Wolverhampton Compact Principles

Introduction

The Wolverhampton Compact is a commitment from all sectors in the City to work together in the common purpose we share to effectively and efficiently serve the people of Wolverhampton.

We acknowledge that our starting points may be different and that our organisational processes can make working in partnership challenging, but by signing up to these principles, we agree to actively hold each other to account and challenge ourselves and each other to work together for a better Wolverhampton.

These principles play an important role in ensuring empowered and sustainable communities. An effective partnership between Statutory Sector and Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) will help achieve the following:

Principles

1. Relationships and communications that are fair, honest, transparent and open.
2. A strong, diverse and independent civil society
3. The effective and transparent design and development of policies, programmes and public services
4. Responsive and high-quality programmes and services.
5. Clear arrangements for managing changes to programmes and services
6. An equal and fair society
7. A fully implemented Wolverhampton Charter and Commissioning Framework

Commitments for Statutory Sector and VCS:

This principle acknowledges that at times maintaining constructive relationships and communication can be challenging, especially in situations where time is limited or when working or communicating with a different organisation or sector from our own. However, aiming to build respectful, timely and open relationships and communication helps to minimise misunderstandings and will lead to better outcomes. This principle asks that, wherever possible, time is taken to ensure that all pertinent parties have been communicated with appropriately. To keep parties informed and to keep lines of communication open, respectful, transparent and honest.

1. **Relationships and communications are fair, honest and open.**

**Undertakings for Statutory Sector and VCS**

1.1 Ensure we comply with organisational and mutually agreed procedures, professional standards and applicable laws and regulations.

1.2 Respect the confidentiality of information.

1.3 Treat all with respect, courtesy, and fairness.

1.4 Strive for fairness in our behaviour and our policies promoting equal opportunity for all.

1.5 Make decisions based on organisational and shared values.

1.6 Perform duties and obligations with honesty, integrity and professionalism.

1.7 Be transparent in actions and communications to foster trust and minimise ambiguity.

1.8 Acknowledge mistakes and seek to rectify adverse consequences in an appropriate and timely manner.

1.9 Promote an environment that encourages sharing insights and knowledge across the sectors.

1.10 Ensure judgments and conclusions are based upon analysis of all available and relevant data, without prejudice or partiality.

1.11 Properly document engagements and business operations in accordance with policies and relevant legal and professional requirements.

1.12 Establish and follow conflict of interest protocols.

1.13 Work together to create an environment of mutual trust and respect.

1. **A strong, diverse and independent civil society.**

This principle acknowledges that a thriving and independent Voluntary and Community Sector supports a thriving City. Effective infrastructure ensures a collective voice, stronger organisations, strategic influence and collaborative working which in turn improves outcomes for communities and people in Wolverhampton.

**Undertakings for Statutory Sector:**

* 1. Respect and uphold the independence of VCS to deliver their mission, including their right to campaign, regardless of any relationship, financial or otherwise, which may exist.
  2. Ensure VCS are supported and resourced in a reasonable and fair manner where they are helping the Statuary Sector to fulfil its aims.
  3. Ensure that the Statutory Sector collectively recognises the need to resource local support and develop organisations in order to assist VCS with their capacity and capability to deliver positive outcomes.
  4. Ensure greater transparency by making data and information more accessible, helping VCS to challenge existing provision of services, access new markets and hold the Statutory Sector to account.
  5. Consider a range of ways to support VCS, such as enabling greater access to state owned premises and resources.

2.6 Ensure that it is free for volunteers to access Criminal Record (DBS) checks. Work towards streamlining processes for volunteers who are volunteering for more than one cause.

**Undertakings for VCS:**

2.7 When campaigning or advocating, ensure that robust evidence is provided, including information about the source and range of people and communities represented.

2.8 Ensure independence is upheld, focusing on the cause represented, regardless of any relationship they have with the Statutory Sector, financial or otherwise.

