

28 October 2009

<insert addressee>

Dear Colleague

CONSULTATION OF THE CODES OF GOOD PRACTICE ON CONSULTATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Following a review of our existing Code of Good Practice on Consultation and Partnerships we have refreshed and developed the Code into two separate Codes of Good Practice, one on Consultation and the second on Partnerships. This work has been undertaken with partners from across the statutory sector and the voluntary and community sector.

It is important that we gain input from a wide range of individuals and organisations from both sectors and we have now reached the stage in this process where it is appropriate to invite your views and comments.

Please find enclosed a copy of the Consultation Document Pack, which provides full details of the consultation, information on how to submit your comments, a draft copy of each of the proposed Codes of Good Practice and a Stakeholder Response Form. Copies of these documents can be downloaded from the VoluntaryWorks website and the Stakeholder Response Form can also be completed online (please see Consultation Document Pack for details).

If you would like to comment on the content of both or either of the Codes of Good Practice, tell us your views or suggest amendments please complete the enclosed Stakeholder Response Form and return it to Helen Nottingham at Voluntary and Community Action, Bossard House, West Street, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire LU7 1DA or via email to partnerships@action-centralbeds.org.uk. The closing date for responses is the 21 January 2010.

Yours faithfully



Peter Fraser
Chair of the Bedfordshire and Luton Compact Development Group



Bedfordshire and Luton

COMPACT

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**Consultation of the Draft Codes of
Good Practice on
Consultation and Partnerships**

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT PACK

November 2009

Information about this Consultation

Introduction

The Bedfordshire and Luton Compact is the agreement between local statutory organisations and the voluntary and community sector to improve and develop their relationship for the benefit of the communities they serve. The Compact and its Codes of Good Practice are seen as living documents forming Bedfordshire and Luton's agreed approach to continued partnership working.

The Codes set out to ensure that consultation and partnership working deliver the best possible outcomes. They contain statements of values and principles that are shared between the two sectors and which underpin their working relationship as well as providing information for good practice across sectors. They set out key responsibilities and commitments of those statutory and voluntary and community sector bodies that have signed up to the Bedfordshire and Luton Compact.

Local government reorganisation; the creation of new partnerships; the introduction of new legislation that places a duty on statutory bodies to inform, consult and involve representatives of local communities (including voluntary and community organisations) and work around National Indicator 7 on an environment for a thriving third sector have all contributed to a review of the current Code of Good Practice on Consultation and Partnerships.

This has led the Review Group (made up of partners from across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors) to conclude that two separate Codes would be more appropriate.

We are therefore seeking your views and comments on these documents to ensure that they are relevant, appropriate and useful resources for those wishing to engage with, or represent, the voluntary and community sector, be that through consultation, partnership working or other means of involvement.

Document Pack

Contained in this pack are the following documents:

- Information about this Consultation
- Draft Copy of the Code of Good Practice on Consultation
- Draft Copy of the Code of Good Practice on Partnerships
- Stakeholder Response Form for the Code of Good Practice on Consultation
- Stakeholder Response Form for the Code of Good Practice on Partnerships

The Codes of Good Practice include various terms that have been defined in a Glossary of Terms. This document has not been included here but is available on the Compact pages of the VoluntaryWorks website.

Upon request, we will provide the consultation documents in other formats e.g. large print, audio format and languages other than English. Please contact Helen Nottingham at Voluntary and Community Action, Bossard House, West Street, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire LU7 1DA.

The documents included in this Pack can also be downloaded from the VoluntaryWorks website at <http://www.voluntaryworks.org.uk/portal/CompactConsultation.asp>

In accordance with good practice a Document History, providing an audit trail of the review process used to produce the draft Codes, has been completed, but has been

removed from the consultation documents to aid ease of reading. A contents page will be inserted in the final version of the Codes.

Purpose of the Consultation

With input and comments from a wide range of stakeholders from the statutory and voluntary and community sectors in Bedfordshire and Luton, this consultation aims to produce Codes of Good Practice that:

- meet the needs of both sectors
- are relevant, usable documents
- ensure effective and positive working relationships between the sectors
- ensure involvement and cooperation in shaping policy, delivering services and building strong communities.

Key Issues for Consultation

The Compact Development Group has decided that there should be two separate Codes of Good Practice, one on Consultation and the other on Partnerships. This is primarily because it does not want the documents to become unwieldy and too lengthy if they remain as one document.

It is our intention to cover the main components of consultation and partnerships by setting out some general guidance and the key commitments specific to either the statutory sector or the voluntary and community sector. In the case of the Partnerships Code of Good Practice there are also a number of joint commitments.

We particularly want to know if you think the general guidance is relevant and appropriate – we appreciate there are various toolkits and other resources that explain good practice in more detail – and whether you think the commitments are reasonable, fair and achievable.

Related Consultations

Luton and Central Bedfordshire local authorities will also be consulting stakeholders on new Community Engagements Strategies for their respective areas. These will also be undertaken at around the same time as this consultation. We have worked with colleagues preparing these Strategies to ensure they are aligned with, and complimentary to, this Code of Good Practice.

Respondents may also wish to respond to these other Consultations, further details of which can be found on the authorities' respective websites.

Equality Impact Assessments

The two Codes of Good Practice have sought to ensure that they reflect good equality and diversity practice. Colleagues within local authorities will undertake an Equality Impact Assessment of each Code of Good Practice and will feed their findings into the Review Group's work following the consultation process.

Who Should be Consulted and Who Will be Affected

We particularly want to hear from all statutory, voluntary and community sector organisations that have signed up, or intend to sign up, to the Bedfordshire and Luton Compact. We would very much like to hear from officers across statutory organisations that deal with consultation, partnership working and the involvement of the voluntary and community sector (or third sector) organisations in their work. We would also very much like to hear from staff, trustees and volunteers within voluntary and community organisations that engage with, or are seeking to have their views and concerns communicated to, local statutory agencies.

Duration of the Consultation

The consultation is open to the submission of comments for a period in excess of the standard period of 12 weeks. This period ensures all stakeholders who wish to submit comments are provided with sufficient time and opportunity to do so and takes account of the holiday periods taking place during the consultation period.

The closing date for receipt of your views and comments is 21st January 2010.

Collating your Comments

Within each Code of Good Practice every paragraph has been numbered to help you refer to relevant text as you organise your thoughts and comments. Please refer to the relevant paragraph when making specific comments as this will help us to identify the appropriate text.

