



Equality and Diversity Code of Practice

coming together is a beginning

staying together is progress

working together is **SUCCESS**

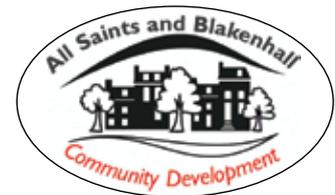


What is Wolverhampton's Compact?

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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The Equality and Diversity Code

This Code is one of six Codes of Practice developed by Wolverhampton Compact¹. These Codes are frameworks for effective partnership working and contribute towards the achievement of Wolverhampton Compact's vision of 'a commitment by each sector to the implementation of the Compact Principles'. Whilst this Code is to be used in conjunction with the other five Codes it is currently most closely linked with the Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Code of Practice but other equality Codes may be developed over time.

Wolverhampton Compact is a commitment between the Statutory Sector and the VCS in Wolverhampton to work better together in order to provide good quality services to the community. The Compact is designed to demonstrate a commitment to open and transparent partnerships and the organisations that have signed up to it have agreed to uphold its ten underpinning principles².

The Development of this Code

This Code has been developed following consultation with both the Statutory Sector and the VCS in Wolverhampton. The consultation process has included semi-structured interviews; a consultation event; an email survey and a final consultation meeting of both statutory and VCS partners.

This Code has been developed in a context of change. There is a national agenda to achieve a sustained improvement of the VCS and a growing recognition of its value. There is a desire for the VCS not only to evolve into an equal partner with the Statutory Sector in the planning and delivery of services in their locality but also for more public services to be procured from the VCS.

¹ The other Codes of Practice cover Consultation, Funding, Volunteering, Community Groups and Black and Minority Ethnic Groups.

² For details of the principles visit www.wolverhamptoncompact.co.uk

National Considerations

Underpinning this Code are the seven strands of equality - disability, gender, race and ethnicity, religion or belief, sexuality, gender identity (proposed, commenced or completed reassignment of gender (within the meaning given by section 82 (1) of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (c65)) and age³. Partners will adhere to any legal obligations arising from these and will be mindful of new obligations that may emerge from the newly created Equality and Human Rights Commission.

The development of this Code has also been informed by 'The Fairness and Freedom' report (Equalities Review 2007⁴), in particular its ten steps to achieving greater equality:

- 1** Define equality
- 2** Build a consensus on equality
- 3** Measure progress towards equality
- 4** Have transparency about progress
- 5** Target action on persistent inequalities
- 6** Have a simpler legal framework
- 7** Be more accountability for delivering equality
- 8** Use public procurement and commissioning positively
- 9** Enable and support organisations in all sectors
- 10** Develop a more sophisticated enforcement regime.

³ Public bodies currently have both general and specific duties in respect of disability, gender, race and ethnicity.

⁴ Fairness and Freedom: the Final Report of the Equalities Review, Cabinet Office, February 2007.

Equality and Diversity

Equality is about fairness, and not discriminating against individuals or groups because of individual characteristics⁵. The Equalities Review defined an equal society as one that 'recognises people's different needs, situations and goals and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and can be'.

Diversity is about respecting and valuing difference in a way that adds value to our understanding and approaches to work. It is also about recognising and understanding the mix of people and communities who use our services. It focuses attention on their diverse needs and makes them central to our work⁶.

Wolverhampton is a richer place to live and work because of its welcome of diversity and its commitment to fairness and equality. We benefit from the contribution that people with different backgrounds and life experiences bring to our family and community life, our places of learning and to our economy. Our commitment to equality and diversity enables us to have a greater degree of creativity and innovation in the provision of our services. It brings us into contact with communities and assists us in developing services that are sensitive to their needs.

An environment that promotes and encourages equality and diversity values the contribution that all members of the community bring. It encourages participation by all, enhances understanding, builds tolerance, and helps us to break down the barriers between us. It enables people to reach their potential, and provides us with role models that enhance the aspirations of all our children and young people.

Both the statutory and voluntary & community sectors play a part in embracing equality and diversity through, for example:

- Employing people from diverse sectors of the community in their workforce
- Ensuring that services are accessible to all - whether these are services delivered by ourselves or by others on our behalf
- Reaching out to all sectors of the community, in particular those who are not currently accessing services
- Involving users in the development of services
- Developing services tailored to people's specific access requirements

⁵ This definition is based on the Audit Commission's as stated on their website: www.audit-commission.gov.uk

⁶ This definition is based on the Audit Commission's as stated on their website (see above).