1. **Effective and transparent design and development of policies, programmes and public services**

This principle acknowledges that better public outcomes for individuals and communities are gained through more effective and innovative commissioning with optimal involvement of communities. Co-production yields efficiency gains and community benefit. Those affected by outcomes in public service design, improvement, delivery and holding services to account is a vision to which we would all wish to aspire. Wherever possible we will aim toward a Co-production model[[1]](#footnote-1)**.**

Services will be better designed, commissioned, procured and delivered if meaningful engagement and consultation has taken place throughout the process in particular with those who are affected by the outcome. It is important that we seek to involve a fair representation of groups and individuals. Consultation should be undertaken in such a way to ensure an honest exchange of information and an honest appraisal of how far the outcome can be influenced or affected.

**Undertakings for Statutory Sector:**

3.1 Ensure that social, environmental and economic value[[2]](#footnote-2) forms a standard part of designing, developing and delivering policies, programmes and services.

3.2 Consider the social impact that may result from policy and programme development, and in particular consider how these would impact local efforts to inspire and encourage social action and to empower communities.

3.3 Work with VCS from the earliest possible stage to design policies, programmes and services. Ensure those likely to have a view are involved from the start and remove barriers that may prevent organisations contributing.

3.4 Give early notice of forthcoming consultations, where possible, allowing enough time for VCS to involve their service users, beneficiaries, members, volunteers and trustees in preparing responses. Where it is appropriate, and enables meaningful engagement, conduct 12-week formal written consultations, with clear explanations and rationale for shorter time-frames or a more informal approach.

3.5 Consider providing feedback to explain how respondents have influenced the design and development of policies, programmes and public services, including where respondents’ views have not been acted upon.

3.6 Assess the implications for the sector of new policies, legislation and guidance, aiming to reduce the bureaucratic burden, particularly on small organisations.

**Undertakings for VCS**

3.7 Promote and respond to Statutory Sector consultations where appropriate

3.8 Seek the views of service users, clients, beneficiaries, members, volunteers, and trustees when making representation to statutory sector. Be clear on who is being represented, in what capacity, and on what basis that representation is being made.

3.9 When putting forward ideas, focus on evidence-based solutions, with clear proposals for positive outcomes.

**4. Responsive and high-quality programmes and services**

**Undertakings for the Statutory Sector:**

4.1 Ensure that VCS have a greater role and more opportunities in delivering public services by opening up new markets in accordance with wider public service reform measures and reforming the commissioning environment in existing markets.

4.2 Consider a wide range of ways to fund or resource VCS, including grants, contracts, loan finance, use of premises and so on. Work to remove barriers that may prevent VCS accessing Statutory Sector funding, thereby enabling smaller organisations to become involved in delivering services where they are best placed to achieve the desired outcomes.

4.3 Ensure transparency by providing a clear rationale for all funding decisions.

4.4 Commit to multi-year funding where appropriate and where it adds value for money. The funding term should reflect the time it will take to deliver the outcome. If multi-year funding is not considered to be the best way of delivering the objective, explain the reasons for the decision.

4.5 Ensure well managed and transparent application and tendering processes, which are proportionate to the desired objectives and outcomes of programmes.

4.6 Agree with VCS how outcomes, including the social, environmental or economic value, will be monitored before a contract or funding agreement is made. Ensure that monitoring and reporting is relevant and proportionate to the nature and size of the opportunity. Be clear about what information is being asked for, and why and how it will be used.

4.7 Ensure equal treatment across sectors, including reporting and monitoring arrangements, when tendering for contracts.

4.8 Recognise that when VCS apply for a grant they can include appropriate and relevant overheads, including the costs associated with training and volunteer involvement.

4.9 Discuss and allocate risks to the organisation(s) best equipped to manage them. Where prime contractors are used, ensure they adhere to the principles of this Compact in allocating risk. Ensure delivery terms and risks are proportionate to the nature and value of the opportunity.

4.10 Ensure that the widest possible range of organisations can be involved in the provision of services through appropriate funding and financing models, for example outcome based payments and payment in advance of expenditure. Payment in advance of expenditure should be considered on a case by case basis where this represents value for money.

4.11 Ensure all bodies distributing funds on the Statutory Sector’s behalf adhere to the commitments in this Compact. This includes the relationship between prime contractors and their supply chains. Demonstrate how funding arrangements and financial support can allow smaller and specialist providers to play a greater part.

