

The Castle Point & Rochford Compact



Introduction

The compact is a document which outlines a set of best practice principles and undertakings for both voluntary and statutory sector organisations to adhere to in order to achieve meaningful, effective and mutually beneficial partnerships. Compact documents exist locally and nationally and reflect the needs of the geographical area they represent. However the value and commitment to respectful and transparent partnership working for the benefit of the local people and communities is consistent across all versions.

There are a number of Compact documents in use covering Castle Point & Rochford.

- National Compact
- Essex Compact
- Local Compact

While these documents are a written understanding between the two sectors, they are **not**:

- a legally binding document or contract
- a service level agreement
- a funding guarantee

Each document is in place for organisations to work within, depending upon their geographical area of remit e.g. an organisation delivering services across the county would work towards the Essex Compact. This is the Local Compact for use by organisations delivery services within the Borough of Castle Point & the District of Rochford.

Vision

The vision is to improve the relationship between the statutory and voluntary & community sectors through mutual trust and understanding. Success lies in commitment to the principles set out within this Compact and in using it as an instrument to drive change.

Why Make Use of the Compact

The Compact is an agreement between statutory agencies and voluntary and community groups. It should be used as a basis on which to build and improve relationships for mutual benefit. It makes commitments on both sides, clarifies what partners can expect from each other and how to work together. It should be used as a reference to be cited and followed and also used to hold each other to account, ensuring through compliance mechanisms that partners adhere to what they signed up to do. It also needs to be recognised as a way of working and become a living document for outlining how partners behave, engage and work together at an individual, organisational and partnership level.

For each code it has been highlighted who should use it. This is for guidance and not a definitive list.

Codes of Practice

The following are the Codes of Practice contained within this Compact.

Volunteering

Volunteer Centres, volunteer managers, volunteer involving organisations from both the statutory and voluntary sector.

Community Groups

Volunteer Centres, Councils for Voluntary Services, Voluntary Sector Organisations, Councillors, Statutory Body representatives.

Funding & Procurement

Councils for Voluntary Services, Procurement and Commissioning Officers, Voluntary Sector Organisations.

Voluntary & Community Groups facing Marginalisation

All organisations both Statutory and Voluntary working within the community.

Consultation & Public Engagement

All organisations both Statutory and Voluntary who undertake consultations or engage with the public.

Code of Practice on Volunteering

Aim

To encourage and enable more people to become involved in the various forms of voluntary activity that are a vital part of active citizenship and offer them the necessary support.

Who should use this code?

Volunteer Centres, volunteer managers, volunteer involving organisations from both the statutory and voluntary sector.

Shared Values

All partners recognise the value of:

- The importance of volunteering as an expression of citizenship and contributing to the community which is essential to democracy and is undertaken as a result of an individual's choice.
- An effective infrastructure and framework for supporting volunteer activity and promoting good activity.
- Agree to recognise the need to train, support and value the work of volunteers who work for the benefit of the community.
- Greater publicity for the achievements of volunteers and the need to expand the public perception of volunteering by improving the profile, status and range of volunteer activity.
- A policy in place that supports volunteers, including the payment of out of pocket expenses and allocates resources accordingly whenever possible.
- Undertaking CRB checks for volunteers when appropriate.

The Voluntary and Community Sector agree to:

- Recognise the importance of high standards and effective management of volunteers and that fulfilling this responsibility requires allocation of organisational resources.
- Ensure volunteers are recruited and effectively supported and managed with clear task descriptions and have access to appropriate training giving equal access to all.
- Ensure organisations working with volunteers are fit for purpose to do so.

Statutory Sector agree to:

- Recognise that volunteering is a positive experience of citizenship.
- Work to limit the barriers to volunteering and community action, for example, not requiring inappropriate blanket checks, consideration of times and venues of meetings/events.
- Recognise the independence of volunteering infrastructure bodies and to seek to work with those already in existence rather than setting up new structures.
- Uphold the undertakings as set out in the National Code of Good Practice for Volunteering.

Code of Practice on Community Groups

Aim

This code of good practice aims to promote a better understanding of community groups, how they operate within the wider third sector and the particular problems they may face in order to help create and maintain the conditions and support that will help them succeed.

Who should use this code?

Volunteer Centres, Councils for Voluntary Services, Voluntary Sector Organisations, Councillors, Statutory Body representatives.

Shared Values

All partners:

- Recognise and value the contribution made by all community groups to the wider Voluntary and Community Sector.
- Recognise that healthy, sustainable communities will include a range of community groups which help to create a strong sense of involvement and belonging at local or neighbourhood level.
- Recognise and respect the right of the Voluntary and Community Sector to be represented at Community Partnerships at all levels.
- Will work in a manner of accountability and transparency.

The Voluntary and Community Sector agree to:

- Engage with and advocate for as many small community groups as possible to ensure inclusion in the wider Voluntary and Community Sector.
- Recognise the different needs of community groups and encourage involvement at a level that suits them.
- Infrastructure organisations will encourage and facilitate collaborative working between organisations when appropriate.

