

# The Thurrock Compact

A new vision for building communities together

December 2006



To improve relationships, decision making, services and outcomes between the public and voluntary, community and faith sectors for the benefit of all communities in Thurrock



An agreement between the public sector partners of Shaping Thurrock Local Strategic Partnership and Thurrock Council for Voluntary Service



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## Foreword

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Thurrock is undergoing a period of significant physical, social and economic change. This change brings challenges which will need to be understood and addressed by those agencies involved in leadership and service delivery across Thurrock.

Thurrock's Local Strategic Partnership, called Shaping Thurrock, brings all the key public, voluntary and community agencies together to ensure that:

*Thurrock will be the location of choice; a place where people thrive and prosper; where you can access services that will make a difference; and where development is sustainable and supports our new and existing communities as they grow.*

Shaping Thurrock, 2021 Vision Statement

Thurrock has vibrant and vocal voluntary, community and faith sectors which are made up of both volunteers as well as paid professional staff. They include active citizens and a varied range of organisations, from informal self-help groups to community associations, as well as both large and small registered charities. These groups initiate and deliver a wide range of community based services to Thurrock's residents, all of which are designed to improve the quality of life for local people. They have a key role to play in delivering local services and activities which contribute to the Community Strategy.

The original Compact of March 2004 has been refreshed and updated, and builds on the consultation undertaken in 2003 and early 2004. This refreshed Compact recognises the considerable effort of a number of key statutory, voluntary and community sector partners through the Shaping Thurrock Local Strategic Partnership.

The Thurrock Compact represents the collective commitment of the Shaping Thurrock Strategic Partnership to nurture and support a new relationship between Thurrock Council, the Primary Care Trust, the Police, Thurrock Thames Gateway, other public sector partners, and the voluntary, community and faith sectors operating within Thurrock. It commits all partners to an ongoing process of working together to develop and strengthen Thurrock's communities, and of working to remove barriers to the growth of the local voluntary, community and faith sectors.

In this period of considerable change, all agencies involved will need to develop shared values based on a sense of trust, hope and reciprocity. This will not happen overnight, but will be the result of a continuing process through working together to make Thurrock the place that we can all be proud of.

Naya Naqvi  
Chief Executive, Thurrock CVS

- 1.1** Voluntary, community and faith sector organisations in Thurrock make a significant and essential contribution to the economic and social wellbeing of Thurrock. These organisations are very diverse in both size and scope. Some have no income at all and rely on the efforts of volunteers whilst others derive considerable income through contracts and grants and are run by paid professional staff.
- 1.2** In 1998, the Government published a national Compact with the voluntary and community sector. This recognised the value and importance of the sector and set out a number of undertakings about ways of working together. Since 1998, the national Compact has been developed with other public bodies and then applied at a local level across the country, addressing specific areas of concern for that particular area.
- 1.3** Through this national Compact, two successive Treasury Cross-Cutting Reviews, the Gershon Efficiency Review and the 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' White Paper, efforts have been made to explore how central and local Government can work more effectively with the voluntary, community and faith sectors. The intention is to ensure that where the sectors are engaged in public service delivery, they are able to do so effectively and viably.
- 1.4** Although not legally binding, Compacts are an important development tool for building positive relationships and trust between all statutory and voluntary parties involved in improving their communities. They contribute towards best practice and provide a context for highlighting the importance and value of joint working.

## Development of Thurrock's Compact

- 1.5** In 1998 Thurrock Council, Thurrock CVS (Council for Voluntary Service) and TRAG (Thurrock Residents Action Group) published 'Different Strengths - A Voluntary Sector Strategy'. This report aimed to establish firm partnership relationships within the new unitary authority. The strategy enabled many positive developments, most notably a shift from year on year to a three-year rolling funding programme for the voluntary and community sector.
- 1.6** Following discussions between Thurrock Council and the voluntary and community sector, it was agreed that 'Different Strengths' should be developed into a Compact. Through a period of extensive consultation with community and voluntary groups, a draft Compact was published in March 2004.
- 1.7** This draft Compact did not progress as partners had originally expected for a number of reasons. Many of the original key staff left or changed their role, the political leadership of Thurrock Council changed, the PCT enlarged and restructured to cover three boroughs, and the Shaping Thurrock Local Strategic Partnership developed to take a coordinating role with a revised structure and Programme Boards.
- 1.8** Thurrock Council, through its transformation programme, expressed a desire to work with Thurrock CVS, the expanded Primary Care Trust, and Shaping Thurrock LSP to revitalise the draft Compact and to work together with the voluntary, community and faith groups of Thurrock to inform and guide its effective implementation.
- 1.9** The Programme Boards of the Shaping Thurrock Strategic Partnership each have an important role to ensure that Thurrock residents are given more say in the decisions that affect them and are able to shape and influence the strategic agenda. They will be involved in developing the six Codes of Practice, and the Community Involvement Board in particular, will have a role in the monitoring of the Compact.
- 1.10** With strong political and executive support from Thurrock Council, it is expected that the Shaping Thurrock LSP will in partnership with Thurrock CVS, lead on ensuring that this Compact is implemented, monitored and reviewed.

