



Foreword by Councillor Maria Crompton Cabinet Member for Safer Communities and Mark Davis Chief Executive of Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations (SCVO):

The Sandwell Compact provides a framework by which Sandwell Council and the diverse range of voluntary groups, charities, social enterprises and not-for-profit businesses that make up Sandwell's Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) can work together effectively to achieve Vision 2030.

As funding for services and other resources become more stretched, there is a greater need to create links with, grow and make the most of our local assets, to find new ways of supporting people and nurturing self-reliance, and to extend the reach of services to those who are particularly marginalised or disadvantaged. A healthy and productive relationship between the Council and VCS organisations which makes the most of what Sandwell has to offer gives us reason to feel confident about improving the prospects and quality of life for residents and meeting many of the challenges facing the borough.

In practice, relationships between the Council and VCS organisations happen at many levels and in many different places – from strategic conversations at formal partnership boards to funding arrangements, to frontline activity at neighbourhood level and everything in-between. In all settings, the Compact goes beyond our important joint statement of intent, to provide us with a picture of what effective collaboration looks like and how we might address and resolve differences when one or other partner falls short of the other's expectations.

All Council members and employees, community members, volunteers and VCS employees are invited to use this Compact and its Codes of Practice. We would like to hear from you if your experience of partnership practice is not reflecting the aims of this shared Compact and we are equally keen to get feedback when the Compact is used effectively to improve working together.

Section 1 - Purpose of the Compact

The Compact is an agreement between Sandwell's voluntary and community sector (VCS) and Sandwell Council. By setting out the principles governing the relationship between the two sectors, the Compact aims to set the tone of their relationship, supporting them to work together to do good things for the people of Sandwell.

VCS organisations are a very diverse collection of non-governmental and value-driven organisations that deliver significant public services and community benefits in Sandwell. Whilst the Compact is not a legally binding document it is a statement of intent and aspiration.

The intended outcomes of the Sandwell Compact are:

- stronger partnerships between the VCS and statutory bodies
- better services in Sandwell that meet local needs
- making the best use of resources
- improved communication between the VCS and statutory sector

Section 2 - Shared Vision

The Statutory Sector and VCS recognise their interdependence and reliance on each other to achieve the Sandwell 2030 vision.

Section 3 - Shared Values and Principles

All partners agree that the following values and principles will govern our relationships:

- **Partnership working:** All partners have distinct but complementary roles in the development and delivery of public policy and local services. Partnership working adds value and helps to create shared aims and objectives.
- **Openness, honesty and respect:** All partners will treat one another with generosity of spirit, respect, openness, honesty and transparency and will work to build trust between organisations.
- **Community cohesion:** All partners will promote collaboration and bridge-building between different groups and communities.
- **Accessibility:** Services will be accessible to people who want to use them. All partners will endeavour to ensure that their services meet the needs of their current and future customers.
- **Equality:** All partners will treat their customers, employees and volunteers fairly to ensure that they do not receive less favourable treatment on any grounds, which cannot be shown to be justified.
- **Accountability:** All partners are open and accountable to each other, no hidden agendas.
- **Celebrating Independence:** The independence of the council, other statutory partners and voluntary and community organisations is a strength.

- **Interdependence:** The statutory and the voluntary and community sectors are interdependent - neither can fully function without the other.
- **Learning:** All partners aspire to be learning organisations in order to deliver better services to end users, learning from experience of what works and using skilled staff that have been properly trained.
- **Volunteering:** All partners recognise the value of volunteering as an important expression of citizenship and essential to civil renewal. Volunteering builds skills and experience, enhances employability, promotes social inclusion and contributes to the building of community networks and participation; high levels of volunteering are therefore an indication of healthy and active communities.

Section 4 - Undertakings

4(i) Stronger Partnerships between VCS and Statutory bodies happen when:

The VCS

- operates through open and accountable organisations
- adheres to principles of good governance
- ensures that policy positions are derived from the real views of all stakeholders (users, members, the community etc)
- challenges, campaigns and comments on policy regardless of any financial or other relationship which may exist
- ensures that they uphold their independence, and remain focused on their mission, irrespective of any relationship with the statutory sector

The Statutory Sector

- recognises the importance of the VCS and respects its independence
- recognises the right of the VCS to challenge, campaign and comment on policy regardless of any financial or other relationship which may exist

4(ii) Better services in Sandwell that meet local needs are delivered when:

The VCS

- seeks the views of service users, beneficiaries, members, volunteers and trustees, where possible, when making representation to the statutory sector. Is clear on who is being represented, in what capacity and on what basis that representation is being made
- helps to identify need and ways of meeting that need

The Statutory Sector

- works with the VCS to develop policies and design services from the earliest stages of development, ensuring those likely to have a view are involved from the beginning
- uses open and transparent commissioning and procurement processes
- involves the VCS in the identification of need

4(iii) Best use is made of resources when:

All partners:

- comply with the Compact Funding Code of Practice
- recognise the importance of local shared partnership priorities
- have a clear understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities
- have a clear understanding of each other's expectations in relation to funding, service specifications, payment arrangements, and monitoring and reporting requirements, from the start of a funding relationship
- have a commitment to focus on impact and outcome measurement
- have a willingness to take and share risks
- have a continued dialogue and are flexible throughout the course of the funding relationship
- have a willingness to share and resolve problems
- learn from experience and share good practice
- have a commitment to maximise resources coming into Sandwell

The VCS

- demonstrates value for money, quality, community impact and social value

The Statutory Sector

- uses the most appropriate ways of funding or supporting VCS organisations. These methods will include grants, contracts, training, use of premises or other support
- recognises the added value of the voluntary contributions (goodwill, time and money) from the VCS to the positive quality of life in Sandwell

4(iv) Improved communication between the VCS and statutory sector happens when:

All partners

- are clear about the purpose of communication; informing (a one-way process), a dialogue (a two-way process) or consulting (where there is an opportunity to shape a decision)
- are proactive in informing, communicating with, and consulting with each other
- communicate in a manner that will ensure an honest exchange of information and views

The Statutory Sector

- seeks guidance from local infrastructure organisations (SCVO or SCIPS) on how to communicate effectively with the VCS

Section 5 - Codes of Practice

Compact codes of practice have been produced to provide more detail in the following areas:

Funding
Volunteering
Capacity Building

Section 6 - Resolution of Disagreements

In working together, it is inevitable that from time to time disagreements will arise. Disagreements are an opportunity for constructive challenge, improvements in behaviour and change to take place.

Wherever possible such disagreements should be settled by the immediate parties involved. The Compact principles of respect, openness and honesty will help disagreements to be resolved professionally and speedily.

The following procedure on the resolution of disagreements is for Compact issues only. It will not alter the complaints procedures of individual organisations.

- **Stage 1: Talk to each other.** Involve a third party such as SCVO or the Council's Voluntary Sector policy officer if you wish. Keep a written record of discussions. If this does not resolve the issue, please move to stage 2.
- **Stage 2: Submit a written enquiry or complaint.** Involve a third party such as SCVO or the Council's Voluntary Sector policy officer. Request a written response within 21 days. If this does not resolve the issue, please move to Stage 3.

- Stage 3: SCVO and the Council's Voluntary Sector policy officer to receive details of the disagreement and call a meeting of relevant people to discuss the issues further. If this does not resolve the issue, please move to Stage 4.
- Stage 4: Independent mediation from an appropriate source.

Ombudsman for Local Government – www.lgo.org.uk - free service

Section 7 – Signatories to the Compact

David Stevens Chief Executive of Sandwell Council

Mark Davis Chief Executive of SCVO

Compact refresh date: September 2019. Review date: 2022