

A Compact for Telford & Wrekin 2008-2009

**A Partnership Agreement between agencies in the
Public Sector, Voluntary Organisations and
Community Groups in Telford & Wrekin**

Originally adopted on 6th November 2004

This compact is available on the website of the Telford & Wrekin Partnership
(www.telford-partnership.org.uk).

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THE TELFORD & WREKIN COMPACT

Why a Compact?

This Compact is a commitment to partnership working between public bodies and voluntary organisations and community groups in Telford & Wrekin. By drawing on and sharing our strengths, knowledge and resources, benefits can result which are not attainable by working separately.

While committed to developing partnership approaches, where appropriate, it is recognised that, within their separate legal frameworks both public sector and voluntary and community sector bodies in Telford & Wrekin are ultimately responsible for determining their own priorities.

It is intended through application of the commitments contained within the Compact and the five Codes of Good Practice to support and strengthen the Voluntary and Community Sector in Telford & Wrekin and its ability to play a full and creative role in the work of Telford & Wrekin Local Strategic Partnership.

Since 2002 the Local Strategic Partnership, through its Community Strategy has been pursuing a **Vision** of:

“A successful, prosperous and healthy community which offers a good quality of life for all the people of Telford & Wrekin”

The Community Strategy was last updated in October 2006 and, from 2006-2011, this vision has a focus on 6 Shared Community Priorities:

- 1. Transforming Telford & Wrekin – putting in place services and facilities to ensure that Telford & Wrekin continues to thrive and develop**
- 2. For children & young people to be healthy and safe, to enjoy and achieve, to make a positive contribution to their communities and to be economically secure**
- 3. A sustainable and quality environment – improving access and public transport, a clean and safe environment, reducing waste and increasing recycling**
- 4. Safe, Strong and Cohesive Community – reducing crime and building stronger communities**
- 5. Healthier Communities and Vulnerable People – promoting healthy lifestyles and supporting people to live independently**
- 6. Local economy and skills – encouraging and supporting business in the area and improving the skills of the local workforce**

This Compact will continue to be reviewed regularly to keep it relevant and up to date, in particular, in light of Government’s strategy for the Third Sector, and the upcoming 2008 review of the National Compact with a new focus on commissioning.

Our Compact Commitments

This Compact is a statement of our intention to work together across voluntary, community and public bodies to achieve the best results possible for the people of Telford & Wrekin. Our approach to working in partnership is based on shared values and commitments that have been agreed between all who are party to the Compact. Through working together we aim to create a partnership environment in which the following values are reflected in the working practices of all partners, both strategically and operationally:

- Respecting each others' roles
- Caring for and respecting our clients
- Valuing the diversity of the Borough's population
- Involving people in decisions that affect their lives
- Improving accountability to all who have a stake in our activities
- Providing high quality and accessible services
- Striving for improvement
- Valuing employees and volunteers
- Promoting the delivery of equality of opportunity
- Promoting social inclusion and community cohesion
- Protecting the environment for future generations
- Serving local communities
- Promoting voluntary and community work
- Monitoring and reviewing – a living document

Signed on Behalf of:

Date

Telford & Wrekin Council for Voluntary Service

Telford & Wrekin Council

Telford & Wrekin Primary Care Trust

Shrewsbury & Telford NHS Trust

Learning & Skills Council

West Mercia Constabulary

Ratified by Telford & Wrekin Partnership

Telford & Wrekin Partnership

The Five Codes

Confident partnerships require working relationships that are respectful of partners' needs, perspectives and priorities. The purpose of the Codes of Practice contained within this Compact document is to facilitate confident partnership working.

The Codes relate to:

1. Policy and Consultation
2. Community Groups
3. Volunteering
4. Black and Minority Ethnic Groups
5. Funding

POLICY & CONSULTATION

What this covers

The Public Sector bodies in Telford & Wrekin recognise that local Voluntary and Community Sector organisations and groups have valuable knowledge, skills and abilities. For everyone's benefit and at the earliest possible stage effective consultation should take place about policy matters and decisions that may affect them.