# Compact: Shared Vision, Values and Undertakings

## Section 2

This Compact is an agreement between the public sector partners of the Shaping Thurrock Strategic Partnership and Thurrock Council for Voluntary Service on behalf of the voluntary, community and faith groups operating within Thurrock. It represents a collective commitment to improve joint working relationships between the public, voluntary, community and faith sectors for the benefit of all communities in Thurrock, and to monitor the quality of those relationships through an annual review of the Compact.

## Vision

### The vision for Thurrock's Compact is to:

*'Recognise voluntary and community action as an essential component of society that contributes to the social, cultural, economic and democratic life of Thurrock. Independent, economically viable and diverse voluntary, community and faith sectors are essential to the well being of society and there is added value in working in effective partnerships towards common aims that improve the quality of life for people in Thurrock'.*

## Values

### This Compact will act as a framework guided by the following values:

- 1 Public bodies have a duty to fulfil statutory obligations and responsibilities, but will do so in the light of the needs, ideas and choices of the people of Thurrock.
- 2 Genuine partnership requires trust, mutual respect, integrity, objectivity, understanding, transparency, openness, honesty and collaboration, together with recognition of the equal value of the contribution of each partner. This is in the context of different groups having different resources. Only genuine partnership can help meet the needs of Thurrock's communities.
- 3 In the development and delivery of public policy and services, statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sector have distinctive but complementary roles. Each organisation will have its own priorities and areas of accountability.
- 4 Voluntary and community organisations act as pathfinders for the involvement of users in the design and delivery of services and often act as advocates for those who have no voice. In doing so they promote equality, diversity and innovation.
- 5 Commitment is given by all partners to promote diversity. This can be achieved by removing barriers, improving practice and striving to achieve equality of opportunity in all aspects of activity and service, for all people regardless of class, ethnicity, legal status, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation or religion.
- 6 Meaningful consultation improves policy development, demonstrates accountability, builds relationships and enhances the design and delivery of services.
- 7 The voluntary and community sector must remain independent and manage its own affairs in line with current legislation and Charity law.
- 8 In common with all organisations, the voluntary and community sector needs strong and effective management, quality assurance and support systems. These require robust funding mechanisms, and in some cases, paid staff and management.
- 9 Where appropriate, the voluntary and community sector can act as advocates for their membership. Voluntary sector agencies have the ability to bring the collective voice of the user and this should not be overlooked when agencies develop and consult on public policy.
- 10 Volunteers are recognised as having a valuable, extensive and vital role contributing to the quality of life and health of people in Thurrock. This role should be encouraged and supported.

## Undertakings

### All partners agree to

- 1 Develop and promote a better understanding, trust and respect between statutory agencies and voluntary, community and faith groups working in Thurrock.
- 2 Work towards relationships in which all partners are equally valued. This requires a mutual understanding of roles and mutual appreciation of the constraints facing both the voluntary and community and faith sectors and statutory sector and by developing support and working relationships between statutory agencies, elected members and voluntary, community and faith groups in Thurrock as equal partners.
- 3 Work to enhance accountability, honesty, leadership, integrity, transparency, openness and objectivity through listening to each other, responding constructively and developing joint action programmes.
- 4 Represent information fairly and honestly and to respect confidentiality where required.
- 5 Recognise the value and contribution made by volunteers through increased community involvement. Volunteering and Active Citizenship activity should be supported across all not for profit activity. This applies to formal volunteering and informal community action.
- 6 Recognise that in common with all organisations, the voluntary and community sector needs strong and effective management, quality assurance and support systems. These require robust funding mechanisms, and in some cases, paid staff and management.
- 7 Work within an ethos that encourages the resolution of conflict with an agreed process for any break down in negotiation.
- 8 Rigorously monitor, evaluate and review collectively the implementation of the Compact. To take into account the different environments in which we work and to amend as appropriate the Thurrock Compact framework enabling it to make a real and positive difference to joint working at all levels.

