



supporting voluntary and community
organisations in the Borough

THE BRACKNELL FOREST COMPACT



May 2008

1. Background

- 1.1 The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) is central to a democratic socially cohesive society and the Bracknell Forest Compact recognises and values the increasingly vital and vibrant role that this sector fulfils. The services provided by the sector complement local authorities' provision and are part of a whole package of quality services available to the community.
- 1.2 Genuine partnership working is essential for maximising the value and effectiveness of services. In development and delivery of public services, statutory organisations and the voluntary and community sector have distinct but complementary roles. The VCS, in addition to ensuring a diversity of service provision, play a key role in promoting and building communities, reaching out to under represented communities and enhancing the capacity of communities in making decisions affecting their lives.
- 1.3 A National Compact was agreed between Government and the VCS in November 1998 (and a local Compact was signed with Bracknell Forest in 2002) which highlighted the need for the formalisation and continuous development of working relationships at all levels to ensure that the combined resources of the sectors could be used effectively and efficiently.
- 1.4 In Bracknell Forest, there are many good examples of effective joint working between voluntary and community organisations and the statutory sector. The purpose of the Bracknell Forest Compact is to build on these good relationships by developing a formalised partnership between statutory organisations, the VCS and other partners.
- 1.5 It is intended that the Bracknell Forest Compact will be a fundamental reference document and process for monitoring and evaluating the quality of relationships, partnerships and cross-sector working at all levels. This document sets out the key principles and shared vision by the development of codes of good working practice in key areas of relationship between the sectors.
- 1.6 Compacts are not legally binding documents, rather their authority comes from the fact that they are developed, consulted upon and formally adopted by local stakeholders themselves. Bracknell Forest Compact will not be static, but will be monitored, developed and amended over time in order to reflect the changing needs and priorities of the local community. The success of the Compact is dependent upon the public and voluntary sectors making an equal commitment to maintaining principles of mutual respect, recognition, best practice and co-operation.

2. Introduction - What is a Compact?

- 2.1 A Compact is a written understanding between local public organisations and the VCS which will define how the two sectors will work with each other. It is an agreement between organisations and not individuals. This compact is an agreement between Bracknell Forest Borough Council and the VCS organisations that operate in this borough.
- 2.2 The Compact is designed to benefit the local community, by establishing an effective relationship across sectors and ensuring that energies and resources are not wasted and more joint working is possible. The five codes of practice are:
 - Consultation and Policy

- Funding, Procurement and Commissioning
- Volunteering
- Black and Minority Ethnic Groups
- Disability

2.3 Key Shared Principles - the key shared principles and values, which will underpin the relationship between the public sector and the VCS are set out below

- 2.3.1 A recognition that more will be achieved for the people living and working in the Borough and users of services in the Borough through working together.
- 2.3.2 An independent, diverse and vibrant voluntary and community sector is fundamental to the well-being of the borough of Bracknell Forest and a democratic society.
- 2.3.3 A recognition that volunteers make a vital and unique contribution to the well-being of people and communities in the borough of Bracknell Forest.
- 2.3.4 A commitment to equality of opportunity for all, regardless of age, disability, ethnic background and skin colour, faith, gender, health, language, social and economic background or sexual orientation.
- 2.3.5 Partnership working across the sectors requires integrity, objectivity, understanding, openness, honesty, accountability, collaboration and recognition of the equal value of the contribution of each sector.
- 2.3.6 Partnerships must be based on the principle of equality, mutual respect, and recognition of differences, as well as similarity of purpose.
- 2.3.7 An approach recognising that the diversity of funding base is one of the best guarantees of continued independence of the voluntary and community sector.
- 2.3.8 Sustainability and the encouragement of sustainable communities are important in the planning and provision of services in Bracknell Forest.
- 2.3.9 An acceptance that the statutory agencies play a significant role as funders of some voluntary and community groups. Meaningful consultation builds relationships, improves policy development, and enhances the design and delivery of services and programmes.
- 2.3.10 Voluntary and community groups are entitled to campaign within the law in order to advance their aims and objectives, to comment on public sector policy, to challenge policy, and to determine and manage their own affairs.
- 2.3.11 Statutory agencies and the voluntary/community sector have different forms of accountability and are answerable to a different range of stakeholders.

3. Voluntary and Community Sector Undertakings

3.1 The VCS in Bracknell Forest recognises that it has a significant role to play in the borough. It is for this reason that it will:

3.1.1 Recognise the need for value-for-money in the spending of public money, and be prepared to adopt, as agreed and appropriate, procedures for the monitoring and evaluation of their services.

3.1.2 Adopt and implement policies for the promotion of equal opportunities.

3.1.3 Taking into account the size and nature of each group, it will adopt and implement policies and codes of practice when working with volunteers

3.1.4 Involve those using their services in the development and where appropriate, management of services.

3.1.5 Work towards implementing appropriate quality standards.

3.1.6 Maintain high standards of governance, and meet agreed reporting and accountability obligations to funders and clients.

