

COMPACT

**Voluntary and Community Sector
Compact for Stoke-on-Trent**



**Improving working
relationships and generating
trust between individuals,
communities, organisations
and local agencies**

Contents		Page
	Foreword	4
1	The Compact is	5
1.1	Scope and Definition of the Compact	5
2	Compact Executive Summary	6

Chapter One

Shared Principles and Values

1	Introduction	7
2	Aims	7
3	Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Partner Organisations Commitments	7
4	Voluntary and Community Sector Commitments	8

Chapter Two

Community Groups: Code of Good Practice

1	Introduction	10
2	Aims	10
3	Community Involvement Is Where Local People	10
4	Status of Community Groups	11
5	Distinction between the Community and the Voluntary Sector	11
6	City Council, Partner Organisation and Community Sector Joint Commitments	11
7	Community Sector Commitments	12
8	City Council and Partner Organisation Commitments	12

Chapter Three

Black and Minority Groups: Code of Good Practice

1	Introduction	13
2	Aims	13
3	Key Principles for Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Organisations	13
4	Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Partner Organisations and Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Sector Joint Commitments	14
5	Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Partner Organisations Commitments	14
6	Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Sector Commitments	15
7	Consultation, Participation and Representation	15

Chapter Four

Volunteering: Code of Good Practice

1	Introduction	16
2	Aims	16
3	Key Principles for Volunteering	16
4	Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Partner Organisations Commitments	17
5	The Voluntary and Community Sector Commitments	17
6	Promoting Volunteering	18

Chapter Five

Funding and Non Financial Support: Code of Good Practice

1	Introduction	19
2	Aims	19
3	Shared Key Principles for an Effective Funding Support Framework	19
4	Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Partner Organisations Commitments	20
5	The Voluntary and Community Sector Commitments	20
6	Costing Principles	21
7	Applications Process	21
8	Notification of Funding Awards	22
9	Specific Conditions	22
10	Payment Procedure	22
11	Using Underspends	23
12	Financial Reporting	23
13	Intervention in Financial or Other Difficulty	23
14	Monitoring, Evaluation and Review	23

Chapter Six

Consultation and Policy Appraisal: Code of Good Practice

1	Introduction	24
2	Aims	24
3	Methods of Consultation	24
4	Time Scales For Consultation	25
5	Key Principles for Effective Consultation and Policy Appraisal	25
6	Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Partner Organisations Commitments	26
7	Voluntary and Community Sector Commitments	26
8	Evaluating Consultation Processes	27

Chapter Seven

Monitoring and Review Process

1	Introduction	28
2	How Will This Be Done	28
3	Contact Details	29

Appendix A	30
Appendix B	33
Appendix C	34

Partner Organisation Signatories	35
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Foreword

There is a history of voluntary organisations, community groups, the City Council and Partner Organisations¹ working in partnership within Stoke-on-Trent. It is this strength that the Compact seeks to build upon and extend, producing greater benefits for the people of the City.

The Voluntary and Community Sector, (VCS) makes a major contribution to sustaining and improving the social, economic and environmental life of the City. The diversity and independence of the VCS is an asset to the City and reflects the diverse nature of the City's communities. The Compact will continue to build on this asset so that the people of the Stoke-on-Trent continue to benefit from appropriate, applicable and timely services that improve the quality of life.

The City Council and Partner Organisations have a duty to promote the general health and well being of the City and so have a keen interest in ensuring the continuation of a strong and vibrant VCS. The City Council and Partner Organisations also seek to ensure a joined-up approach to community services that will contribute to the continued regeneration of the City and create the type of environment local people want and deserve.

This Compact will provide a framework for the relationship between the City Council, Partner Organisations and the VCS. Shared values and principles will be established, expectations will be clarified and support and commitment to partnership working, equal opportunities and anti discriminatory practices will be promoted through codes of good practice. The Compact will be reviewed and monitored on a regular basis to ensure it continues to fulfil its aims.

¹ See Partner Organisations Signatories p.g., 35

1 The Compact is:

An agreed framework that guides the relationship between Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Partner Organisations and the Voluntary and Community Sector, (VCS). The basis of this agreement is the recognition that there is mutual advantage in working together for the benefit of our communities.

1.1 Scope and Definition of the Compact

The Compact is a policy document that supports the relationship between the City Council, Partner Organisations and the VCS. All VCS organisations within the City are encouraged to support and work towards the Compact's principles. All City Council Departments and Partner Organisations will abide by the Compact's core values and principles.

The Compact sets out the framework within which partnership, joint working, communication, support and agreements are conducted, supplied and negotiated. The Compact is not intended to be a legally binding document. When contracts exist between the City Council and/or Partner Organisation and VCS organisations, the Compact's core values and principles are the basic standards and will generally be reflected in the agreement. However in certain circumstances these standards may be built upon or be amended with the agreement of both parties to suit the circumstances and type of agreement made.

