivery of solutions at the outset
- Any specific barriers to protected groups getting involved are identified and attempts are made to overcome them

## **Enabling positive community identity**

- Protected groups are recognised and respected;
- The independence of protected groups, and their right to challenge policy and practice is recognised and respected
- Encourage people from protected groups to carry out leadership roles in community networks.
- Community leaders will ensure that they represent the interests of their community fairly and honestly when asked to speak on its behalf

## **Supporting the community**

- Public Sector and Voluntary and Community Sector recognise the importance of understanding diverse communities and commit to gather information and build good working relationships
- Principles that effectively achieve the three aims of the general Equality Duty are developed and promoted in all policy
- It is recognised that people with different protected characteristics may have a different experience of volunteering and community work, and specific support is provided in line with the checklist guidance for volunteering