

**Bedfordshire and Luton**

# Compact

**getting it right together**



## Foreword

I welcome the publication of the **Bedfordshire and Luton Compact** as a document that aims to draw together the key principles of effective partnership working between the voluntary, community and statutory organisations in Bedfordshire and Luton.

In a small County like ours resources always seem to be in short supply. The Compact will help to avoid duplication, provide a forum for the encouragement of the sharing of ideas and good practice, and for networking.

I particularly welcome the commitment of the Local Authorities, and other statutory agencies, to work together with the voluntary and community sector in developing services and programmes necessary for the well-being of the people of Bedfordshire and Luton.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Sam Whitbread'.

**S C Whitbread**  
**Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire and Luton**

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## **Key Points**

**The Bedfordshire and Luton Compact is a working document aimed at developing a close, efficient and more effective equal working partnership between local voluntary and community organisations and statutory agencies**

### **What's in it for you if you commit to the principles of the Compact?**

#### **Voluntary and Community Organisations**

- A definition of partnership which goes beyond funding and includes a whole range of voluntary organisations - large and small - and not just those funded by public bodies
- Open arrangements for agreeing and evaluating objectives
- Consultation on changes to funding positions
- Recognition of the importance of infrastructure in order to develop services
- Consultation, within reasonable timescales, on issues that are likely to affect you, for example, the delivery of statutory services

#### **Statutory Agencies**

- A definition of partnership which goes beyond funding and includes a whole range of voluntary organisations - large and small - and not just those funded by public bodies
- Maintain high standards of governance, conduct and accountability
- Partners will develop recognised standards that are appropriate to the role and resources of the organisation
- Partners will build strong relationships based on mutual respect and understanding
- Effective partnership to deliver high quality, reliable statutory services and improve services in local communities in line with Best Value
- Help in policy development, planning and delivery

**Our Compact is a framework document and a starting point, not a conclusion. The statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sector are committed to working together to develop how effectively it can be used.**

## Bedfordshire and Luton Compact

**This Compact shows the commitment of the statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sector in Bedfordshire and Luton to work in partnership to improve people's quality of life and to encourage and support voluntary and community activity.**

### 1. ORIGINS

*'Government and voluntary and community organisations share many aspirations, the pursuit of inclusiveness, dedication to public life, and support for the development of healthy communities. The Compact is a starting point for developing our partnership based on shared values and mutual respect.'*

Rt. Hon. Jack Straw MP

In Bedfordshire and Luton there are many good examples of effective joint working between voluntary and community organisations and the statutory sector. The local Compact aims to build on these good relationships as an essential foundation stone for the development of genuine working partnerships, especially between organisations in both sectors with little tradition and experience of joint strategic planning and delivery of services. Both sectors have much to gain from a local Compact and Codes of Good Practice.

The **Bedfordshire and Luton Compact** was initially discussed at the County Conference in October 2000. A Steering Group and subsequent Working Group were formed from those who expressed an interest at that event, and others who responded to a wider invitation to the statutory and voluntary sectors to create a new approach to working together.

### 2. PROCESS

Our Compact is a framework document and acts as a starting point. The statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sector are committed to working together to develop how effectively it can be used. As part of that process we have developed Codes of Good Practice and a Monitoring and Evaluation policy, which will influence and enhance the implementation of the Compact.

## The Bedfordshire and Luton Compact

### 3. SHARED VISION

3.1 The Compact is a general framework that helps the statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sector improve their relationships with each other. It sets out the main principles and undertakings which should underpin the relationship between them and shows their commitment to:

- work in partnership for the improved quality of life in society
- encourage and support voluntary and community activity
- jointly influence policy and planning, where appropriate

3.2 The underlying philosophy of this Compact is that voluntary and community activity is fundamental to the development of a democratic and socially inclusive society, through the alleviation of poverty and the improvement in quality of life. Partners to the Compact believe that this can be achieved by:

- a healthy independent voluntary and community sector
- encouraging people to get involved in their communities
- developing communities by providing the opportunity for voluntary action
- promoting equal opportunities and diversity

3.3 Partners to the Compact recognise and value:

- the contribution of volunteers in our society and the important role of voluntary and community organisations in supporting them
- the contribution to the economy of voluntary action in Bedfordshire and Luton
- the positive role statutory agencies can play in promoting volunteering and in supporting the work of voluntary and community organisations
- the important role and contribution of hundreds of small voluntary and community groups, whether or not they receive statutory funding. We will make sure that they are included in the ongoing Compact development process, especially with issues relating to black and minority ethnic organisations and disadvantaged groups

These attributes are a major benefit to society.