The following chapters are the Codes of Good Practice that will support Compact between the City Council, Partner Organisations and the VCS within the City

The development of action plans to implement these Codes of Good Practice will be the responsibility of all the organisations who have signed up to this Compact. It will also be their responsibility to ensure that their individual departments, teams, officers and managers implement these action plans into their everyday working. Those who decline good practice must satisfy themselves that they have acceptable reasons for their actions.

This document is to be read as a whole. For instance the consultation commitments set out in the Consultation Code of Good Practice will not be repeated in the Community Groups Code of good Practice or the Volunteering Code of Good Practice but they will equally apply when dealing with these Groups.

The Compact and each individual Code of Good Practice are living documents and therefore will be reviewed regularly.

2 Compact Executive Summary

The Voluntary and Community Sectors are key partners with the City Council and Partner Organisations in the delivery of projects, services and the development of active communities. These activities are successful due to the trust relationships that build up over a number of years, usually between individuals within organisations. To ensure these mutually beneficial relationships continue once these individuals have moved on a Compact has been developed. It is a framework within which a new partnership approach based on shared values and mutual respect is agreed.

The National Compact between Central Government and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, (NCVO), the national representatives of the Voluntary and Community Sectors, was launched in November 1998. The purpose of a local Compact is the same as the national Compact, to further develop partnerships between local Councils, Partner Organisations and the VCS. It is intended that the mutually agreed vision and principles contained in this document will build on existing relationships in order to benefit everyone in our Communities.

One of Central Government’s aims is to break down the barriers between the public, private and VCS in order to create public services that are appropriate and applicable to the communities they serve. Therefore a change is needed in the relationship between individuals, the communities, City Council, Partner Organisation and the VCS to make these relationships more interactive, open and transparent.

It is recognised that stating there is partnership working and actually doing it are not the same thing. An effective partnership includes supporting partners and equal status regardless of size or funding levels.

Central Government policy is that each local authority area should have it’s own Compact. This is our local Compact for the geographical area of Stoke-on-Trent.

This Compact is made up of a number of Codes of Good Practice that set out the commitments and key principles that will improve ways of working and standards. These are the minimum commitments that all signatories will work towards and build up on for the future.

1

Shared Principles and Values

1 Introduction

Every person has the right to develop his or her potential and to contribute to the well being of society. Active citizenship is expressed through volunteering and community activity and this is central to the development of a democratic and socially inclusive society. An independent and diverse VCS is therefore vital for the well being of the people of Stoke-on-Trent.

The City Council, Partner Organisations and VCS share the belief that no person should suffer oppression or lack of opportunity. We must promote justice, equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for the benefit of all people.

The City Council, Partner Organisations and VCS have different forms of accountability and regulation but common to all is the need for integrity, objectivity, accountability, honesty and openness.

The City Council, Partner Organisations and the VCS have different but complementary roles. There is added value in working together towards common aims and objectives. We recognise that differences in viewpoint on particular issues can lead to a healthy tension and better decision making.

2 Aims

The Compact builds on its statement of shared values by identifying a series of commitments for the City Council, Partner Organisations and the VCS.

3 Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Partner Organisations Commitments

- To recognise the independence of the VCS, including its right within the law to campaign, comment and challenge policy, irrespective of any funding relationship, and to determine and manage its own affairs.
- To recognise that the VCS need strategic funding in order to plan, develop and build their capacity in order to respond to local and shared priorities.

- To recognise the importance of infrastructure to the VCS and support its development as appropriate.
- To appraise new policies and procedures so as to identify the implications for the VCS.
- To consult the VCS on issues that are likely to affect it, allowing adequate time for organisations to consult their users, beneficiaries and stakeholders.
- To take account of the specific needs, interests and contributions of those parts of the VCS, which represent the disadvantaged and minority groups within the community, e.g. black and minority communities and other socially excluded groups.
- To establish funding systems that are open transparent and clear in respect of service outcomes, monitoring and evaluation, payment systems, redress etc.
- To operate consistent practices and procedures across City Council and Partner Organisations.
- To maintain high standards of governance and conduct and meet reporting and accountability obligations.
- To promote effective working relationships with all VCS organisations regardless of an organisation's funding status.
- To monitor the operation of the Compact quarterly and review annually in conjunction with Partner Organisations and the VCS.

4 Voluntary and Community Sector Commitments

- To maintain high standards of governance and conduct and meet reporting and accountability requirements of funders and users.
- To respect and observe guidance from the appropriate regulatory authorities, to be accountable to the law, and in the case of charities observe the appropriate guidance from the Charity Commission.

