

Compact codes of practice

Promoting equal partnerships

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1 Introduction

- 1a The Compact for Leeds, launched in September 2003, sets out, for the first time, the responsibilities and expectations of the Leeds Initiative's public-sector partners and the voluntary, community and faith (VCF) sector have when working together.
- 1b Leeds is a city with many cultures, languages, races and faiths. The Compact for Leeds recognises, celebrates and values these differences and aims to include all groups that find themselves under-represented and excluded.
- 1c This code of practice is one of four which supports the Compact for Leeds. The others cover:
- encouraging people to use funding effectively;
 - communications and consultation; and
 - volunteering.
- 1d This code of practice refers to the work with the voluntary, community and faith sector (VCF). The Compact for Leeds recognises the many functions of the faith sector and fully supports and promotes the community activity carried out by faith groups and organisations. However, the Compact for Leeds cannot support activity that leads to promoting any particular faith.
- 1e Across Leeds there is a very wide-ranging VCF sector that plays an important role in the city. Their activities range from:
- developing the confidence of people and communities to influence and take part in local decision-making by supporting them to work together, encouraging volunteering and to become more involved;
 - providing services to the public and particular groups in the community, meeting social and individual needs;
 - supporting communities and the individuals they represent, for example through campaigning or through formal representation in decision-making forums;
 - contributing expertise and experience when developing policy;
 - providing jobs and income; and
 - delivering public and publicly-funded services.

2 The aim of this code of practice

- 2a This code of practice aims to give you, as an organisation which has signed up to the Compact for Leeds, a guide to working in equal partnership. You will have your own toolkits and guides

on working in partnership. We have not written this code of practice to replace these but to support them.

2b This code identifies principles and actions you should consider when beginning to work in partnership, whether in an informal way or as part of a more strategic formal partnership.

3 The range of partnership working

3a Partnerships come in many shapes and forms. A partnership can be seen as when two or more organisations work together for a shared goal. By working together the partners aim to achieve something they could not do alone, such as sharing skills or other resources. To do this they need a shared vision of their goals, and a way of working together to achieve this ambition. This may involve a long-term formal structure, or a shorter-term agreement.

Strategic partnerships	Task-based partnerships	Relationship partnerships
Large official partnerships set up by major institutions, for example, the Leeds Initiative.	Short-term partnerships based round a particular project or activity, for example, redeveloping a community building.	Other forms of working together to share information and support, sometimes called networks.



4 What do we mean by equal partnerships?

4a Equality is very important – it means that partners can share power and have equal influence. While true equality may be hard to achieve, all outcomes from working in partnership should benefit both sides and show mutual respect.

4b Partners come with different resources, gifts and skills. Each organisation should be valued and respected for its contribution.

5 Showing equality when working in partnership

- All partners have the opportunity to set agendas.
- Everyone can to contribute to debate.

- Everyone can influence policy.
- The partnership must represent the community it serves. The community can be made up of people belonging to a specific group who live in the same area or who share a concern.
- The partnership must include the right organisations or people that can contribute to its aims

6 Benefits of working together

By working together, partners from all sectors - public, voluntary, community, faith and private – bring many positive benefits which can improve the outcomes for everyone involved. These are:

- bringing together a variety of interests, skills, resources and experience;
- working towards shared aims that are understood by all involved;
- sharing ideas and resources;
- sharing skills and experiences;
- drawing on the talents of everyone involved;
- supporting each other;
- sharing responsibility and agreeing shared outcomes;
- securing funding;
- having the opportunity to reach wider audiences;
- developing an understanding of how different partner organisations work;
- taking action which is more likely to meet local community needs; and
- helping to create communities where people can get along with each other.

7 Barriers and challenges to a successful partnership

Partnership working has its own barriers and challenges for all the partners involved.

- Policy and law – you can be restricted by laws and your own organisational policies.
- Lack of trust and a suspicion of others – you may not be willing to let go of your own identity.
- Unequal balance of power and control – the organisations with the resources may control the agenda and debate.
- Failure to recognise different personalities and communication styles – organisations can lack respect for each other's experiences and backgrounds.
- No time to develop relationships and realistic plans - it takes time to get to know each other and to agree the way forward.

- Lack of clarity about purpose, roles, responsibility and leadership - why are partners working together, who is responsible for which actions and how can people take part?
- A lack of appropriate representation - this can be a source of tension and lead to you being reluctant to take part. Where appropriate, individuals should have the authority to act on behalf of their organisation or community.

8 How to build a successful partnership

- 8a You need to put in time and effort to build partnerships and make sure that they work. Partnerships come in many different forms and for a number of reasons, for example, a specific project in a local community or a strategic organisation developing and putting into practice a regeneration programme for a city.
- 8b No matter what level of partnership working you are developing, you should consider the following actions. Working in a less formal way involves considering only taking action that is the most important to the partnership. In a formal strategic partnership, you should aim to achieve all the actions.

All partnerships need to:

- set a clear role and purpose and agree a shared vision;
- agree on the membership and decide how members are chosen, taking care to make sure that the partners involved can all add to the agenda;
- decide on responsibilities and roles for the partners to make sure they know why they are there and who are they must answer to;
- make sure that the members represent the community by checking who needs to be included and identifying who will have an interest in the project;
- recognise power structures and the relationships between organisations and how will this affect the partnership;
- state limits and aims including your own rules, policies, deadlines and targets;

- consider how far each partner can get involved and find out what support exists for organisations - for example, a small VCF group may not have the ability to send a representative to each partnership meeting;
- set up procedures to make sure that decision-making is open and active, is confidential and sets out how you will deal with differences of opinion within the partnership;
- consider what resources each partner has available in terms of money, staff time, networks and specialist skills;
- behave professionally and build relationships, creating opportunities for partners to get to know each other, developing a culture of support, trust and respect and agreeing how to disagree;
- share power and influence - making sure that one organisation does not dominate;
- build and support skills, knowledge and confidence between partners;
- support and encourage excluded groups and individuals to take part and become leaders in their communities;
- use different ways of communicating that allow everyone to get involved and be open and honest;
- make sure that effective procedures are in place that set out the responsibility of the partnership and the actions each partner should take;
- monitor activities and progress, design a work programme and define clear tasks with real outcomes; and
- review, from time to time, how effective the partnership is, looking at strengths and weaknesses and agreeing the way forward, even if this means stopping work.

9 Things to remember

- Partnerships are not the only way to work. Sometimes letting organisations get on with what they do best might be the best thing to do.
- Think about what you can do in partnership and what partners outside the partnership should do.

For more information contact the following organisations.

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