

Southwark Compact

An agreement between Statutory
Agencies and Voluntary, Community
and Faith Organisations in Southwark

Agreed by:

Southwark Alliance
London Borough of Southwark
Southwark Primary Care Trust
Southwark Infrastructure Group
Southwark Multi Faith Forum
Community Action Southwark

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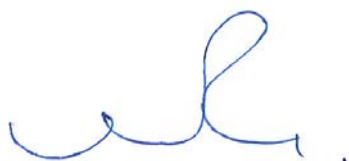
Foreword

A joint message from Cllr Abdul Mohamed, Cabinet member for equalities and community engagement, London Borough of Southwark and Helen Rice, chair of trustees of Community Action Southwark.

The voluntary and community sector is not only a major part of community life in Southwark but a major partner with the statutory sector in delivering services for our communities. The Compact sets out the shared principles on which this relationship is built and we are therefore pleased to announce the launch of this refreshed version of the Compact.

In 2003 the Compact for Southwark was first published as a statement of principles that all partners sign up to. It aims to consolidate a partnership in which local communities have a real voice in decision-making and service design and delivery. This means building mutual trust through transparency, fairness, inclusiveness and equality based on shared values and respect. This version brings that initial document up to date, outlines a role for Compact champions in all partner agencies and incorporates a conflict resolution mechanism.

In light of the current economic climate and the many challenges ahead this refreshed version of the Compact is timely and an opportunity for all partners to consider their responsibilities to the communities of Southwark. At the heart of this Compact must be a commitment to providing excellent services to our communities. This can only be achieved by an understanding on the part of the partners that there will be increased demand for services and growing pressures on public funding. This makes the Compact ever more important as we work together to improve efficiency and effectiveness in our delivery of services to the residents of Southwark.



Helen Rice. Chair of trustees
Community Action Southwark



Councillor Abdul Mohammed
Cabinet Member for Equalities
Community Engagement

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Foreword

This COMPACT illustrates the vital role that the voluntary and community sector has in working in partnership with Southwark Council, the Primary Care Trust and other statutory partners to develop and deliver the services that residents deserve.

The Southwark Compact aims to consolidate a partnership in which local communities have a real voice in decision-making and service design and delivery. This means building mutual trust through transparency, fairness, inclusiveness and equality based on shared values and respect.

Southwark statutory agencies recognise that the voluntary and community sector has an essential role in helping to achieve their objectives. Voluntary and community sector organisations enable individuals to contribute to public life and the development of safe, healthy and thriving communities. They empower service users in the design and delivery of services, and often act as advocates for those who otherwise would have no voice. They promote equality and diversity.

In 1998 a central Government initiative was launched with the publication of a national Compact with the voluntary, community and faith sectors. The underlying philosophy of the Compact is that voluntary and community activity is fundamental to the development of a democratic, socially inclusive society.

In 2003 an initial version of a Compact for Southwark was published. This version brings that initial document up to date and also incorporates a Conflict Resolution mechanism.

1. Background

Southwark is an inner-city borough with a resident population estimated at 269,200 in 2006. The population is projected to grow to 312,300 in 2016 and to 348,700 in 2026. According to the 2001 census the percentage of people in ethnic groups was: White: 63%; Black or Black British: 25.9%; Asian or Asian British: 4.1%; Mixed: 3.7%; Chinese or other ethnic group: 3.3%. A number of new communities have become established in Southwark in recent years including those from Sierra Leone, French speaking African countries, Latin America and Eastern Europe.

Southwark currently ranks 26th out of 354 local districts on the deprivation index (9th in London), with a high level of estate based local authority housing, high unemployment, a large proportion of lone parent families and teenage pregnancies. The borough has therefore attracted a wide range of funding through regeneration and interest-based initiatives.

Southwark was identified as one of the 88 deprived areas eligible for the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund as part of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal which was managed by the Southwark Alliance. This has been replaced by the Working Neighbourhood Fund within the Local Area Grant.

The voluntary, community and faith sector are recognised in Southwark as meaning "not for profit organisations run by unpaid management committees who are drawn from the community and users of services acting for community benefit and whom are involved in any/or a combination of the following: the provision of services, self-help and advocacy, campaigning, borough co-ordination and support, services to other voluntary organisations". They range from small self help organisations run by volunteers to large multi functional organisations with large turnovers.

