

Compact on Relations Between the Statutory and Voluntary Sectors in the London Borough of Bromley

WORKING TOGETHER BETTER

The purpose of the Compact is to

- Set out key principles and values which underpin the relationship between the statutory and voluntary sectors in the borough
- Clearly state commitments to be given by the voluntary and statutory sectors

1. Introduction to Bromley's Compact

1.1 Bromley's Compact is the agreed framework for the development of closer partnerships between Bromley's statutory and voluntary sectors. This document sets out the key principles and values which underpin the relationship between the partners and is intended as a tool and not as an end in itself. This local Compact builds on the national guidance set out in the Compact on Relations between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in England in 2002.

1.2 The Compact has been developed to reflect the local context and for ownership by all the partners to Bromley's Local Strategic Partnership. By setting out clearly the expectations of all the partners the Compact will support more effective partnership working and the delivery of the community vision of a Better Bromley. The agreement is intended as a practical document which will be supported by guidance on particular aspects such as a guide to consultation for use by all partners.

1.3 The Partners to the Compact comprise:

Bromley's voluntary and community sector (VCS)
London Borough of Bromley
Bromley Primary Care Trust
Bromley Borough Metropolitan Police
Oxleas Foundation Trust
Bromley Hospitals Trust

2. Partnership

2.1 The Compact builds on the long history of partnership working in Bromley. In the early days partnership was primarily about the delivery of specific projects or schemes. This has changed in recent years with all partners recognising the importance of partnership at the strategic as well as the operational level. The development of the Local Strategic Partnership across all sectors to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area is evidence of this new emphasis on working collaboratively.

2.2 Partnership is now a central theme at both strategic and operational levels for the Council, local NHS bodies, the Police, the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), other public and increasingly, private sector organisations as well.

2.3 The National Compact has at its heart “Getting it Right Together” and that is the aim for Bromley. There are many different formal and informal partnership structures that bring together the skills, knowledge and experience of the sectors. Whilst the scale and scope of partnership work has increased in Bromley, all parties recognise the opportunity for strengthening this and developing a culture of continuous improvement. Different sectors and indeed departments within an organisation such as the Council have different legal responsibilities, resources and operational functions that will impact on the nature of their partnership working and their effectiveness.

2.4 Many Voluntary Community Organisations (VCOs), particularly smaller or developing ones may have not been fully involved in partnership initiatives . This may be due to a variety of reasons. For instance, it lies outside their priorities, a lack of resources or knowledge of existing partnerships or a perception that partnerships will not offer benefits to their organisation.

2.5 The development of the Compact is a recognition that all partners are important to the success and well-being of the Borough.

2.6 Shared Principles

Compact Partners

- recognise and accept that both sectors are equally important in improving the quality of life of people living and working in Bromley and will respect and appreciate the rich diversity of roles and objectives of other Compact partners
- Promote and encourage inclusive and accessible consultation and engagement that ensures stakeholders are informed and given the opportunity to participate in decisions affecting their lives
- understand the importance, of and are committed to, working together and communicating in an honest and open way for mutual benefit
- value the wide range of partnerships within the borough and promote different partnership structures appropriate to the purpose and aims of the partnership and encourage access and involvement
- Public agencies recognise the independence of the voluntary and community sector and its right to campaign within the law
- acknowledge the different constraints under which they each work, for example legal and constitutional requirements on the public sector, and charity commission obligations for the voluntary and community sector
- are committed to being socially inclusive and committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all people regardless of race, age, disability, sexual orientation and belief,
- are committed to sharing information with each other, respecting confidentiality protocols and the Data Protection Act.
- Recognising the role and benefit that volunteers make to individual organisations and the community in general and adopting “best practice” volunteering policies when working with volunteers
- Recognise that differences will arise, and are committed to resolving any disagreements within the partnership in a constructive and respectful way.

3. Resources

3.1 This section sets out commitments to encourage clarity, consistency and transparency in resource allocation and to enable effective long-term planning and maximisation of resources.

