COMPACT

getting it right together

Compact Code of Good Practice on Community Groups

The main points for a framework of partnership between the Government and the community sector are:

- Recognition by the Government and the formal voluntary sector of the distinctive nature of community groups, and how this will affect policy and practice.
- Recognition by the Government and the formal voluntary sector of the range of groups that make up the community sector, including neighbourhood-based groups and groups based on common interests or experience, such as faith, ethnic origin, refugee and asylum seeker status, arts and crafts, disability and ill health.
- A clear understanding by all concerned that community groups can play a range of different roles, including:
  - providing a voice for residents and users to public authorities and service providers;
  - building relationships and networks in neighbourhoods and communities, and providing self-help and mutual support, to build **social capital** and **community cohesion**; and
  - delivering services, often locally and informally, based on their assessment of community needs.
- A cross-sector strategy for, and commitment to, investment in **capacity building** and infrastructure that is adequate and appropriate to the needs of communities and community groups.
- An awareness by all concerned that, as community groups mainly relate to **local statutory agencies** rather than central government, Local Compacts (undertakings) which fully involve community groups in their development are vital.
- Approaches to consultation and policy appraisal which tackle the needs of community groups and find creative ways of using the experience of residents and users.
- Funding policies and procedures for community groups, which are in proportion to the scale of funding and the ability of the groups concerned to respond to the needs of the community.

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1. Aims

1.1 This code of good practice aims to promote a better understanding of the community sector, within the voluntary and community sector as a whole. By doing so, it will have a positive effect on the way the Government relates to community groups through its policies and practices in England. The code includes the main considerations that came out of a consultation exercise that the voluntary and community sector's Compact Working Group carried out, as well as best practice from within the Government. It supports the Compact on relations between the Government and the voluntary and community sector in England.

What is the Compact?

The Compact is the agreement between the Government and the voluntary and community sector to improve their relationship to benefit each other. It was published in 1998.

The Compact sets out:

- a shared vision and principles;
- promises from both sides;
- a government commitment to respect the independence of the sector; and
- systems to help make sure that the agreement works.

The Compact has been supported by four codes of good practice, covering:

- funding;
- consultation and policy appraisal;
- volunteering; and
- Black and minority ethnic (BME) voluntary and community organisations.

This code is the fifth.

The Compact Working Group and the Local Government Association also published guidelines in 2000 to help develop Local Compacts.

1.2 This code builds on a number of government commitments to support community groups and community activity. It is important to understand community groups, what they do, how they operate and how they are

different from voluntary organisations, to create and maintain the conditions and support that help community groups succeed.

1.3 Developing the relationship between the Government and the community sector will be greatly helped by recognising:

- the contribution of community groups;
- their specific problems;
- that the largest social contribution of all is made through the effort of their volunteers (who often claim no expenses); and
- that working at community level means involving them by using everyday language.

1.4 Community groups operate at local level, where relationships between the voluntary and community sector, local authorities and other statutory agencies are particularly important. Research shows that where Local Compacts are being developed or are in place, these relationships do improve, but that small community groups (including Black and minority ethnic groups) are sometimes not included in the process and the content. As a result, this code provides a resource for those involved in developing Local Compacts, and supports the Local Compact guidelines published in 2000.

1.5 This code aims to :

- provide a basis for mutual trust and acceptance of the roles and responsibilities of the Government and community groups;
- recognise the **diversity** and contribution of the community sector, and promote understanding of what community groups contribute as an important local resource in any community;
- deal with relationships between the community sector and the voluntary sector, as well as with the Government, by setting out separate agreements for all three;
- set out the policies, consultative arrangements and support that the community sector needs so it can play an effective role in building successful local communities; and
- boost access by community groups to the Compact as a whole and to Local Compacts (including by developing local codes for community groups).

2. The community sector and its importance

2.1 The community sector is made up of personal relationships, groups, networks, traditions and patterns of behaviour among people who share physical neighbourhoods, living conditions or common understandings and interests. It is the community itself taking action to get things done, although much of its activity is informal and often invisible. The community sector ranges from small informal community groups to large multi-purpose community organisations. The community sector is led by values, which include:

- being able to make decisions themselves;
- **mutuality**;
- equality;
- social justice;
- co-operation; and
- the importance of local delivery at a personal level.

2.2 The value of the community sector extends far beyond the services it delivers, and includes :

- encouraging people to take part in their communities;
- building **social capital**;
- improving local democracy; and
- strengthening the feeling of community.

2.3 Healthy, **sustainable** communities will include a range of community groups and organisations which, for members of that community, help to create a strong sense of belonging.

2.4 Some of the typical features of voluntary organisations and community groups are shown in the table on the next page. While there are no single characteristics for the community sector, many of the features on the left-hand side of the table will be shared by most community groups and organisations (although there will always be a few organisations which will not clearly fall on one side or the other). At the same time, individual organisations continue to change and some may move in either direction over time.

← Range →	
Community groups	**Voluntary organisations**
Member-led (where the community controls direction and purpose)	Staff-led
Neighbourhood, village or community of interest	Wider area
Less formal structure	More formal structure
Lower or no income	Higher income
Membership-based	Client-based
Self-help and mutual support	Support and development
Providing informal and autonomous (independent) services	Providing specialist or contracted services
Representing community interests, residents and community members	Supporting client groups

2.5 Some community groups develop into larger voluntary organisations, but many want to stay small (and keep their original purpose and nature) or have limited room to grow because of the population they serve. The community sector is made up of hundreds of thousands of these smaller groups (which make up most of the voluntary and community sector). Many of these are not funded or registered charities (although this should not be a barrier to funding them). They work locally in rural or urban communities, or with communities of interest. Sometimes, groups operate across a district or city or, more rarely, regionally or nationally.