- To develop processes and structures that enable full consultation and involvement, including promoting the collective and diverse views of the VCS.
- To develop quality standards appropriate to the organisation and to the services it provides.
- To promote best practice and equality of opportunity in activities, employment, involvement of volunteers and service provision.
- To ensure that service users, staff, volunteers, members and supporters are informed and consulted on key issues.
- To maximise the involvement of users in the development and management of activities and services.
- To promote effective working relationships with the City Council, Partner Organisations, other agencies and across the VCS.
- To monitor the operation of the Compact quarterly and review it annually in conjunction with the City Council and Partner Organisations.

2

**Community Groups:
Code of Good Practice**

1 Introduction

Community groups differ from voluntary sector organisations. They are generally smaller and run on a voluntary basis to pursue a common interest or tackle a problem that is unique to them. These same groups of people will usually benefit from pursuing and / or solving the problem themselves. Voluntary organisations are generally professionally led, have some paid staff and operate a service that meets a particular need. Voluntary organisations can be local, regional or national, whereas community groups always represent a community of interest that is usually, but not exclusively, within a local geographic area.

However community groups along with the VCS will benefit from working within the Compact. Their unique differences will be taken into account within this code of good practice.

2 Aims

This code of good practice aims to promote a better understanding of the community sector and have a positive effect on the way the City Council and Partner Organisations deal with community groups.

3 Community involvement is where local people:

- Are involved in their own community groups, networks and initiatives;
- Know what is being planned for in their area and feel they have a say in influencing these plans;
- Co-operate with schemes and add value through their voluntary effort;
- Gain experience, develop their own skills and create the community they want;
- Have ownership of the results and build on them in the future.

5 Status of Community Groups

Community groups may or may not be constituted. Constituted means to have written rules that everyone within the group abides by. Dependent on how the group is organised they may have a volunteer committee that abides by the written rules and makes decisions on behalf of the group, or have the support of the group to make decisions on their behalf where there are no written rules for guidance.

6 Distinction between the Community and the Voluntary Sector

Community and Voluntary Sector aims and objectives can overlap but there are fundamental differences between the sectors, particularly in the way they meet community needs, provide services and represent the community.

Clear distinctions should be maintained between:

- Activities that represent the community as users and controllers of community activities;
- Activities that community representatives freely choose to do (or to stop doing) for themselves;
- Activities that bind a group or organisation to deliver services by taking on an agreement and the systematic accountability that goes with it.

All organisations that receive financial assistance from funders should comply with the Financial and Non-Financial Support: Code of Good Practice.

7 City Council, Partner Organisations and Community Sector Joint Commitments

The joint commitments are to:

- Support a learning community where people and groups gain knowledge, skills and confidence through community activity;
- Develop an influential community, which is consulted and has a strong voice in decisions that affect its interest;

- Increase the help available to residents to get together to tackle local issues and interests;
- Support groups that deal with issues highlighted by local people and agencies;
- Support better networks, umbrella bodies or representative forums for the sector.

8 Community Sector Commitments

The Community Sector undertakes to:

- Abide by and support the aims and objectives set out in the Compact and Codes of Good Practice.

9 City Council and Partner Organisation Commitments

The City Council and Partner Organisations undertake:

- To support the culture of active citizenship by raising expectations and the communities understanding of the kinds of activity open to them;
- To support the increase in the ability of excluded people to form and or take part in community groups and activities;
- To support the creation of the right physical conditions to make it easy for people to take part in meetings by choosing a natural meeting place that is accessible to all, creating an atmosphere of trust and safety;
- To increase its ability to involve local people in decision-making;
- To recognise that successful regeneration schemes need local people to be actively involved throughout the scheme, to take ownership on completion and to develop and sustain it for the future;
- To value the work knowledge and expertise of the Community Sector.

3

Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Organisations: Code of Good Practice

1 Introduction

The Black and Minority Ethnic, (BME) Voluntary and Community Sector in Stoke-on-Trent is diverse, representing a range of groups and communities including refugees, asylum seekers and faith groups.

They remain largely excluded from the traditional structures of the Voluntary and Community Sector, (VCS) and are therefore often excluded from engagement with the City Council and Partner Organisations.

It is vital that the local BME sector engages in a positive relationship with the City Council and Partner Organisations to build mutual trust and confidence. Together they can tackle the disadvantages experienced by BME communities, take forward the race equality agenda, celebrate diversity and promote cohesion.

The cost of social policy programs that fail BME communities is very high, not only for public expenditure but also in terms of community confidence, cohesion and leadership.

2 Aims

This code aims to make a positive impact on the relationship between the City Council, Partner Organisations and the Black and Minority Ethnic, (BME) Voluntary and Community Sector. To create an effective partnership with the City Council and Partner Organisations to ensure that BME Organisations are able to develop their full potential.

3 Key Principles for Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Organisations

- Joint commitment to taking forward the race equality agenda at all levels.
- Better consultation and participation in policy and implementation.