- Maximising the potential of specific groups through the provision of education, training and employment opportunities
- Supporting groups by providing assistance with funding applications, advice about governance etc
- Providing representation and advocacy services for people who feel that they do not have a voice
- Providing advice and guidance to those groups in the community who do not know their way around mainstream services
- Raising awareness of the experiences and perceptions of different groups amongst the wider community
- Bringing groups of people together in order to enrich their understanding of each other's needs and experiences.

We are committed to ensuring that all of our services are accessible to all members of the communities we serve. We will monitor the diversity of those who use or access our service in order to meet their needs and plan accordingly for the future. We each need to scrutinise our own policies and practices in order to identify any barriers to inclusion, and what we need to do in order to remove them.

Any list of the groups that are covered by the terms 'equality and diversity' is inevitably time-limited, since new groups are emerging all the time. Furthermore, many people fall into more than one category, and many of the issues pertinent to each of the groups cut across a number of them. However, some agencies may find it helpful to be reminded of the groups that they should consider when assessing the accessibility of their services, and so a list of groups is included in an Appendix to this Code. This list may also serve to make visible some of the groups, who believe that not all agencies are yet sufficiently aware of their existence and needs.

The Aims

The aims of this Code are to:

- Enable a diverse range of groups and individuals to actively contribute to, access and benefit from all our services and thus enhance life in the city
- Enable the delivery of high quality services, designed to meet known needs, that make effective use of resources and create a real difference in people's lives⁷
- Set minimum standards for behaviour against which service providers may be assessed.

The Principles

The Code is underpinned by the following principles, which all partners agree to:

- A commitment to applying principles of equality of opportunity and access is a central part of a fair and democratic society and is vital to achieving the aims of our Compact
- Equality and diversity take many forms and we are not bound by definitions
- This Code creates responsibilities on the part of us as partner organisations, and rights on the part of current and potential service users
- We will strive to work in a climate of equity , honesty, respect, trust, understanding and learning
- Any challenge made using the Code should be with care and consideration.

The Undertakings

To achieve these aims and work within the principles of the Code the statutory and VCS agree to the following undertakings. These should be proportional to the size of the organisation.

⁷ This commitment has drawn from Wolverhampton Council's new set of values and behaviours.

Partnership Working

A strong partnership between the Statutory and Voluntary and Community Sectors is an important foundation for developing services that meet the needs of all those who live in Wolverhampton. We need to build trust, respect and openness between us, to develop a strong, equal partnership. We recognise that at present there is often an imbalance of power, and that the VCS feels that it has to struggle to be both present and be heard as an equal partner. These undertakings are agreed with the understanding that due regard for proportionality must be accepted, especially in the case of smaller community groups.

Both Sectors Will

- Develop a protocol for partnership working which defines the meaning of partnership working; the terms of a fruitful partnership; the range and roles of partners; and the process of engagement.
- Use the Code as a basis for all new partnership ventures, existing partnerships, and network structures, for example the Local Neighbourhood Partnerships (LNPs) and working with the Communities of Interest and Identity.

The Statutory Sector Will

- In all its dealings with the VCS be aware of the power imbalance that exists and make positive efforts to address this, ensuring that it hears and takes proper account of the views that are being expressed by them.

The VCS Will

- Recognise that power imbalances occur between organisations in the VCS and strive to address these when working in partnership, ensuring that the views of all are properly heard and taken into account.

Policy

Policies provide the context for our work and it is important that they fully reflect our welcome of diversity and our commitment to equality and fairness.

Both Sectors Will

- Ensure that they have in place the policies and procedures that are necessary to meet the requirements of the seven strands of equality.
- Undertake Equality Impact Assessments of policies and functions in order to determine what impact they may have on equality strands for those affected by the outcomes.

The Statutory Sector Will

- Monitor, evaluate and review their policies identifying, as far as possible, any implications for the VCS and ways that the VCS can contribute to policy making.

Services and Resources - Shaping, Developing and Targeting

It is important that our services are accessible to members of our community and that we use targeting to redress current inequalities. Through its strong links within the community the VCS can help to ensure that services are responsive to need.

Both Sectors Will

- Work together to map existing services, unmet needs and emerging needs in order to have a better understanding of diverse needs and to avoid duplication and waste of resources.
- Develop Action Plans to respond to these needs.
- Engage service users to shape, develop and target services.
- Undertake Equality Impact Assessments of service provision, drawing up an action plan to address any inequality that emerges.
- Conduct an audit of our own internal working practices and cultures to ensure we are working inclusively, equitably and valuing diversity.