2.6 The community sector covers the entire range of policy and services. Its activities can range from nurseries and playgroups to community centres and village halls, from tenants' associations to environmental groups, from arts and sports groups to credit unions, and from self-help groups to scout groups.

Example:

"The voluntary [and community] sector includes not just those organisations which provide services to the people who need help, advice or care; it embraces all those, formal and informal, large or small, which people set up and join because they like to play football or sing, perform plays, garden, watch birds, study the heavens or dig up the past, engage in politics, worship, or take part in morris dancing. The voluntary [and community] sector is infinitely richer and more varied than we have cared to assume, and a far more convincing and encouraging mirror of what our communities are about". ['Studying Local Voluntary Organisations – Purpose, Methods and Findings' by K T Elsdon with John Reynolds and Susan Stewart]

2.7 Faith groups represent a particular part of the community sector which is often not fully recognised. They face unique issues, which are set out in more detail in Appendix 2 'Including faith groups'.

Working within a rural context

There are particular characteristics of community groups in rural areas. They are likely:

- to be generally far smaller in size;
- to have responsibility for providing more local services than groups in urban areas; and
- to be more involved with other groups within their village or parish, but be relatively disconnected from normal networks and structures outside their immediate area.

Most rural areas also have an extra tier of local government in town and parish councils, which (within their work) carry out many of the functions of a community association or other neighbourhood forum. A good parish council will:

- represent the needs of its parish;
- consult its residents;
- promote the use of community planning exercises; and
- be well connected to wider networks and **statutory structures**.

There is guidance to local authorities and parish councils on the Quality Parishes Scheme. When using this scheme, the role of parish and town councils in developing local involvement and activity, **advocacy** and in connecting to wider networks, is vital.

Black and minority ethnic community groups

The community sector contains many small Black and minority ethic (BME) groups. Some are small not by choice but because they cannot get access to funding. They may have volunteers covering what should be paid jobs. The community and Black and minority ethnic sectors have many features in common (such as not being involved in consultation and partnerships), and there is room for links between them.

2.8 National and local government and regional structures see the community sector as an important partner because community activity is a vital building block in developing a more active and involved society. Community groups help build the relationships which allow people to get more fully involved in influencing local services and taking part in **governance** structures and partnerships. Community groups offer a way for local statutory agencies to reach into communities and listen to their views and concerns. They make a substantial contribution to social unity, health and regeneration, and are vital in transforming neighbourhoods and communities.

2.9 Sometimes, statutory organisations will use local umbrella organisations as a convenient way of getting involved in the community sector. When this is the case, it is important to make sure that they have enough contacts, resources and understanding to carry out this role. Wherever possible, they should be encouraged to get involved with community groups so they can communicate effectively with the sector.

2.10 Community groups can play many roles in their communities. They can:

- give a voice to communities and help to strengthen local democracy;
- encourage a balance between self-interest and active citizenship;
- assess the needs of their communities;
- make sure that government programme resources intended for communities actually reach them;
- be the first link in breaking the isolation of people who are socially excluded;
- build community unity through community-based events and festivals;
- provide access to the arts and to sports facilities in poorer or more remote communities; and
- promote a shared responsibility for community safety.

2.11 Providing services is an important part of the work of community groups, in a number of situations where:

- a service cannot be provided by a statutory organisation;
- a statutory organisation cannot provide a service economically because of geography, culture or limited scale;
- a service supports existing statutory services, and benefits from community involvement and management;
- a community organisation grows larger and is able to deliver statutory services under contract; or
- a quick response is necessary for an identified need.

To do this, they need access to appropriate support, as we discuss in section 5.

Examples:

Community transport can be one solution to the inability of transport providers to deliver transport solutions to rural areas because normal bus services are not practical. Community groups often run these types of services to help people in the community access facilities that would otherwise be impossible to reach.

Helping older people use information technology
Derby West Indian Community Association developed 'taster' computer classes. Funded by community education, the five-week course introduced older people to computer skills in an informal community setting.

Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs)
There are around 200 TMOs managing 84,000 council homes in England. TMOs are independent tenants' organisations whose committees go through a rigorous training programme and competence assessment, so that they can take over the management of their homes from their council landlord under formal management agreements.

3. The framework of partnership between the Government and the community sector

Joint undertakings

3.1 The Government and the community sector are committed to developing and maintaining best practice and mutual respect in their relationship. To act in line with the Compact, they both agree to do the following.

- Keep to the Compact, this and the four other codes of good practice as they apply to community groups, and expect government-funded national umbrella organisations for the community sector to show they are committed to promoting them.
- Make suitable mention of this code of good practice (along with the Compact and its other codes) as appropriate and legal, in government documents (including policy documents, press releases and answers to Parliamentary questions) and in voluntary and community sector publications.
- Develop a partnership approach to tackle the Government's strategies for communities, including promoting and sharing best practice and celebrating success.
- Promote community development based on the following definition.

"Community development is about building active and sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual respect. It is about changing power structures to remove the barriers that prevent people from participating in the issues that affect their lives. It promotes the active involvement of people through sharing power, skills, knowledge and expertise."

Strategic Framework for Community Development published by the Standing Conference for Community Development in May 2001

Government undertakings

3.2 The Government promises to do the following.

In setting the national policy framework

- Take account of the community sector's needs and role, when setting policies or procedures or carrying out a regulatory role.

- Develop policies towards communities that recognise the importance of communities of people that share a common interest or concern, as well as communities of place.
- Help create and maintain the conditions and support that help community groups to succeed.
- Make sure that regulations affecting community groups are in proportion to the size of the group, and the effects of new regulations are appropriately assessed before they are finalised.
- Involve people with first-hand experience of particular problems in developing solutions (for example, disadvantaged people, socially-excluded and hard-to-reach groups, people with disabilities and so on, through self-help or user-led groups) and give the process resources as appropriate.
- Value the work, knowledge and expertise of the community sector, including its important role in helping the Government achieve its aims.