This pack contains two **Stakeholder Response Forms** (one for each Code) that ask specific questions with simple tick boxes for you to indicate your view, and text boxes should you wish to make further comment against each of the points.

We would also welcome feedback on the consultation documentation and the consultation process itself, along with suggestions for future improvements. These may be included in the Stakeholder Response Form under Question 12.

Submitting your Comments

You can either:

- complete hardcopy versions of the two Stakeholder Response Forms and send them to Helen Nottingham at Voluntary and Community Action, Bossard House, West Street, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire LU7 1DA
- download the Stakeholder Response Forms in Word format from the VoluntaryWorks website at <http://www.voluntaryworks.org.uk/portal/CompactConsultation.asp> and submit them via email to partnerships@action-centralbeds.org.uk
- complete the online versions of the Stakeholder Response Forms using Survey Monkey at <http://digbig.com/5bahaj> and <http://digbig.com/5bahah>
- you may submit your views and comments in a letter or in an email. Please make it clear which Code of Good Practice and which section your comments refer to.

Confidentially

You do not have to identify yourself or your organisation; however we would be unable to provide acknowledgement and feedback to comments if you do not include these. If you choose to provide your contact details the Compact Secretariat and those agencies acting on its behalf will treat them in the strictest confidence, not circulate them to other organisations or departments and use them only to provide acknowledgement and feedback.

Comments submitted in response to the questions will be collated and circulated to members of the Compact Code of Practice Review Group. Please take care not to identify your organisation in any comments you make if you wish these to be anonymous.

Next Steps

We will acknowledge receipt of your response. It is not our intention to reply to specific points within each response.

Your views and comments will be collated with all others submitted against the two draft Codes of Good Practice and presented to and considered by partners on the Review

Group that developed the two draft Codes. The draft Codes will each be amended in the light of feedback received and the final Codes of Good Practice will be recommended to the Bedfordshire and Luton Compact Development Group for agreement and eventual publication in May 2010.

A document setting out the responses received and the action taken (e.g. noted, document amended, amendment not accepted etc) will be published on the VoluntaryWorks website and made available on request following the Review Group's detailed consideration of all the responses.

Our Contact Details

This consultation is being undertaken by the Bedfordshire and Luton Compact Development Group and its Code of Practice Review Group.

Should you require further assistance, or would like to receive these consultation documents in a different format to those already made available please contact:

Helen Nottingham
Voluntary and Community Action
Bossard House
West Street
Leighton Buzzard
Bedfordshire
LU7 1DA

Tel: 01525 850559
Email: partnerships@action-centralbeds.org.uk

If you would like further information on the Bedfordshire and Luton Compact and its other Codes of Good Practice please contact:

The Compact Secretariat
c/o Community and Voluntary Service
Bedford Centre for Voluntary Services
43 Bromham Road
Bedford
MK40 2AA

Tel: 01234 354366
Email: compact@yourcvs.org

Thank you for taking the time to provide your views and comments for the consultation of the Bedfordshire and Luton Compact Codes of Good Practice on Consultation and Partnerships. Your input to these documents will be very valuable.

Bedfordshire and Luton

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Code of Good Practice on Consultation

DRAFT Version 0.f

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Bedfordshire and Luton Compact is the agreement between local statutory organisations and the voluntary and community sector to improve and develop their relationship for the benefit of the communities they serve. The Compact and its Codes of Good Practice are seen as living documents forming Bedfordshire and Luton's agreed approach to continued partnership working.
- 1.2 The Bedfordshire and Luton Compact is supported by five codes of good practice in respect of:
- a) Funding and Procurement
 - b) Volunteering
 - c) Consultation
 - d) Partnerships
 - e) Equality and Diversity.

The codes contain statements of values and principles that are shared between the two sectors which underpin their working relationship. They also set out key responsibilities and commitments of those statutory and voluntary and community sector bodies that have signed up to the Bedfordshire and Luton Compact.

- 1.3 This Code sets out to ensure that consultation exercises deliver the best possible outcomes. As well as providing information for good consultation practice across sectors, it also contains relevant information to shape good practice where consultation takes place within a sector.
- 1.4 Effective consultation contributes to local democracy. This Code complements the overall aims of the Bedfordshire and Luton Compact, and aims to have a positive impact on the way in which the statutory sector informs, consults and involves the voluntary and community sector.
- 1.5 The Bedfordshire and Luton Compact and its Codes of Good Practice have been developed by the Compact Development Group, whose representation stretches across the diverse range of voluntary, community and statutory sector organisations actively involved in the Compact. The Group meets regularly to discuss issues raised through the implementation of the Compact and to promote its use throughout Bedfordshire and Luton.
- 1.6 If you require further copies of this document, or would like to find out more about the Compact Development Group, please contact:

The Compact Secretariat
c/o Community and Voluntary Service
Bedford Centre for Voluntary Services
43 Bromham Road
Bedford
MK40 2AA

Tel: 01234 354366
Email: compact@yourcvs.org
Website: bedsandlutoncompact.org.uk

2. Benefits of the Consultation Code

- 2.1 The statutory sector consults and involves others to ensure that in developing its policies it is informed by a wide range of experience and takes into account the impact of its proposals on different sectors of society. This presents an opportunity for the voluntary and community sector to bring its knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on statutory sector policy on behalf of the people and causes they work for.
- 2.2 The voluntary and community sector should be willing to offer their advice based on objective experience and appropriate consultation with those they work with. This helps to establish and maintain the credibility of the sector as a valuable source of informed opinion.
- 2.3 Effective consultation and involvement is an essential part of ensuring that the relationship between the statutory and the voluntary and community sectors work. It:
- a) enables others to contribute to the policy making process
 - b) symbolises the statutory sector's commitment to be open and accountable
 - c) leads to more realistic and robust policy that better meets the needs and aspirations of the communities we serve
 - d) can create a working partnership and mutual understanding with those consulted
 - e) helps to plan, prioritise and deliver high quality services, improved planning and effective policy decisions
 - f) ensures a two-way process of receiving as well as giving information, listening as well as talking, in a language and format accessible to all.
- 2.4 **The benefits of following this Code for the statutory sector:**
- a) added value to existing consultation guidance and strategies that may already be in place
 - b) access to specific groups and/or clients, with due regard to data protection and confidentiality
 - c) advice from the voluntary and community sector that takes positive account of the specific needs, interests and contributions of all parts of the sector, including those who are socially excluded and those that represent the diversity of users
 - d) ensures valuable input from voluntary and community organisations to make an effective contribution to the development and implementation of, policy.
- 2.5 **The benefits of following this Code for the voluntary and community sector:**
- a) allows the views and concerns of the sector and its users to be heard and taken into account, before decisions are made
 - b) enables voluntary and community organisations to make an effective contribution to the development and implementation of policy and service development
 - c) the statutory sector is approachable and maintains open communication with and consults the voluntary and community sector on issues likely to affect it
 - d) the statutory sector takes positive account of the specific needs, interests and contributions of all parts of the voluntary and community sector.