The principles we will work to

The bodies signed up to this Compact agree that where decisions may affect Voluntary and Community Sector activity or the effectiveness of partnership working with the VCS then they will consult with those affected and the following standards will apply.

Standards

When Public Sector bodies consult, clear explanations will be given of:

- *The Issue* that is open for consultation (and, where appropriate, what elements are for information only)
- *Why* consultation is taking place
- *Options for action* or the range of possible decisions
- *Who* is being consulted this time (for example, because a particular interest group, voluntary group or community group is particularly affected by a proposal)
- *How* consultation will take place (and how it will be tailored to meet the needs of those being consulted)
- *How much time* will be allowed for consultation, why this period has been chosen, and *start and finish dates* will be given at the beginning of the period. Sufficient time will be given wherever possible to enable consultees to consider the issues properly
- *Who to Contact* for further information about the consultation
- *How the results* of the consultation will be publicised, in particular to those who took part
- *How* the consultation was used to influence the decision

Background material will be provided, where appropriate, that is as accurate and complete as can be managed. As far as possible *plain language* will be used in all consultation documents.

When participating in consultation activities, Voluntary and Community Sector organisations undertake to:

- Advise the Public Sector body of groups that should be consulted
- Respond in such a way that reflects the view of the whole organisation
- Endeavour to respond within reasonable and realistic deadlines (with appropriate facilitation to meet the needs of consultees)
- Ensure that comments are accurate and realistic and explained in a reasoned way in light of the possible impact of proposals on their interests
- Respect any confidentiality requirements of the Public Body

Voluntary and Community organisations will inform and, where appropriate, consult public bodies on changes to their organisation where they have an impact on that public body.

They will also inform public bodies of changes in the details of the main contacts for the organisation

Future Direction and Key Issues

Telford and Wrekin Council for Voluntary Service (the CVS) acts as an umbrella group for the Voluntary and Community Sector in Telford & Wrekin. Public bodies locally will and do use the CVS for consultation purposes.

Not all Voluntary and Community Groups can be accessed through the CVS but it is a commitment that the CVS maintain as thorough as possible a contact list of Voluntary and Community organisations and groups active in the area.

For local Voluntary and Community organisations that aspire to compete to deliver public services, appropriate information, advice and guidance will be made available.

COMMUNITY GROUPS

What this covers

Millions of citizens voluntarily give of their time and skill to help others and to generally improve the quality of life in their community. They come together in voluntary and community organisations as volunteers, trustees and committee members and they often tackle issues which no other organisation can or will. Although many voluntary organisations do employ staff, much of this community activity is informal and often invisible. Here in Telford & Wrekin it is no different. As well as the many voluntary organisations, there are over four hundred small community groups covering a vast range of policy and services. These activities cover playgroups and young people's groups to community centres and village halls, from tenants' associations to environmental groups, from arts and sports groups to credit unions, and from self-help groups to scouts and guides. The community sector also contains many small Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups. Some community groups are small not by choice but because they cannot get access to funding to develop their work. Many may have volunteers covering what should be paid work and some may develop into larger voluntary organisations.

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

Voluntary and community groups also play many diverse roles in their communities. They can:

- Give a voice to communities and help to strengthen local democracy
- Encourage a balance between self-interest and active citizenship
- Assess the needs of their communities and hold vital local knowledge about residents' needs
- Be the first link in breaking the isolation of people who are socially excluded
- Build community unity through community-based events and festivals
- Provide access to the arts and sports facilities in poorer or more remote isolated and rural communities

The principles we will work to

It is vitally important to have contacted as many of the voluntary and community groups as possible in the Borough of Telford and Wrekin. During the compilation of this Compact, we contacted over 450 groups by letter. In addition, presentations were made to 9 working lunches and meetings of the Telford and Wrekin Voluntary and Community Forum. These groups provide the fabric of services for local residents.

The roles of the voluntary and statutory sectors are very different. Both sectors recognise their interdependence upon each other and the ways that they complement each other. It is vital that they agree to respect their differences and to explore better ways of utilising them for the benefit of the communities they work with. Both have a very important role to play by representing the communities they serve.

