

## Merton Compact

“The Compact is not just another document to be followed, but a way of working which enables those using it to better carry out their existing roles.”

Simon Blake, Chair of Compact Voice

### Foreword

The Merton Compact has provided a framework for joint working between the public and voluntary sectors in Merton since 2004. From being a strategy that could have just gathered dust on a shelf, the ‘Compact way of working’ has become part and parcel of the way we do things in Merton, strengthening the links between the voluntary sector and a wide range of partners in Merton to bring about real, positive change for local people. Over time more partners have seen the benefits the Compact has brought about and have signed up to the principles and aims of the Merton Compact.

As a group of partners we continue to seek out new opportunities to work together to deliver services, lever in additional funding and tackle problems with creative shared solutions. As a result of this work Merton has been cited as an example of national best practice for a number of years.

The Merton Compact provides a solid foundation to enable us to have difficult conversations and challenge each other. Our strong working relationships have been maintained during the difficult financial times we all have recently been facing and this is proof that we stand together, supporting each other, in good times and bad.

This refreshed Merton Compact recognises how much we have achieved over the last seven years, and I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to making Merton a better place.

It also sets out a clear commitment for the future. We will continue to work hard to understand and support each other so that we are able to respond to all challenges that arise.

With the Merton Compact firmly in place, we are well-prepared to succeed, together.



Cllr Stephen Alambritis

Chair of the Merton Partnership and Leader of Merton Council

## **What is a Compact?**

Compacts are partnership agreements between public bodies and the voluntary sector<sup>1</sup> to improve their relationships and provide a framework within which the sectors can understand what to expect from each other, thereby enhancing their contribution to the local community.

## **The Merton Compact**

The Merton Compact was developed in 2004 with partners from the Primary Care Trust, Merton Council and the voluntary sector signing up to the Merton Compact when it was launched in October 2004.

Since then a number of other organisations have lent their support to the Merton Compact and signed up to its principles, including Merton Police, the Fire Service, local college and health partners. The local Chamber of Commerce has also signed up to the Compact to help strengthen partnership working with local voluntary and public sector partners, and promote Compact principles among the business community.

Merton made a conscious decision to focus on practical improvements that could be made to improve the relationship between the statutory and voluntary sectors, recognising that often some of the biggest gains can be achieved as a result of the smallest changes.

## **Our achievements**

The Merton Compact has provided a standard against which the actions of signatory organisations can be judged. By applying the principles of the Merton Compact to the way partners work, Merton has seen a number of improvements to the way the public, voluntary and business sectors work together which in turn has brought about positive change for local people.

Merton is able to provide practical examples of how the Compact has improved partnership working in the borough as a result of mutual support, training and advice; timely cross-sector involvement in policy development and the design of public services; and joint working to lever in additional external funding that individual organisations would not be able to access alone. Details of some of these examples are included in Appendix I.

Because of this, the Merton Compact has consistently been promoted across the country by the Government as a model of good practice.

In recognition of the evidence demonstrating how the Merton Compact has had a real impact on outcomes for local people, the Compact has won many national and regional awards for several years running:

- 2010 Winner of the Compact of the Year Award at the National Compact Excellence Awards

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<sup>1</sup> Note that for brevity, the term 'voluntary sector' has been used throughout this document to refer to the voluntary, community and faith sectors. Further information is contained in the glossary at the end of this document.

- 2009 Excellence award under the Compact of the Year category at the National Compact Excellence Awards and Highly Commended in the London Regional Compact Awards
- 2008 Winner of the London Regional Award for excellence in partnership working
- 2007 Gold Commendation for excellence in the 'Compact way of working' category of the National Compact Commendations
- 2006 Winner of the Gold Commendation for excellence in the 'Partnership working' category of the National Compact Commendations and Winner of the Municipal Journal Working with the Voluntary and Community Sector Achievement Award for achievements of the Merton Compact
- 2005 Winner of the Gold Commendation for excellence in the 'Implementation of the Compact' category of the National Compact Commendations

'Compact Wins' such as these are flagged up by the Compact Board and published on the Merton Compact webpages. The Board also exercises its 'scrutiny' role to identify examples of where Compact principles have not been applied and establish solutions.

