

The Swindon Compact

An agreement on relations between the voluntary and community sector and the statutory sector in Swindon

1. Status of the Compact

1.1 The Swindon Compact has been developed to recognise the diversity and independence of the voluntary and community sector. The Compact sets out a framework which reinforces and enhances the working relationship between the voluntary and community sector and the statutory sector based on shared values and mutual respect.

1.2 The Swindon Compact carries authority because it has been drawn up and endorsed by all parties. The Compact will be reviewed and developed by them. All the organisations that have signed up to the Swindon Compact are committed to resolving any difficulties together and in an equitable manner.

2. Shared Vision

2.1 The Swindon Compact is proof that the voluntary and community sector and the statutory sector in Swindon share similar values and have a number of complementary functions.

2.2 The agreement expresses the commitment of the voluntary and community sector and the statutory sector to work in partnership to support the development of healthy and vibrant communities in Swindon.

2.3 As independent, not-for-profit organisations, voluntary and community groups have a distinctive value to Swindon and play a role, which is different from other sectors. They enable individuals to contribute to public life and the development of their communities by providing the opportunity for voluntary and community activities.

2.4 The statutory bodies and the voluntary and community sector recognise and value the vital contribution made by volunteers in Swindon and the crucial role of voluntary and community organisations in helping them to make those contributions.

2.5 The Swindon Compact recognises that the statutory bodies can play a positive role both in promoting volunteering and supporting the work of voluntary and community organisations. This agreement aims to ensure that the impact the statutory bodies have on the voluntary and community sector, and vice versa, is a positive one.

3. Shared Principles

3.1 All partners recognise the importance of voluntary and community activities in the development of an inclusive and democratic society.

3.2 The independence and diversity of the voluntary and community sector is fundamental to the well-being of our society.

3.3 Roles of the voluntary and community sector are: campaigners, self help groups, service providers, advocates, community activists and active partners in the design, development and delivery of services.

3.4 The voluntary and community sector and the statutory sector have distinct but complementary roles in the delivery and development of public services.

3.5 The Swindon Compact acknowledges the value added through working in partnership towards common aims and objectives. Partnership working is based on mutual respect and recognition of differences. Each partner has clear duties, responsibilities and accountabilities.

3.6 All partners are committed to equality and diversity in all terms of service delivery, policy development, practice and procedure.

3.7 All partners are accountable for their actions. Relationships should be based on integrity, objectivity, openness and honesty.

3.8 All partners agree to promote and support the wide and active participation of all Swindon people in local democratic consultation and participation processes.

4. Shared Responsibility

4.1 All partners agree to take positive actions to reach groups whose voices might not be heard, and to engage service users in the development and management of activities and services.

4.2 All partners actively promote the value and principles set out in the Swindon Compact.

4.3 All partners agree to promote good practice, consistency of approach and effective working relationships between the statutory sector and the

voluntary and community sector. This will maximise opportunities and minimise duplication of resources.

4.4 All partners are committed to review the operation of the Swindon Compact and associated codes of practice regularly.

4.5 All partners agree to put policies in place for promoting best practice and equal opportunities in activities, employment, volunteering and service provision.

5. Undertakings by the Statutory Sector

5.1 Independence

5.1.1 The statutory sector recognises, appreciates and supports the independence of the voluntary and community sector. It acknowledges that the campaigning and scrutiny role locally and nationally will challenge the statutory sector on occasions.

5.2 Funding

5.2.1 A funding code of good practice will be developed, including transparent and coherent funding agreements, to govern the way that the statutory sector allocates funding to the voluntary and community sector.

5.2.2 The statutory sector will support the voluntary and community sector by funding and non-financial support, where appropriate. It will also help to draw in resources that are not available to statutory agencies.

5.2.3 To ensure a positive funding relationship leading to successful and well delivered funding programmes.

5.2.4 To recognise the importance of an infrastructure to support the voluntary and community sector and to promote its development in Swindon.

5.3 Policy Development & Consultation

5.3.1 A consultation code of good practice will be developed to govern the way that the statutory sector consults with the voluntary and community sector.

5.3.2 The statutory sector will involve the voluntary and community sector in developing policies and strategies that affect the sector or its services.

5.3.3 The statutory sector will consult with the voluntary and community sector on issues that affect it and take account of their views in any decisions. This will include allowing sufficient time for the sector to carry out consultation with the sector.

6. Undertakings by the Voluntary & Community Sector

6.1 Funding & Accountability

6.1.1 The voluntary and community sector will maintain high standards of governance and be accountable to the legal and accounting standards and guidance imposed by the Charity Commission and other regulatory bodies.

6.1.2 The voluntary and community sector will develop quality standards appropriate to different groups and activities, which includes best practice and equal opportunities.

6.1.3 The voluntary and community sector will understand the financial and regulatory constraints of the statutory sector.

6.2 Policy Development & Consultation

6.2.1 The voluntary and community sector will continuously improve practice, policy and services, and regularly monitor and review.

6.2.2 The voluntary and community sector will encourage active consultation from service users, carers, volunteers and members.

6.2.3 The voluntary and community sector will ensure that any evidence or information provided by the voluntary and community sector is accurate.

7. Evaluation & Review of the Swindon Compact

7.1 The Swindon Compact is a starting point not a conclusion. All partners will evolve and develop the Compact to promote a culture of challenge and innovation, continuous improvement, shared learning and the promotion of good practice.

7.2 The voluntary and community sector and the statutory sector are all committed to review and monitor the operation of the Swindon Compact and associated codes of practice yearly, in order to assess its continuing effectiveness and impact to the community.

7.3 A Compact Implementation Group will be established which includes representative members of the voluntary and community sector and statutory sector. The Implementation Group will be responsible for monitoring the progress and effectiveness of the Compact. The Group will meet annually to assess progress and issue a short report with an action plan for the following year, which will be presented to the Swindon Strategic Partnership.

8. Dispute Resolution

8.1 As far as possible, disagreements over the application of the framework should be resolved directly between the parties involved.

8.2 Any issues arising that cannot be resolved by the Implementation Group* will be brought to the Swindon Strategic Partnership.

8.3 Where behaviour which contravenes this framework constitutes maladministration, a complaint may be made to the Local Government ombudsman or the National Council for Voluntary Organisation's Compact Advocacy Programme, which will support organisations who have a dispute with government departments or agencies.

9. The Codes of Practice

9.1 The following codes of practice will form a set of practical guidelines.

- Funding
- Consultation
- Black & Minority Ethnic Groups
- Volunteering
- Community Groups

9.2 Other codes of practice may be developed in the future, where appropriate.

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