The voluntary sector in Southwark is well established and made up of around 18,000 individuals delivering services through 1,200 community groups and voluntary organisations. Volunteer management committees manage 90% of the sector and 71% depend on volunteers to run day to day services. The contribution of volunteer activity in Southwark has been estimated at about £26m.

Faith organisations have a lot to offer due to their very strong links to the local community either through the practice of that particular faith or through the use of their premises. Faith groups have a contribution to make to social inclusion that is distinct from promoting religion; they are also involved in running community services, community development and representing community interests.

The voluntary, community and faith sector work with statutory agencies in a number of roles including policy development and strategy development and implementation. In addition they provide employment opportunities, have access to funds that statutory organisations do not and, although accountable, are not bound by duties that constrain organisations from campaigning and lobbying on behalf of the communities they serve.

2. Vision and Principles

The Vision

Southwark's Voluntary, Community and Statutory Sectors are committed to the principle of working together for the collective benefit of everyone that lives and works in Southwark.

Southwark's Compact will strengthen this commitment by providing a framework for developing improved relationships based on shared values and mutual respect across all sectors. To this end we will jointly work towards the production, implementation and continuous review of a local Compact.

Principles

Southwark's Community Strategy can secure effective action to improve the well-being of the Borough if an inclusive approach is embraced, involving all statutory, voluntary and community organisations that provide services or whose action, collectively or individually, affects the local quality of life.

The Compact is an expression of the commitment of statutory agencies and the voluntary, community and faith sector to work in partnership to improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of Southwark, recognising that each sector has a distinct, valuable and complementary role which when utilised will improve the quality of life and public services in the London Borough of Southwark

The statutory sector and the voluntary, community and faith sector have different forms of accountability and are answerable to a different range of stakeholders. However, common to all is the need for integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

All partners are committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity for all, regardless of race, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation or faith.

There is added value in working in partnership towards common aims and objectives. Meaningful consultation builds relationships, improves policy development and enhances the design and delivery of services and programmes.

The statutory sector plays a significant role, among other things, as a funder of some voluntary, community and faith sectors organisations. Voluntary and community organisations can secure funding from other sources. Funding can play an important part in the relationships between the sectors.

Joint undertakings

All partners agree to:

- listen to each other and respond constructively;
- increase community involvement and support volunteering activity;
- work within an ethos of accountability, honesty, leadership, integrity, objectivity and transparency;
- represent information fairly and honestly and respect confidentiality where required;
- develop an environment that encourages and supports the resolution of conflict and an agreed approach to managing breakdown in negotiation;
- work towards equal partnership relations that recognise and understand the contribution, roles and constraints of the statutory and voluntary, community and faith sectors;
- work together towards creating the opportunities for involving groups under-represented in partnerships, consultation and decision making like Black and Minority Ethnic Organisations, Carers, Young People, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender communities, Women and People with Disabilities;
- develop a process to monitor, evaluate and review implementation and effectiveness of the Compact and its Guidelines, and to make changes as appropriate;
- work together to secure external resources.

The statutory sector will:

- aim to ensure its structures, policies and procedures are transparent;
- recognise that voluntary and community organisations are independent and have the right to campaign within the law, and comment on policy developments irrespective of funding arrangements;
- acknowledge the value of the contribution made by volunteer activity;
- when proposing policies, procedures, procurements and practices, aim to identify at an early stage possible implications for the voluntary, community and faith sector;
- recognise voluntary and community organisations' role in representing and providing services to the community.

The voluntary, community and faith sector will:

- meet reporting and accounting obligations to members, beneficiaries, funders and partners;
- promote effective working relationships with statutory agencies and across the voluntary, community and faith sector;

- involve users and carers, wherever possible, in the development and management of activities and services;
- develop policies that promote best practice and equality of opportunity in activities, employment, involvement of volunteers and service provision;
- recognise and respect the responsibilities and constraints placed on the statutory sector through legislation or Central Government, directives, funding allocations and performance indicators;
- recognise and respect the statutory sector's governance arrangements for the award of contracts and other funding

3.Partnership

At the core of the Compact is partnership. Government is actively promoting joint working between all sectors to help it achieve its social objectives.

Partnership working in Southwark is not new. Statutory, voluntary and community organisations work together in a number of ways ranging from informal networks to formal contractual arrangements.

There are very many different partnerships in Southwark; themed strategic partnerships covering, for example, crime, health and social care, children; area-based regeneration partnerships; service delivery partnerships and community/interest based forums.