3. Key Principles

3.1 Organisations responsible for carrying out consultation and/or taking part in consultation exercises are asked to consider how this Code of Practice can influence and modify their practice for the better. Organisations have to genuinely want to hear what others have to say, even if they don't always like or agree with it, or end up taking action based on it and develop more user-led services and culture.

3.2 The Duty to Inform, Consult and Involve

The *Duty to Involve* ensures that representatives of local people and communities (defined as including local voluntary and community organisations) have greater opportunities to have their say on how statutory agencies exercise their functions, by providing information, consulting and involving in other ways those affected by, or interested in, a particular function or service. This means that statutory agencies will need to

- a) provide appropriate information about services, policies and decisions that affect, or might be of interest to, local voluntary and community organisations in a way that is easy to access and understand, and that supports organisations to have their say and get involved
- b) offer local voluntary and community organisations appropriate opportunities to have their say about decisions and services that affect them through consultation that provides genuine opportunities for people to be involved
- c) consider where it is appropriate to provide local voluntary and community organisations with opportunities to get involved in activities over and above being informed and consulted, such as:
 - i. influencing or directly participating in decision making
 - ii. providing feedback on decisions, services, policies and outcomes
 - iii. being involved in designing policies and services, and in the commissioning of services
 - iv. undertaking some aspects of the service for themselves
 - v. being involved in assessing and scrutinising services.

3.3 The following key principles apply to all consultation processes:

- a) consultation activities are **well planned** in terms of approach, principles and methods used
- b) the **rationale** for consultation, and what is genuinely **open to influence** and change and what is not, is made clear
- c) careful consideration is given to who will be consulted, so as to be as **inclusive** as possible, whilst taking proactive steps to genuinely engage hard to reach sections of the community
- d) the nature, scale and scope of each consultation exercise is **proportionate** to the resources available and the outcomes
- e) always give careful consideration to any additional **resource implications** for the voluntary and community sector in disseminating consultations and to the most **appropriate methods** of consultation to encourage responses from the sector
- f) **review and evaluation** will be built in to all consultation processes
- g) consultation outcomes will be well **publicised** and people given feedback
- h) have regard for the **regulatory frameworks** that govern the local statutory sector and the voluntary and community sector
- i) **respect the right of choice** of individuals and organisations not to be involved.

4. Planning a Consultation

- 4.1 Organisations should be able to register their interest in forthcoming consultations on a central consultation database/calendar, showing actual or anticipated start and end dates for planned consultation exercises, and contact details of those leading the exercise. The danger of 'over consulting' or 'consultation fatigue' will be better managed.
- 4.2 An effective consultation process needs to acknowledge the value of ongoing dialogue and avoid unnecessary surprises. This helps to improve the development and delivery of programmes based on partnership, where improved mutual understanding can enhance joint working and policy outcomes
- 4.3 It may not always be possible to share the detail of new policy before it is announced, but it may be useful to make the voluntary and community sector aware in general terms of forthcoming developments, receive their initial views on the subject and allow them to prepare and prioritise their consultation work.
- 4.4 There is no single 'right' way to consult, but the overall aspiration of being inclusive should be paramount. All organisations involved in driving the consultation should be involved in the design process, and the following should be taken into account:
- a) The overall aims of the consultation
 - b) be transparent about constraints; a consultation and the intended outcomes will be subject to limitations which should be recognised and made clear
 - c) be planned early with partners to help ensure the resulting proposals are in line with current experience and thinking and avoid incorrect assumptions and misunderstandings
 - d) decide on the target group(s) to be consulted - be flexible and innovative, engage organisations that are not traditionally involved, as well as those that are frequently successfully consulted
 - e) decide whether a single method of consultation, or a variety of methods, are appropriate.
- 4.7 **The statutory sector will:**
- a) build consultation with the voluntary and community sector into planning cycles and plans for policy development
 - b) communicate with and consult the voluntary and community sector on issues that are likely to affect it
 - c) take account of the impact on the voluntary and community sector when developing and reviewing policies and procedures in all its functions
 - d) have oversight of and co0ordinate community consultation and engagement activities of individual partners and where appropriate combine them
 - e) be aware of additional resource implications to the voluntary and community sector in disseminating and undertaking consultations.
- 4.8 **The voluntary and community sector will:**
- a) clearly identify to the statutory sector issues that are likely to affect it and on which they would like to be informed, consulted and involved
 - b) maximise opportunities for the sector to bring their knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on statutory sector on behalf of the people and causes they work for.

5. Who to Consult

- 5.1 Organisations should be proactively encouraged to register their interest in forthcoming consultations so that those who are genuinely interested and have the most to say are never left out while respect is given to individuals and organisations who choose not to be involved.
- 5.2 Statutory sector agencies should, where possible and appropriate, target their consultation at a wider audience than just those organisations in receipt of public funds or that have developed a relationship with the statutory sector, including co-operation through local partnerships and networks to streamline the consultation process.
- 5.3 **Confidentiality**
- Confidentiality has to be given serious consideration, so that those organisations responding to consultation exercises can express their views fully without fear of reprisals. This is particularly the case where the information being collected is of a sensitive nature. In some instances, consultation responses may not be anonymised, and this must be made explicit. Assuring confidentiality will encourage those consulted to give honest views.
- 5.4 Where confidentiality is specifically requested, the wishes of the organisation responding should be respected in accordance with the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act. Agreements around confidentiality should always be made explicit so that no misunderstandings occur.
- 5.5 **The statutory sector will:**
- a) engage with local voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations to use their knowledge about the sector, establish who to approach, how to identify hard to reach organisations and encourage participation in statutory sector consultations (commensurate with available resources).
- 5.6 **The voluntary and community sector will:**
- a) advise statutory sector organisations of, and provide access to, specific groups and/or clients, with due reference to data protection and confidentiality, and encourage participation in statutory sector consultations (commensurate with available resources)
 - b) ensure its involvement takes positive account of the specific needs, interests and contributions of all parts of the voluntary and community sector, including those who are socially excluded and those that represent the diversity of users.