On funding and other support

- Simplify the delivery of small-grants funding programmes for community groups, to increase access and to get as many local people as possible involved in administration and decision-making.
- Recognise the value of the contributions of volunteer time to projects, as equivalent to **match funding**.
- Take positive action to see fair treatment and equal access in applications to government funding programmes for all community groups, including faith groups and those who are not normally funded.
- Be prepared to take risks to support new ideas and business within communities, but still use public money wisely.
- Recognise the importance of **community ownership of assets**, including land and property, as a basis for community enterprise and development at local level.
- Consider how central and local government can make it easier for the resources needed to develop and maintain a community sector **infrastructure** at all levels to become available.
- Recognise and promote the need for accessible learning and development support for community groups and active community members.

- Encourage and promote local people to use suitable community buildings, such as village halls and other facilities, as much as possible.
- Encourage support for local voluntary sector infrastructure and networking, which encompasses an independent community sector.

On working in partnership

- Recognise that communities need resources for partnership working and involvement, and that this may be supported by a community development strategy progressed jointly with the local community sector.
- Make sure that community needs are identified by communities themselves, and that community groups have opportunities to manage projects and have a say in what is considered to be a successful outcome.
- Deliver race equality, including by involving Black and minority ethnic groups.
- Make sure that government employees working with communities are adequately trained to do so effectively, and that the tasks of the **Departmental Senior Official Champions** and the Voluntary and Community Sector Liaison Officers specifically include responsibilities in relation to the community sector wherever appropriate.
- Allow community groups, wherever possible, to have access to statistics held by the Office of National Statistics (on a geographical level smaller than electoral wards) so local groups can benefit from information that is relevant to the particular needs of their community.
- Include in the Government's brief to the Learning and Skills Councils a requirement to involve and support the community sector (including disability groups) in their work, including through Local Compacts.
- Recognise the contribution community groups make to Community Strategies, Local Strategic Partnerships, and in Best Value reviews and Comprehensive Performance Assessments.
- Make sure that in developing 'toolkits' for assessing whether the voluntary and community sector can get involved, as recommended by 'the cross-cutting Review of The role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery', they take account of the needs and the **infrastructure** of the community sector and of smaller community groups.

Community sector undertakings

3.3 The community sector promises to do the following.

- Accept that, as they receive funding, there is a need for monitoring and evaluating their spending, in proportion to the size of the grant.
- Encourage quality partnership working and community involvement.
- Encourage the local community to get involved and take control wherever possible.
- Tackle racism and other forms of discrimination, no matter where it comes from.
- Be clear and open as to the community or constituency a particular group speaks for.
- Where appropriate and where it is able, channel information and views to and from its members or constituency.
- Make sure that where there is a development agency specifically working with community groups, it co-operates with other appropriate voluntary sector organisations.

Voluntary sector undertakings

3.4 The voluntary sector promises to do the following.

- Play an enabling role which supports the community sector in its **diversity**.
- Consult the community sector and consider its different interests alongside those of the voluntary sector before responding to invitations for representation on partnership organisations and other local structures.
- Challenge timescales that prevent community groups getting involved.
- Recognise that the interests of community and voluntary organisations are not always the same, and so make clear which part of the sector is being represented or discussed, when necessary.
- Respond to the information, involvement, practical support and training and conference sponsorship needs of community groups, and count this as a service priority.

- Ask for the views of community groups when reviewing organisational management and looking at forward planning, and include their views when being evaluated by funders.
- Make sure that voluntary sector organisations co-operate with agencies specifically working with the community sector, where these exist.
- Respect the views of other organisations, including community groups, voluntary sector groups, government and local statutory agencies, and work constructively with them, especially when there are many viewpoints and interests.
- Acknowledge how appropriate it is for voluntary community representatives taking the chair of local networks and, in general, be aware of possible conflicts of interest.
- Encourage active community members to carry out leadership roles in voluntary and community sector networks.
- Evaluate the difference made as a result of putting this code into practice, and draw on the results to revise the code as may be mutually agreed by everyone involved.

4. Consultation and involvement

4.1 The Government and the community sector recognise consultation as being at the heart of their relationship. The Code on Consultation and Policy Appraisal (published in May 2000) aims to help the voluntary and community sector make an effective contribution to developing the policy and putting it into practice. This is supported by the Cabinet Office's Code of Practice on Written Consultation (published in November 2000).

4.2 Voluntary sector involvement in forming policies has increased since the Compact was published, but it is important that the community sector is given the same opportunity. Wider involvement of community groups in policy-making should make it easier to put this code into practice by:

- identifying how proposals may affect communities;
- demonstrating what role community groups themselves can play in putting this code into practice; and
- involving new people who might not otherwise take part.

4.3 Consulting community groups is important, particularly those who do not have the information and networking structures that come from being linked to an umbrella organisation or federation. Input from community groups who are in touch with current local opinion or strength of feeling can provide invaluable information.

> Example:
>
> Many local umbrella organisations produce directories of all known groups in their area, whether or not they are linked to the organisation. In Tameside, a directory, set up in 1988, was used to bring groups together for the first consultation on setting up a Local Compact and to bring together groups to form the Tameside Voice (Tameside Community Empowerment Network).

4.4 Also, when they are consulted, community groups need the most time to respond but often get the least because they are at the end of the communication chain. This becomes more significant as more government partnership programmes are delivered at community level. This is why the 12-week consultation period set out in the Compact Code of Good Practice on Consultation and Policy Appraisal is particularly important for community groups. Success in increasing community benefit depends considerably on securing **community ownership** and involvement (that is a situation where local residents and members of

the community feel a sense of responsibility and acceptance of proposed activities). Good consultation paves the way.

