

Voluntary Sector Compact for Kingston 2013

August 2013

Shared vision from Kingston's Compact 2000

'The importance of the voluntary sector's contribution to a democratically, socially inclusive society is recognised. Voluntary organisations make a major contribution to the development of society, promoting and supporting health and wellbeing, including involving users in the design and delivery of services, acting as providers of advice and information, acting as advocates for people who have no voice, helping to alleviate poverty, improve quality of life and involve those people at risk of being socially excluded'.

COMPACT 2013

This vision remains valid in 2013 but the relationship between statutory authorities and the voluntary and community sector has moved on significantly over the last few years. In response to the changes in the political and economic context, there is an ever-increasing focus on partnerships 'working better together' through the One Kingston programme and a greater recognition of the Voluntary and Community Sector's role in transforming service delivery and empowering communities, within the whole Localism agenda.

The Compact, which sets out a model for a way of working between statutory organisations and their VCS partners, plays a crucial part in supporting the development and implementation of the Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy in Kingston.

The Project Team for the VCS Strategy, consisting of representatives of RBK and key voluntary and community sector partners, is working on refreshing the local Compact commitments which includes the shared commitment on supporting the health and wellbeing of the local population.

Draft refreshed Compact commitments and principles are set out below. These include some overarching principles and then three main areas to reflect the changing context of relationships and partnerships and the content of the Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy.

Overarching principles

Commitments from statutory authorities

- Recognise the value of early VCS involvement in planning and delivery of services without their loss of independence and right to campaign
- Recognise that the VCS is made up of a wide range of organisations with different approaches working in different sectors
- Recognise the multiple roles of the VCS in relation to health and wellbeing i.e. well tailored support, early intervention and preventative services that work with specific communities
- Recognise the reality of funding/capacity issues for the VCS which can lead to difficulties in long-term planning and commit to maintaining a mix of funding including longer-term funding and contributing to core running costs/overheads
- Recognise tensions of partnership working which may include mismatched expectations, resources, power and influence

Commitments from voluntary and community sector

- Recognise the context and pressures in which local government and other statutory partners have to work
- Be willing to collaborate and share information/practice with partners
- Commit to meeting commissioning standards/operating standards as appropriate and to continuous improvement
- Recognise and take opportunities to work together with statutory partners

The Compact covers three main areas are:

1. policy development and service planning
2. allocating resources
3. advancing equalities and building stronger communities

1. Policy development and service planning

This includes planning local services, having a voice in local decision making and effective partnership working to promote the effective, transparent design and development of policies, programmes and services.

Commitments from statutory authorities

- Involve the local voluntary sector early on in any discussions taking account of local mechanisms such as local commissioning boards and teams, the Strategic Partners Grant Programme, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, local infrastructure support organisations and the Voluntary Sector Board
- Keep people in the sector informed about developments
- Ensure that social, environmental and economic value are considered when designing, developing and delivering policies and services
- Make data and information more accessible
- Give enough notice of consultations, allowing time to involve users/members
- Respect the independence of voluntary organisations and the views they bring
- Give feedback to explain how views have been used to influence policy and planning

Commitments from voluntary and community sector

- Make time to attend meetings and ensure you are fully informed.
- Involve members, service users, volunteers and trustees when preparing responses to consultations and when involved in policy development and service design
- Promote and contribute to consultations and provide robust evidence to support views put forward
- Accept that on some occasions, short time frames for consultation and engagement may be necessary

2. Allocating resources

This covers service delivery and commissioning, funding options, building relationships and partnerships to achieve good results for local people. It also covers enabling greater access to assets and premises owned by statutory partners (eg through the Right to Bid and the Right to Challenge)

Commitments from statutory authorities

- Begin planning programmes and services well in advance of start dates and inform the VCS of commissioning/funding intentions
- Aim to choose the approach to achieve the required outcomes (eg grants, procurement/competitive tendering, support in kind) which will attract the organisations best placed to deliver the outcomes
- Ensure that opportunities to do business with the Council are advertised on the Council's website or through KVA
- Ensure that the application/procurement process is transparent and accessible as well as proportionate to the size of the project/service
- Consider how smaller and specialist providers can be included in larger contracts and that prime contractors and supply chains adhere to the commitments in the Compact
- Engage with relevant VCS organisations to identify potential barriers to achieving outcomes, including allocation of risk, contract management, timing of payments and clarity of documentation and processes
- Allow enough time for organisations of all sizes to apply as well as consortia and partnership bids, which may take longer
- Commit funding for three years or more, where possible, taking account of the need for organisations to cover their full costs
- Once a contract has been awarded, provide feedback to unsuccessful organisations to help them develop their future tender writing skills.
- If a service is encountering problems, agree actions to improve performance
- Assess the impact of any potential de-commissioning including giving a minimum of three months notice when changing or ending a funding relationship and provide a clear rationale for the decision

Commitments from voluntary and community sector

- Make time to contribute to design and planning of services and programmes
- Be clear on reasons for bidding or applying to deliver services and that it fits with your organisation's mission
- Have appropriate governance and quality assurance arrangements as well as systems in place to manage and account for finances and for the organisation's capacity to deliver the outcomes required
- Be willing to work collaboratively with other voluntary and community sector organisations and with prime contractors and their supply chains
- Be clear on how the outcomes required will be achieved
- Ensure that systems are in place to deliver the reporting required and contribute to any reviews of the service
- Plan for the end of funding to reduce any potential impact on users and the organisation and advise on what this impact might be

3. Advancing equalities and building stronger communities

This section includes building a fair and equal society with strong communities, opportunities for volunteering, and engagement, particularly with those communities which are in danger of being marginalised.

Commitments from statutory authorities

- Work with the voluntary and community sectors to promote equality and diversity in the local community
- Engage with small and informal groups which give a voice to diverse communities and ensure that these views are taken into account when designing and implementing policies and services
- Recognise that organisations representing specific disadvantaged and under-represented group/s can help promote social and community cohesion and should have equal access to funding
- Work with the sector to remove any barriers to people volunteering
- Support capacity building through local infrastructure organisations

Commitments from voluntary and community sector

- Take practical action to promote equality and diversity and build community links
- Identify groups which are in danger of being marginalised, excluded or are under-represented in voluntary activity
- Work collaboratively with smaller groups to understand their needs and communicate them to statutory partners; including sharing information on sources of funding
- Monitor the take-up of your organisation's services – take action to widen accessibility where necessary and provide evidence to statutory partners of how the value of the work can help tackle discrimination and promote equality

These commitments are designed to underpin the relationship with the voluntary and community sector and to assist in the development of commissioning frameworks, new ways of working together and engaging local communities. They should be used in conjunction with the Voluntary Sector Strategy and Action Plan which proposes some specific actions to improve and deepen partnership working between the sectors.