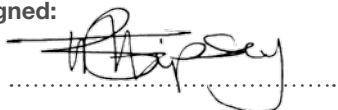
### Shaping Thurrock LSP, Thurrock Council, the Primary Care Trust, Essex Police and public sector partnership agencies will:

- 1 Recognise voluntary, community and faith organisations' role in representing and providing services to the communities of Thurrock.
- 2 Seek to make their structures, policies and procedures transparent and equitable.
- 3 Identify and consider the possible implications for the voluntary, community and faith sectors of any proposed policies, procedures and practices.
- 4 Recognise the voluntary and community sector's independence and diversity, and that it includes a wide range of organisation styles and governance structures.
- 5 Recognise the right of voluntary, community and faith organisations to campaign within the law (and Charity Commission Guidelines) and to comment on statutory policy and practice, irrespective of any funding relationship that may exist.

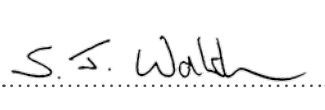
### Thurrock CVS and the voluntary, community and faith sector organisations will:

- 1 Promote effective working relationships with Shaping Thurrock LSP, Thurrock Council, the PCT, Essex Police and partnership agencies and across the voluntary, community and faith sectors.
- 2 Develop policies that promote best practice and equality of opportunity in activities, employment, involvement of volunteers and service provision with the resources available.
- 3 Recognise its accountability to members, beneficiaries, funders and partners for agreed outcomes, and operate effective monitoring procedures.
- 4 Involve users, wherever possible, in the development and management of its activities and services.
- 5 Recognise and respect the responsibilities and constraints placed on the statutory sector through legislation or central government directives and performance indicators.

Signed:



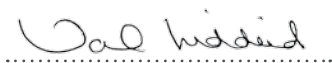
Chair of Shaping Thurrock LSP



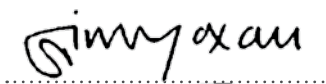
Chair of Thurrock CVS



Leader Thurrock Council



Chair of Primary Care Trust



Chief Superintendent

# Implementation and Action Plan

## Section 3

The expectations of the partners to this Compact are that its values and undertakings will be understood and acted upon. This will provide the foundation upon which partners can work together to discuss and develop the more detailed Codes of Practice, which in turn will build trust and commitment.

This Action Plan covers both the implementation of the Compact and the summary of action required to develop the six priority Codes of Practice (see sections 4.1 to 4.6 below).

### Action for Coordination and Implementation

Heading	Details	Who	By When
Launch of the Compact	Hold event with key stakeholders from public, voluntary, community and faith sectors present	Key partners and stakeholders	Dec 06
Promotion of Compact	Publicise the Compact to all public, voluntary, community and faith organisations across Thurrock	CVS, Council, PCT	Jan 07
	Invite voluntary, community and faith organisations to sign up to the Compact, adopt its undertakings within their own policies and procedures, and discuss participation in the development of the Codes of Practice	CVS	March 07
	Plan dissemination of Compact and its implications to departments within public sector partners. Key agencies to sign up to the Compact, and where necessary, adapt their procedures to achieve maximum compliance with its provisions	Council, PCT, Police, TTGDC, LSP*, others	March 07
Supervising the Compact	Establish an on-going Compact Monitoring Group (CMG) from within LSP to guide the implementation, further development including the Codes of Practice, and address any areas of dispute	LSP*, Thurrock Council and partners	Jan 07
	Monitor its success and inform appropriate feedback to all partners	CMG	On-going
	Partners undertake to examine arrangements for Conflict Resolution in order to ensure consistency. Final arrangements to be agreed by the LSP	LSP	June 07
	Undertake a review one year after the launch to determine the effectiveness of the Compact and identify further action required	CMG, LSP	Nov 07
	Plan and undertake annual reviews to ensure sustained development and implementation	CMG, LSP	Nov 08

\*LSP also includes each of the Programme Boards

The undertakings within Thurrock's Compact will be underpinned by a series of Codes of good practice. Each Code will have specific undertakings for the voluntary, community and faith sectors as well as for statutory agencies - and so provide the mechanism to turn the Compact's principles and values into practice. These six Codes have been identified from the national framework and adapted to suit the needs and priorities of Thurrock:

- 1 Consultation, involvement and engagement
- 2 Partnership
- 3 Resourcing, procurement and commissioning
- 4 Equalities and diversity including BME, disabilities and gender equality issues
- 5 Volunteering
- 6 Community groups

The framework for each of these Codes are summarised in the following six sub-sections.