3.1.7 Where appropriate, work towards diversifying its funding base to avoid reliance upon any single source of funding.

3.1.8 Promote effective relationships between the statutory and voluntary and community sectors.

3.1.9 Actively maintain the role of campaigning to improve practice, policy and services

3.1.10 Ensure it acts lawfully and complies with Charity Commission guidance and Company Law.

3.1.11 Accept that public sector organisations are governed by statute and as such have statutory duties to discharge.

3.1.12 Work towards ensuring that its services and policies are transparent, open and inclusive.

3.1.13 Be accountable for all their actions.

4. Public Sector Undertakings

4.1 The public sector recognises that the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in Bracknell has valuable skills and abilities and for that reason (within resource constraints) it will:

4.1.1 Recognise and support the independence of the VCS including their self-help and campaigning roles, as well as the services they provide.

4.1.2 Accept that the VCS have the right to determine and manage their own affairs, regardless of any funding arrangements.

- 4.1.3 Consult with the VCS in a timely and reasonable way, enabling effective consultation with users, beneficiaries and stakeholders.
- 4.1.4 Work towards a transparent and open process for any dealings with the VCS.
- 4.1.5 Work towards achieving consistency and good practice within and between public sector organisations on issues such as: funding arrangements, monitoring and evaluation, consultation and development of services.
- 4.1.6 Seek to monitor policy developments and government initiatives and consult the VCS where possible on issues likely to have a significant impact on the Sector.
- 4.1.7 Recognise and support (within resource constraints) the value of infrastructure organisations, such as Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action, and the role it plays in Bracknell Forest.
- 4.1.8 Recognise that the VCS will not deliver public services which public sector organisations have a statutory obligation to deliver, but will, where appropriate, work to improve local services and assist in delivery of statutory responsibilities.
- 4.1.9 Recognise the training needs of volunteers and those with governance responsibilities for VCS organisations.
- 4.1.10 Recognise the value of the VCS in Bracknell Forest and commit to monitoring and reviewing the Compact.

5. Resolution of Disagreements

- 5.1 The Compact Steering Group (comprising members of the Council, Churches, PCT and local VCS) will work together to develop effective mechanisms for resolving complaints and conflicts in relation to the application of the Compact.
- 5.2 The Compact Steering Group will work towards developing a process that:
 - Encourages all organisations to raise concerns, in an environment that is positive and open.
 - Wherever possible seeks to enable disagreements to be resolved between parties.
 - Offers help, support, advice and if appropriate access to an independent person to assist in the resolution of dispute.

6. The Way Forward

- 6.1 This document sets out the key principles and values that underpin the work between the two sectors and the commitment of both the VCS and public sector organisations in Bracknell Forest to work together to improve the lives of people in the Borough.
- 6.2 Both sectors will work together to spread the message about the Compact and to ensure its effectiveness.

7. CODE OF PRACTICE FOR CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

7.1 Aims

- 7.1.1 This Code of Practice aims to improve the way in which both the public sector and the VCS consult each other on policy developments, leading to the planning and delivery of better services.
- 7.1.2. A robust and agreed Code of Practice will contribute to the building and maintenance of trust and understanding between the sectors.
- 7.1.3 It will also contribute to the development of more effective and equal partnerships, recognising that the knowledge and experience of VCS organisations however large or small, is an essential contribution as the spending power of public sector agencies.

“Consultation is a process of dialogue that leads to a decision. It can be a powerful tool for improving the quality and cost effectiveness of services and for ensuring that policy makers stay in touch with citizens.”

Audit Commission

7.2 Definition

- 7.2.1 Consultation is a broad term, which applies to a variety of tools and techniques to involve communities in decision making. This Code of Practice is specifically concerned with the potential role of VCS Groups. Consultation in the context of the Compact is defined as gaining and taking into account the views of VCS organisations and their users where appropriate on policies, plans, priorities and services.

7.3 Scope of the Code of Practice

- 7.3.1 The Code of Practice on Consultation is seen as an enabling mechanism to enhance the relationship between the sectors in Bracknell Forest. It applies to public sector organisations and the broad range of organisations in the VCS..
- 7.3.2 Following the Code of Practice will be the responsibility of individual local statutory agencies as well as organisations in the VCS.

7.4 Joint Undertakings:

- 7.4.1 All sectors in Bracknell Forest recognise that consultation is a two-way process which in many cases is influenced by central Government. All sectors believe that effective consultation will lead to more realistic and workable policy that better reflects people’s needs and wishes.

7.5 Borough Council undertakings:

- 7.5.1. Build on, develop and improve existing consultation mechanisms by using and/or enhancing existing networks, partnerships and forums.
- 7.5.2 Ensure that the mechanisms of consultation are inclusive.