- Recognition of the role, contribution and needs of the BME sector.
- Support, capacity-building, developing infrastructure and sustainability.

4 Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Partner Organisation and the Black Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Sector Joint Commitments

The City Council, Partner Organisations and the BME Sector will:

- Develop a partnership approach to achieve race equality, social inclusion and cohesion, while promoting and sharing best practice;
- Work together with other agencies to improve services for BME groups and community cohesion;
- Encourage, develop and support volunteering by and within BME communities in line with the Code of Good Practice on Volunteering and Community Groups.

5 Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Partner Organisations Commitments

The City Council and Partner Organisations will:

- Have effective and transparent equal opportunity monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that the BME sector is treated fairly, in line with all the Compact Codes of Good Practice. The monitoring and evaluation systems will be linked into the equal opportunities and valuing diversity policies of the City Council and Partner Organisations wherever appropriate;
- Ensure that the voices of the BME sector are being heard in consultation, development and implementation of policy;
- Establish positive lines of communications with the BME sector, listen and respond where appropriate to issues raised within a mutually agreed time scale;
- Increase access to funding and development opportunities for the BME sector in order to promote a level playing field;
- Develop strategies to promote social inclusion, cohesion and promote a multi-cultural community.

6 Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Sector Commitments

The BME sector will:

- Play a full and active part in the wider Voluntary and Community Sector;
- Highlight gaps in BME community services and help to build BME infrastructure within the City;
- Work in partnership with the City Council, Partner Organisations and VCS to promote equality, social inclusion and community cohesion;
- Facilitate partnership working among diverse ethnic and religious groups within the sector.

7 Consultation, Participation and Representation

In addition to the commitments in the Consultation Codes of Good Practice consultation with the sector should be inclusive and recognise the broad spectrum of interests that make up the BME sector. Consultation processes should be culturally appropriate. In recognition of linguistic, cultural and religious barriers all consultation processes should make appropriate arrangements, e.g., interpreters, be flexible in the time of meetings and respect cultural norms in order to be inclusive.

4

Volunteering: Code of Good Practice

1 Introduction

Volunteering is an activity that involves spending time unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit someone, individuals or groups other than or in addition to self, close relatives, or to benefit the environment.

2 Aims

To set an agenda for good practice in volunteering and to facilitate and support the participation of a greater number of people in the varied forms of voluntary activities that are an important part of active citizenship.

The City Council, Partner Organisations and Voluntary and Community Sector are agreed that there should be greater publicity for the achievements of volunteers. They aim to work together to expand the public perception of volunteering by improving the profile, status and range of volunteering activities.

The City Council, Partner Organisations and the VCS also agree to improve the recognition of the work done by volunteers and identify the benefits of volunteering to the communities. They also aim to resource the hidden costs of volunteer activity.

3 Key Principles for Volunteering

There are four principles fundamental to volunteering. These are:

- **Choice:** Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual without coercion or compulsion.
- **Diversity:** Volunteering should be open to everyone and equal opportunities principles are basic to supporting diversity. Social inclusion brings opportunities for new and innovative ideas from the community.
- **Of Mutual Benefit:** Volunteering should be a reciprocal, mutual relationship. Although a person is not paid for their efforts, they should feel a sense of worthwhile achievement. The volunteer should have gained benefits such as useful skills, experience, contacts, sociability, fun and inclusion in the life of the organisation and community.

- **Recognition:** The value of volunteers to the organisation, community, the social economy and wider social objectives is fundamental to a fair relationship between the volunteers, City Council, Partner Organisations and the VCS.

4 Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Partner Organisations Commitments

In supporting this code the City Council and Partner Organisations commit to:

- Recognising that volunteering is an exercise of the basic human right of freedom to assemble and associate, and fundamental to democracy;
- Working to limit the barriers to volunteering and community action presented by existing policies and practices;
- Assessing how volunteering and community activity contribute to achieving departmental policy, programme objectives and broader policy objectives;
- Increasing staff awareness of volunteer contributions to departmental objectives;
- Recognising that volunteering infrastructure bodies should be independent voluntary sector organisations, with voluntary management boards;
- Supporting initiatives to provide accessible information about volunteering opportunities at local, regional, national and international levels;
- Working with the VCS to address how detailed demographic information on volunteering and community activity can be collected for comparison with other surveys and research;
- Taking action to promote volunteering amongst those in schools, colleges and universities.