4.5 The Code on Consultation and Policy Appraisal goes some way to tackling this. Particular attention should be given to the most appropriate ways of involving smaller groups who do not get much funding, and supporting their involvement. This may include:

- extending the time for local statutory agencies to consult community groups where possible;
- giving easy access to summaries in community-friendly formats for those consultations with major implications for communities;
- providing clear and accessible summaries of consultation outcomes;
- taking consultation events and processes out to groups, especially those in remote areas, rather than expecting them to travel; and
- offering financial support for expenses for being part of the consultation process, such as financing meetings and offering payment for attendance or travel.

4.6 Working in partnership with organisations and networks that have links with different target groups and organisations can allow them to take advantage of local communities' knowledge. The media can also be used to reach groups that are not in touch with the networks.

4.7 It is also important to be aware of which groups may be relevant to a particular issue, and to find out what their constituency is and where they get their authority from. At the same time, talking with one group should not leave out others with legitimate interests.

4.8 A range of techniques that are designed to involve people can be used by government and local statutory agencies to make consultation with community groups and community involvement more effective. These include **Planning for Real**, village appraisal, participatory appraisal, visioning workshops and so on. The table below summarises a number of questions to ask when planning to consult community groups.

The main questions before consulting

- Are you hoping for your consultation to reach community level?
- If so, are you considering the different approaches you need to achieve this?
- Are you able to give notice of the consultation?
- Are there intermediary organisations you should encourage to carry out the consultation in a way that encourages as many people as possible to get involved?
- Have you budgeted for the resources needed to consult community groups?
- Have you involved the main community members in planning the consultation?
- Do all sections of the community have equal access to the consultation, or are there some barriers to involvement which could be overcome?

The main questions after consulting

- Have the knowledge, know-how and views contained in community sector responses been appropriately valued, used at policy appraisal stage and reflected in statements on the effect of the consultation?
- Have you fed back the results within an appropriate timescale?

You can find more guidance in the Cabinet Office's guide 'Viewfinder: A policy maker's guide to public involvement', published on www.cmps.gov.uk/policyhub
You can also find more information on good practice in community involvement at www.renewal.net

5. Funding and other support

5.1 Millions of people are giving their own time, resources, skills and support through community groups. This value can be boosted and made more effective by giving extra resources to groups, especially where a geographical community or community of interest does not receive enough resources. The Compact Code of Good Practice on Funding (published in 2000) aims to have a positive effect on the funding relationship between the Government and the voluntary and community sector. The Government is committed to setting up and maintaining best practice in the way it funds the voluntary and community sector, and the sector itself recognises that receiving public funds carries with it responsibilities to the funding body and to the public who benefit from the service provided.

5.2 The funding code is for the whole voluntary and community sector. However, there are specific considerations that relate particularly to the community sector. Investment for community groups is needed to develop dedicated **infrastructure** and **capacity building**, training, access to networks, information, consultation, and to fund involvement with national and local statutory agencies and the voluntary sector.

5.3 Government and local statutory funders should publish clear guidelines on their grants to community groups and jointly review these with them. In particular, government funders should make sure that conditions and monitoring requirements are:

- not a barrier to community groups;
- in proportion to the size of grant;
- broadly consistent with other funding systems;
- flexible and encourage evidence of success that is meaningful to communities (known as *creative evaluation* for example, photographs, stories or even how people make new friends while doing a project); and
- not discriminatory in terms of race, sex or other reasons, to make sure they have equal effect on all groups.

Small grants

5.4 Small grants (normally £10,000 or less) play an important role in stimulating community activity and encouraging new ideas and fresh approaches. Small grants can contribute to spending such as meeting costs, publicity, equipment and materials, training and networking opportunities, consultancy or a feasibility study, and **sessional workers**. Small grants programmes should offer a quick response where appropriate and a monitoring regime that is proportionate to the small size of the grant. There should be arrangements for one-off grants to individuals and groups who are not formally constituted and do not want to be.

5.5 The Government is committed to introducing a streamlined process for delivering its small grants. It is developing a single application form and co-ordinated conditions and procedures as part of the Small Grants Action Plan. Small-grants programmes need to be promoted through active outreach work (to reach marginalised groups) and having appropriate development support available is essential to help groups to apply.

Support for volunteers

5.6 Managing volunteers in community groups is very different from those voluntary organisations where paid members of staff are the managers. In community groups, the management committee (made up of volunteers) generally takes on this responsibility. For example, managing most community centres is the responsibility of committee members who may also be charity trustees. They supervise paid staff and volunteers and are responsible for them in the same way as a paid worker is in a more formal volunteering structure. This needs to be recognised in developing policy and programmes to support volunteering.

5.7 As with other organisations, community groups must meet statutory requirements (such as health and safety). This needs an understanding of charity law, licensing, equal opportunities and other legislation. Councils for voluntary service, rural community councils, federations of community organisations, local volunteer bureaus and other organisations have a role in delivering training locally to volunteers in community groups.

Example:

Village hall advisors in the rural community councils in each county provide a dedicated service to the volunteer management committees who run the 8900 village halls or other rural community facilities in England. With a mixture of support literature, training opportunities and individual advice, management committees are able to take on the complicated regulatory, legal and financial activities associated with running community facilities for the benefit of their community.

Other support

5.8 Practical support for community groups is especially important. Funders should have policies which allow for other kinds of support to be offered as well as grants where regulations allow. The support would include equipment, office space, a meeting place or access to training and professional services; or perhaps loans on favourable terms, where this will promote income generation and enterprise. Organisations (including those within the voluntary sector) that make charges for their services and events should consider the effect on community groups. Funders can also work together to provide a package of support and should work effectively when approached by groups that cross authority boundaries. The rights of groups to choose the agencies (if any) they receive support from should be respected.

5.9 Easy access to support is particularly important to community groups. This is shown by the situation of groups run by and for refugees and asylum seekers. They play an important role in supporting their own communities, and at the same time can make a significant contribution to **social inclusion**, **cohesion** and **integration**. To be able to access the necessary information and support, they need targeted outreach so they can be properly consulted, and funding so they can access interpretation and translation services where necessary.