The Borough Council has a democratic mandate to represent communities and a responsibility to establish policy to provide local services. The Council is accountable to its electors via its elected members, and to a variety of statutory regulatory bodies.

Voluntary and community organisations are independent organisations with their own structures of accountability. They are primarily accountable to their membership, but also to the Charity Commission (if they are registered charities); to other bodies which regulate their status (e.g. Companies House) and to funders for work that a particular funder may support them to do.

Both sectors recognise these different routes of accountability and the resulting ways it affects the way both operate, the way they develop policies and the timetables to which they work.

Standards

The status, responsibilities, resources and functions of statutory, voluntary and community organisations are not equal. Despite these differences, and in acknowledging them, partners will nevertheless treat each other as equals.

All parties to this Compact believe in the need to:-

- Promote, develop and take part in meaningful two-way communication which is essential for partnership working and improving local decision making processes. Initially this communication may mean public bodies committing additional effort or resources to making their planning processes accessible to independent groups.
- Value the contribution that community and voluntary organisations make to the well-being of Telford and Wrekin people;
- Work together to identify and obtain resources needed by different partners which aim to improve the quality of life in the Borough;

- Recognise and acknowledge the different roles and characteristics of the different partners in the statutory, voluntary and community sectors.

Future Direction and Key Issues

The main issues for voluntary and community groups that arose from the consultation were as follows:

- **Funding:** small grants play an important role in stimulating community activity and encouraging new ideas and fresh approaches. Any small grants programme needs to have a single application form and a quick response process. The largest response from the survey was for information on what funds are available.
- **Information/Communication:** with regard to contact and communication, groups would like to see more information available in newsletters, followed by a contact person and websites.
- **Training:** the most requested form of training was “promoting your group”, closely followed by “fundraising and planning for the future”.

All of the above point to actions to be taken, by both public bodies and the community and voluntary sector, to achieve them.

Please see attached Appendix 2 for the full results of the original Compact Community Groups Survey

In accepting this Compact for Telford and Wrekin Council, both public bodies and the voluntary and community sector will:-

- be committed to working together in an open and honest way to achieve increased resources, better information and relevant training for community groups.

VOLUNTEERING

What this covers

It is recognised that volunteering has a positive impact on all aspects of life in the community. Volunteering is an important expression of citizenship and enables the community to benefit from a wide variety of range of skills and experiences which many volunteers have. Each person has his/her own reasons for volunteering (e.g. skills development, well-being, community service, work force re-entry) which are equally valid.

For the purposes of this code the definition of **volunteering** is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community. It is taken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain.

Community organisations are those entirely or almost entirely made up of **volunteers**.

Voluntary organisations may involve and manage volunteers, and may provide infrastructure support or funding to volunteers or volunteering groups, as well as paid staff.

The principles we will work to

Public Sector Bodies and the Voluntary and Community Sector in Telford & Wrekin respect the four principles fundamental to volunteering:

- **Choice:** Volunteering must be a choice made freely by each individual. Any encouragement to become involved in volunteering should not result in any coercion or compulsion. Freedom to volunteer implies freedom not to become involved.
- **Equality and Diversity:** The people of Telford and Wrekin bring varying experiences and qualities to the Voluntary and Community sector. Equality and diversity should be valued, respected and recognised. Volunteering should be open to all, no matter what their background, age, race, colour or ethnic origin, sexuality, gender or marital status, religion or other beliefs, social class or disability. It is recognised that social exclusion barriers can be overcome by voluntary activity.
- **Reciprocity:** Giving voluntary time and skills without financial gain must be recognised as establishing a reciprocal relationship in which the volunteer also receives. Benefits that volunteers expect to gain include a sense of worthwhile achievement, useful skills, experience, training, contacts, team spirit, fun and inclusion in the life of the organisation and the wider community.
- **Recognition:** The value of what volunteers contribute to the organisation, to the community, to the social economy and to wider

social objectives is fundamental to the relationship between volunteers, organisations and government policy and practice.