The national Compact Working Group suggests the following definition:

"Partnership exists where each party has an opportunity to contribute to the decisions of the partnership and to influence the provision which arises from it, be this at a policy, strategic or implementation level"

One of the benefits of working in partnership is the pooling of resources, skills and experience of different organisations across sectors. Pooling cultures and different ways of working can enable local service planning and provision to be more sensitively and more effectively delivered.

In Southwark the benefits of working with the voluntary, community and faith sector include the lack of constraints and flexibility, innovation, creativity, links to the community and ability to bring inward investment to the Borough which are seen as valuable, even critical to service delivery.

Voluntary and community organisations in Southwark can be found in a number of roles including:

- Partner: on partnership boards, formulating strategy, making decisions on programmes and projects.

- Programme manager: with responsibility for managing and delivering one strand of the partnership's work.
- Sub contractor: provide services to beneficiaries of the partnership or delivering projects on a contract basis.
- Advocate/intermediary: advise on the needs of community or organise consultation.
- Source of ideas: can advise how to design and deliver schemes based on best practice and experience.
- Consultees: organise or join forums designed to elicit responses from the community about needs and priorities, which can then be used to guide partnership decisions and programme design.
- Beneficiaries: smaller organisations may benefit by being a recipient of partnership resources that enable users to benefit from funding and activities of the partnership

Over the years the public sector has increasingly recognised that working together with other agencies and sectors can better enable the design and delivery of services that offer the best value. The increasing emphasis on public involvement means it makes sense for partnerships to include the voluntary, community and faith sectors.

The distinctions in cultures and accountability between sectors may create challenges on both sides through different roles, perceptions of power and expectations of the partnership.

There is a need for an understanding of what different sectors bring to and look for within partnerships, which will inform each others' perspectives.

Statutory organisations seek:

- understanding and assurance that services are targeted and well received by the community it serves;
- confidence that service provision is linked to the views and perceptions of the people of Southwark;
- to create opportunities for involvement in service delivery; and
- to be able to exercise facilitative leadership in a collaborative relationship.

The voluntary, community and faith sector can offer a grass roots perspective and often provide services to the most deprived communities and seek opportunities to influence the way services are provided.

Voluntary and community organisations may be found in more than one role at the same time, e.g. a partner and sub-contractor; partner, consultee, beneficiary.

Where organisations have multiple roles within a partnership, it is important to ensure mechanisms are in place to handle potential conflict of roles in a sensitive way.

Partnerships should try to avoid suggestions of dominance by one or other partners (e.g. those providing main resources). Voluntary and community organisations can feel or be perceived as the 'junior' partner. Ideally there will be equality of power, responsibility and status, but in reality, there are some cases where all partners cannot be equal as statutory accountabilities of public bodies may prohibit that.

It is therefore crucial that partnerships are clear about the roles of each of the players and of the partnership itself i.e. is it advisory, consultative, executive etc.

Shared objectives that are realistic and achievable have been identified as key aspects of good partnerships and may be a good starting point.

Successful partnership working depends as much on people as it does systems and structures. A characteristic of effective partnership working is the time taken to develop relationships; mutual trust, understanding other organisations' culture, work style and accountabilities. However that time can be costly and thought needs to be given to the costs of partnership development, participation for less resourced organisations and how those costs are met.

Undertakings

All partners will recognise that:

- partnership places a commitment on all parties to contribute appropriately and to keep agreements they make;
- different partners may have different contributions to make but carry equal weight in joint decision-making; and will:
- work towards a better understanding of the other partner(s);
- commit to developing partnerships across sectors;
- develop skills around partnership working;
- jointly promote the adoption of the Compact by other partners; and
- evaluate the effectiveness of partnership working to ensure continuous improvement.

The statutory sector will:

- ensure the voluntary, community and faith sector are informed and enabled to effectively participate on partnership boards; and:
- be clear about the roles of voluntary, community and faith sectors partners.

The voluntary, community and faith sector will:

- work to ensure their contribution to partnerships is effective;
- ensure that representatives represent the whole sector and not just their own organisation's interests;
- ensure that voluntary sector representation on partnerships demonstrate a level of accountability to the wider voluntary sector in Southwark.

4. Resourcing

The term resourcing refers to any support, financial or in kind, provided to the voluntary, community and faith sectors through a variety of different mechanisms including; grants, service agreements, contracts or 'in-kind'.

The Compact partner agencies are committed to establishing and maintaining best practice in relation to service delivery. The outcome is to improve the quality of the lives of Southwark residents, especially those who are socially excluded.