Example:

The South London Tamil Welfare Group is a community organisation set up to improve the quality of life of Tamil refugees and asylum seekers in the area. They provide advisory and support services in a varied range of matters such as education, employment, health promotion, youth work, immigration and cultural activities. This group received £5000 of funding from the Home Office Refugee Community Development Fund and has used the money to develop the ability of the organisation to respond to the needs of the community.

5.10 Community groups should have the opportunity to give views on their support needs when funders are reviewing something that affects them (for example, community centres or other neighbourhood umbrella organisations). Local umbrella organisations should regularly review the priority they are giving to community groups to make sure that some are not being left out simply because the community sector has not been clearly identified. Funders should also consider this in monitoring, evaluating and assessing the level of resources for both the voluntary sector and the community sector, in the light of increased pressures from partnerships and expanding involvement in public service delivery.

The main questions for funders

- What can be done to boost access by community groups to funding?
- What facilities may be needed to explain programmes to community groups?
- How might direct communication with community groups be improved?
- Are all the questions on your application form necessary or are you asking for information you will not use?
- Are the conditions and approval system flexible, fast (in proportion to the size of the grant) and open?
- How adequate is your funding for small community groups?
- Are you offering start-up and development grants and ongoing funding?
- Do you regularly review your working definition of risk to make sure there is enough room for trying things out by using new ideas, and do you value learning from those initiatives that fail?

6. Local relations and partnership

6.1 Successful and varied community groups contribute to social unity, improve the quality of life and help build a more involved democracy. The quality of their relationship with local statutory agencies and the support they receive are important issues. This relationship, at a local level, involves a range of agencies including the local council, health service, police and other organisations which need to work together to support the development of community groups so they can succeed.

6.2 Local government modernisation is an important factor in local relationships. Best Value, community strategies and Local Strategic Partnerships are major building blocks for change. The main focus of this modernisation is the community itself. This means that an important challenge for local statutory agencies is how to involve the community effectively and imaginatively. Finding the best ways of doing this should include using the expertise and experience in the voluntary and community sector. Communities need to be properly involved. If they are, modernisation is more likely to be successful. If they are not, it may well fail.

6.3 In line with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) guidance (Best Value and Performance Improvement), local authorities should take account of a wide range of interests when assessing and designing Best Value Reviews, and should, for example, include the voluntary and community sector. Similarly, third parties, such as the voluntary and community sector, also have an important role to play in providing an external view of reviews, by questioning and challenging authorities' approach to reviews.

6.4 Success in community involvement can depend on the culture and behaviour within the Government, local authorities and other statutory agencies (at political and administrative level). Appropriate training and management support within these organisations is essential to achieve this.

Local Compacts

6.5 Local Compacts provide a framework for the relationship between the local voluntary and community sector and local statutory agencies. They offer a lever for improving relations to set up strong and supportive

partnerships with local statutory agencies based on mutual respect. Guidelines for Local Compacts were published in July 2000 by the Compact Working Group and the Local Government Association. The National Forum for Local Compacts (set up by the Compact Working Group) reviews them. It is essential that community groups, including local faith groups, are fully involved in developing Local Compacts. 'The cross-cutting Review of The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery' (September 2002) strongly supported the continuing development of Local Compacts, and it is expected that all local statutory agencies will be working towards involvement in a Local Compact by April 2004.

6.6 Involving community groups (including through networks such as local faith forums and community care alliances) in both the process and the content is vital if a Local Compact is to be successful. If this is not done, many of the interests of the sector will be overlooked and the Local Compact may not deliver community benefit. It has become established practice for the publication of Local Compacts to be followed by local codes of practice. The definition of continuing an effective Local Compact development includes producing a local community groups code (combined, if necessary, with a local BME Code).

6.7 The local statutory, voluntary and community sectors share a joint responsibility to make sure that community groups understand why a Local Compact is relevant to them. The Local Compact Guidelines recommend developing a Local Compact communications strategy, and suggest that a test to use after publishing a Local Compact is whether small community groups say it benefits them.

6.8 The benefits of a Local Compact for community groups may include:

- an increase in awareness of the nature and diversity of the community sector, and communication between local statutory agencies and community groups;
- increased working together; and
- more effective delivery and evaluation of services, and better use of resources.

6.9 To achieve these benefits, Local Compact steering groups should:

- include direct community group representation in their membership;
- target community groups in communication and consultation strategies;

- involve them in agreeing and reviewing the Local Compact; and
- link their Local Compacts with the development of other protocols on involving community groups (for example, in Best Value reviews).

6.10 An effective Local Compact will:

- recognise that community groups have funding, information and support needs that are different from larger voluntary organisations, and identify what these needs are and how they can be appropriately met;
- set out how local statutory agencies should consult, including adequate timescales, so that community groups have a real opportunity to influence local decisions;
- recognise that larger umbrella organisations do not always represent the interests of community groups, and set out how local statutory agencies will involve community groups;
- provide for open procedures and agreements in areas such as service planning, to make sure that information reaches all sections of the community;
- provide for monitoring funds managed by voluntary sector umbrella groups (for example, European funds), to make sure they reach into local communities; and
- identify appropriate systems and procedures for sorting out any conflict as quickly as possible.

Building better relationships

6.11 Local authorities should pay attention to developing the relationship with community groups and explain clearly to them why they are important to the council. Training and practice issues include understanding community groups and how elected members and staff at all levels should communicate with them and involve them.

6.12 Some **community of interest** groups feel left out from one-to-one contact because their single policy issue is not on their council's agenda. It is important for some contact to be available, because the community group may be picking up an issue that the local authority itself may have to tackle some years later. This contact helps identify issues that communities are concerned about, and can identify unexpected ways of helping them.

