



Tower Hamlets Compact

Working together

An agreement of shared principles to support effective relationships between statutory and third sector organisations

Tower Hamlets Partnership



Tower Hamlets Partnership

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Foreword

In the context of drastic and far reaching cuts across the entire public sector it is even more imperative that statutory sector organisations work constructively with local voluntary and community organisations. I am fully committed to the aim set out in the Tower Hamlets Third Sector Strategy – to create an environment for a thriving third sector in Tower Hamlets.

Compact is an agreement setting out how local statutory bodies and third sector organisations will work together as partners to address the challenges facing the borough and improve the lives of everyone in Tower Hamlets. If we can work well together we can achieve more for local people. This will be achieved by better partnership working, supporting the best use of resources and prioritising key areas

of joint working. I hope that this document provides a solid set of principals for this to happen. In the Third Sector Strategy we said that we would refresh the local Compact. We have done this by making the dispute resolution process clearer and updating the contacts.

Third sector organisations have a vital role to play within our community. As I stated in the Third Sector Strategy, we recognise that it may not always be possible to have consensus on how best to move forward, but I hope we can agree on our shared goal: to improve services for everyone living and working in the borough. I trust that this document underpins this commitment.

“ I hope we can agree on our shared goal: to improve services for everyone living and working in the borough.”

Lutfur Rahman
Mayor of
Tower Hamlets
and Chair of
Tower Hamlets
Partnership



What is this compact about?

Our compact is called 'Working together'

This compact sets out how organisations in Tower Hamlets want to work together. The aim is to achieve more for local people. Its value comes from the commitment of organisations that sign up to it and the clear procedure for solving disagreements.

The compact is a statement of principles that organisations agree to. Any organisation that does not meet these commitments can be held responsible for their actions. There is a national compact between the Government and the third sector.

This compact recognises that good working relations are vital if local

people are to have the highest quality services and representation.

The third sector

In this document, the term 'third sector' means independent voluntary or community groups which are often registered charities. It includes religious organisations that are involved in community work. Organisations that only make profits to support growth, such as social enterprises and cooperatives, may also be considered part of the third sector.

Third-sector organisations generally have a clear purpose that is relevant to local people and includes a community development role.

The statutory sector

This generally means organisations created through acts of parliament. The law sets out what they do. The first statutory-sector organisations to adopt the compact in Tower Hamlets are the council, health

and police services. These will encourage other organisations in Tower Hamlets to adopt the compact.



Tower Hamlets Partnership

Tower Hamlets Partnership (THP) brings together a range of key stakeholders from the private, statutory and third sector. There are three strands to our partnership – local area partnerships, community plan action groups and a partnership management group. THP develops and agrees a joint strategy and priorities that are published every year in the community plan.

At the heart of the community plan – and this compact – is a commitment to provide excellent services. The compact recognises that working together helps to improve people's quality of life. Tower Hamlets has high levels of economic and social deprivation. Our partnership aims to make sure that all services respond to, and meet the needs of, the different communities that live and work in our borough.



Shared vision

The shared vision for Tower Hamlets comes from our community plan.

“To improve the quality of life for everyone living and working in the borough.”

This compact recognises the distinct, but often shared roles of third-sector and statutory organisations in delivering this vision.



Shared principles

These are the shared principles we have agreed.

Mutual respect

The commitment and contribution of volunteers is a vital part of Tower Hamlets communities. Our partners have a duty to promote equality, prevent discrimination and promote good relations between communities. Each sector has its own set of responsibilities and duties. Each organisation is different and all our partners must respect and value this.

Quality services

Organisations have different but often complementary roles. All our partners want to provide the highest-quality services for their users. Developing and improving services together builds stronger relationships, cross-border learning and services that are more likely to meet people's needs.

Our partners will promote effective working relationships within the Tower Hamlets Partnership.

Independence

An independent and varied third sector is essential to the wellbeing of communities in Tower Hamlets. Strong and lasting relationships are built on honesty, openness and trust. One of the third sector's main roles is to campaign and challenge policy – within the law and using the appropriate methods.

Responsibility

Organisations are responsible for their actions and the services they provide to different stakeholders. This compact will be independently assessed. The statutory sector funds some third sector organisations and has a duty to make sure that public money is spent appropriately. Each organisation will have a complaints procedure that is easy to understand and effective.

Joint working

Organisations can achieve more for local people by working together. Organisations should train and develop workers so they can work together. Any opportunity for joint training sessions should be explored. When an organisation cannot do something that is set out in this compact, they will explain why.