The Statutory Sector Will

- Consult with the VCS in developing services to find out what works, what does not and why.

The VCS Will

- Reach out into, and work with, communities and individuals to help them to have a voice in the development of new services.

Communication

Communication is a powerful tool through which agencies and individuals can be effectively included in decision-making processes and it is often the Statutory Sector that holds knowledge.

Both Sectors Will

- Assess their current communications and develop a communications strategy to ensure that all local people know about services provision and are able to benefit.
- Conduct research and/or make use of existing research to identify the best ways of communicating and consulting with minority individuals and/or groups.
- Make use of and develop existing networks.
- Develop and maintain mechanisms to routinely share information between, and within, both sectors in a transparent and accountable way.

The Statutory Sector Will

- Develop mechanisms for gathering knowledge about local equality issues.
- Identify the resource implication of these and allocate investment accordingly.
- Use the knowledge and links that the VCS has with the community in developing these mechanisms.
- Make appropriate resources available to the VCS to communicate with minority groups where this appears to be the most effective means of communication.
- Communicate and use acquired knowledge to better inform policy, procurement and service delivery.

The VCS Will

- Establish mechanisms to routinely and regularly inform the Statutory Sector about local equality and diversity issues and the resource implications that these might have.
- Use any resources made available by the Statutory Sector for communicating with minority groups in the most effective way.
- Put in place procedures to enable monitoring whether communication is reaching targeted groups in the community.

Investment in Support, Capacity and Resources

The VCS will need a targeted investment in its capacity and skills if it is to be both an active and effective partner with the Statutory Sector and an effective deliverer of public services. The Statutory Sector appreciates that the VCS has much knowledge in relation to local equality and diversity groups.

Both Sectors Will

- Conduct a capacity needs analysis of the VCS and focus support, capacity building and resources on the areas of need that have been identified.
- Develop a costed Development Plan for the VCS, focusing on support, leadership and capacity development.
- Include provision in the Development Plan for smaller and emerging community groups to enable them to become equal contributors and participants.

The Statutory Sector Will

- Acquire (through training and other means) an increased understanding and knowledge of local equality/diversity groups.

The VCS Will

- Undertake an assessment of their capacity and development needs and identify how these will be addressed.
- Develop Action Plans to ensure that all relevant staff and volunteers acquire (through training or other means) adequate knowledge of equality standards and the impact of current and new legislation.

Funding and Sustainability

Both sectors are limited by the resources at their disposal. The VCS is to a large extent dependent on the Statutory Sector for its resources, either through funding or procurement arrangements. Funding and procurement arrangements are of necessity rigorous but can be a barrier to some VCS organisations.

The Statutory Sector Will

- Ensure the decision making process regarding the funding and procurement of services are equality proofed, equitable, accountable and transparent.
- Make a requirement of future funding agreements a demonstration of an active commitment to addressing equality and diversity issues.
- Whenever possible, procure/fund services from the VCS for at least a three year period.
- Develop grant, procurement and monitoring structures that are commensurate with the level of funding.
- Take the necessary steps to create equal access for those VCS organisations who lack the capacity to engage with onerous funding application processes.

The VCS Will

- Provide timely performance management information to the Statutory Sector

Progress Measurement and Transparency

Both Sectors will:

- Consult staff and service users on their experience of equality practice in the organisation, asking about the quality and reach of the service, feelings of inclusion and improvements.

Monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the Code

The Compact Monitoring and Implementation Group (MAIG) is responsible for monitoring and reviewing performance of this Code by partner agencies. This process will be strengthened by user involvement, so that accountability is not just to partner agencies but crucially to the communities that we serve.

The first full review of the Code will be conducted by the MAIG in February 2009 and the regularity of future reviews will be agreed as part of that review.

Appendix Checklist

Diversity can include a range of differences. Those that most commonly come to mind are the seven strands:

- Gender
- Age
- Disability
- Sexuality
- Race & ethnicity
- Religion or belief
- Gender Identity

But there are other ways in which people are different:

- Marital status
- Family structure
- Health
- Politics
- Values

And the following groups have different needs and experiences that should be considered:

- People with learning difficulties
- Asylum seekers
- Migrants
- Refugees
- Travellers
- Transsexuals
- Trans gender people

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Copies of the Wolverhampton Compact and Codes of Practice are available from:
www.wolverhamptoncompact.co.uk

If you require this document in any other format or community language, please contact
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www.wolverhamptoncompact.co.uk