



Working it out together

# The Redbridge Compact

2003/06

**Compact** [kóm\_pakt]

A joint agreement between a council and the local voluntary and community sector to build trust and improve working relationships for the benefits of both parties.

# Working it out Together:

## A Redbridge Compact

The Redbridge Compact aims to promote good working arrangements between the Council and the voluntary and community sector in the Borough. This follows the launch of the National Compact for England and the production of guidelines on behalf of the Home Office.

### Background

The Council invited the Local Authority/Voluntary Sector Partnership to lead the development of a Redbridge Compact. The Partnership itself consists of elected voluntary and community sector representatives and Councillors. Work began with a Community Conference in January 2002 and was followed by a series of workshops, consultations and regular editions of the Compact Newsletter. This has led to the production of the Redbridge Compact and a supporting Code of Good Practice.

In recognition of the complementary and vital roles played by both sectors in the social, cultural, economic and environmental life of the Borough, the Redbridge Compact aims to promote trust, co-operation and improved relationships. In this respect, the Compact is an important component of the Redbridge Strategic Partnership and delivery of the Redbridge Community Strategy.

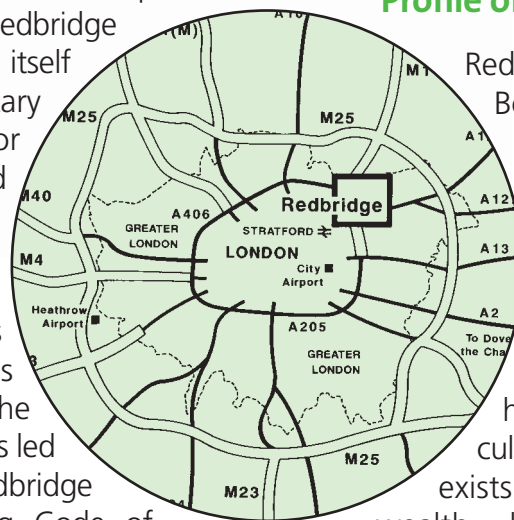
Some of the issues that local people have said are important to them are:

- Developing and involving local communities
- Improving communication and consultation
- Increasing access to services

- Improving access to funding
- Focusing on action and not words
- Measuring the effectiveness of the Compact.

To these ends, Best Value opens up new opportunities for the involvement of the voluntary and community sector in the work of the Council and the delivery of its services. It also provides the framework for evaluating the effectiveness of the Compact.

### Profile of Redbridge



Redbridge is an outer London Borough. Located in the North East of London, it has a population of 238,625 residents. A place of historic buildings, attractive parks, good schools, extensive transport links and busy town centres, Redbridge is home to people of many cultures and faiths. Diversity also exists in terms of material wealth, housing, employment and leisure opportunities.

The **Council** is represented by 63 elected Councillors and is structured around a Cabinet with a Leader, Scrutiny Committees and Area (ward based) Committees. It is supported by 19 Service Areas. Its purpose is to govern the Borough, provide community leadership and deliver services to residents. It therefore has a vested interest of the Borough, its residents and stakeholders.

The **voluntary and community sector** in Redbridge plays an essential role in the civic life of the Borough, the quality of life of local residents and is a significant employer. There are in the region of 1,000 small to medium-sized groups or organisations recorded in the

Borough. The sector serves a key role in developing a democratic and inclusive society, reaching out to those who remain under-represented.

The term 'voluntary and community sector' is used to describe the activities of voluntary organisations and community groups collectively.

**Voluntary organisations** are usually formally constituted, but are independent and non-profit making. They are governed by voluntary management committees, or boards of trustees and may employ paid staff. These include charities, housing associations, friendly societies, religious (faith based) organisations, sports, arts, environmental and political groups.

**Community groups** are formed by people who have come together to respond to common issues or interests and is often locality based. They are run by their members, having no paid staff and limited funding. These include self-help groups, tenant or resident associations, local clubs and societies.

### The Compact, its Purpose and Usage

The Redbridge Compact aims to create a new approach to partnership working and relationships built on trust, confidence and mutual benefit. It sets out the principles and commitments that underpin the evolving relationship between the Council and the voluntary and community sector in Redbridge.

The Compact is supported by a Code of Practice that turns the principles and commitments into good practice. These documents are building blocks of the Redbridge Community Strategy.

Benefits arising from the Compact include:

- Developing and delivering on strategies, policies and services to meet local need and Government requirements
- Setting standards by which future working will be assessed
- Giving the voluntary and community sector a real voice in decision and policy making, and service delivery
- Developing a consistent approach to the funding of voluntary organisations and community groups
- Simplifying Council processes and procedures and promoting the use of straight forward language
- Assisting groups to acquire the knowledge, information and skills they need to be recognised by funding bodies
- Gaining recognition of the contribution that community, cultural and faith organisations make to the lives of residents in the Borough
- Strengthening voluntary activity throughout the Borough.

Through the Redbridge Strategic Partnership, local Health Trusts and other public bodies will be invited to adopt this Compact.