6. How to Consult

- 6.1 The chosen consultation method(s) must aim to get the best spread of views from those organisations most likely to be affected by consultation outcomes, and from those organisations with the most to contribute. Methods that have been used to good effect include:
- a) focus groups and user panels
 - b) written consultation
 - c) opinion surveys
 - d) meetings
 - e) email and internet.
- 6.2 Written consultation documents should be clearly laid out, written in plain English (external testing for plain language is good practice), made available in an accessible format and targeted at the intended audience. Consultation documents will ideally contain:
- a) a summary of the aims and an outline of the consultation process
 - b) a more detailed description of the issue, problem or proposal being addressed
 - c) the purpose of the consultation
 - d) the issues on which views are being sought
 - e) an explanation of what decisions, if any, have already been taken, and explicit clarity around what can and cannot be influenced and changed
 - f) if a particular option is favoured, an explanation of why it is considered most appropriate
 - g) various sources of evidence, opinion and information that are relevant to the consultation
 - h) an explanation of who is likely to be affected by the outcomes of the consultation
 - i) a clear deadline for responses and a timetable for decision-making and feedback
 - j) name, address, telephone, email of the person whom respondents can contact with queries
 - k) a list of those being consulted, and an invitation to suggest other organisations that should be consulted
 - l) a statement clarifying the confidentiality of responses and other material received during the consultation
 - m) an explanation of any constraints in the process that have meant the full Code of Practice has not been adhered to
 - n) an invitation to give feedback on the consultation process itself, including any suggestions for future improvements
 - o) clear information of the next stages of the exercise.
- 6.3 **The statutory sector will:**
- a) use a range of methods for consultation that allow groups and organisations that are not traditionally active in consultation exercises to participate. The methods used will take into account the aim of the consultation and the nature of those being consulted
 - b) make explicitly clear in the consultation process those matters which are open to influence and those that are not negotiable
 - c) prepare consultation documents that are concise, clearly laid out written in simple language (avoiding jargon, using plain English etc.), available in accessible formats

and that will be understood by the intended audience

- d) be proactive in offering consultation documentation in alternative formats upon request unless it is known that a different format is required.

6.4 **The voluntary and community sector will:**

- a) carefully consider the content of consultation documents before formulating their response.
- b) prepare consultation documents that are concise, clearly laid out written in simple language (avoiding jargon, using plain English etc.), that will be understood by the intended audience

7. Allowing Time for Consultation

- 7.1 Careful pre-planning should reduce the likelihood of many instances of having to rush a consultation exercise that should have been given more time.
- 7.2 A standard period of 12 weeks should normally be allowed for written consultations. This will help to accommodate the work cycles of organisations working with voluntary management committees, as well as giving time to include local level member organisations and more informal organisations.
- 7.3 Where a 12 week period is not possible, a minimum period of 6 weeks for consultation may be undertaken, but the reason why a shorter response time has been set should be made clear and justified. If pre-determined timescales seriously undermine the success and integrity of a consultation exercise, then this should be noted and actively challenged by all partners/organisations.
- 7.4 Allowance should also be made for known busy periods, festivals and other potential timing difficulties, and due regard given to holiday periods.
- 7.5 For consultations with small and specialist groups, a shorter timeframe may be justified and appropriate. In almost all cases, it is better for some consultation to take place, rather than none at all.
- 7.6 **The statutory sector will:**
- a) allow consultees enough time to respond by providing a standard period of 12 weeks. Where this is not possible a minimum period of 6 weeks should be provided. Shorter periods will only be given when required by statute or in emergency situations
 - b) keep to an absolute minimum instances where the standard period can not be provided and clearly state and justify the reason why a shorter response time has been set.
- 7.7 **The voluntary and community sector will:**
- a) respond to consultations that affect them within the period provided for, where this meets the specified period and enough time has been provided.

8. Publicising Consultation Exercises

8.1 Early and appropriate publicity is crucial to the integrity and success of a consultation exercise. Consideration should be given to the intended target audience and how best to ensure effective communication with them.

8.2 Possibilities to consider include:

- a) local press releases targeted at the voluntary and community sector
- b) using voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations to publicise particular consultations and circulate consultation documents
- c) using other relevant partnerships and networks
- d) targeting publicity in places where relevant organisations from the voluntary and community sector congregate
- e) use of the internet, including the *Voluntaryworks* website.

8.3 Thought should be given as to how the publicity can best reach the less established sections of the voluntary and community sector and those organisations that might not be represented by existing networks.

8.4 **The statutory sector will:**

- a) ensure early and appropriate publicity is given to all consultation exercises, particularly to the intended target audience
- b) identify who can act as effective channels for onward distribution of information
- c) use voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations to publicise particular consultations and, where appropriate, to circulate consultation documents.

8.5 **The voluntary and community sector will:**

- a) use their networks and contacts to publicise particular consultations and, where appropriate, to circulate consultation documents.

9. Submission and Receipt of Responses

- 9.1 It is good practice for those leading the consultation to acknowledge the receipt of responses and clearly set out the next stages of the exercise. It should be acknowledged however that it is not always possible to respond directly and in detail to the individual points made by each organisation.
- 9.2 Where views are collected that are not entirely relevant to the consultation exercise, but have a bearing on policy or practice in other areas, these views should be channelled to the appropriate individuals or agencies where possible and with the explicit permission of the respondent.
- 9.3 Dependent on the length, scale and nature of the consultation, **interim reviews** can help to determine whether:
- a) the level of feedback/response rate is appropriate to the task
 - b) the target group has been adequately reached
 - c) changes need to be made prior to completion of the consultation in order to get a good response and representative mix.
- 9.4 **The statutory sector will:**
- a) acknowledge the receipt of responses where the respondent can be identified.
- 9.5 **The voluntary and community sector will:**
- a) consult with their members, service users and volunteers wherever possible. Where this is not practicable or appropriate, to indicate that they are responding on the basis of their accumulated knowledge and experience of working with the groups concerned
 - b) ensure that the information they present to the statutory sector is accurate, objective and based on need and where possible includes an assessment of how any proposals will impact on the voluntary and community sector and/or its service users.