The introduction of Best Value, the government's modernising agenda and an increased emphasis on commissioning have created the need for a much clearer relationship between the statutory and voluntary sectors. This is aimed at securing the delivery of quality public services. Historically, funding of the voluntary sector was viewed largely as an act of philanthropy and far greater attention was paid to the nature of an organisation and its membership than to its contribution and its impact on areas of need.

Increasingly, public services provided by all agencies are expected to contribute to those areas of need that have a clear evidence base to support them. The statutory funders are also increasingly required to meet closely defined objectives and their performance is measured against an array of targets and indicators.

Voluntary sector providers are consequently drawn into a relationship with statutory funders, which has to be clearly linked to outcomes that support objectives through a more strategic approach to grant allocation.

In health and social care, and in other areas, voluntary and community organisations are contracted to deliver services targeted at priorities which are to a large extent prescribed by central government.

Voluntary and community organisations in Southwark are funded through one of two mechanisms: contracts or grant aid. Each mechanism serves a different purpose and is appropriate in relevant circumstances.

Traditional grant aid is particularly relevant in relation to smaller grants where there may be an element of capacity building required. Contracts are relevant where service needs can be specified precisely.

The principles which should underpin the funding relationship need to include:

- an agreed strategic purpose.
- the need to achieve best value.
- the development of high standards.
- transparency, natural justice and integrity in process.

Undertakings

All partners will work together to:

- promote funding strategies which help to ensure that the social, economic and environmental well-being of Southwark is advanced;
- seek to increase the funding and resources coming into the borough from non-statutory sources;
- ensure that beneficiaries of service delivery experience tangible benefits and changes
- evaluate the benefits to Southwark Residents

The statutory sector will:

- recognise the independence of the voluntary, community and faith sectors;
- be proactive in working with the voluntary, community and faith sectors to identify new areas for funding;
- ensure that the principles and processes for awarding grants are fully understood;
- recognise the importance of its funding in supporting the core costs of voluntary and community organisations;
- recognise the need for ensuring, as far as is possible, early decisions on grant funding and on ensuring stability of funding;
- recognise the need to fund capacity building and infrastructure support for the voluntary, community and faith sectors;
- make details of funding programmes as widely known as possible by using a variety of means (e.g. press; internet; umbrella organisations; networks);
- provide a timetable for funding programmes and processes which is mutually realistic and provide clear information, written in plain English;
- work towards ensuring monitoring processes are appropriate to the level of funding;
- provide feedback on decisions taken on grant applications within 2 weeks of the decision being made;
- ensure that grant payments are made on time;

- properly negotiate service agreements and contracts; and
- maintain a transparent approach to the allocation of grants.

The voluntary, community and faith sectors will

- recognise that the resources available to the local authority and other statutory funders for grant purposes are limited;
- recognise that the receipt of public funding carries responsibilities and implement proper financial management and accounting systems;
- ensure that the funders' financial monitoring regulations are met and comply with statutory legislation;
- seek to maximise its income by applying for grants by systematically fundraising;
- ensure transparency in the way they manage funds

5. Community Organisations

The principles and undertakings in this Compact apply across the voluntary, community and faith sector. Increasingly though, distinctions are being made between the voluntary, community and faith sector so particular consideration needs to be given to the needs, interests and contributions of Community Organisations (see also the Section on Supporting the Diverse Population of Southwark).

Community Organisations operate closest of all to the grass roots. They can be a community of interest (sharing a common purpose, concern, interest, race disability or belief) or a neighbourhood group aiming to improve the quality of life of residents.

Community Organisations

- give a voice to communities;
- foster a balance between self-interest and citizenship;
- fill service gaps through mutual aid or self-help; and
- provide support for hard to reach people and areas

They bring much to partnerships, programmes and processes by informing project development from "ground level" experience, and can evaluate effectiveness of policy and services based on actual need.

Community Organisations provide opportunities for personal/ leadership development, confidence building or learning specific skills and make a contribution through the in-kind support; time, resources and skills.

Community Organisations are frequently run by a single volunteer with little or no funding or premises and are often the last to be consulted with very little time to respond. Resource needs can include funding, capacity building, training, access to networks, information, consultation and engaging with public bodies and mainstream voluntary sector.

Some small groups may wish to evolve into larger voluntary organisations but many do not, preferring to stay small with their purpose and nature uncompromised.

Funding programmes must ensure that Community Organisations have equal access to funding and other support. Application and monitoring processes must be appropriate to the level of funding.