The Statutory Sector agree to:

- Recognise that some community groups wish to remain small and exclusively volunteer based.
- Recognise that many community groups do not wish to become registered charities and this should not be a barrier for them to access funding.
- Encourage community activity and recognise that a large social contribution is made through the effort of the volunteers working with community groups.
- Recognise the diversity of community groups and seek to include them in policy development and consultative processes, adapting communication appropriately to ensure inclusivity.

Code of Practice on Funding and Procurement

Aim

To improve communication, understanding, transparency and trust between partners covering all aspects of funding and procurement relationships.

Who should use this code?

Councils for Voluntary Services, Procurement and Commissioning Officers, Voluntary Sector Organisations.

Shared Values

- All partners recognise the linking of funding to statutory sector and government priorities and the constraints placed on statutory sector funding.
- All partners recognise the value of funding the community and voluntary sector in order to:
 - Foster community based activity and promote social inclusion.
 - Identify new needs and innovative ways of meeting existing needs.
 - Provide services that are additional and complementary to statutory sector services, which the State has a responsibility or duty to provide.
 - Promote sustainable development and long term investment by funding core costs and agreed long term investment.
- Ensure any reporting required is proportionate and reasonable in relation to the value of the grant or contract.
- All partners recognise the importance of communicating external funding opportunities to appropriate voluntary and community groups in a timely manner.

The Voluntary and Community Sector agree to:

- Meet reporting and accounting obligations to users and funding bodies.
- Work to recognised quality standards in all areas of operational, governance and financial management to ensure accountability to stakeholders.
- Make the best use of the funding services provided by local umbrella and infrastructure organisations in order to access information, support and training on the completion and submission of funding applications and fundraising.
- Recognise the constraints placed on statutory partners by EU law when procuring services.
- Seek to secure funding from a variety of sources so as not to become reliant on one funder.
- Feed into pre-tendering consultations using the opportunity to build relationships with commissioning officers and to assist with shaping future services.

The Statutory Sector agree to:

- Ensure transparency by providing a clear rationale for all funding decisions.
- Adopt a process whereby all voluntary and community organisations within Castle Point and Rochford are aware of and have access to the various sources of statutory funding with adequate lead in time, ideally a minimum of 3 months notice.
- Explain the aims and purpose of each funding programme – its links to their organisational policy and priorities, a timetable of processes and procedures and provide a contact point for information and advice.

- To work towards multi-year funding agreements and recognise that some programmes will need longer term funding to ensure sustainability. Where multi-year funding is not available a clear explanation of the reasons should be given.
- Have an agreed process in place whereby grants can be paid to voluntary and community organisations regularly and on time.
- Give as much warning as possible (usually three months minimum as outlined in the Best Value Statutory Guidance from the Department for Communities and Local Government published in September 2011) about any changes to the level of funding in contractual arrangements.
- Use plain English, aspiring to the Plain English Crystal Mark standard, ensuring processes are streamlined – transparent and accessible.
- Provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants, and refer/signpost to other opportunities, appropriate funding sources or the local CVS for help.
- Encourage and support the development of applications from organisations working with communities that particularly experience discrimination and disadvantage.
- Demonstrate respect for the community and voluntary sector's independence by recognising the applicant organisation's aims, as well as government policy objectives.
- Where possible, co-ordinate information between funding bodies and seek to align guidelines and criteria regarding the application process and decision making and delivery processes.
- Provide service level agreements and contracts that include: clear information on the purpose of funding, accountability of all parties involved, payment timetables, monitoring and evaluation requirements and negotiation arrangements should changes occur for either party.

Code of Practice for Equality & Diversity

Aim

This Code of Practice focuses on the needs of marginalised communities in Castle Point and Rochford. It recognises that organisations working with individuals falling into one or more of the protected characteristics* as detailed in the Equalities Act 2010 still or may experience social exclusion, discrimination, marginalisation and disadvantage, and aims to set up a framework for promoting:

- A joint commitment to taking forward equality issues for the protected characteristics including sharing best practice and promoting good relationships.
- Improved quality and quantity of consultation and participation with groups working with individuals with one or more of the protected characteristics.
- Recognise the specific needs of these groups.
- Better access to resources and support for all marginalised groups.

Who should use this code?

All organisations both Statutory and Voluntary working within the community.

Shared Values

All partners will:

- Develop a partnership approach to responding to policy issues and strategies for achieving equality for marginalised groups, including the promotion of diversity.
- Work in partnership with other agencies on initiatives to improve services for the marginalised groups, social inclusion and cohesion.
- Encourage and support volunteering by and within marginalised groups in line with this Compact's Code on Volunteering.
- Consult marginalised groups on policy documents to ensure that they address the needs of their specific communities.
- Constantly challenge institutional racism and discrimination against marginalised groups.
- Detect and take action on processes, attitudes, and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping which disadvantage marginalised groups.

