



THE HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL COMPACT



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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What is a Compact?

- A document about the relationship between voluntary and statutory agencies:
- An agreement about some key principles we will all sign up to
- A description of how we will work together
- A statement of the expectations we have of each other
- An action plan for improving how we work together over time

What is the Huntingdonshire Voluntary & Community Sectors Compact?

The Huntingdonshire Voluntary and Community Sector Compact (here after referred to as "The HV&CSC"). Is an agreement between the HV&CSC and Cambridgeshire County Council, Huntingdonshire District Council, Town and Parish Councils, Police & Crime Commissioner and Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue service.

The Compact will be a partnership of shared principals and values, where all parties agree to work together, for the benefit of the people of Huntingdonshire, recognising and valuing the diversity that exists within Huntingdonshire.

It will actively promote the equality of opportunity for all people within Huntingdonshire regardless of age, disability, race, sex, gender identity, pregnancy / maternity, religion or belief, sexual orientation and will work together to support and promote the inclusion of people sharing these protected characteristics.

Why have a Huntingdonshire Voluntary & Community Sector Compact?

This Compact will not replace the Cambridgeshire Compact.

However, a number of local organisations feel that they have no stake in the above mentioned Compact and would like to have a role in the relationship between themselves and the Councils and the other statutory organisations on a more local level. This move is in line with ambitions set out in the Localism and Decentralisation Act.

It is intended that this document will work in conjunction with the Charter currently being developed between the District Council and the Town and Parish Councils.

It has been developed at the request of the Voluntary & Community organisations and also the District Council and will actively reflect the current changes in government policy on Compact and national legislation.

DEFINITIONS

What is the Voluntary & Community Sector?

Groups / organisations whose activities are carried out for social and/or community benefit and that any profit made is used for the benefit of furthering social and community benefit which are not public or local authority or private sector.

The group or organisation can be formally constituted, may employ professional staff and operate with volunteers.

Whatever the size or purpose, most of the groups and organisations will have the following characteristics in common:

- Independence and autonomy
- Exist for public and community benefit
- Not for individual gain
- No political allegiances
- Governed by a constitution and set of rules
- Supported by an unpaid board or committee
- Accountable to all members
- Inclusive of all including faith groups / organisations, social enterprises etc
- Community interest companies

What is the District Council?

It is a public sector organisation that operates by statute and law. It is regulated by central government. Huntingdonshire District Council is part of a tiered authority (Cambridgeshire County Council, Town and Parish Councils).

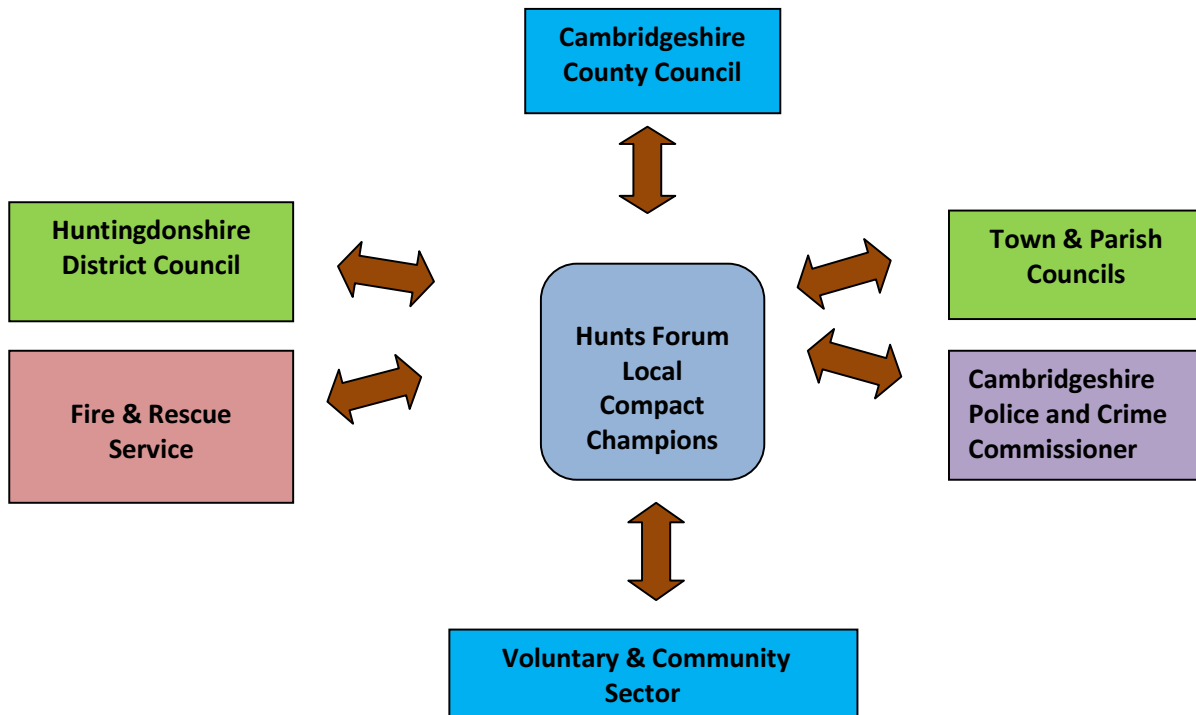
Other organisations that are defined as public sector include Police, Fire & Rescue and Job Centre Plus.