Undertakings

All partners recognise that the community sector makes a substantial contribution to social cohesion and is one of the building blocks for transformation leading to the betterment of neighbourhoods and society.

All partners will work together to ensure fair treatment for all community groups.

The statutory sector will:

- ensure that policies towards communities recognise the importance of communities of interest or issue as well as communities of place;
- unify and simplify small grants funding programmes for community groups;
- recognise the value of the contributions of volunteer time to projects as equivalent to match funding;
- recognise that inadequate resourcing is a barrier to effective partnerships and identify and provide adequate resources for partnership working and participation;
- be sensitive to the Community Sector's needs and role in guidance relating to community strategies, local strategic partnerships and best value;
- ensure requirements made of local communities are realistic and that resourcing implications are known, understood and provided for.

The voluntary and community sector as a whole will work towards developing appropriate mechanisms for active community sector involvement in all its undertakings.

6. Supporting the Diverse Population of Southwark

Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Organisations, which include some faith groups and refugee/asylum seeker organisations, play a vital part in improving the quality of life of their communities. They bring particular value because they are firmly rooted in the community and spring up as a direct response to identified need.

It has been found that negative outcomes of social exclusion are disproportionately represented within BME communities. The Macpherson Report into the death of Stephen Lawrence noted that "institutional racism consists of the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people."

There is a duty on all public sector bodies to promote equal opportunities between people of different racial groups. This means that they must ensure that community involvement techniques, policies and procedures do not discriminate against particular groups.

In Southwark 37.1% of the population is made up of people from black and minority ethnic communities compared with 34.3% across inner London. The largest ethnic group is of African Origin (16.1%). The Refugee Council estimates about 11,000 refugees and asylum seekers live in the borough.

There are around 250 BME groups in Southwark the majority of which are entirely reliant on volunteers without whom the organisations and their services would not exist.

BME groups feel that their voice is often not heard, nor do they have enough of a presence in decision-making partnerships. Consultation is seen as exploitative - ideas used by larger bodies with no real regard for the needs of the groups with whom they consult.

Given the diversity of the population of Southwark it is essential that this part of the community sector be properly supported to engage in and influence policy decisions and deliver services that directly affect them.

Black and Minority Ethnic organisations still feel excluded from mainstream partnerships and initiatives, and attention must be paid to ensuring that non-Black Minority Groups and other socially excluded groups e.g. the Irish community, disabled, travellers, Lesbian, Gay and transsexual groups, are not excluded.

The statutory and mainstream voluntary sectors in Southwark both have a role in supporting the BME sector to enable organisations and groups to fully engage and participate in processes, the development and implementation of local strategy, and effectively deliver services.

Undertakings

All partners recognise Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary and community organisations, and other socially excluded groups:

- have built up experience over the years from which the statutory and wider voluntary sector have much to learn;
- can be treated less favourably than larger, more mainstream organisations in consultation processes, grant-making and financial scrutiny and that
- there are differences of ethnicity and culture, experience and struggles against racism, demography, patterns of settlement, gender, age, outlook and religion.

All partners acknowledge that institutional racism (as defined by the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry) exists and will work together with BME groups to develop guidelines for supporting the diverse population of Southwark.

The statutory sector will:

- ensure that BME and other socially excluded groups, voluntary and community organisations have an equal opportunity to participate in multi-agency partnerships;
- ensure that BME organisations and other socially excluded groups have equal access to available resources, especially those that have a significant impact on these communities;
- ensure that through policy objectives and commissioning strategies, BME voluntary and community organisations and other socially excluded groups are resourced to provide culturally sensitive services for their community, wherever possible;
- work with the voluntary, community and faith sector to encourage the development of a range of organisations to serve the needs of BME and other socially excluded groups in the borough;
- respond to the needs of groups for whom English is not the first language.

The voluntary, community and faith sector will:

- support the development of a network for BME groups;
- work with the statutory sector to encourage the development of a range of organisations to serve the needs of BME and other socially excluded groups in the borough;
- respond to the needs of groups for whom English is not the first language

7. Consultation, Involvement and Participation

Consultation plays an important part in the relationship between the sectors. It is a process by which opinions, feedback and ideas can be gathered to inform decision-making and can also be a way of building trust, inter-agency relationships and contacts.

It can be an aid to fostering ownership depending on the level of involvement and influence of those consulted. If done well the information and insight gained through consultation can inform decision making on service delivery/provision, policies, priorities and strategies.