# Frameworks for Codes of Practice

## Consultation, Involvement and Engagement

Consultation plays an important part in the relationship between all the sectors. It is a process by which opinions, feedback and ideas can be gathered to inform decision-making and can also be a way of building trust, inter-agency relationships and contacts.

Consultation has been defined by the Audit Commission as:

*“A process of dialogue that leads to a decision.. dialogue implies two or more parties listening to and taking account of one another’s views”.*

Consultation is set within the context of the five levels of community engagement:

Level of Engagement	What is involved
Information	We tell people about our plans and services and gather information about attitudes, opinions and preferences.
Consultation	We ask people for their views on specific policies or proposals
Deliberation	We discuss what the issues and priorities are and involve people at various stages
Collaboration	We work together to improve and design new services
Partnership	We maintain an equal and effective working relationship (see 4.2 below)

There are a number of structures and mechanisms across Thurrock that the statutory agencies use to consult, involve and engage with voluntary and community groups, local residents and the users of public services.

Thurrock Council have also developed a structure of Community Forums, supported by ngage. Its primary aim is to support community engagement and to ensure that communities are better informed and involved in decisions that affect them. They have considerable experience of working with different community groups, including those not normally consulted, and of addressing the needs and concerns of different communities.

The Community Involvement Board of the Shaping Thurrock Strategic Partnership are developing a Community Involvement and Engagement Strategy Toolkit which will contain detailed information about how to plan and manage community engagement activity and how to use the results.

### Key principles for consideration for the Code

- 1 Planning and consultation should be announced in advance, start early from the policy design stage, and with sufficient time allowed for responses
- 2 There should be clarity about what areas are open to change, what aspects are open to involvement and engagement, and any potential impact on the voluntary, community and faith sector
- 3 Information should reach those most affected, utilising existing networks and experience, particularly to access the “hard to reach”
- 4 Written materials should be clear and available through a variety of formats and languages
- 5 Maximum participation should be encouraged through accessible and varied consultation and engagement methods
- 6 All feedback should be analysed and communicated and promoted widely

### Action for Consultation, Involvement and Engagement

Heading	Details	Who	By When
Community Involvement and Engagement Strategy Toolkit	Approve strategy for community engagement	CIB / LSP	Jan 07
	Map mechanisms and processes for consultation and engagement across statutory partners	LSP, partners	April 07
	Review gaps for “Hard to reach” communities	CIB	May 07
Code of Practice	Agree Code of Practice for Consultation, Involvement and Engagement	LSP / CVS	July 07

# Partnership

## Section 4.2

At the core of the Compact is partnership. Statutory, voluntary and community organisations work together in a number of ways ranging from informal networks to formal contractual arrangements. Partnership working in Thurrock is not new, but is being increasingly developed through the Shaping Thurrock LSP and its related Programme Boards which will be directed by requirements of the Local Area Agreement.

The national Compact Working Group suggests the following definition of Partnership:

*“Partnership exists where each party has an opportunity to contribute to the decisions of the partnership and to influence the provision which arises from it, be this at a policy, strategic or implementation level.”*

Successful partnership depends as much on people as it does on systems and structures. A characteristic of effective partnership working is the time taken to develop relationships, mutual trust, understanding other organisations’ culture, work style and accountabilities. However that time can be costly and thought needs to be given to the costs of partnership development, participation for less resourced organisations and how those costs are met.

One of the benefits of working in partnership is the pooling of resources, skills and experience of different organisations across sectors. Pooling cultures and different ways of working can enable local service planning and provision to be more sensitively and more effectively delivered.

At the heart of partnership are relationships of ownership and power, both within and between sectors. The Compact must operate on the principle that the governance of the voluntary and community sector is independent from the statutory sector. The distinctiveness and value of the voluntary and community sector’s contribution to public well-being and to an effective civil society is largely the result of its independence from the priorities and constraints that shape statutory sector activities.

