

# **The Staffordshire Compact**

## **Capacity Building Code of Practice**



Staffordshire Strategic Partnership

## Introduction

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The Capacity Building Code of Practice is one of five codes that support the Staffordshire Compact and set out practical undertakings for third sector and public organisations. This code of practice aims to influence and strengthen relationships between public organisations, partnerships at a local level and the third sector. This will help ensure that community groups and voluntary organisations have the skills, knowledge, structures and resources to fully engage with statutory agendas and secure desired contracts/service level agreements to deliver services that meet or exceed statutory requirements.

Public organisations partly as a result of central government expectations and also pressure from the third sector itself, have ever increasing expectations that the third sector will be able and willing to be consulted on about their plans and priorities. They use the sector to consult and engage local communities and may assume that the third sector is willing and has the capacity to deliver public services themselves. These expectations can put pressure on the third sector - pressure that may not always be acknowledged or supported.

The third sector also has high expectations of public organisations to ensure that the sector will be treated in an open, inclusive and transparent way and as equal or respected partners. The third sector needs to appreciate the regulations under which public organisations operate and the issuance of central government directives can make operating in such a manner often difficult. The third sector should be prepared to recognise those difficulties and work with the local public organisations within their imposed constraints.

## Benefits of using this code

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Third sector organisations are better able to meet the expectations of funding bodies as a result of open, honest, transparent, collaborative and supportive partnerships.

- Third sector organisations contribute to commissioning and procurement processes and feel that their contributions are valued and fairly considered.
- Services are increasingly designed and delivered in response to local needs
- The third sector is involved in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of services.
- There is a strategic approach to providing third sector infrastructure services which are stable and are of a high level of quality across the county.

## Key Elements of the Capacity Building Relationship

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There are four main elements to the capacity building relationship, which are as follows:

**Information** – The third sector is kept informed in a **timely** and **coherent** way that helps enable them to participate in local and county decision-making.

**Independence** – The third sector retains its independence and is able to maintain its role as a champion of community issues, even when it may involve challenging potential or actual funders.

**Training** – Multi –agency training and staff development should be encouraged. Training should be provided by the partner best placed to deliver.

**Good Governance** – The third sector maintains high standards of management and conduct and meets reporting and accountability obligations to funders and users.

Principles of proportionality are discussed in the **Equality & Diversity Code of Practice**. For example, smaller community groups may not have the capacity to fully meet the requirements of the code of practices without support from their larger partner organisations. Where possible, larger organisations, or those with access to larger resource, should actively support smaller organisations to achieve these aims (e.g. by opening up training opportunities to staff/volunteers from community organisations).

## **Information**

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### **Obligation of Public Organisations**

Use infrastructure organisations as well as public organisations own communication channels to disseminate information. This will ensure equal access in receipt of information across the wider third sector.

Ensure that information is provided to the third sector in a format that can be understood by all and the use of jargon is kept to a minimum e.g. tender documentation. If format means interpretation or translation of information this may involve adding time to processes.

Ensure information is provided to the third sector in a timely manner. Recognise the time necessary to form partnerships and consortia and where possible this should be reflected in the time allowed for tender applications. Commissioners should recognise that there are some natural divides within the county e.g. north /south. Whilst the third sector is still in development if commissioning pan-Staffordshire services, commissioners should also consider consortia bids that provide chunks of the tendered services.

Ensure details of key contacts within public organisations are provided so that third sector organisations can clarify issues.

Provide full feedback on progress of tender applications and on failed tenders so that organisations can learn and develop their bid writing skills.

## **Obligation of Third Sector**

Information is made available to the third sector in a variety of ways. Organisations should ensure that these channels are visited regularly so that they are kept informed.

Infrastructure support organisations are a conduit for a lot of information and third sector organisations should make use of the expertise available.

Provide information requested by public organisations as part of contract requirements in a timely manner and in an appropriate format.

Use local knowledge and expertise to advise public organisations on the best methods of providing information to specific audiences.

## **Independence**

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### **Obligation of Public Organisations**

Understand that third sector organisations are entitled to campaign within the law in order to advance their aims and those of their communities.

Recognise and respect that third sector organisations are entitled, regardless of funding sources, to act as advocates in challenging and seeking changes in public policy.

Recognise and respect that the independence of the third sector is crucial to the development, delivery and scrutiny of quality public services.

### **Obligation of the Third Sector**

Be clear, when campaigning, whether an organisation is acting on its own behalf, or on behalf of the wider third sector.

When acting as advocates in challenging and seeking changes in public policy, evidence should be provided to show agreement has been reached within the appropriate organisations/ group to advocate on their behalf, i.e. copy minutes of meetings held, not literally a signed mandate which might be difficult to co-ordinate effectively.

## **Training**

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### **Obligation of Public Organisations**

Recognise and respect the value and range of different quality standards used within the third sector.

Make vacant training places available to the third sector and ensure that there is a structure/mechanism where this can happen effectively and in a timely manner.

Recognise and respect the value of including the third sector in multi agency-training programmes.

Recognise and respect there is value in non-accredited and informal training.

Appreciate that 9-5 training programmes may exclude third sector volunteers who may have full time jobs.

When tendering for services public organisations should consider providing/ commissioning support for the third sector organisations in completing the necessary documentation. It is important that the tendering process is about identifying the best service rather than the most accomplished bid writer. (Further guidance can be found in the **Funding, Commissioning and Procurement Code of Practice**).

### **Obligation of the Third Sector**

Consider making vacant training places available to public organisations and put in place a structure / mechanism where this can happen effectively and in a timely manner.

Recognise the value of including public organisations in training programmes

Make use of any training opportunities offered by public organisations.

## **Good Governance**

### **Obligation of Public Organisations**

Recognise that organisational development incurs a cost and that full cost recovery as a principle should be an obligation.

Acceptance of working towards a range of quality standards / continuous improvement within a tender document, rather than always insisting that they should always be in place from the outset.

### **Obligation of the Third Sector**

Maintain and develop quality standards appropriate to the organisation.

Maintain high standards of management and conduct and meet reporting and accountability obligations of funders.

Respect and be accountable to the law, and in the case of charities observe the appropriate guidance from the Charity Commission.

Recognise the importance of involving users, wherever possible, in the development and management of activities and services and in the management of the organisation.

Put in place policies for promoting best practice and equality of opportunity in activities.  
(see **Equality & Diversity Code of Practice**).