Consultation can be defined as *"a process of dialogue that leads to a decision... dialogue implies two or more parties listening to and taking account of one another's views"*.

Distinctions need to be made between consultation and:

Information – providing information to groups as passive recipients – through exhibitions, seminars or leaflets – if comments are invited the process approaches consultation.

Participation – getting views from groups or involving them in planning in meaningful ways that give opportunities to set the agenda and have some control or input to the approach.

Councils, police authorities and health agencies have statutory duties to consult on a variety of issues. But more than that, managers in public bodies see consultation as a way to get the needs of the community right.

The Community Councils are becoming a key mechanism through which the people of Southwark can feed into the community planning process. Voluntary and community organisations can also act as a channel for the views of communities as well as offer different perspectives, and opportunities for fresh ideas.

Voluntary, community and faith sectors organisations also consult their users to make sure services are meeting their needs and umbrella groups consult their members to ensure they are representing members' views.

All organisations that undertake consultation have a responsibility for ensuring groups who are not a part of mainstream networks are included, and clear mechanisms for consulting equalities groups developed. This means knowing who is representing whom, how that is demonstrated and what mechanisms are in place for accountability.

Locally, a variety of methods are used for consultation, ranging from one-off questionnaires and satisfaction surveys to focus groups and interest or service related forums. These have varying levels of quality and effectiveness. Events, including conferences, seminars and workshops are also popular methods.

For public bodies the most common method is to send out documents for comment, often to an umbrella organisation. Voluntary organisations will then consult their membership/users by telephone or by holding meetings through their forums.

Some voluntary organisations engage in an ongoing service or interest related forum with public agencies and/or departments . For those organisations that are engaged the process is seen as productive. Not so for those that are not.

Much has been written on the subject of effective consultation with certain common themes that need to be considered:

The Level and Methods of Participation and Involvement

One of the more common themes is that the level of involvement and participation can adversely affect the quality and effectiveness of the consultation process. This is based not so much on the method used but on the level of power shared. Partnership, participation, and information are different levels of involvement across a spectrum and sometimes consultation is more appropriate than information or participation. It is important that the level fits the purpose of the consultation and that consulting organisations are open about the level of involvement so as not to raise expectations e.g. honest about areas that are non negotiable or where decisions have been made.

There are a number of methods for consultation. Whatever method is used it is important that it is fit for purpose; that thought is given to the aim of the consultation, who is to be consulted and why, and the timetable needs to take into account any necessary action.

Time given for Consultation

Effective local consultation can be constrained by deadlines set by Government or other external bodies that affect timing.

Time-scales differ across departments/agencies depending on the kind of consultation. Some voluntary organisations reported consultations where they were given a document and asked to respond in less than a month and, in some cases less than a week. Too little time means that organisations may not be able to respond appropriately, consult their members or users or participate at all.

Lack of Feedback

A key part of the consultation process is feeding back to consultees and showing how and why decisions have been reached. Evaluation of the consultation process can highlight successful consultation that can be shared as good practice and areas for improvement.

Resources

Consultation can be resource intensive. Resources were considered to be key barriers for both sectors. Good consultation can be resource and time intensive. Many organisations have less than three staff and time taken to engage in consultation can be time taken from delivery of their core service. For very small groups that have one person and little or no income it may be necessary to reimburse expenses in order that they can engage in the process.

Who to consult

Make sure the right people are consulted. A distinction needs to be made between targeted consultation and 'cherry picking' to ensure the right views are obtained and the right groups are included.

Good examples were directly linked to the level of involvement and participation in the process e.g. the Compact process, feeding into contract specification and being asked to actually run the consultation. In Southwark, ongoing dialogue was linked to the sense of involvement and influence. The more involved, the greater the capacity to influence. This may be due to the opportunity to build trust on both sides.

Undertakings

All partners will work together to ensure consultation is effective and inclusive and will:

- aim to make processes clear, open and accessible;
- acknowledge the constraints of time and resources and the effect this may have on their ability to undertake or respond to consultation.

