

A Local Compact for Wandsworth

Wandsworth Compact Steering Group

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1. Building a local compact for Wandsworth

What is a compact? Building Partnerships

1.1 A compact is an agreement between the public or statutory sector and the voluntary and community sectors to work together more effectively to serve the local community. A national compact was launched by the government in 1998 with cross-party support.

1.2 In Wandsworth, the local compact involves two of the largest statutory public sector organisations, Wandsworth Borough Council (WBC) and Wandsworth Primary Care Trust (WPCT), and the many voluntary and community organisations in the borough.

1.3 A compact is not just a piece of paper. It is a part of a process of bringing the public and voluntary sectors together to share views and to be honest with one another about what they think works and what does not. Compacts are not legally binding documents. They rely on a shared commitment and mutual respect built through dialogue.

1.4 The Wandsworth Compact is part of that process of dialogue. It offers a set of principles and joint undertakings on issues such as funding, communication and consultation and support to black and minority ethnic organisations. Creating the right framework for partnership working will take time and commitment. This compact is only the beginning of a process of building better partnerships in Wandsworth.

Why does Wandsworth need a compact?

1.5 Relations between the statutory and voluntary and community sectors in Wandsworth are not always easy. Real tensions exist on funding and consultation that a compact cannot just wish away.

1.6 Wandsworth PCT and Wandsworth Council have legal statutory duties and responsibilities for public funds to provide a range of important services to the local community including health, education, housing and social services.

1.7 There are over 700 voluntary and community organisations in Wandsworth, from local offices of national charities to small community groups. These organisations are independent; many are part of the communities and client groups that support them; and, like the statutory sector, provide important services to local people, especially at the margins of society and those most in need.

1.8 Wandsworth Council and Wandsworth PCT rely on the expertise of those working outside the statutory sector, often on a voluntary basis, to help them consult on and provide local services. As a result, many voluntary and community organisations in the borough already work closely with, and are funded by, Wandsworth Council and Wandsworth PCT. While the statutory and voluntary sectors may not always agree on what should be done – and there are important differences *between and within* the two sectors – they have much in common. They both have an interest in making Wandsworth a better place to live and work.

1.9 Local compacts are not magic wands. But with time and commitment, the Wandsworth Compact can bring advantages to all sides: to statutory providers delivering better services to local people; to voluntary and community organisations working in local communities; and to the people of Wandsworth. These advantages will come through improved partnership working brought about by mutual respect and recognition for the contributions that statutory, voluntary and community organisations make to the social fabric of Wandsworth. The objectives of the Wandsworth Compact are not just to make consultations more inclusive, policy-making more effective, contracts fairer and service level agreements more manageable, but also to contribute towards stronger and more cohesive communities in Wandsworth.

Producing the Wandsworth compact

1.10 Many statutory and voluntary sector organisations across the country have been involved in drawing up local compacts. Wandsworth can learn from this experience. The Wandsworth compact should be meaningful to those living and working in the borough. It must reflect their needs.

1.11 The Wandsworth Compact Steering Group brought together Wandsworth PCT, Wandsworth Council and organisations from the voluntary and community sectors (a full list of the steering group can be found in appendix 1).

1.12 In January 2004, the steering group commissioned the Social Research Centre at Roehampton University to carry out a consultation with local organisations and to draft a compact that would take the process of compact development forward. This compact is the result of that consultation.

1.13 The consultation lasted four months. Voluntary and community organisations, as well as officers, managers, elected members and non-executive directors from Wandsworth Council and Wandsworth PCT were able to express their views on the relationship between the public and voluntary sectors. Strong opinions were voiced. But in spite of differences of view, all sides were agreed on the need to:

- Improve how organisations communicated with one another
- Encourage participation in consultation
- Make funding mechanisms more open and policy-driven
- Build the organisational capacity of under-represented organisations
- Support volunteering

1.14 Underpinning these points were concerns about the need to build mutual respect and recognition; and to value diversity and fairness.