5 The Voluntary and Community Sector Commitments

In supporting this code, the VCS is committed to:

- Promoting high standards and effective management of volunteers and recognise that fulfilling this responsibility

requires allocation of organisational resources. Staff that recruit, induct and manage volunteers should have this work recognised as part of their job descriptions or work plan, and receive appropriate training and support;

- Identifying where appropriate a senior manager to be responsible for volunteer involvement. Being responsible for the monitoring review and reporting of voluntary activity and have a board-level champion for volunteering;
- Recognising that as part of the reciprocal relationship volunteers should be given thanks and recognition, get fair treatment, receive training and support according to the resources of the organisation with which they are involved;
- Encouraging and enabling accreditation of skills acquired through volunteering;
- Assisting potential volunteers to find volunteering opportunities that fit their needs, interests and abilities by working in partnership with other agencies;
- Developing systems for referring surplus volunteers, or those unsuited to their needs, to other organisations, to ensure that volunteer’s potential is not wasted.

5 Promoting Volunteering

The following are ways in which the City Council, Partner Organisations and the VCS will promote the status and image of volunteering and community involvement. They will include:

- Promoting volunteering events to help secure greater media coverage and a higher public profile;
- Developing and promoting the innovative programmes for enabling the contribution of volunteers;
- Developing partnerships with organisations and media that promote volunteering;
- Using information and community technology to communicate volunteering information via the Internet;
- Developing the knowledge and experience of volunteering young people.

5

Funding and Non-Financial Support: Code of Good Practice

1 Introduction

The City Council, Partner Organisations and some Voluntary and Community Sector² groups provide funding, non-financial support and purchase services from the wider Voluntary and Community Sector. These funding arrangements support and help to build the VCS within the City. The commitments and aims outlined below will enhance these funding relationships.

2 Aims

The aims of this code are to make a positive impact on the funding relationships between the City Council, Partner Organisations and the Voluntary and Community Sector; to meet the five principles of good regulation: transparency, accountability, targeting, consistency and proportionality. The outcomes of this code will be to develop sound funding decisions to support the development and delivery of appropriate and effective services and projects.

3 Shared Key Principles for an Effective Funding Support Framework

- Adopt a continuous improvement approach to funding, particularly in the provision of services.
- Adopt procedures that are consistent with the principles of good regulation and the need to provide effective protection of and proper accountability for public money and resources.
- Recognise overhead and core costs and the different ways these can be met.
- Improve co-operation and consistency.
- Adopt a joint approach to monitoring, evaluation and review to be measured against agreed outcomes and targets.

² Community Chest Fund, Community Empowerment Fund, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, etc.

4 Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Partner Organisations Commitments

To promote an effective funding framework that:

- Ensures value for money, clarity and greater consistency in funding conditions;
- Applies procedures consistent with the principles of good regulation and provides effective protection of and proper accountability for public money;
- Respects the VCS right to campaign;
- Recognises the VCS need for greater financial stability to allow it to fulfil its strategic role, improve sustainability and the ability to plan for the longer term;
- Invests in the capacity of the VCS infrastructure;
- Promotes fair access to strategic, project and contract funding, and provides clarity in the objectives of grant programmes, their eligibility criteria and conditions;
- Ensure fair and open access to funding opportunities;
- Streamlines procedures to cut out duplication, e.g. monitoring, evaluation and review processes.

5 The Voluntary and Community Sector Commitments

The VCS recognises that the receipt of public money and support carries with it responsibilities to the funding body and to the people that benefit from the services provided. The VCS will follow good practice in the use and administration of funding appropriate to the scale of funding and operation covering:

- Clear and effective employment policies, management arrangements, service provision, equal opportunities and other procedures;
- Effective and balanced systems for the management, control, accountability, propriety and audit of finances;
- Compliance with the regulators accounting framework for charities and appropriate guidance from the Charity Commission, including those on political activities and campaigning;

- Systems for quality assurance and accountability to service users, including complaints procedures and the involvement of users in the development and management of activities and services;
- Policies for ensuring equality of opportunity in both employment practice and service provision;
- Where applicable the involvement of volunteers in service provision;
- Public acknowledgement of City Council and Partner Organisations' support.

6 Costing Principles

VCS groups and organisations have a responsibility to cost and plan their services realistically over the funding life-time. Realistic budgeting will ensure that outcomes are achieved effectively, efficiently and to the appropriate standards.

Regardless of the funding approach taken³, the funded organisation should have a recognised exit strategy that should form part of and be considered in the funding application and assessment.

7 Applications Process

The City Council and Partner Organisations will have a transparent and objective applications and assessment process that will have:

- An initial assessment of eligibility set against funding criteria;
- Consideration of the strategic importance of the application and where appropriate consultation with internal departments and relevant statutory bodies;
- An appropriate detailed assessment procedure for applications set against the funding objectives;
- A recommendation and feedback process that gives clear reasons for supporting or not supporting an application.

³ Appendix A, for Types of Funding, page 30.

8 Notification of Funding Awards

Notifications of funding awards will be given as soon as practicable, up to a maximum of three months before they are due to be paid. If there is likely to be a substantial delay in payment, the applicant will be informed. Should the funding be reduced then the applicant will have a minimum of three months notice of the reduction in funding where applicable/appropriate.

