

Warwickshire Compact

working together better together

Introduction

The Warwickshire Compact provides a set of good practice standards to guide relationships between Warwickshire's public agencies and voluntary and community organisations. We are working together to achieve:

1. A strong, diverse and independent voluntary and community sector
2. An effective and transparent design and development of policies, plans and services
3. Responsive and high quality services
4. Clear arrangements for managing change
5. An equal and fair society

Warwickshire's public and voluntary agencies aim to:

- work together in the spirit of constructive partnership, openness, transparency and honesty
- work across organisations and sectors flexibly and imaginatively in order to achieve the best services and outcomes for our communities
- encourage volunteering, community action and social entrepreneurship
- promote equality, diversity and social cohesion and challenge discrimination
- recognise, support and celebrate the contribution of volunteers
- work in good faith to implement the Warwickshire Compact and any associated guidance
- address any disagreements between agencies through liaison and discussion before recourse to other avenues
- work towards wide ownership and understanding of the Compact across our workforces, volunteers and members.

Warwickshire's public agencies value the contribution and diversity of the local voluntary and community sector and recognise that voluntary and community sector organisations:

- are a source of expertise on many issues
- can provide a voice for communities of interest
- bring considerable independent resources in support of the delivery of local priorities
- can provide a mechanism for communities to get together and address their own issues
- are entitled to comment on, challenge and campaign against the policies and practices of public agencies
- may require support and stability to achieve their aspirations.

Warwickshire's voluntary and community sector organisations recognise and respect the mandate of statutory organisations to make decisions and to prioritise the use of resources.

Further information on the Compact will be available at www.warwickshirecompact.org.uk including detailed good practice guidance, case studies, action plans and a protocol for dealing with disputes.

All local public agencies will nominate a lead officer who has the responsibility for the implementation of the Compact and these will be published at www.warwickshirecompact.org.uk

The Warwickshire Compact Commitments

1. A strong, diverse and independent voluntary and community sector

Undertakings for public agencies:

- 1.1 Respect and uphold the independence of voluntary and community organisations, including their right to campaign, regardless of any relationship, financial or otherwise, which may exist.
- 1.2 Endeavour to explore opportunities where voluntary and community organisations can support the delivery of local priorities and services and to ensure that organisations are resourced reasonably and fairly where they are supporting the delivery of public services.
- 1.3 Recognise the need to resource services to assist front-line voluntary and community organisations with their capacity and capability to deliver positive outcomes and to access, deliver and manage public sector contracts.
- 1.4 Make data and information more accessible to help voluntary and community organisations challenge existing provision of services, access new markets and hold public agencies to account.
- 1.5 Consider a range of ways to support voluntary and community organisations, including the transfer of public assets into community ownership.
- 1.6 Encourage feedback from a range of sources on the effectiveness of local partnership working between public agencies and voluntary and community organisations.

Undertakings for voluntary and community organisations:

- 1.7 Aim to be transparent and open about plans and activities.
- 1.8 When campaigning or advocating, ensure that robust evidence is provided, including information about the source and range of people and communities represented.
- 1.9 Aim to ensure their independence is upheld, focusing on the cause represented, regardless of any relationship they have with local public agencies, financial or otherwise.
- 1.10 Voluntary sector support services will:
 - work in partnership with public agencies to ensure information is widely distributed to voluntary and community organisations and targeted where appropriate
 - work collaboratively with other voluntary sector support services to ensure the best use of resources
 - work at all times in the best interests of front-line voluntary and community organisations
 - ensure, wherever possible, that responses to consultations are informed by the views of front-line voluntary and community organisations and that front-line organisations have the opportunity to comment directly themselves
 - provide opportunities for liaison between public agencies and voluntary organisations
 - ensure the representation of voluntary and community sector interests on strategic partnerships
 - provide notification in advance of publishing material critical of any local public agency
 - provide support to front-line voluntary organisations to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.

2 An effective and transparent design and development of policies, plans and services

Undertakings for public agencies:

2.1 Involve voluntary and community organisations in developing and delivering plans to address local priorities, from neighbourhood action planning through to County-wide strategies, and ensure voluntary sector interests are represented on significant partnerships.

2.2 Ensure information on policies, consultations, strategies and partnerships is easily accessible to all and provide notification of any planned changes at an early stage.

2.3 Consider the social impact that may result from policy and service development, including the implications for voluntary and community organisations, and the impact upon efforts to inspire social action and to empower communities.

2.4 Work with voluntary and community organisations from the earliest stage possible to plan any changes to services or policies and to assess the possible implications and impact of these changes. Ensure that those likely to have a view are involved from the start and aim to remove any barriers that may prevent organisations from contributing.

2.5 Aim to consult with relevant community interest groups prior to making any significant changes to policies or services.

2.6 Where possible give early notice of consultations, allowing enough time for voluntary and community organisations to involve their service users, beneficiaries, members, volunteers and trustees in preparing responses. Where it is appropriate and enables meaningful engagement, conduct 12 week formal written consultations with clear explanations and rationale for shorter time-frames or a more informal approach.

2.7 Aim to provide feedback to explain how respondents have influenced the design and development of policies and services, including where respondents' views have not been acted upon.