4.12 Apply the Compact when distributing European funding. Where conflicts arise with European regulations, discuss the potential effects and agree solutions together

4.13 Encourage feedback from a range of sources on the effectiveness of the Statutory Sector’s partnership with VCS and how successful it has been in delivering their objectives. Consider placing this feedback in the public domain.

**Undertakings for VCS:**

4.14 Ensure eligibility for funding before applying and be explicit about how outcomes will be achieved.

4.15 Ensure robust governance arrangements so that organisations can best manage any risk associated with service delivery and financing models, including giving funders early notice of significant changes in circumstances.

4.16 Be open and transparent about reporting, recognising that monitoring, whether internal or external, is an aspect of good management practice.

4.17 Demonstrate the social, environmental or economic value of the programmes and services provided, where appropriate.

4.18 Help facilitate feedback from users and communities to the Statutory Sector to help improve delivery of programmes and services.

4.19  Recognise that the Statutory Sector can legitimately expect VCS to give public recognition of its funding.

**5. Clear arrangements for managing changes to programmes and services**

This principle acknowledges that problems will occur, from time to time, when delivering services. Partners to the Compact need to work together to resolve issues for the good of the service users and citizens of Wolverhampton. This may mean a change to the service to meet a new need or change to the organisation delivering. It may mean that following appropriate assessments and discussions that service delivery should remain in place in its current form. This may mean taking part in uncomfortable discussions, seeing things from another person’s or organisation’s perspective and ensuring that the best outcome for the City and its people are at the heart of these discussions.

**Undertakings for Statutory Sector:**

5.1 If a programme or service is encountering problems, agree with the VCSO a timetable of actions to improve performance before making a decision to end a financial relationship.

5.2 Assess the impact on beneficiaries, service users and volunteers before deciding to reduce or end funding. Assess the need to re-allocate funds to another organisation serving the same group.

5.3 Where there are restrictions or changes to future resources, discuss with VCS the potential implications as early as possible, give organisations the opportunity to respond, and consider the response fully, respecting sector expertise, before making a final decision.

5.4 Give a minimum of three months notice in writing when changing or ending a funding relationship or other support, apart from in exceptional circumstances, and provide a clear rationale for why the decision has been taken.

**Undertakings for VCS:**

5.5 Plan for the end of funding to reduce any potential negative impact on beneficiaries and the organisation.

5.6 Contribute positively to reviews of programmes and funding practice.

5.7 Advise commissioning body on the social, environmental or economic impact of funding changes, and on ways to minimise their effects on people in vulnerable situations.

**6. An equal and fair society**

This principle acknowledges that we need to ensure that the voice of the most disadvantaged and under-represented people and communities are included in service design and delivery if the City is to improve outcomes for all Wolverhampton citizens. This includes ensuring that all communities are considered at the earliest stages of service conception and design.

**Undertakings for Statutory Sector:**

6.1 Work with VCS that represent, support or provide services to people specifically protected by legislation and other under-represented and disadvantaged groups. Understand the specific needs of these groups by actively seeking the views of service users and clients. Take these views into account, including assessing impact, when designing and implementing policies, programmes and services.

6.2 Acknowledge that organisations representing specific disadvantaged or under-represented group(s) can help promote social and community cohesion and should have equal access to state funding.

6.3 Take practical action to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality and to ensure a voice for under-represented and disadvantaged groups.

**Undertakings for VCS:**

6.4 If receiving funding from a Statutory Sector body, show how the value of the work can help that body deliver its public sector duties on promoting equality and tackling discrimination.

6.5 Take practical action, such as through funding bids, to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and build stronger communities.

**7. Embedded Wolverhampton Charter and Commissioning Framework**

**Undertaking for Statutory Sector and VCS:**

7.1 Partners to the Compact recognise that the undertakings contained within the Charter form part of the Compact agreement.

7.2 The Wolverhampton Charter and Commissioning Framework contain principles which form part of the Compact between sectors, by signing up to the Compact, partners agree to work to the Wolverhampton Charter, which has specific undertakings intended for commissioning processes.

1. Co-production means delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours (New Economics Foundation). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Social value encompasses a broad concept of value by incorporating social, environmental and economic costs and benefits. This means that as well as taking into account the direct effects of interventions, the wider effects on other areas of the economy and society should also be considered. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)