Taking the compact forward

1.15 Writing a local compact is part of a process of establishing confidence and trust between the statutory and voluntary sectors. The Wandsworth Compact is not exhaustive. It offers a framework for building partnerships across the borough. It is a statement of intent.

1.16 There is work to be done. As the process of building a Wandsworth compact continues, these principles of good practice will need developing and refining. In 2005, the development of the Wandsworth compact will focus on three areas:

- Consultation and policy-formation
- Funding, resources and governance
- Support for black and minority ethnic and under-represented organisations

1.17 These will form part of a compact action plan that will set out a timetable for the implementation of the Wandsworth compact; the mechanisms to disseminate the principles and undertakings of the compact to organisations across the statutory and voluntary sectors; and the means of monitoring and compliance. This action plan can be found in appendix 2.

2. The Wandsworth compact: values and principles

2.1 What values should be built into the Wandsworth compact? What principles should shape the working relationships between statutory and voluntary sectors?

2.2 Whatever may be current practice in Wandsworth, the aim of a local compact is to establish a new framework for partnership working. Any framework built to last needs a set of values and principles that organisations share. This does not mean that Wandsworth PCT, Wandsworth Council – members and officers – and the great diversity of voluntary and community organisations across the borough should always agree with one another. But it should mean that there is a framework that allows them to agree to disagree - and to keep working together in support of the local community.

2.3 The starting point, then, for any compact is diversity. The compact must recognise the diversity of organisations in Wandsworth; the diversity of the population that these organisations serve; the different views and interests that organisations may have (including campaigning and advocacy roles); and the different constraints organisations work under.

- **Principle 1:** *The statutory, voluntary and community sectors acknowledge the diversity of organisations across the borough; respect the contribution and independence of other organisations; and will work to build mutual respect and understanding among those organisations*

2.4 Relationships between the statutory and voluntary sectors in Wandsworth can be strained because of a sense of inequality and unfairness, in particular, regarding funding and policy decisions. Wandsworth Council and Wandsworth PCT are bound by statutory obligations and responsibilities for public funds. Wandsworth council is subject to local democratic politics. The voluntary and community sectors represent and support local communities, as well as providing services responsive to the needs of particular client groups.

Within this framework, the Wandsworth compact should work to instil fairness in relations between statutory and voluntary organisations, while recognising the important differences that will inevitably remain between them.

- **Principle 2:** *The statutory, voluntary and community sectors agree to build relationships with one another that are fair; which display honesty and openness; and which acknowledge the sharing of responsibilities between the statutory and voluntary sectors.*

2.5 Statutory and voluntary sector organisations exist to serve the needs and well being of individual people, the communities in which they live and the wider public good. The Wandsworth compact should acknowledge the commitment to representing the people of Wandsworth and to improving the delivery of public services in the borough.

- **Principle 3:** *The statutory, voluntary and community sectors agree to work together to support and represent the people of Wandsworth and to provide services under the principle of Best Value [see glossary].*

3. Communication and consultation

Communication

3.1 Good communication is essential in any successful partnership. It can foster a sense of value in another organisation's work. Good communication requires honesty and openness, even if the news is bad. It is as much about management culture as it about formal procedures. Channels of communication, especially those concerning funding, need to be simple, transparent and accessible. Informal communication for those not in the know can be a source of exclusion. Good communication should be two-way: a dialogue between partners that builds mutual understanding and respect.

➤ ***Undertaking 1***

The statutory, voluntary and community sectors agree to work towards establishing appropriate management and communication systems between the statutory and voluntary sector, within the statutory sector and across the voluntary sector.