3.2 Resources within the voluntary and community sector exist at several levels. Infrastructure organisations are defined as those providing support for organisational capacity, giving a voice to VCOs and access to representation and policy making. VCS infrastructure organisations include all those playing a supporting, co-ordinating or development role within the sector.

3.3 Community Links Bromley, as the Voluntary Service Council aims to ensure access to information and advice on best practice finance and human resources policies and procedures, new and emerging funding streams and increase opportunities for partnership and joint working for the sector. The strategic nature of infrastructure organisations' work, means they are unlikely to attract public donations or funding from many grant givers who prefer to direct resources toward front line groups. Therefore to ensure the infrastructure support is available to support a vibrant and effective voluntary and community sector, it is important that statutory partners contribute towards the core costs of second tier organisations.

3.4 All partner organisations are increasingly required to demonstrate effectiveness of their resources. Funding to organisations or to particular projects is usually for the purpose of delivering objectives of both the funder and the organisation or project receiving the funding. To ensure the delivery of value for money and the best possible outcomes for our local communities there needs to be a clear, fair and effective process in place, providing a mix of funding that reflects the different needs of local communities.

3.5 The VCS works to a variety of funding bodies and funding streams, including a number of different local statutory funds. It is common for a single project to be funded through more than one source. Indeed for many funders, match funding from an alternative source is a requirement.

3.6 Increasingly there is move to commissioning led approach to funding of the voluntary and community sector. Commissioning is a process of procurement and purchasing that shapes and develops services to ensure that public funding is focused on priorities that meet the needs of Bromley residents and, in some cases, the requirements of funding bodies and external inspection regimes. The key elements to commissioning are clear strategies and plans that specify what services are needed, how they will be developed, paid for and monitored and how their impact will be evaluated.

3.7 This move from the more traditional funding of VCS services through grant aid to a commissioning led approach means that the VCS may in future need to;

- Bid along with other not for profit organisations and the private sector to deliver services, including through a tendering process
- Negotiate service agreements
- Deliver services to clearly specified performance standards
- Evidence that their services are meeting the required outcomes
- Demonstrate Best Value

- Anticipate the consequences of possible de-commissioning, if services fail to meet the required standard or when priorities change

3.8 Both sectors recognise that some organisations do not yet have the infrastructure and skills to participate effectively in the commissioning process. It is recognised that the VCS must be helped to acquire the skills to compete with each other and the private sector on an equitable basis.

3.9 The Statutory Sector Commits to:

- Recognise that the VCOs will require support to participate in the commissioning process;
- Support and encourage the long term development and investment in infrastructure support for the VCS
- Encourage fair access to funding by:
 - Clarity of funding aims, purpose and relationship to statutory sector policy; objective criteria, timely information on actual or likely amounts of funding available and transparency in decision-making and allocation of funds
- Recognise when funding voluntary organisations that the cost of providing a service should include the provision of reasonable core costs to support the funded service.
- Operate funding arrangements that encourage effective long term planning/ implement multi-year funding models
- Give positive consideration to the potential for the VCS to undertake work when developing commissioning strategies and adopt procurement strategy guidelines which recognise the benefits of investing in local VCOs
- Involve the VCS in service planning and consult the sector about the financial implications when new roles and responsibilities for the voluntary sector are being considered.
- Ensure performance monitoring and assessment is transparent, consistent, proportionate, constructive and objective.

3.10 The Voluntary and Community Sector Commits to:

- Work to achieve core quality standards through adopting best practice in structures, service delivery and employment
- Work through representative networks as much as possible and ensure that the voluntary sector networks and forums represent the full range of community groups across the sector.
- Developing and sharing its resources for the good of the whole community
- Support statutory sector agencies in developing appropriate funding schemes and their supporting systems.
- Recognise that receiving public money to support their structure and work brings responsibilities, both to the funding body and to the service users
- Provide information about how the funding has been used and the outcome achieved as a result
- Diversify funding bases and avoid reliance on any single source of funding
- Explore ways in which resources within the sector can be shared and maximised
- Make an effective contribution to service planning.
- Meet legal, reporting, inspection and accounting obligations to external bodies.

