

## **THE HARROW COMPACT**

### **1. WHAT IS A COMPACT?**

A Compact is a written agreement, setting out a framework for the future working relationships between local government, the wider statutory sector, the private sector and the voluntary and community sector. It sets out a range of shared principles and undertakings from all sectors and incorporates some specific action points.

### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF HARROW COMPACT**

The aims of this Compact are to build on existing partnerships and develop the relationship between the sectors through mutual respect and trust so that they can together provide more effective services to local people and communities within the borough

#### **Our general objectives are to:**

- have shared values and outcomes, e.g. a borough that is safer, cleaner, healthier and more prosperous, with equal life opportunities for all
- agree a framework for effective consultation and community involvement and partnership working to achieve shared values and outcomes
- improve communication and developing common understanding between the different sectors

#### **Our specific objectives are to:**

- ensure good communication between the different agencies and sectors
- ensure equitable access to resources
- resolve conflicts quickly, as close to the dispute as possible
- ensure that our work addresses the many dimensions of diversity present in Harrow
- provide constructive support recognising the needs of smaller partners
- work towards agreed priorities and recognise there are some things that we are not able to do.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE COMPACT:**

The purpose of the Compact is to set out the shared principles and commitments to action that underpin the working relationship between the sectors. It also aims to develop further a strong healthy relationship between the public, private and community sectors.

In the development and delivery of public policies and services, the local statutory organisations and the voluntary and community sector have distinct complementary roles to play. Voluntary and community organisations bring a unique package of resources to service delivery, for example, their closeness to target groups which provides a communications route for them to become involved in local service planning and decision making. Statutory organisations in Harrow spend substantial amounts of public money in the voluntary and community sector, through contracts, service level agreements and grants.

The voluntary sector adds a unique local, grass roots dimension to the delivery of services to meet local needs. Both sectors have different forms of accountability and are answerable to a different range of stakeholders.

### **STATUS OF THE COMPACT**

The Compact is not a legally binding document or contract, although it has been accorded the status of a “Statement of Intent” by the High Court which means that failure to follow it can result in judicial review proceedings. Despite this, it remains a mutual agreement between those who decide to endorse its principles and commitment to action and its authority derives primarily from the respect accorded to it by the partners and the extent to which it influences future decision-making and development. It is intended to be of both practical and symbolic significance.

It is the intention of those who have collaborated in producing the Compact, that it should have authoritative focus in promoting good quality working relationships between the partners. Signing the Compact and thereby agreeing to its undertakings, is open to any organisation working for the benefit of the community in Harrow. Harrow Association of Voluntary Service will hold a Register of Parties who have signed the Compact, which will be updated at an annual meeting.

### **SHARED PRINCIPLES IN THE HARROW COMPACT**

- We believe that voluntary action and community involvement are essential components of a democracy.
- We believe that an independent and diverse voluntary and community sector is fundamental to the well being of society.
- We believe that people who work in the voluntary and community sector make a vital and unique contribution to the well-being and health of people and communities in Harrow.
- We believe that by working together we will achieve more for the people and communities of Harrow.

- We believe that working in partnership enhances the ability of public sector bodies and of voluntary and community sector organisations to fulfil their own purposes, but also imposes a responsibility for each sector to contribute towards mutual aims and objectives, according to the capacity of each organisation.
- We believe that, irrespective of any funding relationships, voluntary and community sector organisations are entitled to campaign in order to advance their aims and objectives, to comment on public sector policy, and to determine and manage their own affairs.
- We agree that genuine partnerships across the sectors require integrity, objectivity, understanding, accountability, openness, honesty and collaboration and a recognition of the equal value of their respective contribution.
- We agree that purposeful consultation improves policy development, builds relationships and enhances the design and delivery of services and programmes.
- We recognise that whilst each organisation will have its own priorities, the statutory bodies have a responsibility to give priority in funding to activities supporting their statutory responsibilities.
- We are committed to promoting and striving for equality of opportunity in all aspects of our work, for all people regardless of race, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation or religion.
- We are committed to an inclusive approach which means that every effort will be made to welcome groups that wish to be included.
- We are committed to recognising the importance of sustainability in the planning and provision of services

### **KEEPING THE COMPACT LIVE**

The Compact Code of Practice have been developed and adopted but will need revision and updating from time to time. This will be the responsibility of a Compact Board comprising representatives of the voluntary and statutory sectors which is itself accountable to Harrow Partnership Board.

In the case of any dispute, an investigation by the Council's Relationship Manager for the Voluntary and Community Sector will be reported to the Compact Board. In the event that a dispute is not resolved through this mechanism, the Compact Board may seek a reciprocal arrangement with another Partnership in West London to investigate, mediate and determine disputes.

NB. If any organisation signing the Compact is found to be working outside the commitments of the Compact, they will be referred to the Compact Board for closer examination.

## **DEFINITIONS**

### **Statutory Sector**

Organisations created through Acts of Parliament whose functions are determined by the law. Local authorities, including county, district, borough, parish and town councils are democratically elected and accountable to the voters and central government. They have legal responsibilities for the social well-being, economic development, environment and health of the people they serves. Other statutory agencies, such as Health Authorities and the Probation, Police, Fire and Rescue and Ambulance Services, are not directly elected and are accountable to the appropriate Secretary of State.

### **Voluntary and Community Sector**

The Improvement and Development Agency has defined voluntary and community sector as: "Independent, voluntary and community groups that are voluntary organisations formed by people who have come together of their own free will to respond to issues regarding the quality of life of themselves or fellow citizens"

### **Voluntary and Community Organisations**

The European Commission Communication (1977), on promoting the role of voluntary organisations and foundations in Europe, identifies the following features which are shared by voluntary organizations:

- They are distinguished from informal or ad hoc, purely social or familial, groupings by some degree, however vestigial, of formal or institutional existence
- They are non-profit-distributing, that is to say they have purposes other than to reap profits for their management or members
- They are independent, in particular, of government and other public authorities, that is to say, free to govern themselves without interference according to their own rules and procedures.
- They must be managed in what is called a "disinterested" manner. The use of this term is meant to indicate not just that voluntary organisations

must not themselves be profit-seeking, but also that those who manage them ought not to do so in the hope of personal gain.

- They must be active to some degree in the public arena and their activity must be aimed, at least in part, at contributing to the public good.

**April 2009**