Our partners will acknowledge each organisation's contribution. Organisations will apply risk management principles to joint working arrangements.



Statutory sector

Statutory-sector organisations agree to the following.

Independence

1. To recognise the right of third sector organisations to make their own decisions.
2. To respect the campaigning role of third-sector organisations.

Funding

1. To be clear and consistent, and give fair access to funding opportunities.
2. To consider the financial and other risks that can be significant within formal agreements.
3. To make each funding process as simple as possible. To publish clear standards, procedures, timescales and reasons for any decisions taken.
4. To use clear and consistent monitoring arrangements.

These monitoring arrangements should be appropriate, relevant and easy to use.

5. To move to more stable and longer term funding relationships, where appropriate, to help local organisations with their planning.
6. To consult in good time on any significant changes to funding arrangements.
7. To pay funding on time.
8. To make sure that the costs of providing a service, under a contract or service agreement, reflect an understanding of the full cost of delivery, including any relevant part of the overhead costs.
9. To provide strategic funding that supports the skills, knowledge, structures and resources of the third sector.
10. To confirm funding amounts three months before the start of projects, if possible.

Policy development and Consultation

1. To involve the third sector, at an early stage, in designing and planning services.
2. To take account of the compact in planning, performance review and independent inspection arrangements.
3. To keep to the standards in the code of practice for consultation and involvement, including making clear the purpose of each consultation, giving reasonable timescales for responses and providing feedback on the outcomes.
4. To respect the confidentiality of information provided by the third sector, within the law and the proper performance of public duties.
5. To develop an approach for assessing new policies and procedures to identify possible effects on the third sector.

Communication

1. To listen, respond and keep channels of communication open. This should include communicating with smaller groups who support excluded communities.
2. To promote good working relations, a consistent approach and good practice, particularly where this relates to cross-agency work with the third sector.
3. To contribute to the yearly review of the compact.
4. To encourage other statutory organisations in Tower Hamlets to adopt the compact.
5. To promote and raise awareness of the compact within Tower Hamlets Partnership.
6. To share and explain targets set locally and by the Government that influences the service priorities for the statutory sector.

7. To nominate a third-sector compact 'champion' in each Statutory sector organisation. The champion will act as the point of contact for third sector organisations.
8. To provide appropriate feedback on the performance of third sector organisations.



Third Sector

Third-sector organisations agree to the following:

Governance

1. To maintain high standards of governance.
2. To meet responsibilities to funders and services users.
3. To maintain high standards of financial management, including following the accounting frameworks for charities and limited companies.

Representation

1. To be clear and open about which part of the community each organisation is asked to represent.
2. To make arrangements to consult effectively with service users or the communities that the group represents.
3. To respect the confidentiality of statutory-sector information, within the law.

Service delivery

1. To deliver excellent services for local people that are designed to meet their individual needs.
2. To put into practice relevant performance and quality-assurance standards.
3. To record outputs and outcomes effectively and openly.

Communication

1. To provide feedback from service users to statutory-sector organisations.
2. To involve local users, wherever possible, in developing and managing activities and services.
3. To contribute to the yearly review of the compact.
4. To go to forums and networks to contribute to the operation and development of the sector as a whole.
5. To raise statutory-sector awareness of the work of the third sector, the knowledge and expertise within it, and the third sector's knowledge of the local community.

Solving Disagreements

Compact Dispute Resolution Process

In the event that your organisation perceives a case of Compact non-compliance, the following dispute resolution processes are recommended:

Stage 1 – Informal

The complainant organisation is encouraged to seek advice from TH CVS in its capacity as lead Compact Champion.

The complainant organisation is also advised to raise the issue in writing with the relevant manager, copying the CVS in its capacity as the lead Compact Champion for the Third Sector. The CVS will notify the Third Sector Advisory Board that this has occurred and will keep the



Board up-to-date with progress on Compact related complaints and their outcomes.

If any meeting then takes place between the complainant and the public sector organisation, it is recommended that a relevant Compact Champion is invited to attend.

If this does not lead to a satisfactory resolution, it is recommended that the complainant move to Stage 2. In urgent cases complainant can move to Stage 4 directly.

Stage 2 – Internal Complaint procedure

If the complaint remains unresolved, it is recommended that the complainant uses existing Complaints Procedures of the statutory partner in question (e.g. the Council or NHS or the Police) as appropriate. The organisation subject to the complaint is encouraged to process this in a timely and efficient manner.