- 7.5.3 Recognise and endeavour to work within the constraints, which each sector has to work in, especially time constraints.
- 7.5.4 Take account positively of the specific needs, interests and contributions of minority groups and those serving socially excluded people.
- 7.5.5 Aim to use language which is clear and simple, avoiding unnecessary jargon, acronyms and abbreviations.
- 7.5.6 Be committed to following the Compact Code of Practice insofar as it fits with their own organisations' strategies (i.e. the Council's Community Cohesion Strategy) including using it as a reference point in any challenge, complaint or dispute about consultation processes.
- 7.5.7 Develop partnership working with the voluntary and community sectors in the development of policy and strategies, and consult the VCS on issues which are likely to affect it.
- 7.5.8 Respect and value the campaigning role of the VCS, while acknowledging that this may conflict with statutory agencies' policies, plans and decisions.
- 7.5.9 Recognise and respect the legal and regulatory framework within which voluntary organisations work.
- 7.5.10 Build timely consultation into plans and timetables for policy and strategy developments.
- 7.5.11 Be willing to change proposals as a result of consultation feedback.
- 7.5.12 Provide information on consultation processes well in advance, including the potential for policy changes to be made and whose views are being sought.
- 7.5.13 Consider how to address the costs for the sector in being involved in consultation processes, which may affect the ability of organisations to take part.
- 7.5.14 Prepare consultation and feedback documents that are concise, clearly laid out, and with a summary.
- 7.5.15 Undertake consultation in a variety of accessible formats and methods, as appropriate.
- 7.5.16 Allow an appropriate time for responding to written consultations.
- 7.5.17 Support the role of VCS umbrella agencies and specialist groups in facilitating consultation, including having regard to the resource implications.
- 7.5.18 Respect the confidentiality of information provided by the sector, within the constraints of the law and the proper performance of public duties.
- 7.5.19 Analyse carefully and provide feedback to consultees and stakeholders on the results of consultation exercises.
- 7.5.20 Accurately convey the views expressed by VCS organisation in consultation exercises.

7.5.21 Evaluate and publish evaluations on their consultation processes, with the aim of developing and spreading best practice.

7.6 VCS organisations in Bracknell Forest will:

7.6.1 Publicise and provide information to members and service users as appropriate about consultation exercises and encourage participation in consultation.

7.6.2 When responding they will define how they represent their “constituency” and make clear whether responses are made as a service provider, advocate, user representative or campaigning organisation.

7.6.3 In the case of umbrella bodies, make clear whether the response is based on consultation with members, or on accumulated experience and knowledge.

7.6.4 Have regard for the regulatory framework that governs their organisation when representing their constituents, including Charity Commission guidance on representational and campaigning work.

7.6.5 Ensure that views expressed as a result of consultation are conveyed accurately in responses.

7.6.6 Respect the confidentiality, when appropriate, of statutory information, especially in the discussion of draft documents.

7.6.7 Work to improve information about the scope and location of VCS organisations by contributing to local databases, directories, websites etc as appropriate.

7.6.8 Recognise and respect the role of organisations and the statutory requirements and regulations placed on public sector organisations.

7.6.9 Recognise that both VCS and non-VCS organisations may wish to tender for the Borough Council’s business, and that the Borough Council has a duty to treat all tenderers fairly and equitably and to evaluate tenders using robust and transparent processes.

8. CODE OF PRACTICE FOR FUNDING, PROCUREMENT AND COMMISSIONING

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 Many VCS organisations enter into a financial relationship with the public sector to deliver outcomes on its behalf, either through grant funding or by supplying services purchased through procurement. This Code seeks to improve funding and procurement relationships, to the mutual advantage of both sides, based on what each can expect from the other. This code covers how services and projects should be designed and delivered to achieve the best possible outcome. It does not cover what is funded or who should be funded. The code complies with the principles in the National Code of Good Funding and Procurement.

8.1.2 It is important to recognise that grant funding and procurement operate in different ways. For the purpose of this code, a grant is defined as the giving of money or benefits on a discretionary basis. Procurement is defined as the acquisition of goods and services from third party suppliers under legally binding contractual terms. Such acquisitions are for the direct benefit of the contracting authority and are necessary for the delivery of the services it provides.

8.1.3 The following underpin the commitments to the code:

8.1.4 **Focus on outcomes** – the achievement of outcomes is used as a key indicator of the success of projects or services as a direct result of grant funding or contract award.

8.1.5 **Simplicity** – processes should be as simple as possible and in proportion to the amount of funding involved or total contract value and the perceived risk.

8.1.6 **Consistency and co-ordination** – public sector authorities are committed to seeking to join-up and/or standardise funding arrangements as far as possible while having due regard to the various authorities' funding regimes and the constraints that may impose on them to minimise the burdens on organisations and ensure a focus on delivery.