What are the Town and Parish Councils?

The Town and Parish Councils are the third layer of administrative organisations that operate by statute law, both smaller in size than HDC and CCC.

Fig 01

HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL COMPACT ORGANISATIONAL CHART



THE AIM OF THE COMPACT

- (a) Improve communication, understanding, co-operation and trust between the statutory sector and the community and voluntary sector.
- (b) Set up principles and a framework for consultation and partnership working.
- (c) Agree definitions, shared values and mutual undertakings.

It will work to an action plan with clear goals and aim in its first year to:

- (a) Set up Compact structures
- (b) Involve other statutory agencies and the Local Strategic Partnership
- (c) Improve the involvement smaller community groups and voluntary organisations representing the needs of Black and minority ethnic communities and people with disabilities

It will set up basic structures to oversee and monitor progress and implementation, improve working practice and review progress at least annually:

A Forum of equal numbers of voluntary and statutory sector members (number to be agreed) will:

- implement the Compact's Year One priorities through working groups or whatever means it considers most effective
- provide ways of resolving disagreements
- oversee and monitor progress
- inform and report back to all Compact members
- arrange, at least annually, for members to meet, review progress, set future priorities, revise the Compact, review the effectiveness of the forum and agree its composition for the coming year

The Compact Partners are community and voluntary organisations and statutory agencies working in Huntingdonshire. All relevant bodies will be encouraged to join.

In year one, each partner will submit, definitions of their roles, functions, rights, powers, and responsibilities

SHARED VALUES and PRINCIPLES

Respect:

To respect the confidentiality of information provided by each sector and to respect organisational culture which may differ.

Partners share a mutual respect and understanding that, whilst they have distinct but complimentary roles in the development and delivery of public policy and services in Huntingdonshire, all their views are equally important and valid.

Honesty:

Be mindful that partners have different forms of accountability and are answerable to a range of Stakeholders but in common to all are the need for integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, transparency, honesty and leadership.

Independence:

Recognises the right to campaign within the law in order to achieve their aims, to comment on the public sector policies, to challenge that policy irrespective of any funding relationship that might exist and to determine and manage their own affairs.

Diversity & Equality:

To maintain and expand an independent, thriving, sustainable and diverse Voluntary & Community Sector which plays an essential part in the lives of the people and communities in Huntingdonshire, contributing to the local economy and adding substantial value to local activities and resources.

To ensure fairness and the right to access for all members of the community and to promote and value the diversity of the communities of Huntingdonshire:

To protect the community from discrimination: The Compact will promote equality for all people, and tackle discrimination on the basis of race, age, disability, sex, gender identity, pregnancy/maternity, sexual orientation, religion or belief. We are committed to addressing equality of opportunity and social inclusion in our joint work.

Enablement:

Partners can deliver better outcomes for the communities of Huntingdonshire by working together and understanding that they share responsibility in achieving common aims and objectives, according to the capacity of each partner. To ensure that the communities of Huntingdonshire have the ability to shape the service they use.

