

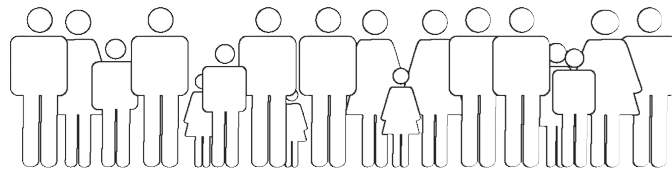
Bedfordshire and Luton

COMPACT

getting it right together

Code of Good Practice

Consultation and Partnership



**Developing a better working relationship between
statutory, voluntary and community organisations**

CONSULTATION AND PARTNERSHIP – CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE

1. Aims

1.1 This Code of Good Practice aims to promote and improve awareness and understanding between sectors about consultation and working in partnership through:

- purposeful consultation which encourages and promotes clarity, equality and a recognition of diversity
- effective communication and feedback
- clear guidelines on successful partnership working
- sharing knowledge, experience and expertise

2. In supporting this code, the statutory sector undertakes to:

2.1 consult the voluntary and community sector on issues that are likely to affect it

2.2 build consultation into planning cycles

2.3 be approachable and maintain open communication links with the voluntary and community sector

2.3 Example

Bedford Borough Council, in partnership with North Bedfordshire Council for Voluntary Service, held the 'Voluntary Organisations Forum' on 4th June 2003 at the Harpur Suite. Over four hundred organisations were invited to the event, which this year took the form of four workshops covering the Compact Codes of Good Practice. The day served as a valuable consultation and feedback exercise giving the opportunity for a wide range of organisations to have an input into the Codes.

2.4 consult as early as possible and give a reasonable time in which to respond

2.5 take account of the impact on the voluntary and community sector when developing and reviewing policies and procedures

2.6 seek to recognise and utilise the skills, experience and contacts of existing organisations in order to prevent duplication

2.7 be aware of additional resource implications to the voluntary and community sector in undertaking consultations

3. In supporting this code, the voluntary and community sector undertakes to:

- 3.1 advise the statutory sector of, and provide access to, specific groups and/or clients, with due reference to data protection and confidentiality
- 3.2 encourage and support user involvement
- 3.3 acknowledge national constraints upon the local statutory sector
- 3.4 feed back issues and information from user groups, which could influence service development

3.4 Example

VOUCH (Voluntary Organisations, Users and Carers Uniting for Care and Health) held two events for their members on 14th October 2003. The first, 'Children and Young People with Disabilities – A Dialogue for Change' was a chance for participants to hear from, and talk to, service providers from Bedfordshire with a view to making children's services more appropriate for their users. The second event provided an opportunity for members to be involved in the national 'Fair for All, Personal to You' consultation process, aimed at improving patient choice. Relevant issues raised were also fed to Bedford Primary Care Trust, Bedfordshire County Council Social Services and Bedfordshire Heartlands Primary Care Trust, who were there on the day, for local action.

- 3.5 consult with users on relevant operational issues based on need
- 3.6 use their resources and systems to support the consultation process and involve the wider community

4. In supporting this code, both sectors undertake to:

- 4.1 acknowledge the value of ongoing dialogue to establish, develop and maintain partnerships
- 4.2 value equality and diversity with regard to contribution and mutual benefit

4.2 Example

The Learning and Skills Council Bedfordshire and Luton (LSC) is working in partnership with North Bedfordshire Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) to raise the quality of provision for learners on LSC discretionary funded programmes in Bedfordshire and Luton. North Bedfordshire CVS is providing an introduction to those organisations that chose to use the PQASSO (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations) quality model. This partnership approach develops capacity of smaller organisations largely from the voluntary and community sector to improve services to their clients and enables them to access other sources of funding more effectively in the future. It also helps the LSC in improving performance of service providers, widening participation in learning and increasing skill levels of local communities.

- 4.3 inform sectors and organisations of service development and identified gaps in provision
- 4.4 define and agree roles and responsibilities
- 4.5 encompass these partnership principles in new and existing partnerships and forums
- 4.6 feed back promptly to each other throughout the process in order to:
 - demonstrate what has been achieved
 - learn lessons from the process and act on them
- 4.7 strive to eliminate barriers to giving and receiving information
- 4.8 respect confidentiality of information
- 4.9 undertake consultation without preconceptions
- 4.10 provide comprehensive and relevant information
- 4.11 communicate early and clearly, using appropriate and accessible formats
- 4.12 clarify the rationale for consultation and be clear about what can and can't be changed – in order not to raise expectations
- 4.13 promote good practice through training and development
- 4.14 aim for any partnership working to be effective, as defined by the partners
 - seeking to improve how the partnership performs
 - demonstrating real results through collaboration
 - having common interest superseding partner interest
 - using the word “we” when talking about partnership matters
 - being mutually accountable for tasks and outcomes
 - sharing responsibilities and rewards
 - striving to develop and maintain trust
 - being willing to change what they do and how they do it