The partners to this Compact agreement also recognise that:

- Time donated by volunteers is accepted as having an economic value.
- Volunteers must be treated with respect and care and protected from exploitation.
- Suitable training opportunities for volunteers and volunteer managers must be provided.
- Voluntary activity in the Borough must be promoted, developed and celebrated.
- Working to good practices and the recruitment and support of volunteers have resource and cost implications which should be adequately provided for.
- Volunteers and paid workers are valued equally to include the reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses incurred by volunteers (including childcare costs) wherever possible.
- Good practice in equalities and diversity should be promoted.

Standards

The Compact partners endorse “good practice” in the use of volunteers. This includes having in place:

- A volunteer policy
- A task description for each volunteer and an appropriate induction programme
- Up to date information about legislative responsibilities like Health & Safety and data protection
- Appropriate insurance cover
- A policy to reimburse out-of-pocket expenses incurred by volunteers, including (child) care costs
- Procedures and policies for the recruitment, management and support of volunteers
- A policy that volunteers working with vulnerable people are checked with the CRB and references are taken up and policies protecting children and vulnerable adults are in place

Future Direction and Key Issues

1. Sustainable funding to support and train volunteers
2. Access to affordable training
3. Models of good practice – e.g. “Investors in Volunteers”
4. Information sharing about training opportunities, funding and good practice (Volunteer organiser’s forum and the Voluntary and community forum)

BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS:

A CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE

What this Covers

The aim of this Code of Practice is to make a positive difference in the relationship between the Public and Voluntary and Community Sectors in Telford & Wrekin and Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary and community organisations (including Black and Minority Ethnic faith groups).

The 2001 Census tells us that 5.2% of Telford & Wrekin's residents are from Black and Minority Ethnic communities.

This Code of Practice for Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary Community organisations outlines the principles which underpin the framework of the relationship. The Compact also aims to acknowledge the contribution of voluntary and community organisations in the development of a democratic and socially inclusive society by enabling individuals to contribute to public life and the development of their communities.

Principles we will work to

A number of key principles must underpin the framework of the relationship:

- There is a shared intent to take the equalities agenda forward through the Local Strategic Partnership's policy commitments to race equality and diversity as reflected in the Community Strategy's Vision of "*a successful, prosperous and healthy community which offers a good quality of life for all the people of Telford & Wrekin*". This means a commitment to developing an equal, collaborative relationship with Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary and community organisations based upon mutual respect and understanding.
- For Black and Minority Ethnic organisations to participate effectively, it must be recognised that they need appropriate support and information.
- For true participation, there must be a recognition that Black and Minority Ethnic communities operate within different religious, cultural and ethnic frameworks. These need to be respected and adjustments made accordingly.
- There is a recognition that the Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary and community sector has arisen in response to specific needs in an attempt to bridge gaps in mainstream services and deal with issues relating to their communities.

Standards and Undertakings

The partners to this Compact agreement are committed to taking forward the race equality and diversity agenda.

As part of this commitment every service provided will be tested against the General Duty to promote race equality in accordance with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. When carrying out functions under the General Duty service providers aim to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Promote equal opportunities, and
- Promote good relations between people from different racial groups

Public and voluntary and community sector agencies:

- will continue to support the growth and development of the Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary and community sector.
- will strive to improve their methods of consultation to ensure that Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary and community organisations are confident that a meaningful dialogue is taking place.
- will, when undertaking consultation, recognise the cultural and religious diversity of the community.
- acknowledge that Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary organisations need support in a variety of ways (for example, funding, accessible information about services, training and other opportunities to develop skills).
- accept that meaningful partnership working requires a recognition that different organisations have different ways of working and that they must be prepared to be guided, when appropriate, by the skills and expertise of Black and Minority ethnic voluntary and community organisations.

Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary and community sector groups will:

- accept that their relationships with public and voluntary community sector agencies are evolving and that many Black and Minority Ethnic community organisations are relatively small and dependent on voluntary commitment.
- support the partnership's commitment to challenging discrimination, promoting equality and social inclusion.

- wish to participate in the Local Strategic Partnership's drive to attain the overall vision and the ambitions contained in the Community Strategy for Telford & Wrekin.

