

MERTON COMPACT

Working Together - Better Together



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Foreword

Our vision is for Merton to be a great place to live, work and learn.

The needs and hopes of people can be met if sectors are willing to build strong, healthy and vibrant partnerships to improve services.

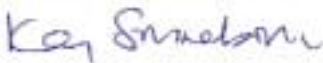
From National Compact week in November 2003, representatives from Merton's voluntary and community sector, local authority and primary care trust have all contributed to the development of a local Compact for Merton.

All partners are encouraged to support the Compact's principles and practices and to be involved in the development of them and the associated Codes of Practice.

We are delighted to present the Merton Compact as a first step in building on relations and developing a Compact way of working for Merton*.



Councillor Andrew Judge, Leader of Merton Council



Kay Sonneborn, Chair of Sutton and Merton Primary Care Trust



Lola Barrett, Chair of Merton Voluntary Service Council

28th October 2004

*To be involved in the ongoing development of the Merton Compact please contact one of the representatives listed in the back.

What is a Compact?

Compacts are partnership agreements between public bodies and the voluntary and community sector to improve their relationships and provide a framework within which the sectors can understand what to expect from each other. Compacts offer the means of supporting the development of the voluntary and community sector's capacity so that groups can do more to meet both their aims and those of their public sector partners, thereby enhancing their contribution to the local community. The national compact (between central government and the voluntary and community sector) was launched in 1998 and it is now a requirement for all local authorities and primary care trusts to develop a compact with the voluntary and community sector. The Compact is an approved and signed policy and affects the conduct of all partners.

What is the Merton Compact?

The Merton Compact is a partnership agreement between the London Borough of Merton¹ and the Sutton and Merton Primary Care Trust² (public sector) and the voluntary and community sector³ and is approved and signed policy. The Merton Compact subscribes to the principles of the national compact and its associated codes of practice. Accordingly, it is intended to expand the scope of the Merton Compact by seeking to sign up other public bodies, especially those partner bodies in membership of the Merton Partnership (the Local Strategic Partnership in Merton). It will also be embedded in the Community Plan.

This Compact sets out the principles and values of the partnership and aims to achieve a Compact way of working by helping us:

- Communicate better with each other
- Understand and respect each other's views
- Work together more effectively to support the people of Merton

¹ The London Borough of Merton is the Local Authority in Merton

² Sutton and Merton Primary Care Trust (PCT) is a public body charged with providing and managing health services for residents. It has four major responsibilities: to improve the health of local people; to bring into one team GPs, community nursing and therapy services; to provide a full range of local GP and community health services; and to commission hospital and mental services.

³ The Voluntary and Community Sector is comprised of self-governing organisations that exist to serve a public benefit and generate social capital. It is independent of the formal structures of government or the profit sector and relies heavily on volunteers in carrying out its mandate. There are several hundred voluntary and community organisations in Merton.

What are our Compact Principles?

Our shared aim is to provide quality services to the people of Merton. We recognise that there is added value in working in partnership towards common aims and objectives. The following principles will underpin this partnership and these aims:

- Community involvement and voluntary action are essential to the quality of life in Merton. It is recognised that the voluntary and community sector makes a valuable contribution to the economic, environmental and social development of Merton.
- The differences and diversity between the public sector and the voluntary and community sector should be respected and valued
- In the development and delivery of services, the public sector and the voluntary and community sector have distinct but complementary roles
- Each sector has its own set of responsibilities and constraints
- The independence of the voluntary and community sector should be respected
- To maximise the effectiveness of the voluntary and community sector, investment in its infrastructure is essential
- The relationship between the sectors should be open and respectful and demonstrate trust
- Each sector should strive for excellence and equality of access
- When working together contributions from each sector should be given equal consideration and respect
- Organisations in each sector have the right to contribute to and, if necessary, challenge matters that affect them

Together we will:

- ☑ Develop mutual understanding of the real needs in Merton and bring forward essential funding and a realistic level of resources to address these needs
- ☑ Raise awareness of Merton's needs at regional, national and European levels
- ☑ Value both informal and organised volunteer activity in Merton, as well as respecting all organisations for what they do
- ☑ Develop policies and services taking into account the experience and views of each sector
- ☑ Develop effective methods of communication
- ☑ Promote Compact principles in our working relationships and encourage the adoption of the Compact by others
- ☑ Update the Compact by reviewing it regularly
- ☑ Develop Compact Codes of Practice and related action plans
- ☑ Resolve problems in a constructive and open way

Proposed Codes of Practice

When developed, the Codes of Practice will help bring the Compact principles into our day to day work and will provide the framework for the codes.

Organisations from both sectors will be invited to adopt the Codes of Practice and are encouraged to be involved in the ongoing development.

1. Consultation and Policy Appraisal Code Principles

1.1 Integral to project development and policy review

Consultation should be considered at the start of a project or policy review to ensure that it happens at the appropriate stage in the project cycle. The methods chosen, and success of these processes, should be continuously reviewed and evaluated throughout the life of the project.