6.13 For some community groups, getting recognition from their local council is valued and can help them develop their work. This is further increased where local authorities already have an officer who is available to get involved with community groups struggling to find the right contact or to get a response, and to support them in building relations with the community sector.

The main questions for local authority members and officers

- Have you identified how working with local groups benefits the council?
- How well do you understand local groups and respect their independence?
- How does the council recognise the contribution of small unfunded groups?
- What would most help to build the relationship with them?
- Is there a publicly accessible local database of community groups across the authority area?

Action points for local authority Members and Officers

- Provide training jointly with the local community sector and other agencies on understanding and working with each other.
- Review the role of elected members and their relationships with community groups.
- When consulting, try to involve all communities in ways that lead to involvement and develop a greater sense of ownership (responsiblity and pride).
- Before taking decisions or during the scrutiny process, ask how proposals will affect community groups.
- Specifically tackle funding, support needs and involve community groups in Best Value reviews of voluntary and community sector and in Local Compact development work.
- Consider using some of the Audit Commission's Quality of Life indicators for community involvement to measure the council's performance, or adapt them to reflect the needs of the local area.

Partnership working

6.14 Neighbourhood renewal and similar programmes need to be lasting. Involving community groups is a way of achieving this. Community groups are a unique source of information about the communities they work in. Working with them allows local people to influence decisions and develop a greater sense of ownership of local services and programmes.

6.15 Large voluntary sector umbrella organisations should encourage wider and adequate representation. Places for small community groups should be considered whenever a new partnership is being set up, with resources to support involvement. Local Strategic Partnerships should be a model for community groups' representation and review their involvement across the whole local partnership structure by:

- reviewing existing partnerships each year for community group membership;
- making sure there is adequate financial and administrative support for involvement; and
- checking that all partners are using systems to answer for their actions.

6.16 Councils and other local statutory agencies should value working with community groups to boost outcomes on current projects and to build on local success in the future. Community groups should be made to feel fully included in partnerships, and attention needs to be given to openness, mutual respect and helping community groups take part from the start of a project.

6.17 One way of closing the gap between knowing how to work in partnership and actually doing it is to make sure that community groups always have the chance to show what they can offer (expertise, contacts, know-how and so on). The Local Compact Guidelines contain pointers on partnership and joint working.

6.18 Involving community groups in specialist forums is a good way of continuing to receive feedback on policy. There are examples across England of forums which allow community groups to get involved with each other and with local authorities. (These may be called a federation, association or a council of community organisations). They often work alongside, or as separate parts of, voluntary sector forums, as recommended by the Local Compact Guidelines. Other local statutory

agencies (such as Primary Care Trusts, other local NHS organisations, Learning and Skills Councils and so on) should consider supporting these arrangements.

6.19 Community sector involvement in designing and delivering government partnership programmes at a local level is a common aim for a range of new and existing work. This is often an effective way of involving people with first-hand experience of a problem or need in developing appropriate solutions. However, if it is to be achieved, care needs to be taken to:

- raise community groups' awareness so they are able to make sense of the many initiatives that exist;
- check that community groups have the resources for training, information and support (so they can take part in the partnership process) and, if appropriate, money up front for developing project proposals; and
- give all relevant community groups the opportunity to be involved, including Black and minority ethnic, faith and women's groups.

6.20 Tough systems for making sure that community groups can get involved in particular programmes should be built into the procedures. This will help to avoid a gap between policy intentions and outcomes. The Government will give a clear lead on this and make sure that the Government Offices also reflect this.

Relationships with Health organisations

6.21 In the area of health, community groups play a number of important roles, including service user advocates or lobbyists, service providers, and sharing information about issues such as health and fire safety. Local health and disability groups are vital sources of expertise on their specialist subjects (for example, on sickle-cell anaemia, Parkinson's disease, HIV and AIDS, improving physical access, and so on).

Advice for NHS Trust and Primary Care Trust Boards and staff

- Contact your local authority to see if a Local Compact is already set up. If one has been set up, your organisation should be a partner to this agreement. If a Local Compact has not been set up, make sure that your organisation is one of the statutory partners working with local community and voluntary organisations to develop one. The geographical boundary for a Local Compact is flexible and is set locally.
- NHS Trusts and Primary Care Trusts should take responsibility, working with the relevant local authority (or authorities), to sign up to, and work within, a Local Compact (this helps achieve the patient and public involvement targets in your annual business plan).
- Make sure that all work within the NHS duty to involve and consult (work in partnership) includes the ongoing involvement of voluntary and community groups.
- Start regular joint reviews to measure the current and possible health role and contribution of local community groups.
- Consider budgets and programmes that can fund or support (or both) community involvement to help achieve your organisation's goals.
- Identify specific posts within the NHS organisation that can monitor, encourage and support community involvement and volunteering, for example, community development, public involvement and volunteer service manager posts.

7. Using the code

7.1 This code of good practice will be used to set up and improve relations between the Government and the community sector, and to help make sure that genuine recognition is given to the diversity of the community sector and its activities. The code covers central government departments, including government offices for the regions, and 'Next Steps' Executive Agencies in England (the other home countries Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have their own Compacts). The code applies to the range of community groups and, as appropriate, across the voluntary and community sector.

7.2 There is a meeting each year between the Government and representatives of the voluntary and community sector to review how the Compact works and develops, including this code of good practice. As a result of these meetings, annual reports to Parliament are published and left in the library of the Houses of Parliament.

7.3 The Government and the voluntary and community sector should take account of the particular need to build confidence among community groups that this code will be followed. The development of action plans to put in place the good-practice guidance in this code will be the responsibility of individual departments and agencies, and the range of voluntary organisations and umbrella organisations in the community sector. If they do not follow this good practice, they must be satisfied that they have good reasons for not doing so.