More information about the impact of the Merton Compact can be found at [www.merton.gov.uk/compact](http://www.merton.gov.uk/compact).

## **Our shared Compact principles**

Our 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 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 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 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 sector should be respected.
- To maximise the effectiveness of the voluntary 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.

## **Compact outcomes**

We believe that an effective partnership between the public sector and voluntary sector organisations – the ‘Compact way of working’ – will help achieve the following outcomes:

1. A strong, diverse and independent voluntary sector
2. An equal and fair society
3. Effective and transparent design and development of policies
4. Responsive and high-quality programmes and services
5. Clear arrangements for managing changes to programmes and services

In order to achieve these outcomes, there are a number of undertakings required from both the public and voluntary sectors

## **Outcome 1: A strong, diverse and independent voluntary sector**

### **Undertakings for the public sector**

- 1.1 Respect the independence of the voluntary sector.
- 1.2 Recognise that volunteering adds value to public services and brings about positive benefits to local people and service users. Encourage volunteering to be undertaken by a high proportion of people across diverse backgrounds.
- 1.3 Ensure greater transparency by making data and information more accessible, helping the voluntary sector to challenge existing provision of services, access new markets and hold the public agencies to account.
- 1.4 Consider a range of ways to support voluntary sector organisations, such as enabling greater access to public sector premises and resources.
- 1.5 Ensure that where organisations are engaging volunteers requiring Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks, the organisation covers the charge, not the volunteers, and work together to streamline processes for CRB checks to encourage volunteering.

### **Undertakings for the voluntary sector**

- 1.6 When campaigning or advocating, ensure that robust evidence is provided, including information about the source and range of people and communities represented.
- 1.7 Ensure independence is upheld, focusing on the cause represented, regardless of any relationship they have with the public sector, financial or otherwise.
- 1.8 Recognise that volunteering adds value to public services and brings about positive benefits to local people and service users. Encourage volunteering to be undertaken by a high proportion of people across diverse backgrounds.
- 1.9 Ensure that where organisations are engaging volunteers requiring Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks, the organisation covers the charge, not the volunteers, and work together to streamline processes for CRB checks to encourage volunteering.

## **Outcome 2: An equal and fair society**

### **Undertakings for the public sector**

- 2.1 Work with voluntary sector organisations that represent, support or provide services to people specifically protected by legislation and other under-represented and disadvantaged groups. Understand the specific needs of these groups by actively seeking the views of service users and clients. Take these views into account, including assessing impact, when designing and implementing policies, programmes and services.
- 2.2 Acknowledge that organisations representing specific disadvantaged or under-represented groups can help promote social and community cohesion and should have equal access to funding.
- 2.3 Take practical action to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality and to ensure a voice for under-represented and disadvantaged groups.

### **Undertakings for the voluntary sector**

- 2.4 Show how the value of the work can help the public sector deliver its duties on promoting equality and tackling discrimination.
- 2.5 Take practical action to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and build stronger communities.

## **Outcome 3: Effective and transparent design and development of policies, programmes and public services**

### **Undertakings for the public sector**

- 3.1 Recognise that the voluntary sector makes a valuable contribution to the economic, environmental and social development of Merton.
- 3.2 Consider the social impact that may result from policy and programme development and, in particular, consider how these would impact local efforts to inspire and encourage social action and to empower communities.
- 3.3 Work with the voluntary sector from the earliest possible stage to design policies, programmes and services. Ensure those likely to have a view are involved from the start and remove barriers that may prevent organisations contributing.
- 3.4 Give early notice of forthcoming consultations, where possible, allowing enough time for voluntary sector organisations to involve their service users, beneficiaries, members, volunteers and trustees in preparing responses. Where it is appropriate, and enables meaningful engagement, conduct 12-week formal written consultations, with clear explanations and rationale for shorter time-frames or a more informal approach.
- 3.5 Consider providing feedback to explain how respondents have influenced the design and development of policies, programmes and public services, including where respondents' views have not been acted upon.
- 3.6 Assess the implications for the sector of new policies, legislation and guidance, aiming to reduce the bureaucratic burden, particularly on small organisations.