The statutory sector will:

- be clear who is being consulted and why;
- give consideration to relevant national standards
- value the contribution of the voluntary, community and faith sector;
- recognise that on-going dialogue is the preferred method for consultation and use that where possible;
- when using other methods ensure they are fit for purpose and appropriate to that consultation;
- seek to identify ways in which the costs to the voluntary, community and faith sectors of participating in consultation exercises can be found;
- take into account specific needs, interests and contributions of those parts of the sector that represent women, minority groups and other socially excluded groups;
- make sure any documents sent out are written in clear, jargon-free language and, where appropriate, in accessible formats for people who cannot read;
- except when working to Central Government deadlines, aim to give the voluntary, community and faith sector the recommended minimum of 12 weeks to respond;
- be clear in all consultation processes what can be influenced and what is non-negotiable and the reasons why;
- feedback results of consultation and the actions that will follow, providing explanations for decisions taken, particularly where a diversity of views has been received.

The voluntary, community and faith sector will:

- define and demonstrate how and who they represent
- work together to develop a mechanism for representative dialogue

8. Volunteering

The following definitions of volunteering have been adopted by the National Guidelines on Volunteering and Community Action.

Volunteering has been described as:

"an important expression of citizenship and essential to democracy. It is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community and can take many forms. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain"

" any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than or in addition to close relatives, or to benefit the environment"

Voluntary activity in Great Britain amounts to about the equivalent of £51bn to national accounts, 7% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Volunteers can provide strategic expertise for an organisation as a member of a board of trustees, management or executive committee. Volunteers can also be involved in the day-to-day activities of an organisation e.g. counselling, fund-raising, leading an initiative, hospital 'friends', involvement in consultation processes and campaigning. Volunteers are an integral part of voluntary and community organisations. Many small organisations would be unable to operate without volunteers. "Hidden Volunteers" can be found carrying out types of public duty e.g. school governors, trade union reps, lay magistrates.

- 22 million adults are involved in formal volunteering each year.
- 90 million hours of formal voluntary work takes place each week.
- Six out of ten volunteers say volunteering gives them an opportunity to learn new skills.
- Half of all volunteers get involved because they were asked to help
- 90% of the population agrees with the notion that a society with volunteers shows a caring society.
- The total public sector support for volunteering is estimated to be in the region of £400 million per year.
- For every £1 volunteer involving organisations spend supporting volunteering they can expect a notional payback of up to 14 times that amount.

It has been estimated that volunteers in Southwark do the jobs of 2,583 full time equivalent workers thereby making a significant contribution to the economic well-being of Southwark.

Economic and social exclusion barriers may discourage or prevent people from getting involved in volunteering. The National Survey of Volunteering found that people earning under £4000pa were less likely to volunteer than people with higher incomes (over £25000pa).

There are a large number of voluntary, community and faith organisations working in the community, whose main role is to recruit, train and support volunteers. Many of these organisations in Southwark are also dependent on the large number of volunteers involved in the delivery of their services.

Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) is now a major force in volunteering as a growing number of companies recognise the clear connection between health and profitability of their business and the health and general well-being of the community in which they carry out their commercial activities. ESV projects support volunteers each year from businesses to find quality volunteering opportunities. Examples range from Team Challenges, involving groups of staff in practical team building exercises such as painting a community centre or carrying out environment improvements, to individuals applying their specific skills in specific ways.

By being involved in the community a company can demonstrate that it is serious about its corporate social responsibility and at the same time bring new skills and energies to helping address social exclusion as well as contribute to social and economic regeneration.

Undertakings

The statutory, voluntary, community and faith sectors will:

- produce and publish their policies for involving volunteers with measurable targets for extending involvement of volunteers;
- identify the type of resources being put to supporting volunteering and community activity, and the level needed to achieve policy objectives;
- recognise that as part of the reciprocal relationship, volunteers should be given thanks and recognition for their contribution at the very least. They should get fair treatment, training and support according to the resources of the organisation with which they are involved

The statutory sector will:

- recognise the value of unpaid work done by volunteers as equivalent to paid work;
- increase staff awareness of volunteer contributions to departmental objectives and how departmental objectives fit with Active Citizenship, Social Exclusion, Lifelong Learning, Work-Life Balance, and other relevant social policy objectives;

- where match funding is required, auditable records of volunteer time donated should be accepted as equal status to money;
- recognise that volunteering infrastructure bodies should be independent voluntary sector organisations with voluntary management boards;
- support initiatives to provide accessible information about volunteering opportunities and how to get involved;
- continue to support appropriate recognition for volunteering and voluntary and community organisations.

The voluntary, community and faith sector will:

- ensure that staff recruiting, inducting and managing volunteers should have this work recognised as part of their job descriptions and work plans;
- ensure proper records are kept of how funding supports volunteering and the value this produces

9. Premises

There are a wide variety of voluntary and community groups occupying Council premises in Southwark. There is also a desperate need for space for new and emerging community organisations. At present there is no consistency in policy in relation to lease agreements or rents/rates charged.