7.4 The Government will actively encourage the extension of this code to other public organisations (for example Non-Departmental Public Bodies and Agencies), including those within the National Health Service and local government. These organisations will be invited to use and follow the Compact and its associated codes of good practice, and to use the Local Compact Guidelines to help them develop their relationship with the community sector.

7.5 The Compact Working Group will put the code into practice while working in partnership with strategically funded national community sector organisations and with the support of local umbrella organisations, especially federations of community organisations, councils for voluntary service, rural community councils and volunteer bureaus.

The Compact Working Group and the Government will work together to promote awareness and use of this code among everyone it is relevant to, through:

- general sharing and promotional activities and events;
- targeted campaigns;
- monitoring and reviewing how it is used; and
- including its terms in the Local Compact Guidelines (if they are revised) and in other guidance as and when appropriate.

Appendix 1

Glossary

Advocacy

Giving a voice to people's options, views and concerns.

Best Value

This replaces compulsory competitive tendering to achieve continuous improvement in the way services are delivered, taking account of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Best Value applies to all local authorities – including district councils, county councils and London boroughs, as well as authorities like the national parks and the police and fire authorities.

BME

Black and minority ethnic.

Capacity building

There are broadly four different kinds of capacity (ability):

- Organisational capacity
- Technical capacity to deliver specific services
- Infrastructure capacity
- Community capacity

  (HM Treasury 'Cross-cutting Review of the Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery' 2002)

The working definition of capacity building is:

'Empowering activity that strengthens the ability of voluntary and community organisations to build their structures, systems, people and skills so that they are better able to:

- define and achieve their objectives;
- engage in consultation and planning;
- manage projects;
- take part in partnerships, social enterprise and service delivery.
  ('Building Community Strengths' by Steve Skinner, 1997)

Civil renewal

In his comments at the launch of the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) publication 'Making Sense of Community' (January 2003), the Home Secretary defined civil renewal as a way:

"to empower people in their communities to provide the answers to our contemporary social problems."

Community

"Community is a deeply evocative and often nostalgic term that is linked to images of belonging and attachment to others within a locality - the glue that binds a society together. But there is no single model, or definitions, of community -- communities are as diverse as their members or residents, which is one of their key strengths. And any one individual may be a member of several different communities, based on geography, politics, faith, ethnicity, social interaction, and cultural interest." (Community Self-help – Policy Action Team 9 Report 1999)

Community capacity building

Activities, resources and support that strengthen the skills and abilities of people and community groups to take effective action and leading roles in developing their communities.

Community cohesion (inclusion and intergration)

A cohesive community is one where:

- there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities;
- the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued;
- those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities; and
- strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

(LGA Guidance Community Cohesion Unit)

Community leadership

The main goal of community leadership is to help local people to take responsibility for and pride in their communities, and to work together to create lively, confident and lasting communities. Community leadership is about encouraging local people to take responsibility for managing and improving their own community assets. Communities are rich in culture and history and have

excellent foundations for the future. Community leadership is all about achieving the full potential that already exists here. It is different from the community leadership role that local authorities have.

Three different aspects of leadership may be particularly important in the context of community capacity building.

- Working with, and how to involve, people.
- Developing and putting into practice projects and services, including developing and encouraging business.
- Representation, advocacy and governance, for which a strong sense of accountability is central.

Community of place and community of interest

Community has tended to be associated with two main aspects - a shared local area or geographical place, or shared interests based on some type of identity or some common issue of concern.

Community ownership

Community groups taking control and responsibility for their own assets, such as, premises, vehicles, equipment and environment.

Community self-help

“Self-help is an end in itself, as well as a means to an end. It is at the core of the empowerment of communities – whether through owning or running assets of their own, or through the acknowledgement of public authorities that local communities may be the best people to judge what is in their best interests. It is about involvement and consultation, but also about moving towards self-sufficiency it is, in its purest form, about communities shaping their own destiny. Doing, not being done to”. (Community Self-help, Policy Action Team 9 Report, 1999)

Community strategy

By law, all local authorities must prepare a community strategy to promote or improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their areas. "The preparation process will be the means by which local people and organisations can be drawn into democratic decision-making... The key to an effective community strategy will, therefore, be successful partnership working and community involvement throughout the process."

(DETR now the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), ‘Preparing Community Strategies: Draft Guidance to Local Authorities’, June 2000)

Departmental Senior Official Champions

These senior-level government officials have responsibility for overseeing how the Compact and the Treasury cross-cutting review recommendations for their departments or agencies are put into practice.

Diversity

An appreciation and respect for other people's cultures, differences and contributions in everyday life.

Governance

Governance has many meanings.

- In relation to a local area or society in general, governance refers to the process where certain people have power, authority and influence, who put into practice policies and decisions concerning public life and economic and social development. It is more than government, including interaction between formal institutions and those of civil society.
- The governance of an organisation or group has a more specific meaning and has been described as the "overall guidance, direction and supervision of the organisation", making sure that it acts in line with its constitution and legal identity. It is most often used in connection with the role of management committees or boards.

Infrastructure

Voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) that play a supporting, co-ordinating, representation, policy-making and development role for other voluntary and community organisations.

- Local VCS infrastructure organisations are sometimes called ‘second tier’ because they provide support and services to a range of ‘first-tier’ VCOs that deliver services. Regional and national infrastructure VCOs are sometimes called ‘third-tier’ because they provide support and services to second-tier VCOs.
- Infrastructure VCOs sometimes provide support and services to ‘communities of interest’ or ‘sub-sectors’ across geographical areas. Examples include the National Council for Voluntary Child Care Organisations and Age Concern and many others such as VCOs for disabled people and Black and minority ethnic (BME) communities. However, the basic definition for infrastructure is still valid for these VCOs.

LGA

Local Government Association.

Local umbrella organisations

These include councils for voluntary service, rural community councils, federations of community organisations, volunteer bureaus and similar organisations.