4. Consultation, Participation and Involvement

4.1 Both the statutory and voluntary sectors share a commitment to user and public participation in their activities. This commitment is driven by Government requirements (in the case of the Council and Primary Care Trust), but also by the need to improve services, to increase local democracy, ensure good governance (in the case of the voluntary sector), and to support ongoing development and sustainability.

4.2 There are many long-standing structures in place for community involvement in Bromley, and the Council, in addition to a regular consultation programme, is developing a community engagement strategy. The VCS supports and encourages a Voluntary Sector Reference Group and a range of Forums, bringing together organisations working across different themes.

4.3 The Statutory Sector Commits to:

- Recognise the unique role of the VCS in enabling consultation and participation.
- Aim to ensure that the VCS is represented on public boards, agencies, working groups, etc as appropriate.
- Support and resource the role of Community Links and other umbrella bodies such as the VCS Reference Group in facilitating consultation.
- Consult or engage the VCS at an early stage on all matters relevant to it, including services, policies, procedures and strategic plans.
- Allow the VCS time (minimum of 12 weeks) to respond to major consultations where reasonable and practical within imposed timescales.
- Consider any VCS representations before reaching decisions.
- Provide clear and timely feedback to the VCS on its response to consultation.

4.4 The Voluntary and Community Sector commits to:

- Facilitate all sections of the community to take part in consultation and participation in accordance with good practice.
- Ensure the accurate reporting of the views of services users, volunteers and other stakeholders in its response to consultation.
- Ensure that second tier organisations feed back to the VCS an accurate and balanced account of consultation initiatives and outcomes.
- Observe guidance from the Charity Commission on political activities and campaigning.

5. Volunteering

5.1 Volunteering is defined in the national Compact code as

“The commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community, undertaken freely and by choice, without the concern for financial gain”.

5.2 The monetary indicator of the value of volunteer contribution to the wider Bromley economy has been calculated at approximately £3m per year. But, volunteers play a much greater role than purely providing support for a cost effective service: they campaign as activists, they provide a unique perspective and substantial skills and experience. Organisations with a wide volunteer involvement are often best placed to identify emerging and unmet needs.

5.3 To ensure that those expressing an interest in volunteering take up placements and that the tasks undertaken by volunteers are both effective and efficient, good recruitment, training and management processes need to be in place. The principles outlined in this Compact mean that all partners recognise the role and benefit that volunteers make to individual organisations and the community in general and when working with volunteers adopt best practice policies. This involves clarity of rights and responsibilities of both organisation and individual volunteer including support and supervision to be given, a task description for the volunteer and an expenses policy.

5.4 The Statutory Sector Commits to:

- Support the infrastructure that underpins volunteering activity, such as volunteer centre, time banks and voluntary and community activity generally as defined elsewhere in this Compact.

5.5 The Voluntary and Community Sector Commits to:

- Gather appropriate data on volunteers and volunteer outputs so that this information can be shared with the partners in order to demonstrate the added value volunteering brings.
- Promote the value of volunteering to all partners.
- Implement good practice in the management and recruitment of volunteers, providing access to training and support
- Embrace diversity and to work to improve community cohesion

6. Monitoring and Review

6.1 This is our first Compact for Bromley and a starting point rather than a finished exercise. The Local Strategic Partnership aims to improve the quality of life for everyone living and working in the borough. This includes a commitment to develop the Compact and make it more effective. Our Compact sets out general principles. We will cover more specific issues in detailed codes of good practice. We will develop these as part of Bromley Local Strategic Partnership's ongoing commitment to the infrastructure development plan.

6.2 The monitoring and review of the Compact will be the responsibility of the LSP Executive Board. An action plan to take forward the detailed development and implementation of specific areas of the compact will be prepared.

6.3 Quarterly monitoring of the actions will be reported to the board and an overall review of the operation of the Compact in Spring 2008 will enable fine-tuning to respond to the needs of the partners in their role of promoting the well being of the Borough.