## Shared Vision

*The underlying belief of a local Compact is that achieving a strong and vibrant voluntary and community activity is fundamental to a democratic, socially inclusive and cohesive society. It recognises that:*

- The Council and the voluntary and community sector have a number of shared values and complementary functions. These should be promoted and developed for the benefit of the residents of the Borough
- The voluntary and community sector brings its own values to society and, therefore has a role that is distinct from both the public and private sectors
- Voluntary organisations and community groups make a major contribution to the development of society and to the social, cultural, spiritual, economic, environmental, and political life of the Borough. They develop new ways of involving users in the design and delivery of services, and represent those who are not heard. In so doing, they promote equity, diversity and inclusion
- Faith groups have a range of resources and offer support to their members and the wider community. Faith groups have the ability to reach some of the most excluded residents in the Borough.

*By recognising these attributes, the Council plays a positive role in promoting volunteering and supporting the work of the sector.*

## Shared Principles

*The Compact is an expression of the commitment by the Council and the voluntary and community sector to work in partnership to improve the quality of life of residents in the Borough. The shared principles that underpin the Compact are that:*

- Voluntary action is an essential part of an effective, caring and democratic society
- A strong, independent and diverse voluntary and community sector is essential for the well-being of society
- The Council and the voluntary and community sector have distinct, but complementary roles, in the development of public policy and provision of services. However, each will strive for excellence and equality of access
- Meaningful consultation and participation add value, build relationships, improve policy development and enhance the design and provision of services, projects and programmes
- The need for leadership is common to both the Council and the voluntary and community sector. It embraces consultation, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and trust
- Resources and sharing are key elements of the relationship between the Council and the voluntary and community sector
- A wide range of communities co-exist in the Borough. In planning services, the Council and community organisation must work together to address diversity and equality of access to those services
- Listening to, and respect for one another, are fundamental to the development of good working relationships.



## Commitments by Redbridge Council

- Recognising the role and independence of the voluntary and community sector and its right to campaign on behalf of its members
- Recognising the standards that apply to Board members, staff and volunteers of the voluntary and community sector
- Adhering to the principles set out in this Compact
- Allocating resources to the voluntary and community sector using clear, consistent and published criteria
- Investing in the infrastructure of the voluntary and community sector and, where possible, assisting groups to secure sustainable funding
- Promoting volunteering in Redbridge
- Improving communication and consultation with the voluntary and community sector
  - Whenever appropriate, involving the voluntary and community sector in policy making
    - Increasing opportunities for the participation by all parts of the voluntary and community sector in service planning and delivery



- Working with voluntary organisations and community groups at a local level to develop and implement standards and best practice
- Ensuring that the Compact and the Code of Good Practice are adopted throughout the Council and promoting their adoption by other public bodies
  - Reporting annually on progress, reviewing and updating the Compact on a regular basis.

## Commitments by the Voluntary and Community Sector

- Acting as an independent voice for residents and their representatives
- Recognising the duties placed upon the Council and the restrictions that limit the provision of services
- Adhering to the principles set out in this Compact
- Meeting their legal obligation to members and funding bodies and where applicable, observing the guidance set out by the Charities Commission
- Improving communication and consultation with their members, service users and the Council
- Strengthening and maintaining good joint working arrangements for the delivery of services
- Developing and maintaining high standards of governance and conduct
- Measuring the impact of policy and service changes on their members, informing service users, volunteers and service providers accordingly

- Working with their members, service users and the Council at a local level to develop and implement standards and best practice
- Providing statutory bodies with a named contact for their organisation.

## Resolving Disagreements

Each party has the right to raise concerns, be listened to positively and receive a response. To actively prevent disagreements from occurring, information should be shared as widely as possible. However, should a dispute arise because either of the parties fails to follow the Compact or the Code of Good Practice, a three stage process will apply.

1. Both sides should have informal discussions to seek resolution
2. If an agreement is not reached, an independent investigator will be appointed and if necessary, seek the support of a mediator. The findings of the independent investigator will be referred to both parties
3. Should the voluntary and community sector remain dissatisfied with the outcome of mediation, they can take their concerns to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Further detail is provided in the Code of Good Practice.

## Code of Good Practice

A Code of Good Practice has been developed to provide guidance on how this Compact should be used. It contains standards and indicators against which the effectiveness of the Compact will be measured. The Code gives particular attention to:

- Consultation
- Policy Development & Service Delivery
- Involving Black & Minority Ethnic Groups

- Involving Faith Groups
- Volunteering
- Funding.

## Implementation & Review

The Local Authority/Voluntary Sector Partnership will develop a three year Plan to deliver the action points arising from the Code of Good Practice. The work of monitoring the progress of the Action Plan and the effectiveness of the Compact will be carried out jointly by the Council and the voluntary and community sector.

A half-yearly newsletter and an Annual Report will be produced setting out progress and problems faced in implementing the Action Plan. A formal review of the Compact and Code will take place after three years of its implementation.

This Compact was adopted by Cabinet, on behalf of the Council, on the 22nd July 2003. It was endorsed by the Voluntary Sector Network, on behalf of the voluntary and community sector, on the 2nd September 2003.

## Further Information

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 website: [www.redbridge.gov.uk/community](http://www.redbridge.gov.uk/community)

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 Website: [www.redbridgecvs.net](http://www.redbridgecvs.net)

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 Voluntary Sector Partnership on behalf of the