### **Undertakings for the voluntary sector**

- 3.7 Promote and respond to public sector consultations where appropriate.
- 3.8 Seek the views of service users, clients, beneficiaries, members, volunteers and trustees when making representation to the public sector. Be clear on who is being represented, in what capacity, and on what basis that representation is being made.
- 3.9 When putting forward ideas, focus on evidence-based solutions, with clear proposals for positive outcomes.

## **Outcome 4: Responsive and high-quality programmes and services**

### **Undertakings for the public sector**

- 4.1 Ensure that voluntary sector organisations have a greater role and more opportunities in delivering public services by opening up new markets in accordance with wider public service reform measures and reforming the commissioning environment in existing markets.
- 4.2 Consider a wide range of ways to fund or resource voluntary sector organisations, including grants, contracts, loan finance, the use of premises and so on. Work to remove barriers that may prevent voluntary sector organisations accessing government funding, thereby enabling smaller organisations to become involved in delivering services where they are best placed to achieve the desired outcomes.
- 4.3 Ensure transparency by providing a clear rationale for all funding decisions.
- 4.4 Commit to multi-year funding where appropriate and where it adds value for money. The funding term should reflect the time it will take to deliver the outcome. If multi-year funding is not considered to be the best way of delivering the objective, explain the reasons for the decision.
- 4.5 Ensure well managed and transparent application and tendering processes, which are proportionate to the desired objectives and outcomes of the programmes. Ensure that notification of funding decisions and that transfer of funds to successful organisations are within agreed timescales.
- 4.6 Agree with voluntary sector organisations how outcomes will be monitored before a contract or funding agreement is made. Ensure that monitoring and reporting is relevant and proportionate to the nature and size of the opportunity.
- 4.7 Ensure equal treatment across sectors, including reporting and monitoring arrangements, when tendering for contracts.
- 4.8 Recognise that when voluntary sector organisations apply for a grant, they can include appropriate and relevant overheads, including the costs associated with training and volunteer involvement.
- 4.9 Ensure delivery terms and risks are proportionate to the nature and value of the service.
- 4.10 Ensure that the widest possible range of organisations can be involved in the provision of services through appropriate funding and financing models.
- 4.11 Ensure all bodies distributing funds on behalf of the public sector adhere to the commitments in this Compact.
- 4.12 Encourage feedback from a wide range of sources on the effectiveness of the partnership between the public sector and voluntary sector

organisations and how successful it has been in delivering their objectives.

- 4.13 Seek out opportunities to explore joint funding bids with the voluntary sector to maximise investment into the borough.

#### **Undertakings for the voluntary sector**

- 4.14 Ensure eligibility for funding before applying and be explicit about how outcomes will be achieved.
- 4.15 Ensure robust governance arrangements so that organisations can best manage any risk associated with service delivery and financing models, including giving funders early notice of significant changes in circumstances.
- 4.16 Be open and transparent about reporting, recognising that monitoring, whether internal or external, is an aspect of good management practice.
- 4.17 Demonstrate the social, environmental or economic value of the programmes and services provided, where appropriate.
- 4.18 Help facilitate feedback from users and communities to the public sector to help improve delivery of programmes and services.
- 4.19 Recognise that the public sector can legitimately expect voluntary sector organisations to give public recognition of its funding.
- 4.20 Seek out opportunities to explore joint funding bids with the voluntary sector to maximise investment into the borough.