Notification of funding will be in the form of a standard letter that will contain:

- The amount, duration and brief description of the aims of the funding;
- The funding body and department that have agreed the funding;
- The arrangements for payments, monitoring, evaluation and review;
- Two copies of the letter will be sent to the VCS organisation for signature. One copy will remain with VCS organisation and one will be returned to the appropriate funding body.

9 Specific Conditions

The source of the funding (match, strategic, project or commissioning) may require individual specific conditions to be met. The City Council and Partner Organisations will aim not to put additional conditions on an organisation or group and wherever possible will use parallel monitoring, evaluation and review procedures with these specific conditions.

10 Payment Procedure

No payment will be made to a VCS organisation until:

- The letter of acceptance is signed by an authorised signatory and returned to the Funder by the stated return date;
- The appropriate bank account details of the VCS organisation have been received;
- Payment procedures have been agreed and understood between the Funder and the group or organisation.

11 Using Under-spends

Any under-spend of 5% or above of the funding awarded will be reported back to the Funder who will have the final decision on the use of the under-spend.

12 Financial Reporting

All funded VCS organisations will submit their annual financial statements/accounts to the Funders. The Funders will not normally expect any more financial reporting than that required by the Charities Commission and/or the Companies Act⁴, except where the type of funding arrangement specifically requests it, e.g. match funding.

13 Intervention in Financial or Other Difficulty

The main concern for the Funders in these circumstances is to protect the end user and to achieve the aims and objectives of the funding. The funding agreement will contain terms under which public funds may be recovered. At all times whether the difficulties be financial or otherwise, the Funders will, if applicable, discuss with the organisation what supportive action, where appropriate, could be taken.

Any decisions made will recognise the independence of the organisation, especially one with charitable and/or limited company status and its strategic benefits to the community.

14 Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Monitoring, evaluation and review will measure the outputs and outcomes of the funded VCS organisation. Monitoring will be on a mutually agreed, regular basis with evaluation made against agreed targets and milestones.

The monitoring, evaluation and review process will be applicable to the level and type of funding arrangement. Where one organisation receives funding from more than one City Council or Partner Organisation department, only one written agreement and one set of monitoring, evaluation and review procedures will be requested wherever practicable.

⁴ Appendix C, Charity Commission Accounting and Audit Requirements

6

Consultation and Policy Appraisal: Code of Good Practice**1 Introduction**

Consultation gives an opportunity to Voluntary and Community Organisations to bring their knowledge, experience and expertise to the City Council and Partner Organisations on behalf of the people and causes they work for. The VCS should be willing to offer their advice based on their objective experience and appropriate consultation with the people they work with.

2 Aims

The aim of this Code of Good Practice is to improve the consultation process between the City Council, Partner Organisations and the communities they serve.

The City Council and Partner Organisations will consult with the community in order to understand the affect their proposals will have on different parts of the community. Therefore consultation will not be limited to those in receipt of funding or support, but to all the appropriate communities who have a special interest in the issues being consulted on.

3 Methods of Consultation

There are many ways of consulting and there is no one right method for any particular circumstance. Consultation can be carried out in many different ways. In some cases more than one method of consultation can be used and there is no set method to achieve success.

The following are a few examples of consultation processes that may be used:

- a) Written consultation
- b) Opinion surveys
- c) Open public meetings
- d) User panels and Groups
- e) Internet
- f) One to one

Consultation can be qualitative, which means exploring people's attitudes and motives' or quantitative which can be the numbers of yes and no answers to specific questions.

4 Time Scales For Consultation

The time scales of a consultation process are dependent on the methods used and the form of reply requested, e.g., written, oral or e-mail. The usual time for written replies will be 8-12 weeks. In extreme circumstances there may be a need for more immediate consultation. In these circumstances it is preferable to have some consultation rather than none at all.

5 Key Principles for Effective Consultation and Policy Appraisal

The following are the key principles that build effective consultation and policy appraisal:

- Build consultation into the regular planning cycle and consult early;
- Appraise new policies and procedures, particularly at the development stage, identifying any implications for the VCS at local level;
- Give enough time to respond and be clear about the purpose of the consultation;
- Write documents in plain language and be clear about their purpose;
- Use many different methods of consultation and communications media;
- Be flexible in your approach to consultation and consider the needs of the people you wish to consult. Take account positively of the specific needs, interests and contribution of those parts of the community that represent hard to reach groups and/or socially excluded groups e.g., BME and Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual;
- Respect confidentiality to encourage openness and honesty;
- Feedback findings of consultation process and action taken;
- Evaluate each consultation and improve future practice from findings .