Stage 3 – Formal Mediation

If the issues remain unresolved, the matter can be referred to an independent mediator, with whom both parties must agree to meet.

Where the parties agree to meet with an independent mediator, but can not reach an agreement, the complaint can be referred to the relevant Ombudsman.

Stage 4 - Ombudsman

If the issue remains unresolved following mediation, the matter can be referred to the relevant Ombudsman.

If the internal public body complaints procedure has been exhausted without a satisfactory resolution of the dispute, an Ombudsman can investigate maladministration causing injustice.

The Local Government Ombudsman [LGO] deals with all local Councils and the Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman with

central government departments, Non Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) and NHS bodies.

Once an organisation lodges a complaint with the Ombudsman, s/he will check whether the public body in question has had an opportunity to respond [i.e. through their own complaints procedure]. If they have, s/he will appoint an investigator to make contact with both parties and try to resolve the dispute informally.

If this is unsuccessful, an investigation usually involves speaking to both parties and other relevant witnesses, gathering and reviewing all of the documents and producing an initial review, or draft report. Ombudsmen sometimes reach agreement by negotiation with the public body on the proposed remedies, which can be an effective way to secure a settlement.

The services of Ombudsman are free to Third Sector organisations,

but are subject to the Ombudsman's agreement to look into the case. A complaint to the Ombudsman can often be a lengthy process and the Local Government Ombudsman has in previously refused to investigate two cases relating to "commercial or contractual transactions" i.e. funding decisions by local Councils concerning voluntary and community organisations. Details of key Ombudsman organisations are:

- **Ombudsman for Health:**
www.ombudsman.org.uk -
(free service)
- **Ombudsman for Local Government:**
www.lgo.org.uk - (free service)

Stage 5 – Judicial review

Where the matter remains unresolved, it can be referred to Judicial Review. Anyone with 'sufficient interest' in a decision can ask the court to look at the decision-making process to see if it was lawful. This can often be an expensive, stressful and a time-consuming exercise for all involved, and is often a last resort in holding a public body to account when all other avenues have been exhausted.

For full details of Compact Dispute Resolution Process, please visit:

www.thcvs.org.uk

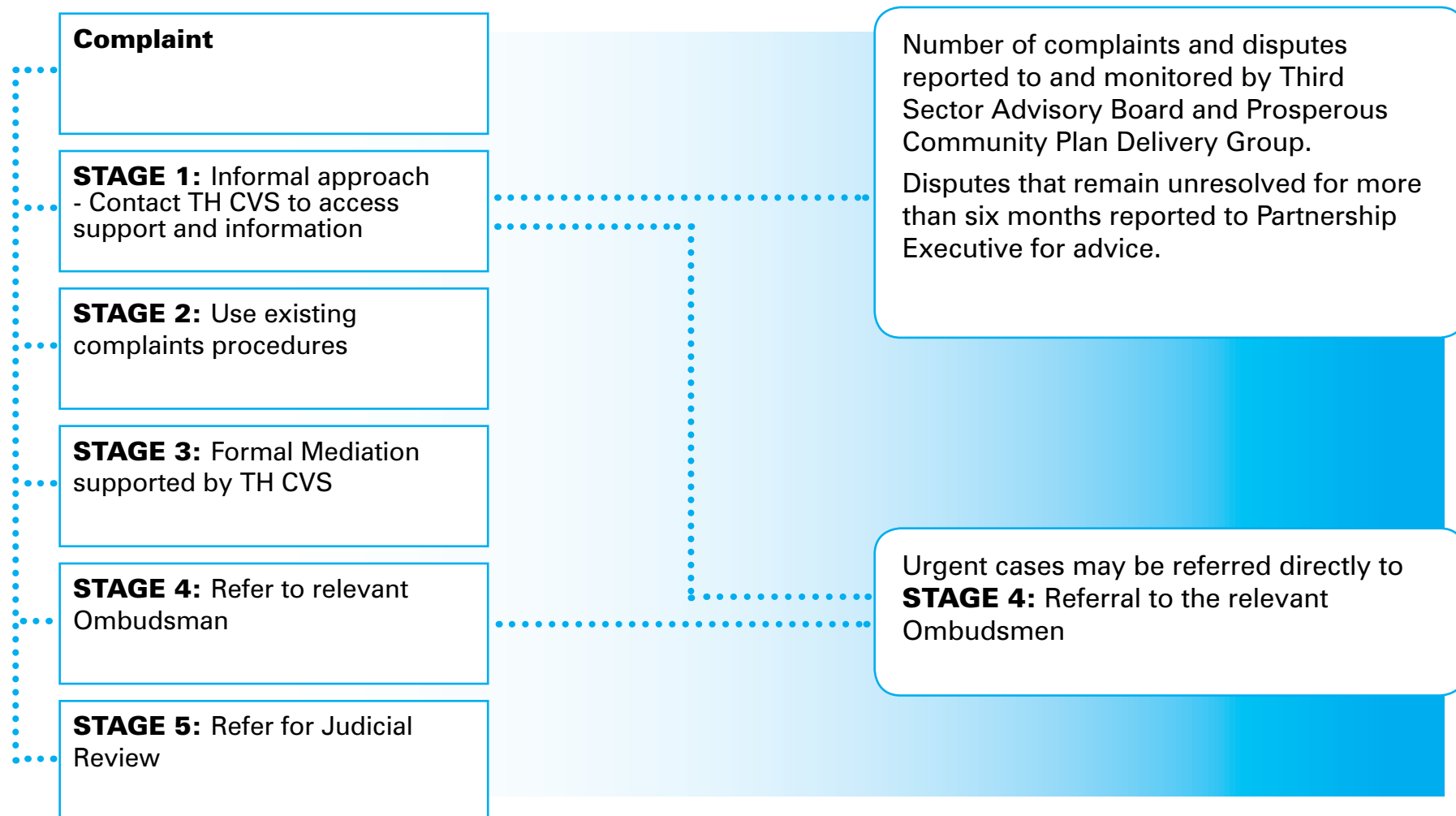
or

http://www.onetowerhamlets.net/your_local_area/third_sector/compact.aspx



Compact Dispute Resolution Process Map

Below is a process map outlining the recommended process to be undertaken if an organisation perceives a breach of the Compact to have occurred.



Compact glossary

Capacity building – This means making sure that individuals, groups and communities have access to the knowledge, skills and resources they need to take action or work efficiently and effectively.

Community group – This is an informal group or it can be a more formal organisation of people. Community groups are formed to pursue a common interest, meet a shared need or campaign for a common cause. Most are run entirely by volunteers, and will be run by their members or a committee elected from members.

Community Plan – The community plan for Tower Hamlets is monitored by Tower Hamlets Partnership Management Group

and was launched in May 2001. It sets out a vision for the future of Tower Hamlets to 2010. We report on our progress towards that vision every year, with a list of immediate priorities to be tackled in each following year.

Governance – This describes the way an organisation is managed, including its powers, responsibilities and decision-making processes. This is often set out in an organisation's constitution or legal identity.

Infrastructure bodies – These are organisations that provide capacity-building support to voluntary and community organisations. They represent the sector when making policies. They also encourage joint working across sectors.

Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) – Our LSP is the Tower Hamlets Partnership. It brings together a range of key local stakeholders from the public, private, voluntary and community

sectors to develop a joint strategy and priorities.

Mediation – This is a way of solving disagreements where an unbiased third party (the mediator) helps people who disagree to find an acceptable solution.

Quality Assurance (QA) – These are steps taken to make sure that an organisation's activities are of a high quality.

Service Agreement – This is a formal negotiated agreement setting out the making processes. This is often set out in an organisation's constitution or legal identity.

Social Enterprises – These are organisations with objectives that benefit the community (for example, recycling). They reinvest any surplus to achieve these objectives, or invest it in the community rather than distribute it as profit to shareholders and owners.

Stakeholders – These are people who have an interest in an organisation, its activities and its achievements.

Umbrella Body – This is an organisation that supports other organisations working in a particular area or field.

Voluntary Organisation – This is a formal non-profit-distributing and non-statutory organisation, usually set up as a charity, which aims to provide a service or meet a need that will benefit the public. Voluntary organisations often have paid employees.



Additional Information

The Public Law Project (PLP) is a national legal charity which aims to improve access to public law remedies for those whose access to justice is restricted by poverty or some other form of disadvantage. The PLP supports those who wish to challenge a decision by public bodies, including non-compliance with Compact. Within this broad remit PLP has adopted three main objectives:

- increasing the accountability of public decision-makers;
- enhancing the quality of public decision-making;
- improving access to justice.

To access the services provided by the Public Law Project, please visit:
<http://www.publiclawproject.org.uk/Volsectcomms.html>

Or contact Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service:
www.thcvs.org.uk

Useful contacts

Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service

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Compact Advocacy – Supports VCS organisations National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)

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W: www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/advice-support/compact-advocacy/contact-compact-advocacy

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