8.1.7 **Timelines** – allowing time for planning, decision making and action so that they have real effect.

8.1.8 **Discussion and dialogue** – this helps build trust and can identify and overcome problems before they impact on the delivery outcome

8.1.9 **Empathy – understanding** each other's needs and requirements should help avoid problems and help achieve outcomes.

8.2 Joint undertakings

Public sector organisation and the VCS will identify barriers to project delivery. They will look at how the outcomes of the project/service can best be sustained and contribute to long term capability of the VCS, and this may be

best served by a longer term grant funding strategy to enable the VCS to plan alongside and work with the Statutory Strategic Plans

8.3 The Borough Council will

- 8.3.1 Respect confidentiality subject to any statutory obligations as disclosure.
- 8.3.2 Provide an opportunity for the VCS to contribute to the early planning of grant funded services and projects wherever appropriate, by inviting potential providers to discussion and meetings as early as possible
- 8.3.3 Recognise that contributing to the planning process for the VCS takes time and resources
- 8.3.4 Be open about its service needs and targets and the driving force behind them
- 8.3.5 Ensure that commissioning and procurement processes are carried out with due attention to fairness to all parties participating.

8.4 The VCS will:

- 8.4.1 Respect confidentiality.
- 8.4.2 Contribute constructively to the planning of grant funded services and focus its contribution on the need of end users.
- 8.4.3 Be clear about who they represent and how they came to their views (e.g. through the Voluntary Sector Forum).
- 8.4.4 Recognise that Public bodies operate under financial and legal constraints.

8.5 Application process (for grants) and Tender process (for services)

This section covers the process of inviting, applying for and assessing grant applications and tender bids and giving notice of decisions. A well managed application and tender process means that those organisations best able to deliver will apply.

8.6 The VCS will:

- 8.6.1 Ensure an understanding of the timescales and decision making process.
- 8.6.2 Ensure organisations are eligible to apply.
- 8.6.3 Recognise that there are competing demands for public spending, and that there may a) be more than one organisation applying for finite resources, and b) not all applications or tenders will be successful.
- 8.6.4 Recognise and respect that the final decision on whether to award the contract or funding rests with the Borough Council.
- 8.6.5 Have clear lines of accountability, especially with joint bids.

- 8.6.6 Properly allocate full anticipated costs in budgets and services so that full cost recovery can be achieved for the life of the project. "Full cost recovery" is defined by the national Association for Voluntary and Community Action as the voluntary organisation having to calculate the direct costs of a project and add these to the share of overheads that the project consumes (indirect costs).

8.7 The Borough Council will:

- 8.7.1 Give as much notice as possible of funding opportunities unless it is impracticable to do so.
- 8.7.2 Advertised tendering opportunities using channels which are appropriate to the estimated contract value and type of goods or services required.
- 8.7.3 Publish clear timescales for applications, decisions and schedules of payments.
- 8.7.4 Publish the criteria against which applications will be assessed.
- 8.7.5 Work in partnership with the VCS whenever new funding processes/forms are developed.
- 8.7.6 Ensure that information and forms are clear and accessible and include all relevant information so that the VCS can make informed decisions about whether to apply or tender.
- 8.7.7 Recognise that in some cases it may be legitimate for the VCS to include full cost recovery in their budget costs.
- 8.7.8 Recognise that in a procurement process, the VCS cannot be given preferential treatment and are entitled to decide their own price in competition.
- 8.7.9 Provide timely notifications of decisions and give adequate notice in advance of the expected date of setting up provision. Ideally this should be at least 12 weeks for new projects or services (unless it is impracticable to do so). Smaller organisations or those new to delivery will need longer notice.

8.8 Service Level Agreements

Defined service level agreements (or specifications) give clear expectations of what is to be delivered and by when, so that organisations can plan and deliver effectively and the best possible outputs and outcomes are achieved.

8.9 The VCS will:

- 8.9.1 Respond to consultation on service level agreements when requested.
- 8.9.2 Be aware of the risks they are responsible for - in particular the risks associated with the delivery of outputs and outcomes.

- 8.9.3 Recognise it is legitimate for the public sector to require public recognition of their funding by funded organisations in appropriate circumstances.

8.10 The Borough Council will:

- 8.10.1 Explain and consult on the service level agreement with the VCS before the funding agreement is entered into. Clarifications on the specification will be covered by the tendering process.
- 8.10.2 Agree with the VCS a simple process for controlling any changes to the contract or agreement, including the actions that will be taken if the VCS is failing to deliver.
- 8.10.3 Ensure that the terms and conditions are appropriate to the value and outcomes of the project.
- 8.10.4 Recognise that in many cases the work of the VCS is carried out by volunteers who give their time freely, with due attention to fairness of competition.