6 Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Partner Organisations' Commitments

The City Council and Partner Organisations will:

- Consult the VCS on issues that are likely to affect it;
- Build consultation with the VCS into plans for policy development;
- Appraise new policies and procedures particularly at the developmental stage identifying as far as possible any implications for the sector;
- Consult early and where possible involve the sector at a sufficiently early stage of policy development subject to considerations of urgency sensitivity or confidentiality;
- Use the most appropriate methods of consultation that use accessible formats that are culturally appropriate and which give notice of and publicise consultations;
- Ensure that consultation documents will be concise, written in plain language and clearly laid out;
- Take account positively of the specific needs, interests and contributions of organisations that represent hard to reach or under representative groups;
- Be sensitive on a case by case basis to any additional resource implications for the VCS in carrying out consultations.

7 Voluntary and Community Sector Commitments

The VCS will:

- Use their infrastructure to encourage consultation and co-operation with each other and intermediary bodies at local regional and national levels;
- Define and show what groups and/or causes they represent;
- Wherever possible consult their constituency directly and if not practicable or appropriate state they are consulting on the basis of their knowledge, experience and expertise of the interest group concerned;

- Take account positively of the specific needs, interests and contributions of hard to reach or under-represented groups;
- Ensure information gathered is objective and unbiased;
- Respect the confidentiality of City Council and Partner Organisations' information when given access to it on that basis;
- Give their groups and service users feedback on the outcome of consultation;
- Follow the Charity Commission 'Guidance for Charities' on what they should and should not do in relation to their representational and campaigning work.

8 Evaluating Consultation Processes

Consultation processes have to be evaluated to see if the consultation has achieved what it set out to do. Effective evaluation shows what worked and what did not and why. It helps to make sure that you get the best value for money from your efforts and time. Successful strategies as well as problems are always much clearer with hindsight.

The outcome of the evaluation will identify if anything could have been done better, show good practice, increase consultation networking and highlight any training needs of the consultation organisers. In this way consultations will continue to be updated and always be applicable to the needs of the communities.

Monitoring and Review Process

1 Introduction

The Compact is a living document. This requires it to be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure its continued effectiveness. The City Council, Partner Organisations and the Voluntary and Community Sector are to work together to continue to monitor and review this document.

2 How Will This Be Done?

Below is the process by which the Compact will be monitored and reviewed:

- A Compact Monitoring and Review Panel will be set up;
- The Panel will be made up of representatives from all Partner Organisation Signatories and appropriate representatives;
- The Panel will meet quarterly;
- Any changes to be made will be consulted on and agreed using the guidelines set out in the Consultation Code of Good Practice;
- All comments on how the Compact and Codes of Good Practice are working will be sent to the Panel for consideration;
- The members of the Group will form a network of Compact Champions within their own organisations who will ensure Compact working is implemented within their team, department, group and/or organisation;
- These Compact Champions will forward any comments on the Compact to the Panel for consideration;
- The outcomes of the Panel will be benchmarked against local compacts in different areas and the National Compact between Central Government and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations.

3 Contact Details

If you wish to make any comments on how the Compact is working, or find out more about the Compact, local or national, please contact either:



Voluntary Action

Voluntary Action Stoke-on-Trent

Dudson Centre
Hope Street
Hanley
ST1 5DD
Telephone: 01782 683030
enquiries@vast.org.uk



Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Civic Centre
Glebe Street
Stoke-on-Trent
ST4 1HP
Telephone: 01782 234789
vso@stoke.gov.uk

A

Appendix A

Types of Funding

The following are the main types of financial support available:

Grants

Grants are normally given yearly. They are reviewed on an annual basis in line with the City Council and Partner Organisations' priorities for the forthcoming financial year. There is no guarantee that the grant will continue or if it does that the level of funding will remain the same. Grants are usually given to community groups to support their aims and objectives for that year.

Multi-year Strategic Funding

Multi-year strategic funding is used to contribute to the costs of the core operational activities of an organisation:

- Where the activities match the objectives of the City Council and Partner Organisations and the VCS is able to deliver them at a level and an audience that the funder is not;
- Where the funder wants to help build the infrastructure of a particular group or organisation;
- Where the value of an organisation and its role within the City promotes and supports the strategic aims and objectives of the Funder.

Funding of this type is long term and will be based on the key principles for effective funding that are:

- Clear terms on the aims and objectives, length of the agreement – usually three years;
- Satisfactory annual reviews against mutually agreed aims and objectives and availability of resources;
- Clear exit strategies;
- Clear terms on which the funding arrangement can be terminated;
- Consultation and reasons for reduction in funding 3 months prior to the reduction.

Neither the City Council or Partner Organisations will commit all resources to multi-year strategic funding. Flexibility to meet changing community needs will be maintained by other funding approaches.

Project Funding

Project funding will:

- Be for a specific piece of work for an agreed period of time;
- Be agreed for the duration of the project, subject to satisfactory monitoring, evaluation, review and availability of resources;
- Include an element of overhead costs. In its application, an organisation will have to show what the overhead costs represent and how these contribute to the outputs and outcomes of the project in order to avoid double funding.