## Key principles for consideration for the Code

- 1 Partnership places a commitment on all parties to work towards a better understanding of the other partner(s) and to contribute appropriately.
- 2 Partnerships should try to avoid suggestions of dominance by one or other partners (e.g. those providing main resources). Voluntary and community organizations can feel or be perceived as the ‘junior’ partner.
- 3 Different partners may have different contributions to make but carry equal weight in joint decision-making.
- 4 Regular reviews of partnership working are required to ensure effectiveness and relevance.
- 5 Commit to develop skills around partnership working and to developing partnerships across sectors.
- 6 Voluntary and community sector engagement in partnership working may need to be supported and facilitated by intermediate or development agencies to build capacity and work with statutory agencies.

## Action for Partnerships

Heading	Details	Who	By When
Mapping of partnerships	Map, review and evaluate range of partnerships with both statutory and voluntary, community and faith sector participation	LSP, CVS	April 07
Membership of partnerships	Prepare and review proposals for recruitment and retention, training and development, and support and rewarding to fill vacancies and support individuals on partnership bodies	LSP, Council, CVS	July 07
Code of Practice	Agree Code of Practice for Partnership	LSP	October 07

## Resourcing, Procurement and Commissioning

Section 4.3

Resourcing refers to any support, financial or in kind, provided to the voluntary, community and faith sectors through a variety of different mechanisms including grants, service agreements, contracts or 'in-kind'. Each mechanism serves a different purpose and is appropriate in relevant circumstances. Traditional grant aid is relevant in relation to smaller grants where there may be an element of capacity building required. Service (Level) Agreements help specify service requirements more clearly and contracts are relevant where service needs can be specified precisely.

The Compact partner agencies are committed to establishing and maintaining best practice in relation to service delivery. The introduction of Best Value and the government's modernising agenda have created the need for a much clearer relationship between the statutory and voluntary sectors. This is aimed at securing the delivery of quality public services.

Increasingly, public services provided by all agencies are expected to contribute to those areas of need that have a clear evidence base to support them. The statutory funders are also increasingly required to meet closely defined objectives and their performance is measured against a range of (floor)targets and indicators. Voluntary sector providers are consequently drawn into a relationship with statutory funders, which has to be clearly linked to outcomes that support objectives through a more strategic approach to grant allocation.

### Key principles for consideration for the Code

- 1 Focus on outcomes - as a key indicator of the success of funding to ensure that beneficiaries of service delivery experience tangible benefits and changes.
- 2 Simplicity and proportionality - processes for commissioning and application should be as simple as possible and in proportion to the amount of money involved.
- 3 Consistency and co-ordination - funders and purchasers should endeavour to join-up or standardise parts of the funding or procurement chain to minimise burdens on organisations.
- 4 Timeliness - allowing time for planning, decision making and action to have real effect.
- 5 Transparency and accountability - allowing informed decisions about spending priorities to be made and for all agencies to learn from previous work.
- 6 Discussion and dialogue - helps build trust and can identify and overcome problems before they impact on the delivery of outcomes, particularly if undertaken through consultation with informed agencies.
- 7 Empathy - understanding each other's needs and requirements should help avoid problems and help achieve outcomes.

### Action for Resourcing, Procurement and Commissioning

Heading	Details	Who	By When
Understanding current position and needs	Identify and map range and nature of resourcing and commissioning from public sector partners to voluntary, community & faith groups	LSP and statutory partners CVS	April 07
	Identify and map the breadth of potential and actual funding and resources coming to voluntary sector from outside the borough	CVS	May 07
	Identify and agree practical issues regarding funding and resourcing relationship between public sector and voluntary, community and faith sectors, including strengths and weaknesses	All partners	July 07
Resourcing Guidelines	Develop guidelines on resourcing	LSP	Sept 07
Funding Code of Practice	Agree Code of Practice for Resourcing, Procurement and Commissioning	LSP, CVS	Dec 07

## Equalities and Diversity

### Section 4.4

In Thurrock, the importance of working with all those who live in the borough is recognised. It is expected that voluntary, community and faith groups will work in partnership with public agencies in promoting race equality, tackling social exclusion, and creating a society in which everyone can participate.

Social exclusion happens when people or places suffer from a series of problems such as unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, ill health and family breakdown. Consideration of equalities and diversity is intended to ensure that everyone in the community has an entitlement to equality of opportunity and access to all services. This is so that they can achieve their full potential, irrespective of their gender, age, ethnicity, faith, tenure, impairment (physical, mental or sensory), sexuality or circumstance.