8.11 Contract Length and Payment Terms

Services should be funded in the most effective way so that the best possible outcomes are achieved. Ideally contract/funding length should allow the VCS to plan and develop for the future and create positive incentives to perform. Longer term planning and financial arrangements often represent better value for money than one year agreements by providing greater financial stability and by reducing the inefficiencies involved in applying for new funds.

8.12 The VCS will:

- 8.12.1 Have in place appropriate systems to manage finances, funded projects, and account for them.
- 8.12.2 Agree with the Borough Council a clear understanding about payments, including importantly the treatment of under spends in grants.
- 8.12.3 Recognise that local public bodies operate under financial and legal constraints.

8.13 The Borough Council will:

- 8.13.1 Following receipt of requested performance monitoring information, make payments to the VCS in advance of expenditure (where appropriate and necessary) rather than in arrears, or make payments within 30 days when invoiced.
- 8.13.2 Agree a clear understanding with the VCS about the treatment of under spends in grants.
- 8.13.3 Consider if longer term funding arrangements are viable.

8.14 Monitoring and Reporting

Effective monitoring focuses on the outcomes achieved, should not be burdensome, and ensures transparency. Effective agreed monitoring, with good management information will ensure that changes or problems are identified and responded to at an early stage.

8.15 The VCS will:

- 8.15.1 Be honest, timely and transparent in reporting.
- 8.15.2 Recognise that public accountability requires an appropriate level of reporting.
- 8.15.3 With the public sector, agree measurable outcomes to be reported on and provide simple reporting formats.
- 8.15.4 Keep documentation to allow monitoring by funders' auditors.
- 8.15.5 Provide monitoring information as requested in the service level agreement or specification.
- 8.15.6 Notify the public sector of any concerns about delivery or outcome at the earliest opportunity.

8.16 The Borough Council will:

- 8.16.1 Be proportionate (to size of funding and size of provider) in monitoring requirements and focus on outcomes.
- 8.16.2 Work towards developing standardised reporting requirements for the VCS across the borough for funded services.
- 8.16.3 Agree with the VCS the level and type of monitoring that will be required including action to be taken if delivery targets are not met, before signing the grant agreement or contract.
- 8.16.4 Agree measurable outcomes to be reported on and provide sample reporting formats where available.

8.17 Concluding a Financial Arrangement

This Code seeks to achieve a well managed process for the conclusion of a financial arrangement when:

- 8.17.1 The grant or contract ends or is terminated.
- 8.17.2 Funding ends earlier than the intended closure.
- 8.17.3 Funding ends as a result of a review of strategic or development funding

8.18 A well managed process will:

- 8.18.1 Minimise the negative impact on service users.
- 8.18.2 Acknowledge resources available to the funder.
- 8.18.3 Understand the long term stability of the voluntary and Community organisation.
- 8.18.4 Ensure that the statutory authority and the organisations receiving funding continue to have a constructive relationship in the future.

8.19 The VCS will:

- 8.19.1 Recognise that the contract may be terminated or funding may end if outcomes are not delivered.
- 8.19.2 Plan in good time for different situations to reduce any potential negative impact on both users and the organisation.
- 8.19.3 Adhere to employment law, e.g. redundancy notices.

8.20 The Borough Council will:

- 8.20.1 Give as much notice as possible whenever possible of the end of grants in order to allow the VCS to fulfil their duties as good employers and prepare alternatives plans. Notice of termination of contracts will be in accordance with the terms and conditions. Notice periods will be shorter in exceptional circumstances i.e. suspected fraud.
- 8.20.2 Aim to give as much notice as possible before beginning of financial year of funding decisions.
- 8.20.3 Give the reasons for the end of the funding agreement and allow the provider organisation to respond to proposals to change or the end of an arrangement.

9. CODE OF PRACTICE ON VOLUNTEERING

9.1 Benefits of the Code of Practice on Volunteering:

- 9.1.1 Improved recognition, value and understanding of the importance of volunteers.
- 9.1.2 Recognition that volunteering makes a major contribution to all aspects of life in the local community.
- 9.1.3 The voluntary/community and statutory sectors are committed to maintaining best practice in the promotion, development and celebration of volunteering.
- 9.1.4 All signatories to the Bracknell Forest Compact respect volunteers' independence and free choice.
- 9.1.5 A co-ordinated and agreed Charter for Volunteers rights and responsibilities.

