



Tameside Local Compact

(Second Edition published 2004)

A COMPACT FOR TAMESIDE

1. Introduction

In 1998 the government published a "Compact on Relations between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in England" and invited local authorities to adopt a local compact along similar lines.

The Tameside Local Compact provides a basis for a working relationship between the Voluntary and Community Sector in Tameside (the Sector) and statutory agencies in Tameside . It is intended to be a living document that will be monitored and reviewed annually to take into account the rapidly changing world in which we live.

This Compact was agreed following initial discussions between representatives of the Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council (the Council) and the Sector and was the first step in an ongoing process. The process is now open to other public bodies in Tameside to become partners

2. Status of the Compact

The Compact has been prepared with the help of a wide range of individuals and organisations and is therefore independent of the policy of any particular body.

Whilst not legally binding the Compact has been endorsed by the Sector, the Council and a number of other statutory agencies as a general framework to guide and enhance the relationship between them. It also provides a framework for developing the closer strategic and operational working arrangements in an open and accountable way and to enhance collaboration between the partners.

The partners agree to work within the spirit of the Compact in their relationship with each other and to inform each other if they feel that it has not been adhered to.

3. Purpose of the Compact

At a workshop held on February 10th 2001 attended by representatives of the Sector and the Council the following statement was agreed: -

“The Tameside Compact will enable Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector to work jointly, with mutual respect and understanding, in a common effort to promote the well-being of all the people of Tameside”

Other statutory agencies signing up to the Compact endorse this joint statement.

4. Shared vision

The Sector, the Council and other statutory agencies will work together to support and represent the views and needs of the Tameside community. They are committed to a shared undertaking to maintain and improve the quality of life of all individuals and communities in Tameside.

5. Joint statement

The Sector and Statutory Agencies in Tameside agree that in order to promote the best for people of Tameside there needs to be increasing co-operation between all the organisations which help to promote the well being of the people living in the Borough. There is already a strong tradition of collaboration between the Council and the Sector with good joint working and development in a number of areas. However, in order to increase the effectiveness of the partnership, it is felt that there needs to be an over-arching policy and practice framework within which such collaboration can take place.

The Council values the important and unique part that that the Sector plays in the life of the Borough and believes that it has a vital role to play in helping the Council to achieve the aims of the Tameside Community Plan. It recognises that the Sector promotes innovation, encourages volunteering, and strengthens the voice of its members and users as well as local people in the planning and delivery of services. In addition it plays an important part in the economic and cultural life of the Borough.

The Sector recognises that in order to achieve their aims they need to work in close collaboration with a number of different partners and sees the Council as a lead partner. Whilst welcoming the financial and other support the Council gives to many of the organisations in

Tameside they do not see the Council purely as a source of funding. The Sector feels that it is important to work more closely with the Council in terms of its responsibilities for planning and delivering services and its power to promote the well being of the people of the Borough.

Statutory agencies and the Sector believe that to achieve their aims, and to truly serve the people of Tameside, continual and close co-operation not only needs to be maintained but also improved.

Statutory agencies and the Sector formally acknowledge that they have shared objectives and will work together to achieve a Community Development Strategy. Whilst they respect the differences in accountability, history and processes they also recognise that at times there may be disagreement between the parties and therefore a mediation procedure has been developed and is outlined in Section 10. However, the Compact is seen as a major step towards developing the best possible community infrastructure for the people of Tameside.

6. Shared principles and values

The Sector and Statutory agencies jointly agree that:

- they need to work in partnership to achieve their joint aims with open and transparent communication and decision making systems
- they have distinct but complementary roles in the development and delivery of public policy and services
- they should strive for integrity , accountability , openness and honesty in all their dealings
- there is great value in working together towards common aims and objectives
- many groups and communities, particularly small community organisations, such as self-help, faith and black and minority ethnic groups, can be excluded from decision making structures and there is a need to make special efforts to include such groups
- information about any organisation or council department used in the preparation of reports, particularly for funding bids, must be accurate and the information should be agreed by the parties concerned before the information is used or quoted
- there is a need for support for the Sector to enable it to be an "active" partner

The Sector recognises that:

- working in partnership with the Council enhances their ability to meet their own objectives, and that partnership agreements impose a duty on all parties to contribute appropriately and to honour any joint agreements
- it is important to maintain high standards of governance, conduct and accountability
- members and service users need to be involved to the greatest possible extent in the development and management of their organisation and its services
- organisations have a responsibility to develop systems of accountability to funders, members and users of their services and in accordance with charity and other laws
- organisations need to inform and consult their members, service users and other relevant voluntary and community organisations as far as is possible when fulfilling a representative role
- there is a need to advocate policies which ensure and promote equality of opportunity in employment practice, in the involvement of volunteers and in service provision