Future Direction and Key Issues

Key issues for the Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary and community sector reflect those of the voluntary and community sector generally in Telford & Wrekin. In order to participate and contribute fully to the vision and ambitions of the Community Strategy then issues of capacity and resources, both human and financial – in short, infrastructure issues - will need to be addressed.

In taking this work forward there is a need to build on existing good practice (e.g. the partnership approach of the Connecting Communities Group and the Race Equality & Diversity Partnership).

FUNDING

What this covers

Funding is a key issue for voluntary and community sector groups within the Borough. This code will examine how groups can be better supported to achieve sustainable funding.

The Principles we will work to

Issues for consideration in consultation with groups are as follows:

- That prescribed recommendations within the code are 'achievable' for both groups and statutory partners.
- That account be taken of economy of scale issues with regard to finance for groups particularly with respect to their ability to fundraise or complete funding applications.
- Whilst Compact structure may suggest parameters for funding issues, groups need to retain their individual bargaining positions within discussions with statutory partners.
- The principle of total cost recovery should be borne in mind in funding applications.

Standards

The partners to this Compact agreement are committed to equity and fairness with regard to funding issues referring to the following standards:

- That transparent formal tendering procedures be applied for contracts in order that voluntary and community sector organisations are in a position to bid on equal terms with others (see Appendix 1).
- Groups achieving funding from partners to this Compact agreement have in place sound financial procedures that, if necessary, will bear external scrutiny (i.e. formal audit).
- Whilst it is impossible to directly consult all groups, efforts will be made to target as many as possible.
- The same annual inflationary increases will normally apply as are used internally by the funding body unless external influences do not permit. If this is the case a written explanation must be provided.

Future Direction and Key Issues

The following issues are suggested as a result of consultation on finance issues:

- Contracts for work should be supported by appropriate documents. For smaller agreements a formal letter may be enough, where larger agreements should be dealt with by detailed Service Level Agreements. The purpose of any funding should be clearly stated: whether it is grant-funding or whether it is ongoing revenue funding for the purchase of direct services.
- That partners to this Compact agreement seek additional resources to support funding applications for voluntary and community sector groups at both a practical and strategic level. Current options available are valued by groups but the consensus suggests a greater level of direct input is required.
- That a specific forum be convened to look at funding issues meeting at least twice yearly to review progress.
- That greater emphasis be devoted to raising awareness about funding opportunities (e.g. seminars, conferences and fundraising events for groups).
- All parties need to be aware of possible cash-flow issues for voluntary and community groups.

The above issues cannot, by their very nature, be fully comprehensive but rather represent an attempt to pull together strands of thinking related to the issues raised during the Compact consultation processes.

PROCUREMENT

“Procurement is the process of acquiring goods, works and services, covering both acquisition from third parties and from in-house providers. The procurement process spans the whole cycle from identification of needs through to the end of a services contract or the end of the useful life of an asset.”

Telford & Wrekin Council and its partners undertake to procure transparently, openly and fairly and will seek to ensure that a mixed economy of suppliers is engaged in our tendering processes, on the basis that this is most likely to deliver best value for our citizens.

Voluntary and community organisations cannot be given preferential treatment, but are entitled to compete equally in competition. Contracts will be awarded on the basis of value for money.

The Council and its partners will provide assistance to 3rd Sector organisations in understanding our procurement processes and the wider legislative framework in which procurement takes place.

When tendering we will work to ensure that our requirements are clearly stated and that bidders from all sectors understand our needs. This will include ensuring that the documentation we use is as clearly written as possible and the extent of our processes are commensurate with the value and complexity of the goods or services being procured.

COMPACT COMMUNITY GROUP SURVEY

As well as attending 9 working lunches to publicise the Compact, a questionnaire was circulated to 450 groups. 59 were returned completed, giving a response rate of 13 %. The questionnaire had 5 headings:

- **Funding** What funding or funding assistance would help your group work better?
- **Contact** What would assist you most in your work?
- **Training** How does your group hear about training opportunities, what sort of training does your group want and what courses would you be interested in?
- **Recruitment and Retaining Volunteers** What help would assist your group to recruit and retain volunteers?
- **Other help** Is there anything else you think would help you with your group work?