Undertakings for voluntary and community organisations:

2.8 Aim to promote and respond to local consultations.

2.9 Seek the views of service users, clients, beneficiaries, members, volunteers and trustees when responding to consultations or making representation to public agencies and be clear about who is being represented, in what capacity and on what basis that representation is being made.

2.10 When putting forward ideas, focus on evidence-based solutions with clear proposals for positive outcomes.

3. Responsive and high-quality services

Undertakings for public agencies:

- 3.1 Ensure information is widely available for voluntary and community organisations around funding and procurement opportunities and any related events.
- 3.2 Seek ideas from voluntary and community organisations around different models of delivering services and meeting community priorities.
- 3.3 Work to remove barriers that might prevent smaller organisations becoming involved in delivering services where they are best placed to deliver the desired outcomes.
- 3.4 Provide a clear rationale for all funding decisions.
- 3.5 Commit to multi-year funding where appropriate and where it adds value for money. The funding term should reflect the time it will take to deliver the outcome. If such an arrangement is not possible or desirable, public agencies will explain the reason for the decision.
- 3.6 Consider joining up funding and monitoring arrangements where more than one agency is funding the same service.
- 3.7 Ensure there are well-managed and transparent application and tendering processes which are proportionate to the desired objectives and outcomes.
- 3.8 Aim to inform organisations of funding decisions at least 3 months before the expected start date.
- 3.9 Discuss and agree how outcomes, including the social, environmental or economic value, will be monitored before a contract or funding agreement is made.
- 3.10 Ensure that monitoring and reporting is relevant and proportionate to the nature and size of the opportunity and is clear about what information is being asked for, why and how it will be used.
- 3.11 Recognise that organisational overheads and costs associated with training and volunteer involvement are legitimate costs in delivering services and projects.
- 3.12 Discuss risks before the start of any contractual relationship and aim to allocate risks to the organisation(s) best equipped to manage them.
- 3.13 Public agencies will endeavour to ensure all bodies distributing funds on behalf of public agencies adhere to the commitments in this Compact. This includes the relationship with prime contractors and their supply chains.
- 3.14 Ensure that the widest possible range of organisations can be involved in the provision of services through appropriate funding and financing models, including payment in advance of expenditure where this is appropriate. Payment schedules should be agreed in advance where appropriate and payment should be made promptly on receipt of correct and timely invoices.

Undertakings for voluntary and community organisations:

3.15 Ensure robust governance arrangements so that issues are addressed early and, where appropriate, jointly with funders and funders are given early notice of significant changes in circumstances.

3.16 Aim to provide three months notice of any planned changes or withdrawals from funding agreements.

3.17 Be open and transparent in reporting. Recognise that monitoring, whether internal or external, and measuring the impact of services is an aspect of good management practice.

3.18 Help facilitate feedback from service users and communities to public agencies to help meet priorities and improve services. Seek to involve service users, beneficiaries and volunteers wherever possible in developing, managing and monitoring activities and services.

3.19 Recognise that public agencies can legitimately expect voluntary and community organisations to give public recognition of funding.

4. Clear arrangements for managing change

Undertakings for public agencies:

4.1 Before making a decision to end a financial relationship for reasons of poor performance, seek to agree an improvement plan with the provider.

4.2 Assess the impact on beneficiaries, service users and volunteers before deciding to reduce or end funding.

4.3 Where there are restrictions or changes to future resources, public agencies will discuss with voluntary and community organisations the potential implications as early as possible, to give organisations the opportunity to respond and will consider the response fully before making a final decision.

4.4 Aim to give a minimum of three months notice in writing when changing or ending a funding relationship or other support, apart from in exceptional circumstances, and provide a clear rationale for why the decision has been taken.

Undertakings for voluntary and community organisations:

4.5 Plan for the end of funding to reduce any potential negative impact on beneficiaries and the organisation.

4.6 Contribute positively to any relevant reviews of local public services. Advise local public agencies on the social, environmental or economic impact of potential changes and on ways to minimise their effects on people in vulnerable situations.

5. An equal and fair society

Undertakings for the public sector:

5.1 Work with voluntary and community organisations that represent, support or provide services to people specifically protected by legislation and other under-represented and disadvantaged groups. Understand the specific needs of these groups by actively seeking the views of service users and clients. Take these views into account, including assessing impact, when designing and implementing policies, plans and services.

Undertakings for voluntary and community organisations:

5.2 Wherever possible, support public agencies to deliver their duties with regard to equalities and fairness.

Undertakings for all agencies:

5.3 Take practical action to tackle unlawful discrimination, advance equality, ensure a voice for under-represented and disadvantaged groups and build strong communities.

5.4 All agencies will have clear procedures in place to safeguard children and vulnerable adults, to promote equal opportunities and to minimise negative environmental impact.

Breach process

If you believe that your organisation has been dealt with by any public agency in a way that breaches the Compact, please contact Warwickshire Community And Voluntary Action (WCAVA) or Voluntary Action Stratford-on-Avon District (VASA) for advice in the first instance. All enquiries will be treated confidentially.

WCAVA: compact@wcava.org.uk
024 7637 1831

VASA: info@vasa.org.uk
01789 298115

Details of Compact Champions within Warwickshire's public agencies are listed on the Warwickshire Compact website: www.warwickshirecompact.org.uk

Contact details correct at the time of publication.