1.2 Carried out using agreed standards

Consultation between partners should be carried out to agreed standards. These should include defined timescales (ideally twelve weeks), summarised reports, and clear feedback about results and decisions undertaken.

1.3 Appropriate for the target groups

Consultation should be designed to be appropriate for the partners being consulted, both in terms of the methods used and the style of presentation. Consultation documents should be written in plain language with technical terms explained. All methodologies should be fit for the purpose and target group being consulted. Where appropriate, reports should be translated into formats accessible to their audience, including those with language difficulties or physical and sensory disabilities.

1.4 Genuine and transparent

Any consultation exercise or document should specify which aspects are being presented for comment and which cannot be changed, to allow partners to respond appropriately. It is understood that partners cannot have an impact on decision making for all aspects of each other's work. Where this is not possible, partners should always make clear that a document or event is for information purposes only rather than consultation.

1.5 Publicised and accessible

Partners should ensure that information and consultation exercises relevant to the work of other partners are well publicised. Consultations and related documents should be easily accessible to groups with all levels of resources and in a format that will allow smaller organisations to respond.

1.6 Shared where appropriate

Partners should work together to share the resources available to undertake consultation where appropriate. The potential for joint consultation exercises should always be examined to reduce duplication.

2. Funding, Procurement and Commissioning Code Principles

2.1 Genuine and transparent

There will be openness and transparency to make it easier to find out about available funding. The partners will promote fair access to strategic, project and contract funding.

2.2 Corporate approach

The public sector will develop consistent procedures and a joint approach to supporting the voluntary and community sector. They will operate a corporate approach to funding that is consistent and timely and streamlines procedures and reduces duplication, whilst exercising accountability of public funds.

2.3 Infrastructure and sustainability

The public sector recognises the importance of funding core costs and will invest in the infrastructure of voluntary and community organisations. It also recognises that longer term funding will improve sustainability and enable forward planning. The public sector will ensure proper consideration of the needs of small community groups by ensuring access to in-kind support, small grants, and investing in development support.

2.4 Needs led funding

Funding and support will be based on need and take account of the changing demographic composition of Merton.

2.5 Proportionality

There will be a joint and consistent approach to monitoring and evaluation that is effective and proportionate to the level of funding.

2.6 Consequences of not funding

Consideration will be given to the effects on a voluntary or community organisation of any decision not to fund, or to withdraw funding, before any final decision is taken.

2.7 Timely decisions and payments

The public sector will ensure sufficient notification of funding decisions and will make timely payment of funds.

3. Black and Minority Ethnic Organisations Code Principles

It is recognised that the black and minority ethnic voluntary and community sector, including faith groups and refugee and asylum seeker organisations, has a wealth of knowledge, expertise and experience and makes a valuable and important contribution to Merton.

3.1 Funding and other support

A wide range of communities co-exist in the borough with differing needs. The public sector will ensure fair and equal access to funding and other support, recognising and appreciating that culturally appropriate service provision can cost more and this should be reflected in funding agreements.

3.2 Capacity building

It is recognised that appropriate support to build their capacity is one of the vehicles through which Merton's black and minority ethnic organisations will continue to be proactive and deliver professional services.

3.3 Consultation and participation

It is recognised that the involvement of black and minority ethnic community organisations is an intrinsic part of the consultation and policy process in Merton.

4. Community Organisations Code Principles

Each community group is different in its purpose, its size and its membership. Small, unfunded groups comprise the majority of the local voluntary and community sector and make a vital contribution to the local community. Common to all is that they are close to the community and involve service users and carers. It is the community itself, often in small informal groups, taking action to get things done.

4.1 Funding and other support

To flourish it is recognised that community groups need access to funding and other means of infrastructure support to increase their effectiveness and build social capital.

4.2 Consultation and participation

It is important to involve community groups directly in the issues that affect them.

5. Volunteering Code Principles

Volunteering has been described as “an important expression of citizenship and essential to democracy. It is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community and can take many forms. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain.”

5.1 Support of volunteers

Volunteer-involving organisations need an effective and properly resourced support framework.

5.2 Contribution of volunteers

It is recognised that volunteers make a major contribution to the economic, environmental and social development of Merton. This contribution should be valued and the profile and ethos of volunteering promoted.

5.3 Barriers to volunteering

The barriers to people volunteering should be recognised by developing the capacity of volunteer-involving organisations to respond to the changing needs of volunteers.

5.4 Investing in volunteering

Best practice for the management and support of volunteers will be encouraged.

5.5 Consultation and participation

The contribution of volunteers in helping to develop public policy is recognised and encouraged through involvement in consultation processes and campaigning.

6. Governance Code Principles

6.1 Adherence to legal obligations and best practice guidelines

The voluntary and community sector will maintain high standards of governance and conduct and comply with their reporting and accountability obligations.

Other areas of the Governance Code Principles to be developed.

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks go to all those who participated in the development of the Merton Compact and the consultation process.

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Consultation

Thank you to the over fifty organisations and other participants who attended the consultation meeting in September 2004 and over twenty who submitted a written response. We hope you will remain involved as the Merton Compact develops further.