The main issues for community groups arising from the consultation are as follows:-

- **Funding** Small grants play an important role in stimulating community activity and encouraging new ideas and fresh approaches. Any small grants programme needs to have a single application form and a quick response process. The largest response from the survey was for information on what funds are available, closely followed by a small pot (up to £500) for any group to bid for and advice about funding applications.

Most groups realise when they have a financial deficit, although building their committee's capacity to plan is often overlooked.

Additional comments, under this heading, were few. However, it was stressed by one group that information regarding funding needs to be made relevant so that applications are made to suitable sources. The amount of time taken over failed bids is both disheartening and discouraging to groups. Other groups thought that the funders need to give clear advice about who is eligible for funding with less repetitive questions on applications forms. Choosing the right wording and emphasis on bids was also raised as groups can experience a lack of confidence to achieve grant aid.

- **Information/Communication** With regard to contact and communication, by far the highest response was for more information available in newsletters, followed by a contact person and websites.

Comments were as follows:-

- Somebody to come along and say "well done! You've got it right" - or "I know someone who can help you with that".
- Telephone calls were seen as the best form of communication as time is always an issue with everyone.
- "No more meetings, please!"

- **Training** The most requested form of training was how to promote your group, closely followed by fundraising and planning for the future, with committee skills and volunteering having the least responses.

Other training requested was for insurance matters, working with young people, communication and listening skills, writing policies and procedures, time management, assertiveness, confidence building and communication skills.

Communication about locally based training opportunities available is obviously, from the survey, very difficult to access for some groups. Those that did respond mentioned newsletters, circulars and through the statutory and public bodies they work with.

- **Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers:** the questionnaire asked the groups what help would assist them to recruit and retain volunteers. The responses were as follows:-
 - "Buddies" to bring along new members to their first meeting
 - Recruiting theatre members is always a problem. It would help if we had a way of promoting the theatre to show that acting is not the prime activity
 - Publicity across Telford
 - Help in recruiting younger volunteers
 - Assistance in keeping volunteers' interest
 - Just information
 - Cost of courses for volunteers
 - Greater publicity
 - Looking after/managing volunteers
 - Being able to pay expenses
 - Being made aware of and training in legislation, policies and procedures

However, one group did say they don't have a problem in recruiting volunteers!

- **Other Help:** as with the heading above, responses were varied:-
 - Outside funding
 - Car park funding for group attendees
 - Contacts to get information on workshops
 - We need to be recognised by other groups and promoted
 - Just the continuing newsletters and communication
 - List of skilled people in Telford
 - Funds for village halls

- Networking
- Advice on organising social/interest occasions to encourage recruitment of members
- Links with other organisations who could perhaps help with talks, discussion groups

There were, however, two very individual group needs:-

- Suitable storage facilities on site (football club at Woodside)
- A lot of rain coats like the ones sold in Wonderland! (a dance troupe)

All of the above point to actions that can be taken, by both public bodies and the community and voluntary sector, to achieve them.

Possible Actions

Community groups are generally providing a service to their community, running a committee and adhering to necessary legislation for their work. Most work in isolation. Support and capacity building initiatives would be a lifeline to aid and strengthen this work.

Funding

1. Setting up of a small grants pot perhaps modelled on the SRB6 grant that expired in 2006
2. Improved access to information re funding, e.g. wider distribution of newsletters, websites, press releases, etc.
3. Increase publicity about how the CVS can help groups access funds and what the limitations are

Information/Communication

1. Improved distribution of newsletters/information as with (2) above
2. Publicity about what assistance/contact the CVS and public bodies, such as the Borough Council, can offer
3. Be more supportive to community groups by offering annual celebrations, etc.

Training

1. Building up a more structured communication network between the voluntary and community groups, e.g. contact numbers, group meetings, directory
2. A more integrated approach to training by, perhaps, resourcing and publishing a calendar of training events offered by all agencies, both public and voluntary
3. Offer specific courses as mentioned above

Volunteers

1. Any actions required will form part of the Volunteering Code of Practice.