## **Outcome 5: Clear arrangements for managing changes to programmes and services**

### **Undertakings for the public sector**

- 5.1 If a programme or service being delivered by a voluntary sector organisation is encountering problems, agree with the organisation a timetable of actions to improve performance before making a decision to end a financial relationship.
- 5.2 Assess the impact on beneficiaries, service users and volunteers before deciding to reduce or end funding. Assess the need to re-allocate funds to another organisation serving the same group.
- 5.3 Where there are restrictions or changes to future resources, discuss with voluntary sector organisations the potential implications as early as possible, give organisations the opportunity to respond, and consider the response fully, respecting sector expertise, before making a final decision.
- 5.4 Give a minimum of three months notice in writing when changing or ending a funding relationships or other support, apart from in exceptional circumstances, and provide a clear rationale for why the decisions has been taken.

### **Undertakings for the voluntary sector**

- 5.5 Plan for the end of funding to reduce any potential negative impact on beneficiaries and the organisation.
- 5.6 Contribute positively to reviews of programmes and funding practice.
- 5.7 Advise funders on the social, environmental or economic impact(s) of funding changes, particularly to minimise their effects on people in vulnerable situations
- 5.8 Advise funders if voluntary sector organisations are facing funding difficulties.

## How do we implement the Compact?

Implementation of the Merton Compact is monitored by the Compact Board which brings together representatives from the voluntary sector<sup>2</sup> and public sector.

The Compact Board highlights good practice demonstrating the 'Compact way of working' – known as 'Compact Wins' – and also provides an opportunity to flag up examples where Compact principles have not been applied and resolve any problems.

## Further information

For more information about the Merton Compact and the work of the Compact Board, please visit the Merton Compact website at <http://www.merton.gov.uk/compact>. Alternatively, please contact a member of the Compact Board (Board members are listed on the Merton Compact website) or email [voluntarysector@merton.gov.uk](mailto:voluntarysector@merton.gov.uk)

To find out more about Involve visit the Merton Connected website at [www.Merton.Connected.com/Involve](http://www.Merton.Connected.com/Involve) or contact Merton Voluntary Services Council (MVSC) by email at [info@mvsc.co.uk](mailto:info@mvsc.co.uk) or telephone 020 8685 1771.

For a copy of the National Compact between central government and civil society organisations, visit <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/The%20Compact.pdf>

The Compact Voice website also provides interesting examples of good practice nationwide at <http://www.compactvoice.org.uk/>

## Glossary

Compact	Compacts are partnership agreements between public bodies and the voluntary sector to improve their relationships and provide a framework within which the sectors can understand what to expect from each other. In Merton, the local Chamber of Commerce has also signed up to the Compact to help to promote Compact principles among the business community.
Compact Board	The Compact Board is a body that forms part of the Merton partnership and acts to promote and monitor the delivery of the Merton Compact through promoting good relations and working between voluntary sector organisations and public sector and business partners in Merton.  Members of the Compact Board include representatives from each of the Merton Compact signatory organisations,

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<sup>2</sup> Voluntary sector members of the Compact Board are elected to the board through the 'INVOLVE' network.

	<p>six representatives nominated by Involve, and the Merton Council cabinet member and shadow member with responsibility for relationships with the voluntary and community sector</p>
Compact way of working	<p>The 'Compact way of working' is the term used to refer to working in line with the principles and undertakings set out in the Compact.</p>
Compact Wins	<p>Good practice examples demonstrating the 'Compact way of working' are known as 'Compact Wins'. The Compact Board keeps a log of Compact Wins and these are published on the Compact webpages.</p>
INVOLVE	<p>INVOLVE is a network of the community and voluntary sector and is the Community Engagement Network for Merton. It aims to make sure that the needs and preferences of service users, carers and the wider community are identified and kept central to the planning and delivery of future services in Merton. For more information about INVOLVE, visit <a href="http://www.mertonconnected.com/involve">www.mertonconnected.com/involve</a></p>
Merton Partnership	<p>The Merton Partnership which brings together public sector organisations, community groups, the voluntary sector and business to address local issues such as improved transport and better facilities for the elderly and the young. More information about the Merton partnership is available at <a href="http://www.mertonpartnership.org">www.mertonpartnership.org</a></p>
Public sector	<p>The term 'public sector' refers to the public agencies that operate in Merton, for example Merton Council, Police, Health, Fire.</p>
Scrutiny role	<p>The Compact Board has a 'scrutiny role' which means that it identifies examples of where Compact principles have not been applied and works to establish solutions to resolve this.</p>
Voluntary sector	<p>For brevity, the term 'voluntary sector' has been used throughout this document to refer to the voluntary, community and faith sectors.</p>
Volunteering	<p>Volunteering is unpaid and entered into freely for the benefit of others and the environment. People get involved through a process of community engagement. It is not work experience, enforced or entered into in the expectation of reward.</p>