10. Analysis and Feedback Following Consultation

- 10.1 It is hard to feel meaningfully informed, consulted and involved if feedback is not given following a consultation exercise.
- 10.2 Gathering the information and data from a consultation exercise is an important step, but it only makes sense once that information and data is carefully analysed, and views adequately weighted if applicable, in order to inform the way forward. Particular attention should be given to the views of representative bodies and those most directly affected by the proposals irrespective of size of organisation.
- 10.3 A full report on the outcome of the analysis should be made available and organisations made aware of how to access this report. This should explain the process followed, how consultation outcomes reflect the views collected and what will happen next.
- 10.4 **Evaluation** of a consultation exercise or process is vital. At the end of a consultation exercise, 'unpack' the consultation process, and consider all the separate elements:
- a) the consultation objectives
 - b) the target audience
 - c) the consultation methods used
 - d) publicity
 - e) timescales
 - f) information provided
 - g) consultation costs (direct and indirect)
 - h) consultation outcomes.
- 10.5 Feedback on the process itself should be actively sought, in order that organisations can effectively identify what worked and what did not. It might be that aspects of the process were a great success, whereas other areas need modification and improvement. Finally, policy and procedural documentation should be updated appropriately to ensure lessons learnt from the evaluation of the consultation process are acted upon.
- 10.6 **The statutory sector will:**
- a) take positive account of the specific needs, interests and contributions of all parts of the voluntary and community sector, including those who are socially excluded and those who represent the diversity of users
 - b) make available a full report on the results and outcomes of consultations and make organisations aware of how to access this report
 - c) provide a prompt and full explanation if respondents ask why the outcomes do not seem to reflect their views or express views they do not necessarily like.
- 10.7 **The voluntary and community sector will:**
- a) ensure feedback on the results and outcomes of consultations are provided to the sector and/or its service users.
 - b) recognise that as representatives of organisations they are not always able to respond and, as a result, decisions may well be made that do not reflect their views.
 - c) recognise that as representatives of organisations they are not always able to respond and resulting decisions may well be made that do not reflect their views.

Checklist of the Main Points of the Code of Good Practice on Consultation

This checklist draws on the Compact Code of Good Practice on Consultation and pulls together key points as a useful summary to promote and develop effective consultation.

Planning and Methodology

- Consultation is built into planning cycles and plans for policy development.
- All participants, especially those with a specific interest in the consultation subject, or who may be particularly affected, are involved in planning from the beginning of the process.
- The voluntary and community sector is informed, communicated with and consulted on issues that are likely to affect it.
- The purpose of the consultation is clearly stated.
- The topic and issues to be addressed during the consultation are clearly stated.
- The target audience for consultation is clearly identified.
- The process and format of the consultation is clearly explained.
- The scope and timescale of the consultation process are reasonable and clearly documented (12 weeks is usually accepted to be a reasonable minimum timescale).
- The delivery methods of the consultation are clear in purpose, accessible and appropriate for the needs of the participants.
- Enough resources are allocated to support the consultation process.
- Fairness, equality and inclusion should underpin all aspects of the consultation process.

Involvement and Support

- Voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations are used to publicise particular consultations and, where appropriate, to circulate consultation documents.
- Any barriers to involvement are identified and attempts are made to overcome them.
- Existing communication networks are maximised and participants work together to help facilitate quality responses.
- It is clear whether the response to the consultation and engagement is based on views of the individual or on behalf of a group.

Feedback and Monitoring

- Consultation is monitored and evaluated against its initial purpose.
- Results from the consultation are communicated back to participants in good time and conveyed accurately and in an appropriate format.
- Any decisions that follow as a result of the consultation are clearly publicised and explained.
- There is a commitment to continually improving the quality of consultation and engagement by learning from experience, building on good practice and developing a consistent approach across different agencies.

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**Code of Good Practice
on
Partnerships**

DRAFT Version 0.e

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Bedfordshire and Luton Compact is the agreement between local statutory organisations and the voluntary and community sector to improve and develop their relationship for the benefit of the communities they serve. The Compact and its Codes of Good Practice are seen as living documents forming Bedfordshire and Luton's agreed approach to continued partnership working.
- 1.2 The Bedfordshire and Luton Compact is supported by five codes of good practice in respect of:
- a) Funding and Procurement
 - b) Volunteering
 - c) Consultation
 - d) Partnerships
 - e) Equality and Diversity.
- 1.3 The codes contain statements of values and principles that are shared between the two sectors and which underpin their working relationship. They set out key responsibilities and commitments of those statutory and voluntary and community sector bodies that have signed up to the Bedfordshire and Luton Compact.
- 1.4 This Code sets out to ensure that partnerships deliver the best possible outcomes. As well as providing information on good practice for partnership working across sectors, it also contains information to assist statutory agencies to understand the voluntary and community sector and to engage more effectively with it.
- 1.5 Effective partnership working and meaningful representation contributes to local democracy. This Code complements the overall aims of the Bedfordshire and Luton Compact, and aims to have a positive impact on the way in which the statutory sector informs, consults and involves the voluntary and community sector.
- 1.6 The Bedfordshire and Luton Compact and its Codes of Good Practice have been developed by the Compact Development Group, whose representation stretches across the diverse range of voluntary, community and statutory sector organisations actively involved in the Compact. The Group meets regularly to discuss issues raised through the implementation of the Compact and to promote its use throughout Bedfordshire and Luton.
- 1.7 If you require further copies of this document, or would like to find out more about the Compact Development Group, please contact:

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2. Benefits of the Partnerships Code

2.1 Effective partnerships are essential for ensuring that the relationship between the statutory and the voluntary and community sectors work. This presents an opportunity for the voluntary and community sector to bring its knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on statutory sector policy on behalf of the people and causes they work for.

2.2 A partnership brings together organisations, often from the statutory, private, voluntary and community sectors, to pursue a common vision, to work together to achieve more than any one of them could on their own. The Government's White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, sets out a *clear expectation that the local third sector will be actively involved with all Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) in helping shape the local area.*

2.3 The benefits to all partners of effective partnerships:

- a) brings organisations together from across the sectors to explore underlying concerns
- b) enables positive contributions to policy planning and delivery
- c) leads to more realistic and robust decisions and activities that better meets the needs and aspirations of the local communities
- d) fosters respect, trust, confidence and mutual understanding between partners
- e) ensures a two-way process of receiving as well as giving information, listening as well as talking, in a language and format accessible to all.