3.4 The Partners recognise that local policy and decision-making has an effect on the work of voluntary and community organisations. The Compact will make that effect a positive one.

## The Bedfordshire and Luton Compact

### 4. SHARED PRINCIPLES

**The shared principles, which underpin the Compact, are as follows:**

- 4.1 We believe voluntary action and community involvement are an essential part of a democratic society.
- 4.2 We believe that an independent and diverse voluntary and community sector is fundamental to the wellbeing of society.
- 4.3 The statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sector have distinct but complementary roles, and we believe that by working together we will achieve more for the people and communities of Bedfordshire and Luton, especially in developing and delivering public policy and services.
- 4.4 We believe genuine consultation and meaningful participation builds relationships and improves how we deliver services to the community.
- 4.5 We recognise each organisation has its own priorities. But the common priorities are the need for openness, honesty and leadership, working together, being independent and unbiased, and being responsible and accountable.
- 4.6 We recognise that the statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sector are answerable to different stakeholders. While supporting voluntary and community activity in Bedfordshire and Luton to improve the wellbeing of its residents, the statutory agencies have a responsibility to give priority in funding to activities that support their statutory responsibilities.
- 4.7 We agree that, regardless of any funding relationships, voluntary and community organisations are entitled to campaign within the law in order to achieve their aims.
- 4.8 We are committed to promoting and working for equality of opportunities in all areas of our work for all people, regardless of their ethnic background, age, disability, gender, sexuality or religion.
- 4.9 We are committed to recognising the importance of sustainability in planning and providing services.
- 4.10 We are committed to resolving any disagreements between the partners concerned in a constructive way.

## **The Bedfordshire and Luton Compact**

### **5. UNDERTAKINGS BY STATUTORY AGENCIES**

#### **In our work with voluntary and community organisations:**

- 5.1 We recognise and support the independence of voluntary and community organisations to determine and manage their own affairs in the best interests of their members and clients.
- 5.2 We recognise the importance of advocacy, including the right to campaign within the law, comment on local policies and to challenge those policies, regardless of any funding relationship that might exist.
- 5.3 We recognise and support the role and value of local voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations, for example the Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS) and the Rural Communities Charity.
- 5.4 We will promote:
  - the value of strategic multi-year funding, where appropriate, to help longer-term planning and stability
  - the allocation of resources against clear and consistent criteria including the principles of Best Value
  - funding policies which take account of the objectives of voluntary and community organisations and their need to work independently, efficiently and effectively
  - open arrangements for agreeing and evaluating objectives, performance indicators (how we measure performance) and their associated targets
  - facilitating prompt payment, consulting on changes to the funding position and letting voluntary and community organisations know about future funding as early as possible before the end of the current grant period
- 5.5 We will promote the appraisal of new policies and procedures, particularly while they are still being developed to help us identify as far as possible the implications for the voluntary and community sector.
- 5.6 We will strive to establish consultation processes which are timely and allow for a reasonable time for response. This will help us consult with service users, the people who will benefit and stakeholders.
- 5.7 We will not expect voluntary and community organisations to fulfil statutory obligations that are the responsibility of statutory agencies but will, where appropriate, contract with the voluntary and community sector to help us meet our statutory responsibilities.
- 5.8 We will make sure that we take account of the specific needs and contributions of black and minority ethnic, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.
- 5.9 We will include the voluntary and community sector in local strategic partnerships and in the developing and implementing of community strategies.

