



# Community Groups Code of Practice

coming together is a beginning

staying together is progress

working together is **SUCCESS**





## What is Wolverhampton's Compact?

It is a commitment between the Statutory Sector and the Voluntary and Community Sector in Wolverhampton which aims to ensure we work better together.

The Wolverhampton Compact Partnership came together in 2004 to develop the Wolverhampton Compact, it's Codes of Practice and steer their implementation. Local Compacts are based on the Compact between National Government and the Voluntary & Community Sector that was agreed in 1998.

The Wolverhampton Compact Partnership is made up of:



“The development and maintenance of strong and effective working partnerships between statutory organisations and the voluntary sector and community organisations is important in the provision of good quality services for the community. In Wolverhampton we are proud of those working relationships.

The Compact is designed to demonstrate a commitment to open and transparent partnerships. The Compact will apply to all statutory agencies and voluntary and community sector organisations operating within the City; complementing existing joint working arrangements.

By signing up to the Wolverhampton Compact organisations signal their commitment to uphold the 10 jointly developed principles that will underpin Compact working in our city”.



Jon Crockett.  
Chair,  
Wolverhampton Partnership.

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## 1.0 Introduction

This Code of Practice sets out a series of undertakings for the statutory and the voluntary and community sectors in Wolverhampton on good practice when working in partnership. In common with the national code these recommendations aim to promote a better understanding of the needs of the community sector and its important role in providing good quality services in Wolverhampton.

This Code of Practice should be used in conjunction with the Wolverhampton Compact and the other codes of practice. It was developed after a thorough consultation process consisting of four workshops with community groups and other stakeholders in different areas of Wolverhampton along with a survey of community groups in Wolverhampton.

## 2.0 Definitions

**The Statutory Sector** includes organisations that provide public services required by law (e.g. Wolverhampton City Council, the emergency services and the Primary Care Trust).

**Community Groups** are generally understood to represent community interests, have few or no paid staff and lower or no income when compared with larger voluntary organisations.

**Local Neighbourhood Partnerships** (LNPs) provide the means for local communities to work with service providers and service commissioners in the design, planning and delivery of public services that respond to the changing needs of local neighbourhoods.

### 3.0 The Community Sector in Wolverhampton and its Importance

The national Compact Code of Practice on Community Groups characterises the community sector as being 'the community itself taking action to get things done'. The sector is driven by a number of clear and powerful values such as independence, equality and social justice.

Some of the typical features displayed by community groups are:

- Member led (where the community controls direction and purpose)
- Activity linked to neighbourhood or community of interest/identity
- Has a less formal structure
- Led by values

Community groups in Wolverhampton provide a wide range of informal and independent services including:

- Advice
- Activities and training for young people
- Health related support
- Recycling services
- Religious and Spiritual education
- Advocacy
- Campaigning

## 4.0 Community Groups Code of Practice

### 4.1 Mutual Undertakings

All sectors agree to:

Promote the principles contained within the Wolverhampton Compact and six codes of practice as they apply to community groups in Wolverhampton.

Regularly review the implementation of this code through the Compact Monitoring Implementation Group, taking into consideration the resources and capacity of all sectors - the first review will be undertaken in July 2009.

Build mutual trust and confidence between the sectors by contributing to joint initiatives and partnerships which seek to transform Wolverhampton from the grassroots and outwards.

Recognise and respect issues of equality and diversity in all partnership working. Work within the Wolverhampton Compact's Equality and Diversity and Black and Minority Ethnic Community Groups Codes of Practice guidelines and equality law.

Promote community development based on the following definition:

*"Community development is about building active and sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual respect. It is about changing power structures to remove barriers that prevent people from participating in the issues that affect their lives. It promotes the active involvement of people through sharing power, skills, knowledge and expertise." (Strategic Framework for Community Development, published by the Standing Conference for Community Development in May 2001)*

## 4.2 Statutory Sector Undertakings

In supporting this code, the Statutory Sector undertakes to:

### Consultation and Engagement

**NOTE:** The Wolverhampton Compact has a Consultation and Policy Appraisal Code of Practice. The undertakings below are, however, specific to engaging with community groups.