2.4 The benefits of following this Code for the statutory sector:

- a) the experience, knowledge and skills of the third sector to help design and deliver more effective services
- b) use of third sector links with communities and users to ensure that services tackle the most deep rooted and intractable problems in ways that will work on the ground
- c) strengthened relationships and enhanced collaboration between statutory, voluntary and community organisations working on similar issues or in the same area
- d) access to community networks that can help deliver changes in attitude or behaviour, for instance to reduce carbon emissions or promote healthy eating
- e) co-ordinated services in the statutory, voluntary and community sectors, so they don't duplicate or contradict each other and creative synergies can be found
- f) links with the external funding, assets, volunteers and other resources that the voluntary and community sector brings into the area.

2.5 The benefits of following this Code for the voluntary and community sector:

- a) recognition of the added value it brings as a partner, particularly in relation to governance, service delivery and social capital
- b) local groups should find it easier to have their voices heard and are better able to influence services on behalf of their communities
- c) it is better placed to make the case for community-based activities
- d) stronger relationships and enhanced collaboration across the sector
- e) a well organised sector that can provide its representatives with an authoritative voice that will strengthen the sector's participation in local partnerships
- f) an inclusive voice that carries more weight, exerts more influence and helps to build better relationships and partnerships.

3. Key Principles

3.1 Organisations that manage and participate in local partnerships are asked to consider how this Code of Practice can influence and modify their practice for the better. By following certain key principles a solid framework for partnerships and effective representation between the statutory sector and the voluntary and community sector can be built. Both sectors need to recognise that:

- a) partnerships vary in terms of size, longevity, makeup and purpose
- b) partnerships take time, energy and resources to develop and sustain
- c) partnerships need to have clear and agreed purposes and set clear, achievable goals and outcomes that are agreed by all partners
- d) reducing inequality should be at the heart of partnership working; the aim should be to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and empower people to make their voices heard
- e) people need to be given time to develop expertise and relationships, and to find the most appropriate approaches to participation
- f) the status, responsibilities, resources and operational functions of the statutory and the voluntary and community sectors are not the same
- g) partnership working is best supported by leadership that enables rather than controls
- h) partnerships need to build in proportionate review and evaluation mechanisms.

3.2 The following key principles apply to all partnerships:

- a) every effort should be made to **understand and acknowledge other partners' priorities and constraints**; their independence and operational autonomy is recognised and respected
- b) relationships between partners are based on **trust and mutual respect**, valuing what each brings to the partnership
- c) **fairness, equality, accessibility and inclusion** must underpin all aspects of partnership working and should be reflected in policies and the way everyone involved participates
- d) all representatives are given the **opportunity to contribute** to the agenda, to share their skills and knowledge and discuss freely any differences of perspective
- e) there is a commitment to continually **improving the quality of partnership working** by learning from experience, building on good practice and developing a consistent approach across all partners.

3.3 The Duty to Inform, Consult and Involve

The *Duty to Involve* ensures that representatives of local people and communities (defined as including local voluntary and community organisations) have greater opportunities to have their say on how statutory agencies exercise their functions, by providing information, consulting and involving in other ways those affected by, or interested in, a particular function. This means that statutory agencies will need to:

- a) provide appropriate information about services, policies and decisions that affect, or might be of interest to, local voluntary and community organisations in a way that is easy to access and understand, and that supports organisations to have their say and get involved

- b) offer local voluntary and community organisations appropriate opportunities to have their say about decisions and services that affect them through consultation that provides genuine opportunities for people to be involved
- c) consider where it is appropriate to provide local voluntary and community organisations with opportunities to get involved in activities over and above being informed and consulted, such as:
 - i. influencing or directly participating in decision making
 - ii. providing feedback on decisions, services, policies and outcomes
 - iii. being involved in designing policies and services, and in the commissioning of services
 - iv. undertaking some aspects of the service for themselves
 - v. being involved in assessing and scrutinising services.

3.4 It is important that the statutory sector recognises and supports the independence of the voluntary and community sector, including its right within the law, to campaign, comment on statutory sector policy, and to challenge that policy, irrespective of any funding relationship that might exist, and to determine and manage its own affairs and structures.

4. Establishing a New Partnership

- 4.1 Effective partnerships take time, energy and resources to establish, develop and sustain. They should only be entered into when it is clear that a new partnership arrangement is the best way to achieve the desired outcomes. Before establishing a partnership, consider:
- a) what has already taken place, or is taking place, that could inform this work
 - b) whether this work is already being undertaken elsewhere, or if it links into other existing work
 - c) whether the proposed activity duplicates that of any other partnership
 - d) whether an appropriate partnership already exists where this work could take place.
- 4.2 Partnerships provide the forum for collectively planning, formulating and reviewing local policy and functions through identifying priorities, allocating resources, commissioning and delivering local services. Clear and transparent lines of accountability and responsibility for all decisions and actions between partners should be set.
- 4.3 The choice of partners is important. Partnerships are often formed from existing networks or where there is a history of collaborative work between potential partners. However, there will be circumstances where it will be important to invite new partners to the table. A list of the obvious stakeholders should be drawn up. In doing this, consider:
- a) voluntary and organisations community
 - b) statutory bodies
 - c) other service providers including the private sector
 - d) 'expert' groups
 - e) advisory groups
 - f) funders and potential funders
 - g) those likely to be affected by the outcomes of the partnership's work.
- 4.4 **Both sectors will:**
- a) be clear about the reasons for entering into any partnership and about what each partner has to offer
 - b) identify all partners who should be involved, identify what support each partner needs in order to participate and remove any barriers to their involvement
 - c) ensure all partnerships have fit for purpose terms of reference, including clearly defined membership and voting rights, agreed by all partners
 - d) be clear about what decisions partnerships have authority to take and how and when they can influence the external decision making process.
- 4.5 **The statutory sector will:**
- a) involve the voluntary and community sector in the formation of partnerships from the outset or as soon as it is realised that the sector is not involved
 - b) engage with local voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations to use their knowledge about the sector, establish who to approach, and encourage participation in local partnerships.
- 4.6 **The voluntary and community sector will:**
- a) clearly define the stakeholders and decision making bodies they wish to work with in their area including, but not limited to, the relevant LSP structures.