Development Funding

Development funding is an investment in building the infrastructure capacity of a particular organisation or group, in response to new environmental opportunities for regeneration, growth and/or community need. It should, where applicable:

- Be for a specific length of time, or a one-off grant;
- Be clear as to outcomes, monitoring, evaluation and review requirements;
- Have a clear and realistic exit strategy.

Match Funding

Match funding is appropriate where it can:

- Help to meet the funder's and Voluntary and Community Sector strategic aims and objectives;
- Secure a broad base of support for an organisation's work;
- Increase the Sector's diversity of funding and reduce over reliance on the City Council and Partner Organisations;
- Have clear eligibility criteria for matching;

- Include non-financial or in-kind contributions with their notional cost;
- Give realistic and credible estimates of volunteer time.

Contracts for Partnership Based Initiatives

The City Council and Partner Organisations contract with the independent sector for services. In such instances the VCS may compete with the private sector in an open tendering process.

As far as practicable, any written agreement between the City Council, Partner Organisations and the VCS will be in line with the Codes of Good Practice set out in the Compact.

Joint bids

Joint bids will be supported wherever possible to increase the diversity of funding within a group or organisation. A lead partner should be identified and will be responsible for the administration of the agreement.

Indirect funding

Applications for indirect financial support will be considered in line with the principles set out in this Code of Good Practice. The principles of good regulation will be used when deciding whether or not to support a Voluntary or Community group in its application. Although there is no exchange of cash, the City Council and Partner Organisations will still be using their resources to support the group or organisation and therefore have a duty to comply with the five principles of good regulation.

The terms, conditions and duration of this support will be clearly documented and where applicable, reviewed in line with the processes and procedures contained within this Code of Good Practice.

B

Appendix B

Typical Core Cost Guidance

Type of Cost	Particular Importance in one type of organisation?	Particular Importance in Stage of Development?
Chief Executive	Needed in all	All stages
Finance management	"	"
Telephone, fax postage	"	"
Premises – rent, mortgage	Nearly all	"
Associated premises cost – heat, light	All	"
Insurance	Needed in all	"
Associated staff costs, including insurance, pension, contractual rights cover	All organisations employing staff	All organisations employing staff
Equipment – IT, printing etc	Needed in all and likely to increase	All who use IT
Premises management	All	All stages
Research and development	"	Start up stages, development and growth
Fund-raising	"	Start up stages, development and growth
Membership – support of the membership structure	Membership Organisations only	All stages
Project management	All	"
Monitoring and evaluation	"	"
Quality assurance	"	"
Travel and subsistence	"	"
Staff Training and supervision*	All employing staff	"
Personnel functions	"	"
Accountancy and audit	All	"
Secretarial support	"	"
Corporate planning	"	"

Taken from, National Compact Funding Code of Good Practice, pg., 23 & ACENVO report 'Who Pays for Core Costs?' – published 1999

* Including Volunteers

Appendix C

Charity Commission Accounting and Audit Requirements



Thresholds	1. Income not over £1,000 (if not registered)	2. Neither income nor expenditure over £10,000*	3. Income not over £100,000*	4. Neither income nor expenditure over £250,000*	5. Income or expenditure over £250,000*
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Excluding Charitable Companies

Retention of accounts and accounting records	Yes at least six years	Yes at least six years	Yes at least six years	Yes at least six years	Yes at least six years
Receipts and payments accounts	If preferred	If preferred	If preferred	No	No
Accruals accounts	If preferred	If preferred	If preferred	Yes	Yes
External scrutiny of accounts	None	Not generally required	Audit or independent examination	Audit or independent examination	Audit in year in question and in following two years

Including Charitable Companies

Registered charities: annual returns to Charity Commission	Not applicable	No; but may be asked for information to keep the register up to date	Yes	Yes	Yes
Registered charities: annual report and accounts to Charity Commission	Not applicable	Only if requested	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accounts to public on written request	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes



Voluntary Action



Putting People First



Staffordshire UNIVERSITY



Taken from, National Compact Funding Code of Good Practice, pg., 39 & Better regulation Task Force Report @Access to Government Funding for the Voluntary Sector' Published July 1998

Under companies legislation, a charitable company need only retain its accounting records for three years and must prepare accrual accounts. If its balance sheet total is £1.4m or less it may not need an audit. Such companies can opt for a report by a reporting accountant, if gross income does not exceed £250,000 or no report at all, if gross income does not exceed £90,000 (unless the company is a parent or subsidiary or at least 10% of its membership votes for an audit).

*Charities crossing threshold 5 must have their accounts audited not only in the year in question but also in the following two financial years. This would lead to the general external scrutiny requirements of thresholds 2,3 and 4 being overruled.