9.2. Aims

- 9.2.1 The code aims to make a positive impact of the working relations between voluntary organisations, community groups, private sector and statutory sector operating in the borough.
- 9.2.2 This code of practice aims to improve the recognition, value and understanding of the importance of all volunteers in the delivery of service across all sectors and the personal development of volunteers themselves.
- 9.2.3 It aims to set out a series of undertakings for the voluntary/community and statutory sectors in Bracknell Forest on good practice in volunteering. The Compact aims to enable and support more people getting involved in the varied forms of voluntary activity that are a vital part of active citizenship.
- 9.2.4 It aims to raise awareness that volunteering is not free, that extra value benefits can not be achieved without financial investment in volunteering.
- 9.2.5 It aims to raise awareness that there is a cost of supporting volunteering and a need to allocate resource for this.
- 9.2.6 The aim is for the code to be adopted and implemented by both the VCS and public sectors in the Borough of Bracknell Forest. It is a code of best practice which organisations should use for their and their volunteers' benefit.

9.3. Definition

For the purpose of this code of practice the Bracknell Forest Compact agrees the following definition:

“Volunteering” has been described as “any activity or service that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups other than or in addition to close relatives), or to benefit the environment.

9.4. Scope of volunteering and community activity

The scope of volunteering and community involvement may include:

- 9.4.1 Helping provide a service as a volunteer within a voluntary or community organisation, the public sector or a not for profit group.
- 9.4.2 Taking part in running a voluntary or community organisation; e.g. as a trustee, board or committee member.
- 9.4.3 Serving as a non-executive member of an authority or participating in civic governance.
- 9.4.4 Involvement in a voluntary initiative, usually as part of a voluntary organisation or community group, to improve the quality of life for people in a neighbourhood or community interest.
- 9.4.5 Being part of a group activity, within a neighbourhood or community of interest.
- 9.4.6 Being part of a group activity, within a neighbourhood or community of interest, providing a community service, or campaigning for a public cause.
- 9.4.7 Enabling young people to develop as active citizens through community involvement.
- 9.4.8 Employer supported community involvement.
- 9.4.9 Offering career-based skills to a voluntary organisation.
- 9.4.10 Helping to develop public policy through involvement in consultation processes and campaigning.
- 9.4.11 Volunteering through involvement in a faith congregation or community

9.5. Principles of Volunteering

The four principles fundamental to volunteering and community activity:

- 9.5.1 **Choice** – Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual, including the choice to stop volunteering without pressure or guilt
- 9.5.2 **Diversity** –The people of Bracknell Forest bring varying qualities, experience and expertise to the voluntary and community sector. Diversity is recognised, respected and valued. Volunteering should be open to all, no matter what their background, age, race, sexual orientation, faith, etc. It is recognised that social exclusions barriers can be overcome by skills, experience, confidence and contacts gained while volunteering.
- 9.5.3 **Mutual Benefit** – Volunteers offer their contribution unwaged but should benefit in other ways in return for their contribution to wider social objectives. Benefits that volunteers expect to gain include a sense of worthwhile

achievement, useful skills, experience and contacts sociability and fun and inclusion in the life of the organisation and the wider community.

9.5.4 **Recognition** – It is vital that the value of the volunteers' contribution is recognised by all involved, including statutory agencies, employers and voluntary organisations.

9.6 All VCS partners will:

9.6.1 Recognise the importance of high standards and effective management of volunteers.

9.6.2 Raise awareness of the cost benefit of volunteering which can not be achieved without investment.

9.6.3 Those responsible for recruitment, induction and management of volunteers, whether paid staff, or volunteers themselves should:

- Have this work recognised as part of their job
- Receive appropriate training and support.

9.6.4 Identify a senior named person to be responsible for volunteer involvement and for monitoring and reporting as required.

9.6.5 Ensure appropriate records are kept of how volunteering is funded, and the benefits this produces.

9.6.6 Ensure that safeguarding precautions have been taken where volunteers are to work with vulnerable groups (e.g. children young people, vulnerable adults and other groups as appropriate. All organisations must have a vetting procedure set out in a policy which includes aspects such as:

- Interviews
- Criminal Records Bureau checks
- References

Plus any additional requirements that may currently or subsequently be required by law.

9.6.7 Recognise that, as part of the relationship volunteers should get fair treatment and be given thanks and recognition for their contribution. They should get support and training according to the resources of the organisation with which they are involved and seek to find suitable training for all of their volunteers.

9.6.8 Assist potential volunteers to find volunteering opportunities that fit their needs, interests, and abilities.

9.6.9 Remove the existing cultural and financial barriers which may prevent people from volunteering e.g. by paying all out of pocket expenses.