5. Involving Voluntary and Community Sector Partners

- 5.1 Those who represent the voluntary and community sector or speak on its behalf should be responsible to the sector. Clear lines of accountability will allow representatives to speak with real authority. This does not mean that all decisions are subject to consensus, but representatives should be prepared and able to explain decisions and actions. This means:
- a) building the strength and validity of the voice of the sector so that it can make the most of opportunities to influence local decision making, either directly or through others who represent their interests
 - b) being well co-ordinated and organised, with the right skills and capacity to participate
 - c) assisting partners in understanding how to engage with them and local communities more effectively
 - d) challenging the sector to reflect changing contexts and needs of issues and partnerships
 - e) recognising and valuing the diversity of its membership and the different strengths they bring to partnership working and representation.
- 5.2 There may be occasions when it is appropriate for people from the sector to be involved in partnerships or other forums, but not to be representing the sector, for example:
- a) when invited as a provider with expertise in a particular area of service delivery
 - b) where there is a need to get the views of under-represented groups whose voices often go unheard
 - c) where a voluntary and community sector view is needed and there is no requirement to represent the views of all, but simply to put forward a voluntary and community sector perspective.
- 5.3 The views of sector representatives carry far more weight when it has demonstrated to partners that they have a legitimate and accountable voice, and the sector speaks with more confidence where it knows it has consulted and communicated as widely as possible.
- 5.4 **The statutory sector will:**
- a) ensure there are opportunities for appropriate representation from the voluntary and community sector.
- 5.5 **The voluntary and community sector will:**
- a) work within the sector's defined structures to enable all voluntary and community organisations to participate as fully as possible in local partnerships and forums
 - b) have an agreed and well publicised process for selecting voluntary and community sector representatives on local partnerships and forums
 - c) develop and utilise the skills and experience of its members when selecting, appointing or electing representatives to partnerships and forums.
 - d) put in place reporting mechanisms that support the flow of information without creating unnecessary burdens
 - e) ensure there is clarity about when voluntary and community sector representatives on local partnerships have a clear mandate, and when they do not
 - f) establish clear and effective methods for communication and consultation; gathering and analysing information from the sector to bring clarity and force of argument to the sector's voice.

6. Defining Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Successful partnerships are greatly enhanced by early clarity around roles and responsibilities, supporting everyone to commit to the partnership and function effectively within it. All partners have responsibility to:

- a) prepare for, attend, contribute to and represent their stakeholders at partnership meetings
- b) contribute to the overall direction and development of the partnership
- c) bring their stakeholder group into the work of the partnership in an appropriate way
- d) challenge behaviour which is detrimental to effective partnership working
- e) inform their own effectiveness as a representative through reading, networking, training and an understanding of the issues affecting the work of the partnership.

6.2 **Both sectors will:**

- a) consider whether the roles and responsibilities have been clearly identified and specified, and if there is a shared understanding and commitment to fulfil these roles within the partnership
- b) consider the need to have structures in place to remind partners of their responsibilities
- c) consider whether there is a clear induction process for new partners regarding roles and responsibilities.
- d) ensure that representatives involved with partnerships maintain a continuing dialogue with those they represent, share information with them and have a legitimacy and authority to take decisions and actions on their behalf
- e) treat all partners equally, sharing out partnership roles.

6.3 **The statutory sector will:**

- a) ensure statutory sector representatives on local partnerships and forums understand their roles and responsibilities
- b) ensure that members and staff within their organisations understand their responsibilities to partnership representatives
- c) clearly define roles for any officers that might support partnerships
- d) exercise a leadership and governing role through identifying and articulating the needs and aspirations of local communities.

6.4 **The voluntary and community sector will:**

- a) ensure voluntary and community sector representatives on local partnerships and forums understand their roles and responsibilities
- b) ensure the wider voluntary and community sector understands its responsibilities to its representatives.
- c) clearly define roles for any officers that might support the sector's representation work
- d) recognise that there is a clear distinction between the representative role of elected members/councillors and their own role as voluntary and community sector representatives, which is supportive of local democracy and adds value to the work of local councillors.

7. Developing Constructive Working Relationships

- 7.1 Effective partnerships recognise that partnership building is an important process, and should take time at the beginning to understand each other as separate organisations before they engage in partnership building. This ensures a much deeper understanding of each other's aims, aspirations and constraints, and in turn supports the development of a shared vision for achieving a common goal.
- 7.2 Partnerships should conduct their business as openly as possible. This is vital for credibility with its own members and also with external stakeholders. Ensure all discussions and decisions are recorded and open to all. Do not conduct meetings behind closed doors. Where, in exceptional circumstances, this is not possible, the reasons should be explained clearly.
- 7.3 Effective partnership working and representation requires strong team work skills, such as negotiation, mediation, assertiveness, dispute resolution, political and influencing skills.
- 7.4 **Both sectors will:**
- a) seek to build inter-dependence, effective relationships and mutual understanding within partnerships
 - b) develop clear and transparent lines of accountability and responsibility between partners and partnerships, and be held accountable for the decisions of the partnership
 - c) agree a process for dealing with conflicts of interest
 - d) deal positively with concerns and failings by acknowledging and addressing them
 - e) commit to the accurate and timely dissemination and presentation of information in appropriate formats – this must include ways in which the results of the partnership activities are fed back to the wider community and agencies affected
 - f) ensure that they share 'credit where credit is due' in its dealings with the media, the wider sector and external stakeholders and ensure the form and content of communications is agreed between the relevant partners.
- 7.5 **The statutory sector will:**
- a) ensure that all staff across different departments and agencies are aware of this Code to ensure good practice and consistency of approach
 - b) create a context in which different views can be aired and discussed freely
 - c) keep members and staff of their organisations informed of developments and decisions made by partnerships.
- 7.6 **The voluntary and community sector will:**
- a) establish clear and consistent lines of communication:
 - a. between members and representatives of partnerships and forums
 - b. with the wider third sector
 - c. with the wider community
 - d. with the LSP and its thematic and delivery partnerships
 - e. with any potential stakeholder.

8. Purpose and Activity

8.1 It is important for partnerships to establish a clear sense of purpose about what needs to be achieved, expressed in whatever terms are appropriate. Do not simply deal with day to day issues; think ahead beyond the immediate horizon. Be clear about the issues that the partnership will deal with and what will be dealt with by a specific sector or partner, and use the combined resources of the partners to best effect.