Sustainability:

Partners recognise the importance of building sustainability and will seek out the best way of meeting the current needs of the people and community.

Voluntary action and community participation are essential elements in a democratic society. A strong, independent and inclusive voluntary sector is fundamental to the well-being of society.

The independence of the voluntary sector should be supported and respected by statutory agencies.

The use of volunteers in voluntary and statutory services should embrace national and local guidelines of good practice. Volunteers must be involved appropriately and not as a substitute for paid employees

We accept that all parties to the Compact have constraints, such as money, people and time, which may impact on their ability to respond and all parties must respect the constraints on the organisation to respond.

COMMITMENT BY THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Individual voluntary groups will undertake to follow good practice in their governance and management, committing to:

- Engage with proposals and ideas put forward by either the district, parish and town or county councils to ensure that the actions can be taken for ward.
- Hold regular meetings per year between HDC cabinet members, officers and named representatives from the voluntary sector.
- Support the authority in its drive to enable inward investment and sustainability in service delivery.
- To engage regularly with the users of their services and in the communities.
- Have a clear and documented vision for how their organisations will work within their local community or area of work.
- Support dialogue within their local communities or areas of work to take forward proposals.
- Engage with processes that will co-ordinate or take on the role of deliverer of services where local voluntary and community groups have the capacity and skills to do so.
- To be committed to the principles of best value in providing services for local people.
- Provide information through the Huntingdonshire Local Compact representative about changes within the communities that they may affect local service deliverers or providers.
- Act as a champion for local communities and citizens.

COMMITMENT BY STATUTORY BODIES

Value the voluntary sector's role in identifying community perspectives of needs, and as advocates and initiators of new services,

Ensure Councillors are informed about the work and role of the voluntary sector and to ensure the voluntary sector is informed about the roles and responsibilities of Councillors

Statutory funders should wherever possible work together to join up funding processes and monitoring for groups they all support, to reduce operational costs and time for all parties

GRANTS AND FUNDING

There should be a clear agreement (even if it is not called a service level agreement) of what is provided and what money/support is given.

Systems should offer flexibility and fair access to funding.

There should be access to longer term funding based on 'Service Level Agreements', multi-year funding or rolling agreements.

Statutory bodies should negotiate and agree a Funding Strategy.

The funding application process should be as accessible and reflect the level of funding available.

There should be an ongoing liaison group of statutory and voluntary people to examine issues and recommend solutions and developments.

OUTCOMES

The Compact will help achieve the following outcomes when the statutory sector and the voluntary and community sector work together:

**CLARITY OF ROLE
INDEPENDENCE
OPENNESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY
QUALITY
FAIRNESS**

Shared principles as well as undertakings by each of the sectors are identified under each outcome heading.

Relevant Codes of Practice:

The following Codes of Practice will be created to support and guide the Compact:

- Community Engagement Code of Good Practice
- Funding and Procurement Code of Good Practice
- Volunteering Code of Good Practice

COMPACT CHAMPION

In order to ensure the compact is understood and implemented fully and consistently, there is a need to develop a network of Compact Champions across the Huntingdonshire voluntary, community and public sectors to promote and encourage a Compact way of working.

Being a champion may not involve extra work, but it may sometimes involve additional reading and time in advising others. It is primarily about encouraging a way of working within your organisation, sector or service that helps to make your work more effective and add value.

The Compact Champion should:

- Have a good understanding of the Compact and its principles
- Promote partnership working and good communication between the voluntary and community sector and the public sector
- Identify, share and encourage good practice in the implementation of the Compact
- Be an advisor to others on implementing the Compact and keep up-to-date with compact developments.
- Be the first point of contact for your sector when concerns about breaches of the Compact arise
- Link the Compact Implementation Steering Group by keeping the group informed of issues and attending an annual meeting