9.7 The Borough Council partners will:

9.7.1 Work to remove any barriers which may prevent people from volunteering.

- 9.7.2 Increase staff awareness of volunteer contributions to the organisation's objectives.
- 9.7.3 Ensure that sufficient safeguarding precautions have been taken. For example where volunteers are to work with vulnerable groups (e.g. children, young people, vulnerable adults and other groups where appropriate). All organisations must have a vetting procedure set out in a policy which includes aspects such as:
- Criminal Records Bureau checks
 - References
- 9.7.4 Recognise the infrastructure support provided by many national umbrella bodies for volunteers and community activists in their local affiliated or member groups.
- 9.7.5 Support partner strategies that recognise the contributions volunteering makes to raising the quality of life in the Borough and support activity motivating more people to become involved in volunteering.
- 9.7.6 Identify ways in which partners can work with the community and voluntary sector to address how detailed demographic information on volunteering and community activity can be collected for comparison with other surveys and research.
- 9.7.7 Work with local employers to encourage and support their staff to volunteer.

9.8 Volunteers Rights

- 9.8.1 To be given a clear idea of their duties and responsibilities within the organisation and the skills etc that they need to fulfil them i.e. a task description and a person specification.
- 9.8.2 To be given copies of all relevant policies and procedures.
- 9.8.3 To be given the name of the person in the organisation who will look after their interests.
- 9.8.4 To be given appropriate induction.
- 9.8.5 Subject to any legal obligations as to disclosure to be assured that any information given in confidence to the organisation is kept confidential.
- 9.8.6 For health and safety purposes volunteers will be treated the same as employees.
- 9.8.7 To be given appropriate opportunities for training and skills development.
- 9.8.8 Volunteers should not:
- * Be used to replace paid workers
 - * Have unfair demands made on their time
 - * Be asked to do something which is against their principles or beliefs.

- 9.8.9 To be given the chance to play a part in decision making within the organisation.
- 9.8.10 To be respected and listened to.
- 9.8.11 To be assigned to projects that meets their interests and needs.
- 9.8.12 To do meaningful and satisfying activities.
- 9.8.13 To be able to take a break from or cease to volunteer.

9.9 Volunteers' Responsibilities:

- 9.9.1 To accept the organisation's agreements, policies and procedures.
- 9.9.2 To do what is reasonably required of them, to the best of their ability.
- 9.9.3 To treat confidential information obtained while volunteering in a confidential manner (except when there is a statutory duty to pass on such information).
- 9.9.4 To recognise the right of the organisation to expect quality service.
- 9.9.5 To recognise they represent the organisation and therefore need to act in an appropriate manner at all times.
- 9.9.6 To honour any commitment made and to give as much notice as possible if a commitment can not be met.
- 9.9.7 .To undertake appropriate training.
- 9.9.8 As far as possible give notice of holidays and other commitments.
- 9.9.9 To recognise that their volunteering role may need to be reviewed and modified.

9.10 Promoting Volunteering

- 9.10.1 All partners agree to promote the status and image of volunteering and community involvement by ensuring links to voluntary opportunities in the Borough are on Partners websites.

9.11 Employee Supported Volunteering

- 9.11.1 Consider offering employees an opportunity to volunteer during work time. This may range from a few hours a month to longer term secondments.
- 9.11.2 Produce guidelines on what resources the organisation will provide e.g. match funding, to support employees who volunteer.
- 9.11.3 Identify volunteering and community activities compatible with the organisations corporate aims.

10. CODE OF PRACTICE FOR BLACK, MINORITY AND ETHNIC (BME) GROUPS

10.1 Aim

To make a positive impact on the relationship between the public sector and the Bracknell Forest Minority Alliance (BFMA), its member groups and the minority ethnic community.

10.2 Definition and Context

The BFMA, formerly the Additional Support Programme (ASP) was introduced through the National Government Change Up Programme. This set out to ensure that recognition should be given to the Black Minority Ethnic (BME) people, faith, travellers, asylum seekers and refugees in order to improve their infrastructure, to enable them to get involved in the wider local picture through elected representation. In this way community cohesion and involvement would be promoted.

10.3 Shared Values

All partners recognise that:

- 10.3.1 The BFMA in Bracknell Forest has an important role to play in helping to deliver better public services.
- 10.3.2 An effective partnership between Bracknell Forest and the BFMA is an essential part of ensuring that the BFMA is able to develop to its full potential.

10.4 Joint Undertakings

All partners agree:

- 10.4.1 To work together, in line with the Change Up agenda to build BFMA capacity to enable it to support its members and local community. "Change Up" is now managed by Capacity Builders but the remit stays the same - to strengthen the support of umbrella organisations such as BFVA to enable them to help front line VCS organisation to fulfil their objectives and be better placed to deliver services.
- 10.4.2 To develop a partnership approach to carry forward Bracknell Forest's Race Equality Scheme, including promoting and sharing best practice and celebrating success.
- 10.4.3 To work in partnership with other agencies to promote joint working initiatives.
- 10.4.4 To encourage, develop and support volunteering by and within BFMA groups, in line with the Bracknell Forest Compact Code of Good Practice on Volunteering.