Be aware of where community groups are, what they do and how to contact them, either directly or through infrastructure or umbrella organisations.

Aim to reach smaller community groups and those with experience of particular issues.

Ensure adequate time for proper consultation on, and consideration of, policies & procedures; taking into account the interval between organisations' meetings and the time capacity of volunteers. Allow a minimum of 12 weeks.

Make use of a range of innovative consultation methods to consult and engage with community groups, in particular those who might consider themselves to be under represented.

Value community groups' contributions to consultations by providing feedback and ensuring that what they say does shape services, policies and procedures, wherever possible. Where this is not possible, acknowledge this and give an explanation.

Provide necessary resources and support for smaller groups and their volunteers to engage appropriately with consultation and engagement processes.

Ensure that appropriate staff are easily accessible for community groups to contact and engage with around specific issues.

Strive to take on a more practical role in engaging, supporting and informing local community groups about services (for example, ensuring staff go out to neighbourhoods and community groups). LNPs should be one of the mechanisms for this activity.

Strive to involve community groups from the outset and throughout the design and development of any proposed community buildings, or other community initiatives, to ensure that they are suitable and able to cater for all the needs of the community.

## **Policy Development or Appraisal**

Engage community groups around any new policies and procedures which affect them from the outset and throughout the development or appraisal process.

Take into account the Community Sector's needs and roles when setting policies, service level agreements and other funding arrangements

Adopt policies which ensure realistic, sustainable and long term resources to support the maintenance of an efficient and effective network of community groups in Wolverhampton.

## **Learning and Development**

Work with community groups to identify their development priorities and the needs of their members.

Recognise and support the development of provision for capacity building and training of community groups.

## **Funding and Support**

Ensure support is available for community groups to access resources and make efforts to increase knowledge on the availability of small grants and funds for community groups.

Support the provision of small grants funding programmes for community groups either directly or through infrastructure organisations ensuring accessibility and proportionate monitoring.

Consider ways of ensuring resources are available to develop and maintain community sector infrastructure.

## **Partnership Working**

Recognise that when working in partnership with community groups about shaping services it is to meet the needs of the whole community without direct financial benefit to any particular group.

Recognise the imbalance of power when working with community groups and strive to achieve ways of working that empower rather than 'disempower'.

## 4.3 Voluntary & Community Sector Undertakings

In supporting this code the Voluntary sector commits to:

Share information with the community sector and support the sector to deliver its functions and meet its commitments to funders.

Provide advice, guidance and support to community groups.

Advocate and challenge on behalf of community groups by taking issues affecting them to appropriate partner agencies.

Provide volunteering opportunities and encourage active community members to take on leadership roles in voluntary and community sector networks.

Make information more easily available to community groups.

Provide accessible training and capacity building to community groups.

Provide community groups with knowledge about available funds and support them in accessing funding.

Accept that in some cases the interests of community and voluntary organisations are not always the same and clarify this when participating in forums, consultations or meetings.

In supporting this code Community groups commit to:

When receiving public funding, aspire to provide the highest level of services and to meet monitoring and evaluation requirements in proportion to the size of the fund.

Engage with statutory agencies, voluntary organisations, infrastructure and umbrella organisations to share views, activities and plans.

Encourage quality partnership working and community involvement.

Be open and clear as to the community or constituency a particular group speaks for.

Ensure that information is passed to and from their members or service users in a timely manner and that they act as an effective means for consultation and exchange of views.

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Copies of the Wolverhampton Compact and Codes of Practice are available from:

**[www.wolverhamptoncompact.co.uk](http://www.wolverhamptoncompact.co.uk)**

If you require this document in any other format or community language, please contact Saffi Price at the above address / telephone.



[www.wolverhamptoncompact.co.uk](http://www.wolverhamptoncompact.co.uk)