Statutory agencies recognise:

- the independence and diversity of the Sector and see this as fundamental to the social and economic well being and development of the Borough
- that the work of voluntary and community organisations, and the contribution of individual volunteers, adds intrinsic value to their work
- that voluntary and community organisations are entitled to exercise their right to advocate and campaign for themselves and their clients or users in order to advance their aims provided that they work within the law
- that they have a significant role to play in supporting the Sector and recognise the added value that such support can bring;
- that they need to support the maintenance and development of the infrastructure needed to sustain a flourishing voluntary and community sector;
- that they need to support systems which enable the wide range and diversity of groups, interests and views within the voluntary and community sector to be heard;
- that they need to ensure that wherever possible they maintain a

- consistency of approach and good practice in their dealings with the Sector;
- that they will consult appropriately with the relevant parts of the Sector when developing policies and strategies which will affect them.

Key areas

These principles will apply in all the dealings between the members of the partnership and will be set out in specific Codes of Conduct in such areas as:

- Consultation
- Funding
- Volunteering
- Community groups
- Black and minority ethnic organisations

These codes will be developed in full co-operation between the partners over the next two years. The principles which will underpin these codes are given in sections 7, 8 and 9.

7. Consultation and Communication

These following principles will be adhered to within the Sector itself as well as between the Sector and Statutory agencies:

- Consultation processes will be clear, open and accessible to all groups particularly those with special needs
- The aims and final decision-making process following consultation should be clear from the outset
- Consultation should be as timely as possible to allow proper debate and input into decision-making processes
- Feedback on final decisions and why these were made should be given to the Sector after consultation has occurred
- All parties have a responsibility to ensure that consultation processes are as inclusive as possible
- Effective communication channels should exist between each service area of Statutory agencies and the appropriate parts of the Sector
- Effective representational and communication systems should exist between all parts of the Sector
- There should be a named officer within each service area of Statutory agencies responsible for liaison with the Sector

8. Funding

These principles apply to all funding that Statutory agencies provide for the Sector either financially or in kind. Under normal tendering procedures where Statutory agencies are purchasing a specific service from an organisation these arrangements will be dealt with as part of standard contracting procedures.

Statutory agencies recognise: -

- the importance of their role as a funder for the Sector
- that the funding that they provide should have a clear link to overall priorities for Tameside
- that they should state clearly what particular areas of activity they will fund and why
- that they should specify over what period funding is granted
- that they should provide clear guidance for the Sector on the grant application, decision-making and monitoring processes
- that they should have monitoring arrangements for grants awarded which are commensurate with the level of funding.

The Sector recognises

- the importance of the support given by Statutory agencies to the Sector, whilst acknowledging that the sector should maximise the funding it can gain from other sources
- that any voluntary or community organisation in receipt of funding from Statutory agencies should ensure that it meets any accountability obligations with regard to the way public money is spent.

9. Tameside Strategic Partnership

The Sector and Statutory agencies will work together to develop a true partnership based on mutual respect and understanding of their different responsibilities and priorities. The Sector and Statutory agencies: -

- are committed to co-operating on matters such as strategic planning, policy development and new service development
- will work together to develop, monitor and regularly review guidelines to increase the effectiveness of the partnership
- recognise that at times there may be conflicting interests but that this should not undermine the overarching principles of

the partnership

- recognise that no one voluntary or community organisation can truly represent the views of the whole of the Sector and therefore shall ensure that, as far as is feasible, appropriate consultation will take place with all relevant organisations
- recognise that there may be differing priorities and views within the Sector and that these differences should be openly aired and heard
- will set up an ongoing monitoring, review and evaluation process

10. Resolution of Disputes

The Tameside Compact sets out a general framework for enhancing the relationship between statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sectors. As far as possible, disagreements over the application of that framework should be resolved between the parties. The aim of the Compact is to build up trust and collaboration; in order to uphold this principle, it is expected that all possible informal routes for resolving disagreements arising in relation to the implementation of the Compact will be explored and exhausted as a first step.

In the event that matters remain unresolved in this way, and would benefit from the intervention of a third party, the Compact Group has established a mediation process. Advice on whether an issue is appropriate for consideration through this process will be provided by T3SC, and decisions on this will be taken by the Compact Group, who have established a cross-sector Mediation Panel. Further details about the Mediation process can be obtained from one of the contact points provided (see appendix).

As a last resort, and where the matters under consideration constitute maladministration, a complaint may be made to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration in the usual way.

Appendix One **Mediation Process**

Opening Statement

Tameside Compact Group have developed a Mediation Process which is specific to the needs of Tameside. It is *not* a Complaints Procedure, and *is* intended to be seen and used as a tool which has the potential to improve joint working and mutual understanding between agencies and sectors. It is based on principles of impartiality, fairness and equal opportunities.