The need to ensure equality in the delivery of public services has long been recognised, as there are many people affected by social and economic exclusion for a wide range of reasons. By way of example, current challenges which are causing inequality are:

- In 2001, over 7,500 people in Thurrock were economically inactive because they were looking after a home or family: of these, 94% were women.
- Women in Thurrock earn 78% of the average male wage.
- Almost 8% of Thurrock's population reported that their health was 'not good'.
- Early deaths from cancer, heart disease and smoking are above the national average for people in Thurrock.
- Over 13,000 Thurrock residents (9.3%) reported that they were providing unpaid care for another person; of these 2% were providing 50 or more hours of unpaid care each week.
- Only 47% of disabled women are in employment, compared with 53% of disabled men.
- Men's take-up of primary health care services is generally lower than that of women, resulting in later diagnosis of problems, greater risks for their health and greater cost to the health service.
- Ethnic minority children are less likely to attend pre-school education.

There are still shortcomings across and within all the sectors, and the introduction of Equalities Impact Assessment as a tool will help to ensure full participation and identify and address any potential for discrimination before new policies and services are introduced.

Partners often commission many and varied services through external contracts with private companies or voluntary organisations. All partners have a responsibility to ensure that all outsourced services comply with the general duty to promote equality as set out in current legislation. In particular, they will be required to monitor and report against race, disability and gender equality schemes prepared by Thurrock Council and other public sector partners.

Responsibility for ensuring that the activities of local partnerships take account of these statutory duties for equality will happen in two ways:

- Through the Thurrock LSP which will have broad responsibility for overseeing compliance in its capacity of supporting partnerships.
- Through the diversity leadership provided by the main public sector partners including Thurrock Council, the PCT and the Police through standards of compliance which should be adopted by partners.

## Key principles for consideration for the Code

- 1 Encourage and enable everyone to live, work, and take part in society to their full potential, free from prejudice and discrimination.
- 2 Actively promote equal opportunities, good relationships, and respect and understanding between men and women, boys and girls, and between all ethnic and faith communities.
- 3 There are numerous specialist voluntary, community and faith organisations in Thurrock who have built up experience over the years to ensure inclusion and from which the statutory and wider voluntary sector have much to learn.
- 4 The voluntary, community and faith sector need to ensure that policies and practices encourage the active involvement of people of all backgrounds and circumstances and that promote equality, improve social inclusion and challenge discrimination throughout its services, activities and employment practices.
- 5 All partners should work in partnership to achieve equality of opportunity sharing examples of good practice and celebrating success.
- 6 Through working openly and co-operatively services can be developed to ensure complementarity and ensure they deliver the maximum benefit to people who suffer the greatest social and economic exclusion.
- 7 Ensure the inclusivity of organisations by providing development opportunities for staff, volunteers and management committees.
- 8 Monitor how successful service providers are in meeting the needs of socially excluded communities.
- 9 When participating in consultation activity, advise the Council of traditionally excluded groups that should be involved; share any proposals with other interested parties and ensure that the responses are a fair representation of the views of the organisation as a whole and the excluded groups.
- 10 Ensure that services and premises are accessible and work with the statutory partners to improve that accessibility.

## Action for Equalities and Diversity

Heading	Details	Who	By When
Review current practice	Review existing areas of good and bad practice across all aspects of equality to identify priorities and areas for improvement.	CVS, TRUST SER&ICC, Thurrock Council, LSP	April 07
Statutory equality schemes including race disability and gender schemes	Set out arrangements for the application of these schemes locally	Thurrock Council	June 07
Reporting and monitoring arrangements for all diversity matters	Set out arrangements for reporting and monitoring including employment and adherence to duties and statutory requirements	Thurrock Council, LSP	July 07
Equalities Code of Practice	Agree Code of Practice for Equalities and Diversity	CVS, LSP	Sept 07

## Volunteering

### Section 4.5

Volunteering can be a powerful tool for change, both for those who volunteer and the wider community. Volunteering has been described in the National Compact Code of Practice as:

*"The commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community and it can take many forms. It is freely undertaken and not for financial gain...it is an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment, or individuals or groups other than close relatives".*

People volunteer for varied and diverse reasons. It may be to develop skills, gain experience, increase confidence or self-esteem, socialise or because of a feeling of moral duty and commitment to a particular issue. Whatever the reason, there are four key principles that underpin volunteering activity:

- Choice - the freedom to choose whether or not to become involved.
- Diversity - being inclusive can build bridges and overcome social exclusion.
- Mutual Benefit - with no financial gain, volunteers should feel their contribution is valued, leading to a sense of self-fulfillment.
- Recognition - of the value volunteers bring to an organisation, activity or community.