COMPACT IMPLEMENTATION / STEERING GROUP

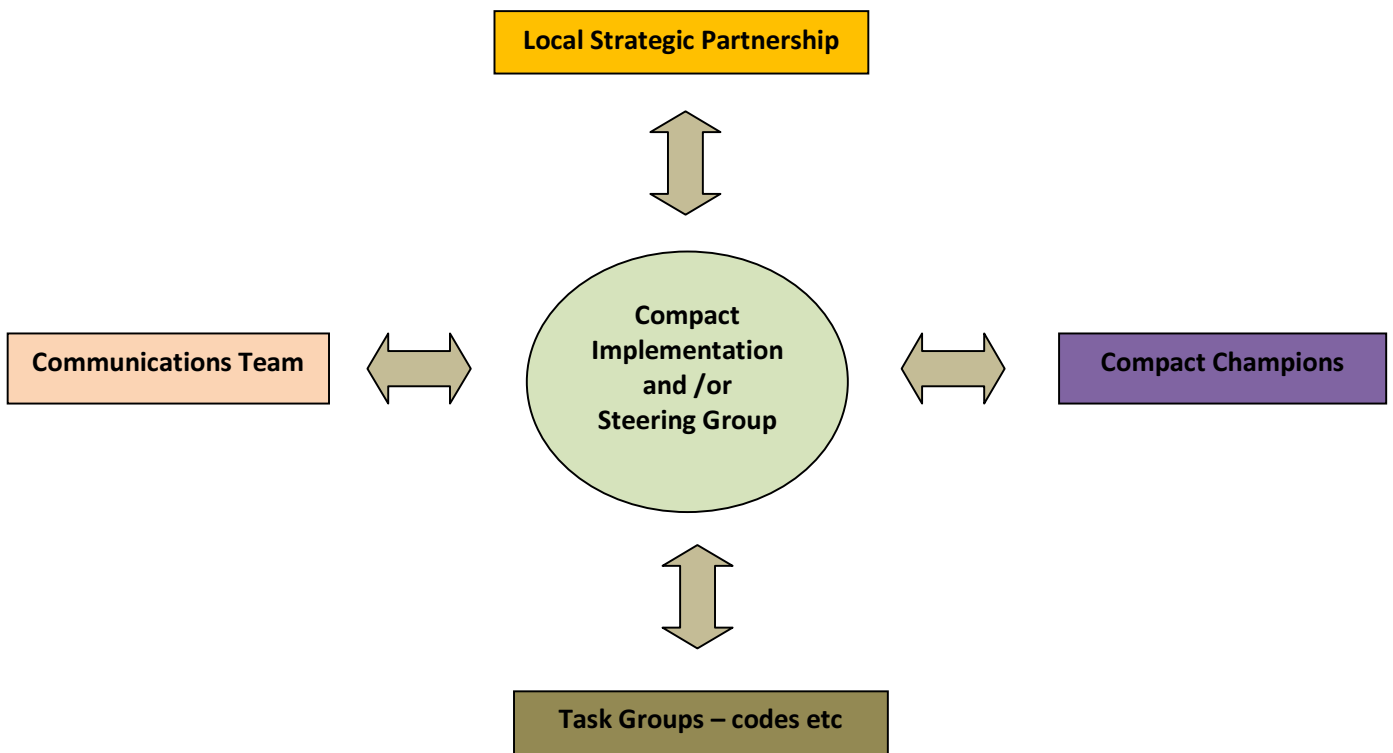
It is crucial to have a Compact Group that is representative, well attended and meets regularly to drive the Compact forward; **this should be formed by the Local Strategic Partnership.**

What should the Compact Group do?

- Steer continuous effective Compact development and be a Compact exemplar
- Monitor progress including logging breaches and successes
- Check how the LSP, partners and partnerships use and comply with the Huntingdonshire Local Compact
- Facilitate Compact-proofing of new initiatives, processes and policy publications
- Oversee Compact mechanisms and processes, agree and monitor the action plan, issue the annual report, run the annual review event, prepare for external audits.

Fig 02

COMPACT IMPLEMENTATION / STEERING GROUP TREE



Resolution of disagreements

The Huntingdonshire Local Compact sets out a general framework for enhancing the relationship between the voluntary and community sector and the statutory sector.

As far as possible, disagreements over the application of this framework should be resolved between the parties. Where resolution is not possible, parties should seek mediation, through a mutually agreed mediator.