The development of this Compact creates an opportunity to resolve a number of issues in relation to premises and sustainability. It will also support a process which ultimately could enable the achievement of the following:

- the development of a borough wide strategy in relation to premises use and sustainability.
- the identification of practical ways of utilising the substantial value of premises assets, owned by the Local Authority, to strengthen local communities.
- the development of a methodology which promotes a 'joined-up' cross-sectoral approach to sustainable neighbourhood regeneration.

Substantial work is needed to identify, appropriately address and resolve these on-going issues by agreement between the Compact Partner agencies.

Undertakings.

The Compact Partner agencies will:

- work towards a better understanding of their different perspectives, needs and constraints, to develop a borough wide strategy in relation to premises;

- define the main principles of the relationship between the Local Authority and the community/voluntary sector governing the joint development of premises;
- create a more structured, fair and transparent approach to the processes and procedures (legal and financial) whereby community/voluntary organisations occupy Council premises.
- identify practical ways in which voluntary sector intermediary organisations can support asset owning and/or community network management;
- work with the voluntary, community and faith sector to develop and implement a comprehensive policy in relation to premises; leases, rents, rates, repairs etc.

The Council will ensure that it builds on the above commitments by carrying out the following:

- explore current arrangements and identify main problems/issues.
- carry out a mapping exercise and compile a database of properties currently occupied by voluntary and community organisations.
- compile and keep up-to-date a database of available premises.
- provide information, training and support on related issues such as planning permission, funding opportunities, lease negotiation.
- provide technical information, training and support to the voluntary and community sectors to enable the effective management, development and sustainability of premises e.g. health and safety, risk assessment, disabled access, community premises network.
- liaise, consult and negotiate with the voluntary and community sectors on the specific details of a premises strategy.

The voluntary and community sectors will ensure that:

- organisations explore and develop a combination and variety of funding options for community premises.
- the sector takes responsibility for managing and running community buildings within the constraints of lease and other arrangements.
- work with the Council to provide infrastructure support, information and resources as appropriate.
- it takes responsibility for being properly consulted and has sufficient financial and legal information to undertake any property commitments.
- participate as appropriate in networks and support structures.
- promote and develop the skills within the sector regarding premises management.
- maximise the use of community buildings by other voluntary and community organisations and service users.

10. Conflict Resolution

Southwark's Compact seeks to clarify and enhance the relationships between the Partners. It is recognised however that different accountabilities and agendas could create areas of disagreement and/or conflict. In a number of cases it will be possible to resolve an issue without recourse to a formal procedure.

The successful implementation of the Compact will depend on willingness by all parties to examine practice in an open and honest way. Disputes about the meaning of the Compact and its application in practice can be used to assist this process.

For disputes that need some form of arbitration there is the Southwark Compact Conflict Resolution Group (SCCRG) which has three representatives from each of the voluntary and statutory sector.¹ Key operating arrangements will be:

- The Group will operate on complaints made to it but will expect to see that some attempt had been made to resolve the dispute before any referral to it.
- The Group will not have any binding powers to enforce its views but will work initially to find a resolution to an issue that has agreement of all parties. If no resolution is possible the Group will then have the option of reporting its findings formally to the relevant statutory body and to Community Action Southwark
- Any voluntary or community group, but particularly smaller groups, will be able to ask for support in presenting their case to SCCRG.
- Any member of the SCCRG directly involved in a dispute will be disqualified from hearing the dispute.
- The SCCRG will prepare an annual report on its operations.
- The Group will be jointly serviced by nominated officers from Southwark Council, Southwark Primary Care Trust and Community Action Southwark and complaints can be filed with any of these officers.

The Group should be seen as a measure of last resort and will not be expected to meet very often.

¹ At its meeting on 21 March 2011 the Council/VCS Liaison Group decided that developing this additional level of conflict resolution protocol was not a key priority and that the resources expended might not be proportionate or justified by any potential benefits that might result. The VCS liaison group can fulfil this role in terms of ownership of the overriding principles around conflict resolution. In addition complaints to or about individual stakeholder organisations should be directed through their own in-house complaints procedures.

11. Monitoring, Review and Ongoing Development of the Compact

The Compact is just one stage in an ongoing process of building and developing relations between the sectors. Progress will be monitored on an annual basis.