## Appendix: Examples of Merton's Compact Wins

'Compact Wins' are flagged up by the Compact Board and published on the Merton Compact webpages. Here are a few examples to illustrate the breadth of Compact working in Merton:

- Merton Council has improved the way in which it manages its grants programmes. 'Lessons learned' sessions take place following funding rounds bringing together the views of the voluntary sector groups that applied with the officers who managed the processes. This enables officers to hear views on what works well and where improvements could be made, and for the sector to hear about the officers' experience. Learning from these sessions has been reflected in new standardised grant application forms, assessment and allocation processes and monitoring arrangements. This kind of evaluation is now built into the annual review of the processes.
- The voluntary sector has worked in partnership with the Merton Chamber of Commerce for a number of years, enabling mutual support and advice and accessing external funding to benefit small business, social enterprise and the voluntary and community sector in Merton. This working relationship was formalised when Merton Chamber of Commerce formally signed up to the Merton Compact in 2011.
- There have been a number of examples of joint working to lever in external funding. For example:
  - Merton Adult Education and St Marks Family Centre worked together to access funding that the council would not have been able to access without support from the voluntary sector. The bid secured money to refurbish the St Marks Family Centre's learning centre.
  - Grenfell Housing Trust was able to access over £400,000 to refurbish a 16 bed property for the benefit of young people with learning disabilities. Again this was funding that the council was not able to access itself. Due to existing strong partnerships in Merton, Grenfell knew that accommodation for this vulnerable client group was a Merton Council priority and pulled together a group to explore the feasibility. Various departments were involved and everyone pulled out all the stops to ensure that extremely tight deadlines were met to develop a funding bid. Through its private sector contacts Grenfell was also able to access the services of a wonderful architect and building company. The first four residents moved into The Gables in August 2011.
  - Late in 2009 the council hosted a sub regional Awards for All Big Lottery workshop to provide guidance to voluntary organisations on how to successfully access this funding stream. The council worked with MVSC to promote the event and 33 groups attended, 21 of which were from Merton. The event was organised as typically Merton groups did not make enough funding applications to the Awards for All scheme, and the borough was therefore not accessing its proportion of funding. Within a few months of the workshop 13 Merton organisations

had submitted applications to the Big Lottery Awards for All fund. Nine were successful and brought a total of £75,640 to Merton.

- The Merton Partnership's Community Plan includes priorities around developing the council's local leadership role and the capacity of the community and voluntary sector, including increasing the scope and impact of volunteering.
- The voluntary sector has been involved in a wide range of service and strategy development, including
  - Merton Council's Asset Management Plan, Community and Housing Commissioning Strategy, and the Children, Schools and Families Early Intervention & Prevention Programme; and
  - Merton Partnership's review of volunteering in Merton and development of a Volunteering Strategy, and the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) BAME Strategic Plan
- In recognition of the evidence demonstrating how the Merton Compact has had a real impact on outcomes for local people, the Compact has won many national and regional awards for several years running, including Best Local Compact in 2011.

As these examples show, Merton is able to provide practical examples of how the Compact has improved partnership working in the borough. Because of this the Merton Compact has consistently been promoted across the country by the Government as a model of good practice.

For the latest Compact Wins visit [www.merton.gov.uk/compact](http://www.merton.gov.uk/compact)