LOCALISM AND THE HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL COMPACT

The Localism Act was passed into statute in November 2011 introducing measures to shift power from central government to local authorities. This will have an impact on the voluntary and community organisations covered by the Huntingdonshire Local Compact.

If well implemented these measures could give Cambridgeshire County Council, Huntingdonshire District Council along with the Town and Parish Councils more flexibility to respond to the needs of the local communities more effectively. Local services could be transformed and institutions could become more inclusive. The Localism agenda is most likely to affect Huntingdonshire voluntary and community organisations because it:

makes local Compacts more important for relationships between the local authorities and the Huntingdonshire Voluntary and community Organisations
introduces new rights which give the community groups a chance to bid for “community assets” if they are up for sale or threatened with closure or demolition
introduces the “Right to Challenge” which allows community groups – including voluntary organisations- to submit an “expression of interest” if they wish to provide, or assist in providing, a service. Huntingdonshire District Voluntary and community Organisations are well placed to help the local authorities with the Localism agenda by:

- bringing people with shared interests, beliefs and experiences together
- supporting and building communities’
- giving a “voice” to the disadvantaged and under-represented

But to make Localism a success, good partnership working between the public, private and voluntary and community sectors will be vital

HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL COMPACT

RESOLUTION OF DISAGREEMENTS CODE OF PRACTICE

The Huntingdonshire Local Compact sets out a general framework for enhancing the relationship between statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sector. As far as possible disagreements over the application of that framework should be resolved between the parties. Where resolution is not possible, both parties should seek mediation, through a mutually agreed mediator. Any disagreements, which arise throughout the year, will be monitored for consideration at the annual review meeting.

Our Procedure

Initially, the **issue or complaint** should be raised **directly** with the **Council / organisation concerned**. You should pursue any offers or actions proposed to resolve the matter before commencing action under the COMPACT's RESOLUTION OF DISAGREEMENTS CODE OF PRACTICE Process.

NB: Check whether the organisation has its' own official Complaints Procedure and whether it might be more appropriate to use this route

Our Procedure

Stage One

If the issue or complaint has not been resolved by direct consultation with the organisation concerned complete the Huntingdonshire Local Compact Complaints Form with details of the complaint indicating which part of the Compact has been breached and the actions taken so far to resolve the matter. This form should be completed within 28 working days of the issue not being resolved

Stage Two

Provide the completed form to a member of the third Sector Partnership Board, and discuss prior to it being passed to the third Sector Partnership Board Secretariat.

The Secretariat to provide a copy of completed form to the Chair of the third Sector Partnership Board to determine whether a **Dispute and Arbitration Panel (DAP)** meeting should be convened.

The Dispute and Arbitration Panel

The DAP will meet within 40 working days of receipt of the Huntingdonshire District COMPACT Complaints Form.

The DAP will consist of **three people** who have **no direct association with either organisation and drawn from a pool of the third Sector Partnership Board** having

previously agreed to undertake this task. Membership of the Dispute and Arbitration Panel will include at least one member from the Voluntary Sector and one from the

Statutory Sector. The Chair of the DAP will be determined by its members at the beginning of the meeting. Additional information on the complaint or issue under consideration will be requested from both parties. The DAP will be looking for compromise and resolution of the issues.

Decision for the DAP

1. No action to be taken.
2. Both parties to agree to meet the DAP around the table with a view to negotiating a settlement of the dispute or complaint.
3. DAP to write to the organisation subject to the complaint requesting adherence to the undertakings in the Huntingdonshire Local Compact and proposing a course of action within a specified timescale to resolve the matter.
4. Refer the matter for mediation through the National Compact Mediation Scheme.

Appeal Process

If the organisation is not satisfied with the decision of the DAP they may appeal to the third Sector Partnership Board within 14 working days of the result of this panel. The DAP will meet again with 3 different members of the third Sector Partnership Board within 30 working days of receipt of the appeal.

Their decision is final and there is no further right of appeal.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL COMPACT

This form should be completed if an organisation wishes to use the Huntingdonshire Resolution of Disagreements code of Practice.

Name of Organisation

Contact Details.....