The process begins with an informal stage, and only moves to formal procedures as a last resort. The Compact Group recognises that the purpose of the Compact can best be fulfilled where the relationships between agencies and sectors are based on a genuine desire to reach common ground, even when difficulties occur.

The Mediation process should be seen as an opportunity to draw out some of the lessons which are implicit in managing the relationships within Tameside, and learn from them.

Stage One

In the first instance, any issues which are referred for mediation by all sectors will be passed to T3SC for advice on whether this is a Compact issue.

A Compact issue is defined as a situation in which there is a clear breach of the agreed processes and procedures as set out in the Tameside Compact and its associated Codes of Practice.

T3SC will encourage informal resolution, and will offer support in achieving this. If this is not a Compact issue, the party(ies) will be advised on an appropriate means of redress. If this is a Compact issue, and cannot be resolved at this stage, Stage Two of the process begins.

Stage Two

Stage Two begins with the issue being referred to a Panel of 4 people drawn from the current membership of the Compact Group. The Panel will include *at least* 1 person each from the statutory and third sectors.

The Panel will consider the issue, and will advise firstly on whether they agree that this is a Compact issue. If it is not, they will signpost the party(ies) to an appropriate mechanism to deal with the issue. If it is a Compact issue, they will encourage an informal resolution, and this will be reported back to the Compact Group. Only when all other efforts have been exhausted, Stage 3 – the formal process – will begin.

Stage Three

A Panel of 5 people drawn from the current membership of the Compact Group will convene to consider the issue. The Terms of Reference for the Panel are set out in the following Section. This is the formal stage of the process; the Panel will receive a written outline of the issue(s), and will seek to meet with, and hear evidence from, both/all parties to the dispute in order to ensure that a fair and balanced process takes place.

Outcomes of Mediation

Learning will be drawn from the outcomes of the mediation process, and will be reviewed annually. The review will focus on identifying improvements in the relationships between agencies and sectors in Tameside, and will identify and highlight patterns of behaviour.

If any partner agency, by clear consensus of the Compact Group, consistently fails to adhere to the Tameside Compact and its associated Codes, the Compact Group will consider the implications for the sectors within Tameside as a whole and will take appropriate action.

Terms of Reference for Mediation Panel

Membership

The Panel will be made up of 5 people, of which:

- 2 will be from the third sector
- 2 from the statutory sector
- 1 from the corporate (private) sector.

The Compact Group will appoint 2 standing members (1 each from the third sector and statutory sector), and these - together with 3 additional members to be drawn from the current membership of the Compact Group – will form the membership of each Panel.

Remit

The Mediation Panel can only deal with issues which are referred through the mediation process, and which are clearly related to the implementation of Tameside Compact and its associated Codes of Practice.

Before a Panel is convened, clear evidence that the issue has progressed through Stages One and Two of the process must be demonstrated.

Accountability

The Mediation Panel is drawn from and accountable to the Compact Group.

Responsibilities

The Panel is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the most appropriate means of dealing with the issues are advised to the parties involved
- Ensuring that the process is fair, impartial and transparent
- Maintaining confidentiality as appropriate
- Implementing equal opportunities in all processes and procedures
- Working towards consensus in decision making
- Ensuring that the outcomes of the process are communicated to the parties involved and to the Compact Group
- Ensuring that any learning is drawn out from the outcomes of mediation, and included in the Annual Review of the Compact

Process

The Panel will:

- Receive a written briefing, outlining the nature of the issues involved
- Seek to meet with both parties separately in order to clarify the Panel's understanding of the issues
- Seek to bring the parties together for a joint discussion in order to develop better understanding and improved relationships between the two parties
- Consider the evidence and reach a decision (by consensus) on whether the issue constitutes a breach of the Tameside Compact and its Codes
- Produce a written recommendation to which both parties will be invited to sign up.

Contact:

Tameside Third Sector Coalition (T3SC)
St Michaels Court
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Ashton under Lyne
OL6 6XN

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Tameside Local Compact

At a meeting of the Board /Committee held on ___/___/2004, it was agreed that our organisation wishes to demonstrate its support and commitment to Tameside Local Compact.

The Board/Committee accept the principles and values enshrined in the document, and we undertake to work within the spirit of the Compact for the benefit of the communities of Tameside that we serve.

Signed:

Name (please print)

Position within organisation:

On behalf of (organisation name)

Contact address:

Please keep one copy of this form for your records, and **return a signed copy** to:
T3SC
Suite 3
St Michaels Court
Stamford Street
Ashton under Lyne
OL6 6XN