In October 2005 a survey of 57 voluntary and community groups in Thurrock showed that 1425 volunteers were active within the groups. Volunteering activity in Thurrock includes:

- Organised or formal activities such as supporting strategic development of voluntary, community or faith groups as trustees or board members.
- Involvement in day to day activities such as counselling, befriending, fund-raising, administration. community activists and campaigners on particular issues.
- Activities related to sport, culture, environment and heritage.
- Many individuals who support neighbours and others in their communities.

Many small organisations are dependent on volunteers to operate. Whatever their involvement, volunteers in Thurrock's voluntary, community and faith groups bring special value to the community, fulfilling roles that are unique and independent. These individuals contribute to public life and the development of their communities by providing and sharing their skills, interests, beliefs, values, time and commitment.

### Key principles for consideration for the Code

- 1 Recognise and value the contribution that volunteers make to life in Thurrock and stimulate interest by promoting and marketing volunteering.
- 2 Increase staff awareness of volunteer contributions and how these support departmental objectives to address social exclusion, lifelong learning, work-life balance, and other relevant social policy objectives.
- 3 Identify the type of resources being put to supporting volunteering, and the level needed to achieve policy objectives.
- 4 Support initiatives that provide accessible information about volunteering opportunities and brokerage, particularly to encourage those who are least likely to engage.
- 5 Where match funding is required, auditable records of volunteer time donated should be accepted as equal status to money.
- 6 Promote and develop Good Practice guidance and initiatives for use by Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs).

### Action for Volunteering and Active Citizenship

Heading	Details	Who	By When
Increasing Volunteering Action Plan of the LAA	Introduce first phase of sign up by VIOs to monitor volunteer involvement in Thurrock to highlight development and promotion areas or gaps	LSP partners Volunteer Centre	July 07
Developing Good Practice	Establishment of Thurrock Volunteer Managers Forum to promote, develop and share Good Practice resources	LSP partners Volunteer Centre	Sept 07
Volunteering Code of Practice	Agree Code of Practice for Volunteering and Active Citizenship	LSP	Jan 08

## Community Groups

Section 4.6

The principles and undertakings in this Compact apply across the voluntary, community and faith sector. Increasingly though, distinctions are being made between the voluntary, community and faith sector so particular consideration needs to be given to the needs, interests and contributions of Community organisations.

Community groups operate closest of all to the grass roots. They can be a community of interest (sharing a common purpose, concern, interest, race disability or belief) or a neighbourhood group aiming to improve the quality of life of residents.

Community groups can:

- give a voice to a community, either geographical or community of interest.
- foster a balance between self-interest and citizenship.
- fill service gaps through mutual aid or self-help.
- provide support for hard to reach people and areas.

Community groups bring much to partnerships, programmes and processes by informing project development from “ground level” experience, and can evaluate effectiveness of policy and services based on actual need.

Community groups can provide opportunities for personal / leadership development, confidence building or learning specific skills and make a contribution through the in-kind support, time, resources and skills.

Community groups are frequently run by a single volunteer with little or no funding or premises, and are often the last to be consulted with very little time to respond. Some community groups also operate within larger umbrella voluntary sector organisations, providing access to ‘hard to reach’ or marginalised voices during public consultations. Resource needs for these community groups can include funding, capacity building, training, access to networks, information, consultation and engaging with public bodies and mainstream voluntary sector.

### Key principles for consideration for the Code:

- 1 All partners recognise that the community sector makes a substantial contribution to social and community cohesion and is one of the building blocks that leads to the betterment of neighbourhood and society.
- 2 Ensure that policies towards communities recognise the importance of communities of interest or issue as well as communities of place.
- 3 Ensure requirements made of local communities are realistic and that resourcing implications are known, understood and provided for.
- 4 Unify and simplify small grants funding programmes for community groups.
- 5 Recognise the value of the contributions of volunteer time to projects as equivalent to match funding.
- 6 All partners will work together to ensure fair treatment for all community groups.