.....

.....

Organisation with whom you have a disagreement

Contact Details.....

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.....

Details of complaint indicating which part of the Compact has been breached

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.....

.....

Actions taken to date to resolve the matter

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.....

.....

.....

Signed **Date**

Send to: **Enter Address**

HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL COMPACT

This form should be completed by the organisation/ individual identified in the DAP form 01, giving their side of the complaint against them in line with the Huntingdonshire Resolution of Disagreements code of Practice.

Name of Organisation/ Individual

Contact Details.....

.....

.....

Organisation with whom you have a disagreement

Contact Details.....

.....

.....

Response on comments contained in the DAP 01:

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Signed **Date**

Send to: **Enter Address**

HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL COMPACT

VOLUNTEERING CODE OF PRACTICE

This Code sets out good practice in volunteering for voluntary, community and statutory sectors working in partnership.

1. INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS

Volunteering is defined as an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit individuals, groups (other than close relatives) or the environment. Volunteering is an important expression of citizenship.

2. AIM

The aim of this Code of Practice is to ensure that volunteers are

- valued;
- supported;
- well managed.

3. KEY PRINCIPLES OF VOLUNTEERING:

- **Choice** – Volunteering must be the result of a free choice by the volunteer.
- **Diversity** -Volunteering should be open to all. Equal opportunity principles are fundamental to supporting diversity.
- **Reciprocity** -Volunteers should benefit from volunteering in the sense that they gain satisfaction, feel both involved and that they are making a difference to the organisation and wider community.
- **Recognition** -It is important that volunteers are valued and their contribution should be publicly recognised.

4. GUIDELINES - *Signatories to the Huntingdonshire Local Compact agree to adopt these guidelines as a basis for developing good practice within their own organisations*

4.1 Overcoming barriers to volunteering:

- Make arrangements which do not unfairly exclude particular groups and tackle discrimination to ensure that volunteering is open to all.
- Promote opportunities to include equality of access in recruitment for volunteering.
- Include reasonable costs for reducing barriers to volunteering in relevant funding bids.

4.2 Valuing Volunteer contributions:

- Communicate to volunteers how their contribution has benefited the organisation.
- Keep data on volunteering and use that information, as well as involving volunteers, to develop new policies and ideas.

4.3 Volunteering experience:

- Involve volunteers in decision making, include them in internal communications and acknowledge them as important stakeholders in the organisation where they volunteer.
- Commit resources to support and train volunteers and create a valuable volunteering experience.
- Encourage and develop employee volunteering schemes.

4.4 Volunteering infrastructure:

- Use the local volunteering infrastructure support e.g. Hunts Volunteer Bureau for support and advice in all aspects of volunteering including promotion, recruitment and developing volunteering policies and opportunities.
- Identify a named person in your organisation responsible for volunteer involvement, monitoring and reporting.
- Identify within your organisation, a trustee board champion for volunteering.
- Adopt clear policies regarding the payment of volunteer expenses.

5. VOLUNTEER CODE OF PRACTISE - Signatories to the Huntingdonshire Local Compact may use this charter as the basis of an agreement with their volunteers

5.1 Volunteers Expectations:-

- To have their tasks and responsibilities within the organisation clearly explained to them.
- To be given the name of someone in the organisation who will look after their interests and who will offer them appropriate support and supervision on a regular basis.
- To be assured that any information they share with the organisation will be kept confidential.
- To be given the same protection under health and safety regulations and insurance cover as paid employees.
- To be offered opportunities for training and skills development, appropriate for their role and tasks as a volunteer.
- Not to be exploited – Volunteers should not be used to replace paid workers, have unfair demands made on their time, be expected to give more time than originally agreed or be asked to do something which is against their principles or beliefs.
- To be given the chance to play a part in decision making within the organisation, relevant to their role.