➤ ***Action points***

- 1. All parties to support the setting up of a borough-wide umbrella organisation for the voluntary and community sectors; business plan to be developed by June 2005*
- 2. New umbrella organisation to provide accessible information on funding opportunities*
- 3. Statutory sector organisations to provide 'key contacts' information*
- 4. All groups to have opportunity to publicise their work using statutory and voluntary sector communication networks*

Consultation and community engagement

3.2 Getting the process of consultation and community engagement right is vital for good communication and for building effective partnerships in

Wandsworth. Too often groups feel excluded from the policy-making process; that decisions have already been made; that consultations are last minute, coming at the end of a process not at the beginning; and that decisions are not fed back appropriately. Moreover, it is not always clear which groups should be consulted or who might have an interest in consultation.

3.3 Improving the process of consultation and community engagement with organisations, communities and users is about clarity, timing, representation, participation and making the process meaningful to all parties.

➤ **Undertaking 2**

The statutory, voluntary and community sectors will work to improve the process of consultation and community engagement as part of the policy-making process in the borough.

➤ **Action point**

By August 2005, a borough-wide model of best practice for consultation will be developed. Following the consultation for the Wandsworth compact, this model will ensure that consultations and community engagements are:

- *Made in good time, documentation is accessible, the purpose of the consultation clearly stated and the results fed back to relevant communities*
- *Inclusive: special consideration should be given to reaching those organisations, communities and users not normally part of the policy-making process*
- *Supportive of wider participation and engagement of voluntary and community organisations in local policy-making processes*

4. Resources and Funding

4.1 Funding decisions by statutory bodies – national and local - to areas of policy, as well as to particular organisations, will always be a source of controversy. Resources are limited and views will differ about what should be funded. A local compact cannot resolve such differences. But it can create a framework for partnership working that guarantees greater openness and transparency in the allocation, management and monitoring of resources.

➤ **Undertaking 3**

The statutory, voluntary and community sectors agree that the allocation of resources should be made against clear and consistent policy criteria in keeping with the principles of Best Value. Funding policies should:

- *Acknowledge the different objectives and capacities of statutory, voluntary and community organisations and their need to operate efficiently, effectively and strategically in response to local need*
- *Recognise that voluntary and community sector organisations are not-for-profit and the balance of financial risk, therefore, should be shared in the pursuit of common goals*
- *Take into consideration the legal and financial regulatory frameworks within which statutory, voluntary and community sectors work*
- *Acknowledge the political imperatives of national and local public policy-making*

➤ **Action points**

1. *Funding bodies to work towards multi-year funding, where appropriate, to assist longer term planning and stability*
2. *Funding bodies to support the diversification of funding sources and resources to support the voluntary and community sectors*

➤ **Undertaking 4**

The statutory, voluntary and community sectors agree to developing high standards of governance and conduct in meeting the obligations to funders and users. This includes reporting, accountability and the development of quality standards appropriate to the organisation.

➤ **Action point**

A funding and good governance framework will be developed by December 2005 as part of the first year compact action plan. Following the consultation for the Wandsworth compact, this framework will include:

- *Common, transparent and appropriate arrangements for agreeing and evaluating objectives, performance indicators and their associated targets*
- *Appropriate monitoring arrangements and processes to facilitate prompt payment and the reviewing of financial support*
- *Consultation procedures for changes to funding to ensure that contract and grant holders are informed about future funding as early as possible*
- *An accounting framework for charities and guidance from the Charity Commission, including guidance on political activities and campaigning*

5. Black and minority ethnic and under-represented organisations

5.1 Ethnically Wandsworth is a diverse borough and becoming more so. Many voluntary and community groups represent the borough's black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, as well as serving their particular needs. Some of these organisations are under-represented and are considered 'hard to reach': not well connected to the communication, consultation and funding networks of the borough. There are other voluntary organisations, usually smaller community groups, which are also under-represented. Many of these organisations serve people like the disabled and young people who themselves can be hard to reach.

5.2 It was agreed by all parties in the consultation that a compact – its principles and undertakings – would serve *all* organisations, including black and minority ethnic voluntary and other under-represented community groups. But it was also acknowledged, that these groups have additional needs – and that a compact could go some way to help meeting those needs.