8.2 Both sectors will:

- a) gain an understanding of local needs and aspirations and ensure that this knowledge is used in the development of the partnership's priorities
- b) work together with all key partners to address the issues and challenges facing the area
- c) involve the full range of stakeholders in developing and delivering a shared vision for the partnership
- d) ensure the aims and objectives of the partnership and its activities are clear, agreed by all partners and based on understanding local needs
- e) identify and agree measurable objectives and appropriate delivery methods for partnership activities whilst recognising the distinct but complementary roles and operational autonomy of partners
- f) ensure there is a shared commitment to the achievement of the partnership's priorities
- g) coordinate the delivery of priorities agreed by the partnership
- h) ensure there is an appropriate performance management system in place
- i) plan for the long-term as well as the short-term.

8.3 The statutory sector will:

- a) have oversight of and co-ordinate community consultation and engagement activities of individual partners and where appropriate combine them
- b) bring together national standards and priorities set by Government, with local priorities informed by the vision developed with partners.

8.4 The voluntary and community sector will:

- a) be clear about the sector's objectives and support these with a strong evidence base
- b) include all its members and conduct wider consultation in assessing needs and priorities and in developing its future direction and purpose
- c) be responsive to change that might be required to deliver the wider aims of the partnership and/or the sector whilst staying true to its values.

9. Maintaining the Involvement of Partners

- 9.1 Sustaining an effective partnership requires time, energy, resources and commitment. Dealing with the practical realities of maintaining a partnership will mean change and whilst some of the effects might be predictable, others might be unexpected and challenging. It is important to communicate problems early and honestly to all partners. Partnership managers or chairs will need to ensure that concerns raised by partners are resolved.
- 9.2 It is important to recognise that the costs of partnership working for the voluntary and community sector are met largely through their own support in kind such as time, expertise and use of common networks; with additional costs involved in maintaining an effective network for voluntary and community organisations. It may be necessary to consider investment in capacity building to ensure that representation is inclusive, with priorities agreed and future resource requirements explored fully as part of the planning process.
- 9.3 The spirit in which a partnership is developed and maintained will have a direct effect on the sustainability of partner involvement. The partnership chair has a key role in routinely and regularly checking that all partners feel valued, listened to, empowered and energised by the partnership. Sustainable partnerships consider the following:
- a) the language used should be a tool for inclusion within partnerships, not a barrier that results in exclusion
 - b) how to resolve differences of opinion appropriately within partnerships in order to meet agreed objectives
 - c) how to stay focused on the task of the partnership, whilst building in flexibility for considering other issues which might impact on partnership progress
 - d) the financial and resource implications of maintaining and developing partnerships.
- 9.5 **Both sectors will:**
- a) be prepared to tackle difficult issues
 - b) reconcile or arbitrate between competing interests
 - c) where possible, work by consensus, with no vetoes or unilateral decisions
 - d) recognise and act upon opportunities for mutual development and training, particularly if any specific issues are highlighted during partnership activities.
- 9.6 **The statutory sector will:**
- a) recognise that partnership working needs to be properly resourced and supported with administrative arrangements, joint training and continuing development
 - b) allocate sufficient resources and administrative support for partnership activities.
- 9.7 **The voluntary and community sector will:**
- a) identify the skills, experience, and competencies required of members and representatives and invest in their development
 - b) build relationships and interdependencies that strengthen the position of the sector
 - c) work collectively through local infrastructure organisations to identify common and minority interests, priorities, strengths and needs
 - d) be flexible enough to take advantage of new opportunities that might arise
 - e) not always take the majority view when trying to resolve and represent conflicting interests; the voices of a legitimate minority deserve to be equally heard.
 - f) seek and secure resources to support partnership and representation activity.

10. Reviewing and Evaluating Partnerships

- 10.1 Periodically partnerships find it useful to engage in a quick 'health check' review, to establish if they need to adapt and make modifications to their practice. They might ask the questions:
- a) do all partners attend meetings and input equally to discussions and decisions?
 - b) do all partners feel valued and listened to?
 - c) is the partnership making appropriate progress towards its stated goals?
 - d) are the current partners still the right ones?
 - e) is the partnership effectively engaging with and reporting back to the wider stakeholder group?
 - f) is the partnership appropriately resourced to function effectively?
 - g) what, if anything, do we need to change in order to succeed in achieving our goals?
 - h) what other work is taking place that we need to pay attention to, or build links with?
- 10.2 Partnerships need to develop evaluative performance measurement mechanisms that are:
- a) proportionate to the timescale, business, size, scope and scale of the partnership
 - b) clear from the outset
 - c) appropriate to the activities undertaken
 - d) sufficiently flexible to allow partnerships to adapt and evolve dependent on local circumstances
 - e) where possible, built on activities already being undertaken by partner organisations.
- 10.3 **Both sectors will:**
- a) review how the partnership is working and put in place simple and robust arrangements that enable reflection, learning and continuous improvement
 - b) share and celebrate success.

Checklist of the Main Points of the Code of Good Practice on Partnerships

This checklist draws on the Compact Code of Good Practice on Partnerships and pulls together key points as a useful summary to promote and develop effective partnership working.

Initiating Partnership Working

- Care is taken to identify any other existing partnerships and whether the proposed activity duplicates that of any other partnership.
- Key partners are identified and the representative for each partner is offered the support they need in order to participate effectively in partnership activities.
- The purpose and working practices of the partnership are clear, agreed by all representatives and documented.
- Appropriate representation from the voluntary and community sector is sought and any barriers to involvement are identified and attempts are made to overcome them.
- Enough resources and administrative support are allocated for the partnership activities.
- Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and understood.

Partnership Working in Practice

- The relationship between partners is based on mutual trust and respect; all representatives can share skills and knowledge and discuss freely any differences of perspective.
- Each representative is given the opportunity to contribute to the agenda for partnership activities.
- Fairness, equality and inclusion underpin all aspects of partnership working and activities.
- Each representative maintains a continual dialogue with those they represent and has the authority to take decisions and actions.
- The independence and operational autonomy of partners is recognised and respected.
- Measurable aims and objectives for the partnership are identified and agreed by all the partners.
- Partnership activities are agreed, coordinated and supported by appropriate performance management systems.

Improving Partnership Working

- Review how the partnership is working and put in place simple and robust arrangements that enable reflection, learning and continuous improvement.
- If any specific issues are highlighted during partnership activities, training is discussed as a possibility for all partners and organised if necessary.
- Information resulting from partnership working is communicated in good time and conveyed accurately and in an appropriate format.