- To be advised if out of pocket expenses will be reimbursed and if so what expenses are eligible, at what rate and the procedure for claiming these expenses

5.2 Volunteers Responsibilities:

This is for the individual organisations to set; the following is set out for guidance only:

- To accept the organisations aims and objectives and work within agreed policies and procedures.
- To do what is reasonably requested of them, to the best of their ability.
- To treat information obtained whilst volunteering as confidential – such as information about clients or about other volunteers or staff.
- To recognise the right of the organisation to expect quality of service both from paid staff and from volunteers.
- To recognise that they represent the organisation and therefore need to act in an appropriate manner at all times while volunteering for the organisation.
- To honour any commitment made to the best of their abilities; notifying the organisation in good time should they be unable to keep that commitment.
- To be willing to undertake appropriate training as necessary for the voluntary work undertaken.
- To share any concerns or problems, or any suggestions for changes in working practices with the named person in the organisation who is responsible for their interests.

NB: For future reference please contact Huntingdonshire Volunteer Bureaux

FUNDING AND PROCUREMENT

This section sets out good practice for the statutory sector and the voluntary and community sector in relation to funding and procurement.

1. INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS

Many voluntary and community sector organisations are interested in, or involved in, the delivery of public services. The statutory sector has a duty to provide services and it is acknowledged that service users, communities and voluntary and community sector organisations hold knowledge that can be vital to the design and implementation of the best services possible. The two main types of funding mechanisms which are used to design and deliver services are grant funding and commissioning and procurement:

1.1: Grant funding

The process of distributing funds, following a bidding process against identified criteria, to meet funders' objectives.

1.2: Commissioning and Procurement Commissioning

The process of deciding what public services are needed, what priorities they are accorded, and choosing what, why, how and where to allocate resources to provide services.

Procurement

The method of purchasing services: This includes market analysis and a tender process. It results in contracts and service level agreements being awarded.

Market Analysis

The method for consulting a market to consider options for satisfying a need or the suitability of options already developed.

Tender Process

The process of inviting, applying for and assessing applications (tenders) to deliver a service and giving notice of decisions: This is a competitive process.

Contracts A legally binding agreement whereby one party provides good or services to the other in exchange for payment.

1.3 Public Service (Social Value) Act 2012

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 became law on the 8th March 2012. From 31st January 2013 the Act is 'live' and commissioners and procurers must adhere to it.

The Act was initiated by Chris White MP as a Private Members Bill, the progress of the Bill becoming law is documented [here](#).

What is the Act?

The Act, for the first time, places a duty on public bodies to consider social value ahead of procurement.

The Act applies to the provision of services, or the provision of services together with the purchase or hire of goods or the carrying out of works.

The wording of the Act states that:

The authority must consider—

*(a) how what is proposed to be procured might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the relevant area, and
(b) how, in conducting the process of procurement, it might act with a view to securing that improvement.*

It also opens the door for consultation with stakeholders to better understand social value and improve service specifications, the Act states...

The authority must consider whether to undertake any consultation

What does social value mean under the Act?

The wording of the act states:

The authority must consider: only matters that are relevant to what is proposed to be procured and, in doing so, must consider the extent to which it is proportionate in all the circumstances to take those matters into account.

1.4 For further information on procurement:

See the Huntingdonshire District council's documents "Procurement Guidance & Protocols" at:

And "Code of Procurement" at:

Published on behalf of the Huntingdonshire Local Compact Implementation Group

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CODE OF PRACTICE

This Code sets out good practice for the statutory sector and the voluntary and community sector when undertaking community engagement activities.

1. INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS

Community engagement has four elements. These elements are sometimes known as the ladder of participation.

1.1: Informing

Balanced and objective information underpins the other three elements of community engagement. It builds knowledge to enable meaningful Consultation, Involvement and Empowerment. It also provides regular feedback throughout an engagement process to maintain dialogue.

1.2: Consulting

This is the process by which an organisation seeks opinion about services and proposals to inform its strategies, policies and service design. The organisation carrying out the consultation makes decisions influenced by the knowledge gathered.

1.3: Involving

By working together to develop solutions, shape policy and design services, decision making is shared. There is an on-going relationship and dialogue between those involved. The distinguishing difference between 'consulting' and 'involving' is the degree of influence in decision making and the level of participation in the delivery of services.

1.4: Empowering

Power, influence and responsibility is devolved from existing centres of power to local people, who take decisions about proposals that affect their lives and manage the delivery of services themselves.