Local Statutory Agencies

These include local authorities (councils), the police, fire services, social services, Primary Care Trusts, NHS organisations, Learning and Skills Councils, the Inland Revenue, and parish councils.

(Although parish councils are statutory organisations, they also carry out the function of a local neighbourhood or a community forum. This is the characteristic that is relevant to using this code in governing relationships with local statutory agencies.)

LSP

Local Strategic Partnership.

An LSP will typically include local representatives from public services, local businesses, voluntary organisations, community groups and residents. The members will jointly work to deliver effective core services and set out a vision for the future.

Match funding

Funding that is found by groups to match, pound for pound, the size of a grant that has been offered by a funding organisation. It is often a requirement to qualify for grant approval.

Mutuality

Standing in relation to each other to give support for a cause or an issue.

Planning for Real

A system used by community development organisations to encourage local residents to design what they want their neighbourhood to look like and the services they would expect to see provided to give a better quality of life. (including their homes, environment, employment opportunities, personal safety, schools, transport, open space, leisure and recreation).

Sessional workers

Experts who support an organisation or group by conducting training and advice giving sessions.

Small Grants Action Plan

This is an action plan, agreed across government, to deliver government small-grant programmes cost-effectively and in a co-ordinated way, and to make sure they reach the community groups they are targeting.

Social capital

The UK Government has formally adopted the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) definition of social capital as:

"networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups."

Sustainable

Having the resources to last and develop.

Statutory structures

Central and local government departments and local statutory agencies.

Appendix 2

Including faith groups

1 This appendix looks at the fact that in our society it is not acceptable, or even justifiable, to discriminate against faith groups simply because they are faith groups.

2 Everyone involved in this code believes that faith groups need to be recognised as community groups because the many faiths form an important part of society. Reaching and working with them is part of equal opportunities and an excellent element of working towards social inclusion. Faith groups often reflect ethnic diversity. While practicing their faith, including worship, is a central activity for most faith-based groups, many are also involved in running community services, promoting community development and representing community interests.

The value of involving faith groups

3 Faith groups contribute to the whole range of community involvement, from membership of strategic organisations to small-scale project work at neighbourhood level. Including faith groups in community involvement processes can:

- provide gateways to communities who would otherwise be left out;
- boost involvement in communities; and
- help link the development of citizenship to faith traditions.

4 The Local Government Association (in its 2002 publication 'Faith and Community') says that "Local authorities will want to ensure that faith communities, as social partners, are fully included in the Compact process and feel that their voice is both heard and reflected in the partnership statement that results in the form of a Local Compact".

5 Among the typical resources that faith groups can offer are:

- local networks and knowledge of local needs;
- leadership in organising their communities to be active;
- management capacity;
- buildings that the community could use; and
- a major source for volunteers.

Funding

6 Many faith groups make a vital contribution to their local community, or to a community of interest across a town or a wider area. The Government recognises the social contribution that faith groups make as being different from just promoting religion. A failure to understand this difference could lead to faith groups being incorrectly assessed as ineligible for funding. Most faith communities will be able to show a boundary between activities that serve a wider public benefit and those that are for maintaining their own faith identity, and this may be reflected in their organisational structure. The Government and local statutory agencies should assess funding applications from faith groups for social and community activities on their merits, without discrimination. They should avoid trying to enforce terms on faith groups which are charities that are not in line with the terms of their governing documents or their charitable status.

Appendix 3

How this code was produced

1 One hundred community groups (significantly, half of them were BME) said in a survey carried out in 2000 what they most wanted to go into this code. A subgroup with members nominated by community groups and organisations working with them was set up under the Compact Working Group in 2001 to develop these important issues into a consultation draft. As well as approving the draft code and overseeing the consultation, the subgroup has also been responsible for revising the draft in the light of the consultation, negotiation with the Government to agree the text for publication, and developing the strategy for taking the code forward.

2 A four-month consultation in 2001 raised the number of organisations involved in producing the code to 289. Three-quarters of them supported the undertakings by everyone involved in the code.

3 This consultation proved the most difficult of all the Compact codes, not only because community groups are the largest and hardest part of the voluntary and community sector to reach but also because the range of views reflects their diversity. The consultation produced many good ideas which were used in substantially amending the draft, especially for improving the wording and format.

4 As well as getting acceptance from community groups, the consultation also aimed to involve local public organisations, partnerships, Local Compact steering groups, and local development agencies, but with less success. This emphasises the importance of sharing the code across the public, voluntary and community sectors.

5 The subgroup elected Barbara Lowndes (Tameside Association of Community Organisations) as Chair and Mike Sherriff (Standing Conference for Community Development) as Vice-Chair.

The following were members before the code was published.

- Roger Smith (ADEPT Community Development Agency Ltd)
- Ben Hughes (British Association of Settlements and Social Action Centres)
- Rachel Adamson and Zoe Suffield (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers)

- Pauline Main (Churches Together in England)
- Clive Martin (Clinks)
- Gabriel Chanan (Community Development Foundation)
- David Tyler (Community Matters)
- Nurjahan Ali (Faith in the Future)
- Janice Owens (High Trees Community Development Trust)
- Carmel Fanconi (Okehampton and District Council for Voluntary Services)
- Margaret Lochrie (Pre-school Learning Alliance)
- Maureen McCann (Refugee Council)
- Tony Ogefere (SIRI)
- Carl Allen (Sofala)
- Barbara Bacon (Sunnyclough Community Centre Project)
- Leonie Lewis (United Synagogues)
- Roger Fox (Voluntary Arts Network)

Observers from national and local government who took part in subgroup meetings were from :

- Department of Culture, Media and Sport;
- Department for Education and Skills;
- Department of Health;
- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (including the Inner Cities Religious Council);
- Home Office;
- Association of London Government; and
- Local Government Association.

Further Information and Contact Details

For copies of all the Codes of Good Practice (including this one), the Compact or for further information, please contact:

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