## **The Bedfordshire and Luton Compact**

### **6. UNDERTAKINGS BY VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS**

#### **In our work with statutory agencies:**

- 6.1. We recognise that statutory agencies have funding priorities and that there is a limit to the amount of money available to pay for essential and desirable services. We will actively seek opportunities to make the best possible, and most varied, use of resources.
- 6.2 We will maintain high standards of governance and conduct and meet agreed reporting and accountability obligations to funders and users.
- 6.3 We will work to develop recognised quality standards that are appropriate to the role and resources of the organisation.
- 6.4 We will make sure that users, volunteers, members and supporters are informed, involved and consulted to the greatest possible benefit in developing and managing services.
- 6.5 We will promote effective working relationships with statutory agencies, other agencies and throughout voluntary and community organisations, but will aim to avoid duplication of services.
- 6.6 When fulfilling a representative role, we as voluntary and community organisations will inform and consult with our members and users as practicable.
- 6.7 We will have policies for safeguarding and promoting equality of opportunity in employment practice, when involving volunteers, and in providing services.

### **7. JOINT UNDERTAKINGS**

#### **In our work:**

- 7.1 We will promote effective working relationships, consistency of approach and good practice between statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sector, particularly where there are issues that affect many departments and agencies.
- 7.2 We will use the skills, interests, beliefs and values of individuals and groups to enhance voluntary activity.
- 7.3 We will keep to the principles of openness and honesty so that whenever possible our decisions and findings are made public.
- 7.4 We will respect information given on a confidential basis.
- 7.5 We will encourage other public organisations to use the Compact.
- 7.6 We will aim to follow the undertakings agreed within the local Codes of Good Practice.

## The Bedfordshire and Luton Compact

The organisations below can provide further information on the Bedfordshire and Luton Compact:

### Community & Voluntary Service - Mid & North Bedfordshire

43 Bromham Rd,  
Bedford MK40 2AA  
01234 354366

☎ [info@cvsmidandnorthbeds.org.uk](mailto:info@cvsmidandnorthbeds.org.uk)  
[www.cvsmidandnorthbeds.org.uk](http://www.cvsmidandnorthbeds.org.uk)

### Mid Beds District Council

Priory House, Monks Walk  
Chicksands, Shefford  
Bedfordshire  
SG17 5TQ

☎ 08452 30 40 40  
[www.midbeds.gov.uk](http://www.midbeds.gov.uk)

### Volunteer Centre Bedford

43 Bromham Road  
Bedford MK40 2AA  
☎ 01234 213100

[vb@bedfordvb.org.uk](mailto:vb@bedfordvb.org.uk)  
[www.volunteeringbedford.org.uk](http://www.volunteeringbedford.org.uk)

### Bedford Borough Council

St Paul's Square  
Bedford MK40 1SJ  
☎ 01234 267422

[www.bedford.gov.uk](http://www.bedford.gov.uk)

### Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire

Bossard House, West Street,  
Leighton Buzzard  
LU7 1DA

☎ 01525 850559  
[mail@action-southbeds.org.uk](mailto:mail@action-southbeds.org.uk)  
[www.action-southbeds.org.uk](http://www.action-southbeds.org.uk)

### South Bedfordshire District Council

Community Involvement Manager  
High Street North  
Dunstable  
LU6 1LF

☎ 01582 474145  
[www.southbeds.gov.uk](http://www.southbeds.gov.uk)

### Voluntary Action Luton

Voluntary Resource Centre  
15 New Bedford Road  
Luton LU1 1SA

☎ 01582 733418  
[info@valuton.org.uk](mailto:info@valuton.org.uk)  
[www.valuton.org.uk](http://www.valuton.org.uk)

### Luton Borough Council

Chief Executive's Department  
Town Hall  
Luton LU1 2BQ

☎ 01582 546000  
[www.luton.org.uk](http://www.luton.org.uk)

### Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity

The Old School, Cardington  
Bedford  
MK44 3SX

☎ 01234 838771  
[www.bedsrcc.org.uk](http://www.bedsrcc.org.uk)

### Bedfordshire County Council

County Hall, Cauldwell Street  
Bedford MK42 9AP

☎ 01234 228014  
[www.bedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.bedfordshire.gov.uk)

### Bedford Race Equality Council

36 Mill Street, Bedford  
MK40 3HD

☎ 01234 350459  
[brec@fsmail.net](mailto:brec@fsmail.net)  
[www.voluntaryworks.org.uk/brec/Index.asp](http://www.voluntaryworks.org.uk/brec/Index.asp)

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