2. AIM

The aim of this Code of Practice is to establish engagement processes that:

- enable effective exchanges of information;
- provide the opportunity for people to influence policies, strategies & service delivery plans;
- facilitate working together;
- support communities to do more for themselves

3. KEY PRINCIPLES

- **Targeted Methods** Use a variety of engagement methods appropriate to the target audience with particular attention to 'hard to reach' groups;
- **Multiple Opportunities** Use more than one engagement method to increase the chance of participation, both in terms of quality & quantity;
- **Overcome barriers** Ensure that engagement reaches groups and individuals who may be at risk of being left out, ignored, misrepresented or taken for granted

and consider the following to include as many participants as possible - location of venues and accessibility, time of day, childcare, literacy, language, issues of trust and fear;

- **Confidentiality** Respect confidentiality

4: GUIDELINES – *Signatories to the Huntingdonshire Local Compact agree to adopt these guidelines as a basis for developing good practice within their own organisations*

4.1: Planning the process

- Agree objectives of the engagement process;
- Find out if a similar process has already been carried out;
- Determine the element(s) of engagement that you are undertaking;
- Identify the target participants (stakeholders) and potential barriers to participation;
- Agree engagement methods to overcome the barriers;
- Set out a programme to show each element of engagement within a time plan;
- Ensure you have the organisational capacity to undertake your programme;
- Decide whether some elements can or should be undertaken in partnership with other organisations to avoid duplication of effort;

4.2: Informing

- Publicise the process and how to take part, in advance, to encourage participation;
- Ensure timescales and response deadlines are clear at the start;
Provide balanced and objective information in good time, making clear that the information can be made available in a range of formats (written, electronic, text, audio, different language etc) upon request. Wherever possible, build the knowledge and skills of participants;
- Outline constraints and limitations of the process (what it can and can't achieve) to manage expectations;
- Explain how responses will be used / acted upon;
- Explain how feedback will be provided at the end of the process;
- As part of the feedback, show a summary of responses, who has responded, how responses have been taken into account, whether they have influenced decisions and/or how decisions have been reached;
- Where a statutory sector decision has an impact on a voluntary and community sector organisation, this should be made clear.

4.3: Consulting

- Avoid consulting during holiday periods;
- Publish a diary of planned consultations for the year;
- Try to stagger consultations throughout the year.
- Set a consultation period of 12 weeks to allow the voluntary and community sector to consult with its users and members. If this is not possible, due to legal time constraints:

Where the consultation is inviting comment on a strategy or on policies, the consultation document should:

- Include a summary;
- Explain the aims and procedures;
- Clearly identify issues & intentions;
- Include a list of those being consulted;
- Make clear where policy decisions have already been taken;
- Be easy to read & available on request in languages and formats other than written English;
- Include easy references to relevant publications;
- Identify named persons who can be contacted about the consultation;
- Include unbiased options;
- Explain whether and why one option is preferred;
- Enable respondents to put forward their own views;
- Identify any actions which might involve increased costs for the voluntary and community sector;
- Invite comments on how the proposals may affect the voluntary and community sector;
- Make clear when decisions will be taken & by whom;
- Publicise the way feedback will be provided.

N.B: Building and Infrastructure Planning applications and ? have a longer consultation period

4.4: Involving

- Clarify what all parties hope to achieve by working together. Understand everyone's needs and aspirations;
- Ensure that the plans for working together fit with the vision, values and objectives of each participant;
- Determine clear shared aims and the boundaries of your working agreement. Establish contractual and legal obligations in writing where appropriate;
- Assess the benefits and risks of working together. Consider the strengths and weaknesses of each participant;
- Agree the structure for working together and management arrangements;
- Establish roles, responsibilities and decision making processes;
- Decide at the outset how you might manage disagreements or disputes;
- Create and maintain good communication channels.

4.5: Empowering

- Ensure groups are set up with open and accountable ways of operating;
- Provide support and expertise where needed;
- Work at the communities pace;
- Increase participants skills and knowledge;
- Instil confidence and a sense of belief that they can do things themselves;
- Promote equality of opportunity and inclusive processes;
- Build positive relationships and promote partnership working.