### Action for Community Groups

Heading	Details	Who	By When
Mapping of community organisations	Map, review and understand range and nature of community organisations by theme and geography	CVS, Ngage, TRUST	May 07
Community group membership of partnerships	Prepare and review proposals for development and support of community organisations, particularly in context of various Codes of Practice	Council, CVS, Ngage	July 07
Code of Practice	Agree Code of Practice for Community Groups	LSP	Oct 07

## Glossary of Terms

### Section 5

### **BME: Black and Minority Ethnic**

### **Local Area Agreement**

Local Area Agreements (LAA) are part of the government's plans to improve the delivery of local services by promoting a new way of working between central government, local authorities and their partners on the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) - including the voluntary and community sectors. The broad idea is that people who live and work in an area are more likely to be aware of the locality's social, economic and environmental problems than civil servants working in Whitehall. Therefore, in terms of delivering more effective and efficient public services, LAA'S will help deliver national targets in a way that reflects local priorities.

### **Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)**

Shaping Thurrock is the Local Strategic Partnership for Thurrock. LSPs bring together the public, private, voluntary and community sectors, to work in union for the benefit of people at a local level within neighbourhoods. Acting as single non-statutory bodies these groups are at heart the community and the regeneration of the areas in which they operate. They should work at a strategic level to identify their communities' top priorities and needs and ensure they are addressed effectively. They are also intended to be the main mechanism for the co-ordination of delivery of better local services.

### **Participation**

Participation may be thought of as a process during which individuals, groups or organisations are consulted about or have the opportunity to become actively involved in a project, committee or programme of activity. Good participation may be characterised as:

- A planned process in which the key interests agree on the level of participation which is appropriate.
- Agreeing on both what is to be achieved - the outcomes - and how it is to be done - the methods.
- A process that allows sufficient time for learning and development for all concerned.
- Involving people on the basis that they understand each other, have the confidence to participate and can see some point to it.
- Using methods and techniques to gain participation which demonstrate an understanding of the overall process, and which are applied with skill and patience.

### **PCT: Primary Care Trust**

South West Essex Primary Care Trust formed from a merger of Basildon PCT, Billericay, Brentwood and Wickford PCT, and Thurrock PCT.

### **Thurrock TGDC: Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation**

### **Voluntary, Community and Faith Sectors**

The term 'voluntary sector' has traditionally been used to describe a whole range of non-profit-making organisations. For clarity and planning it is helpful to distinguish community groups and faith groups as separate sectors from the voluntary sector, with their own specific needs. The 'community sector' refers to small groups who may not receive regular core funding and are often neighbourhood based. Examples of these may include parent & toddler groups or resident's associations.



## Acknowledgements

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**Shaping Thurrock Local Strategic Partnership** ..... Selena Bolingbroke

**Thurrock Council** ..... Cllr Sue McPherson  
 ..... Natalie Warren  
 ..... Chris Paly

**Thurrock Primary Care Trust** ..... Cllr Val Liddiard

**Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation** ..... Tom Gardiner

### Voluntary Sector

- Thurrock Council for Voluntary Service..... Naya Naqvi
- Thurrock Racial Unity Support Task Group (TRUST) ..... Ruth Juett
- South Essex Rape & Incest Crises Centre (SER&ICC) ..... Sheila Coates
- Citizens Advice Bureau ..... Mike Rawlings
- Davy Down Trust ..... Diana Hale

### Community Sector

- Community Involvement Board..... John Peters
- Ngage ..... Jacqui Payne

## Dispute resolution

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The Compact seeks to clarify and enhance the relationships between the Partners. Although not legally binding, this Compact is a development tool for best practice and positive relationships. It is recognised, however, that different accountabilities could create areas of disagreement and/or conflict. It is hoped that it will be possible to resolve any issues informally without recourse to a formal procedure.

The successful implementation of this Compact will depend on a willingness by all parties to examine practice in an open and honest way. Any disputes about the meaning of the Compact and its application in practice can be used to assist this process, should they occur.

Any complaints that cannot be resolved informally are to be managed by the Compact Monitoring Group. Their terms of reference will need to be agreed, but is likely to include powers to call officers in to discuss alleged complaints and establish agreeable outcomes. Action plans will be revised in the light of such incidents to ensure that the Compact provides a positive opportunity for learning and development.

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## **Thurrock CVS**

For further information or copies of this Compact  
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