5.3 These needs reflect the capacity of many black and minority ethnic and other hard to reach organisations to participate in and engage with the policy-making process, including securing funding, on an equal footing. The consultation supported the view that the capacity of black and minority ethnic organisations, as well as other small community-based groups, to make their views known and to establish meaningful partnerships with the statutory sector towards shared goals was inadequate. The capacity of under-represented organisations to engage in partnership working should be supported by the statutory sector bodies through appropriate mechanisms of communication and consultation. To do this, the statutory sector should build its own capacity to communicate with under-represented organisations. It should also consider the best way to allocate resources to those organisations that serve the needs of under-represented communities.

➤ **Undertaking 5**

The statutory, voluntary and community sectors agree to develop initiatives to support capacity-building programmes. These initiatives will enable black and minority ethnic and other under-represented organisations to access and participate in the consultation and policy-making processes in Wandsworth.

Action points

- 1. All parties agree to supporting equal opportunities in consultation and funding processes as a means of recognising and accessing BME and other under-represented organisations*
- 2. The 2005 Compact Action Plan to include the development of a learning plan to support the participation and involvement by under-represented organisations on borough-wide forums*

Appendix 1: Wandsworth Compact Steering Group

Fitzroy Beckford, Wandsworth Care Alliance

Chris Blyth, Economic Development Office, Wandsworth Council

Brian Colman, Social Services, Wandsworth Council

Stephen Driver, Roehampton University

Sean Farran, Wandsworth Primary Care Trust

Margaret Adjeye, Wandsworth Primary Care Trust

Maurice Heaster, Deputy Leader Wandsworth Council

Clare Kakembo, Wandsworth Access Association of Disabled People

Alex King (Vice Chair), Wandsworth African Caribbean Association

Stefan Kuchar (Chair), Wandsworth Volunteer Bureau

Diane Rooney, St Georges Hospital

Judith Roscoe, Economic Development Office, Wandsworth Council

Razia Shariff, Wandsworth Community Empowerment Fund Network

Alan Sharp, Tooting Churches Together

Eglionna Treanor, Wandsworth Carer's Centre

Sally Warren, Generate

Henrietta Wells, Wandsworth Primary Care Trust

Appendix 2: Wandsworth Compact Action Plan 2005

- I. The Wandsworth Compact presented to the Wandsworth Local Strategic Partnership for endorsement - January 11 2005
- II. The Wandsworth Compact signed and endorsed by the statutory, voluntary and community sectors – January 2005
- III. A new Wandsworth Compact Working Group established (to include statutory and voluntary sector stakeholders)– April 2005

This group will take over the work of the Wandsworth Compact Steering Group. It will report to the Local Strategic Partnership. Detailed terms of reference for the working group will be agreed after consultation with stakeholders.

The role of the Wandsworth Compact Working Group will be to:

- Promote the development of the Wandsworth Compact
- Monitor progress towards achieving the first year action points
- Review annually the Wandsworth Compact
- Develop a model of best practice for consultation
- Develop a funding and good governance framework
- Learning plan to support the participation and involvement by under-represented organisations
- Act as the first point of contact for disputes arising from the Wandsworth Compact and report back to the LSP

The working group will oversee that the following action plan works towards meeting the following milestones and target dates:

- I.** Wandsworth model of best practice for consultation completed - August 2005

- II.** Funding and good governance framework completed - December 2005

- III.** Learning plan to support the participation and involvement by under-represented organisations on borough-wide forums completed – December 2005

- IV.** First annual review and report from the Wandsworth Compact Working Group – April 2006

Appendix 3: Glossary

BME

Black and minority ethnic

Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

The [Wandsworth] Local Strategic Partnership is an organisation bringing together the statutory, voluntary and community sectors in order to 'look at ways to improve the quality of life for those living and working in the borough'.

PCT

Primary Care Trust

WBC

Wandsworth Borough Council