- 10.4.5 Make suitable mention of the Bracknell Forest Compact and this Code of Practice in all Bracknell Forest documentation and Voluntary and Community Sector publications relating to BFMA groups

10.5. Voluntary and Community Sector Undertakings:

The BFMA agrees:

- 10.5.1 To support, share information with and participate to develop an effective and representative voice for its member groups and the community.
- 10.5.2 To develop transparent, accountable and dynamic organisations providing opportunities for voluntary action by a diverse range of individuals, with a commitment to race and other equality issues.
- 10.5.3 To work to develop organisations that are governed properly, with clear responsibilities for volunteers, staff and trustees in the use of public and charitable funds. These organisations should adopt quality standards and apply good practice guidelines in their management and day-to-day operation.
- 10.5.4 To support the ethos and aims of Bracknell Forest's Equality and Diversity Policy Statement

10.6 Borough Council undertakings;

The Borough Council agrees:

- 10.6.1 To recognise and support the independence of the BFMA and its right to challenge institutions, policy and practice irrespective of any funding relationship that might exist and its right to determine and manage its own affairs, once it is a properly constituted body, rather than an additional support program.
- 10.6.2 In accordance with partners' existing strategies (e.g. the Council's Equal Opportunities Strategy) to operate effective and transparent equal opportunity monitoring and evaluation systems that ensure BFMA member organisations and communities are treated fairly in all interactions with Bracknell Forest
- 10.6.3 To ensure that full and productive consultation takes place through the BFMA its groups and the community on relevant issues.
- 10.6.4 In accordance with partners existing strategies (e.g. the Council's Community Cohesion Strategy) to continue to work progressing up the levels of the Equalities Standard.
- 10.6.5 To work towards the targets laid out in the Council's Race Equality Scheme and to offer BME VCS organisations fair and equal opportunity to access Bracknell Forest funding streams.

11. CODE OF PRACTICE FOR DISABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

This code of practice aims to:

- 11.1 Ensure people with disabilities have equal access to services and opportunities.
- 11.2 Ensure people with disabilities and their households are able to be part of the main stream of life.
- 11.3 Breakdown stereo types of people with disabilities.
- 11.4 Raise awareness of issues surrounding disabilities and how to deal with them/apply them to your organisation.

12. Underlying Principles

- 12.1 Users and Carers should be at the centre of planning and delivery of services.
- 12.2 Services need to be appropriate to the needs of users.
- 12.3 Services need to promoting independence and adapt to the changing needs of individuals over time.
- 12.4 Information should be available in a range of different formats e.g. prints, languages, tapes.
- 12.5 Services should promote inclusiveness across the board.
- 12.6 Services should be adequately funded to meet people's needs

13. Commitments by VCS Partners

- 13.1 In addition to the commitments stated in the Bracknell Forest Compact, when working specifically on disability and accessibility issues all partners commit to:
 - 13.1.1 Being aware of the need in the design development and management of services that involve the user at the earliest possible stage in order to achieve the maximum possible benefit.
 - 13.1.2 Where possible undertake the access audits of buildings.
 - 13.1.3 To provide disability equality training to staff and volunteers
 - 13.1.4 Keep information up-to-date and in formats appropriate to the needs of people with disabilities in all areas of work where possible.
 - 13.1.5 Maintain high standards of governance and comply with current legislative practice (DDA).
 - 13.1.6 Endeavour to raise the profile and promote the rights of people with disabilities.

- 13.1.7 Try to increase awareness of the associated costs of providing services to people with disabilities.
- 13.1.8 Keep decision-makers and statutory authorities informed of relevant developments that groups become aware of.
- 13.1.9 Work to develop appropriate quality standards in the sector's work

14. Borough Council undertakings:

The Borough Council agrees to:

- 14.1 Maintain high standards of governance and comply with current legislative practice (DDA) (e.g. undertake to have accessibility audits carried out and make building accessible as detailed in the Council's current Disability Equality Scheme).
- 14.2 Involve users at the earliest stage possible in order to achieve the greatest possible benefit in design, development and management of services.
- 14.3 Promote independence through services to enable people with disabilities to live as safe, full and as independent life as possible as detailed in the Council's current Disability Equality Scheme.
- 14.4 Work to ensure that people with disabilities are given opportunities for self-determination and choice over decisions relating to their lives.
- 14.5 In accordance with its existing Community Cohesion Strategy work with other key partners to improve career opportunities for those people who:
 - need support to remain in employment
 - want to re-enter employment, through re-training for example
 - are entering employment for the first time
 - are not ready to work, but want to move closer to the world of work
- 14.6 Support and strengthen the valuable role that disabled people play in supporting many people who are not in touch with the public sector.
- 14.7 Take all reasonable steps to ensure that the physical environment does not prevent services being provided in an equitable way.
- 14.8 Take steps to raise the awareness of disability among employees involved in developing and delivering services to members of the public. Training will be made available where appropriate to equip employees to achieve these.