The Voluntary and Community Sector agree to:

- If receiving funding from a statutory body show how the value of the work can help that body deliver its public sector duties on promoting equality and tackling discrimination.
- Take practical action, such as through funding bids, to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and build stronger communities.

The Statutory Sector agree to:

- Encourage the development and integration of marginalised groups that represent the diverse communities in Castle Point and Rochford.
- Seek and value the contribution the marginalised communities can make in helping them achieve their objectives.

- Recognise and support the independence and uniqueness of marginalised groups and their diversity.
- Operate effective and transparent diversity policies with monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that marginalised groups are treated fairly and with respect in all their interactions with statutory agencies.

***Protected Characteristics**

Age (from 2012/3)

Disability

Gender Reassignment

Marriage & Civil Partnership

Pregnancy and Maternity

Race

Religion or Belief

Gender

Sexual Orientation

Further information about protected characteristics can be found on the website:

www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/new-equality-act-guidance/protected-characteristics-definitions

Code of Practice for Consultation and Public Engagement

What do we mean by public engagement?

The term “Public Engagement” covers a wide spectrum of processes that enable differing intensity of public involvement in decision-making. Engagement can take the form of written or verbal consultation, and may be conducted face-to-face, by telecommunication or by post and can be carried out at any stage of developing a project or policy, but ideally at the beginning. More than one period and/or type of Public Engagement can be applied to any one proposed activity if it is deemed to be beneficial.

Aims

- That any Public Engagement exercise gathers opinions of potentially affected individuals or groups prior to any decision being taken.
- To provide a standard good quality experience for the public across Castle Point and Rochford.
- To maximise the value of public engagement activities for statutory and voluntary organisations.

Who should use this code?

All organisations both Statutory and Voluntary who undertake consultations or engage with the public.

Shared Values

It should be acknowledged that Public Engagement can be undertaken by Statutory **and** Voluntary Organisations and for this reason some of the commitments are based on the involved parties being consulter or consultee rather than being of a particular sector. The Statutory Sector must fulfil their duties under a Duty to Consult (section 3(2) of the Local Government Act 1999) and follow the Best Value Statutory Guidance published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in September 2011.

Public engagement in Castle Point & Rochford should be:

Relevant – so that responses are useful and unnecessary consultation is avoided.

Accessible – in terms of language, method, time and place.

Accountable – all views are recorded, reported on, given due consideration and feedback is made available.

Inclusive – so that communication, method and opportunities offered do not disadvantage any particular group of people.

Informed – so that maximum benefit is gained from the process.

Timely – allow adequate time for responses to be compiled from individuals and groups and for the information gathered to be included in the decision making process.

Balanced – information provided should not be designed to influence the response.

Transparent – so that people understand the context and process.

Honest – so that all information provided by both parties is based on all known facts.

Our Shared Commitments

- To respect confidentiality and ensure data protection measures are in place.
- To put in place protection measures when working with potentially vulnerable people and groups.

Commitments by partners responding to consultation/s

- Advise of other appropriate groups to be consulted and highlight opportunities for joined-up consultation with similar groups.
- Advise statutory partners regarding methods, timing and accessibility requirements of the Voluntary and Community Sector.
- To comply with published deadlines.
- To ensure that responses are accurate and relevant and fairly reflect the views of participants.
- Inform and involve volunteers, members, trustees and employees in the activity and share any outcomes.
- To consult directly with service users and other involved individuals where appropriate.
- To recognise the importance of consultation and the value of providing accurate and comprehensive information.
- To provide feedback on engagement processes to assist with future improvements.

Commitments by partners undertaking consultation/s

- To ensure that activities are planned to allow maximum time and opportunity for individuals and groups to make a considered and comprehensive response recognising that 12 weeks is the recommended time to be allowed. Where this is not achievable a clear explanation should be given.
- To provide adequate resources so that engagement is accessible, appropriate and meaningful.
- To plan in public engagement from the beginning of any decision-making process so that it is a genuine dialogue carried out with integrity.
- To ensure that people have the information, skills and opportunities to empower them to be able to shape decisions.
- To provide information about the engagement process giving adequate and accurate contextual information to enable people to form a considered view.
- To enable the participation of a wide range of individuals and groups and to recognise the need for different approaches and appropriate resources to achieve this.
- To value the input of participants and to demonstrate this by recording, reporting and taking into account their views and be willing to change policies and plans as a result of this.
- To publish consultation results and final outcomes including reasons and justification.
- To list the organisations that were contacted and those who responded.
- To ensure engagement is co-ordinated and appropriate so that individuals and groups are not over-consulted.
- To monitor and evaluate engagement processes with participants to identify areas which can be improved.
- Respect and value the campaigning role of the Voluntary and Community Sector while acknowledging this may conflict with statutory agencies policies, plans and decisions.

This document is issued by the Castle Point and Rochford Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

For more information please contact the LSP Officer at your relevant council or the Compact Champion at your local Council for Voluntary Service.

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An electronic copy of this document can be downloaded from:

www.castlepointavs.org.uk/better-connections-partnerships

www.rravs.org.uk