

# **The Staffordshire Compact**

## **Equality & Diversity Code of Practice**



Staffordshire Strategic Partnership

## Introduction

The Equality & Diversity Code of Practice is one of five codes of practice that support the Staffordshire Compact and set out practical steps for both third sector and public organisations. This code of practice sets out how we will take account of equality and diversity in the way we work together.

Many third sector and public organisations already have their own equality and diversity policies, which outline their commitments and provide details of how they intend to meet the various legislative requirements. This code of practice is intended to support the practical application of these policies in a partnership setting.

## Definitions

Our approach to equality and diversity is based on the following definition, which was developed by the Equality Review in 2007.

**“An equal society protects and promotes equal, real freedom and substantive opportunity to live in the ways that people value and would choose so that everyone can flourish.**

**An equal society recognises people’s different needs, situations and goals, and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and be.”**

This definition recognises that diversity includes everyone. It also allows us to focus on equality outcomes for people, how much choice and control they have in achieving positive outcomes and whether there are any barriers (such as processes, discrimination or disadvantage) which prevent them from achieving those outcomes.

The Single Equality Bill, which was introduced in the House of Commons on 24<sup>th</sup> April, is intended to streamline and strengthen current legislation and is expected to receive Royal Assent in Spring 2010. The Bill supports the wider, inclusive approach to equality and diversity as outlined above.

## Shared Values & Principles

The Staffordshire Compact will support equality and diversity by:

- Facilitating the development of a strong partnership between the third sector and public organisations, which is a vital foundation for developing accessible and inclusive services that meet the needs of all communities in Staffordshire.
- Providing a clear framework to underpin our partnership working, which helps to ensure that the relationships between the third sector and public organisations are based on trust, openness, honesty and equality.

This code of practice aims to show how, by working in partnership, the third sector and public organisations will:

- Contribute to and promote an equal society in Staffordshire;

- Recognise the diversity within our communities;
- Listen to our communities and respond to their needs;
- Actively work together to identify and remove the barriers which limit what people can do and be.

### **Both Sectors will do this by:**

- Developing accurate and up-to-date data about the demographics of our local communities, so that we can make sure that our services are meeting their needs and that our engagement activities are genuinely inclusive and representative. **(See Consultation & Policy Appraisal Code of Practice).**
- Ensuring that systems are in place to enable us to share information about our communities.
- Ensuring we involve diverse communities in our decision making processes, by making sure that we use the feedback from engagement activities to shape and influence the way we work. **(See Consultation & Policy Appraisal Code of Practice).**
- Ensuring we communicate clearly and effectively, with each other and with local communities, taking into account diverse audiences and their different needs and using appropriate consultation methods.
- Considering the impact that our activities, policies and services have on the communities we serve and taking action to mitigate any negative impacts.
- Monitoring the take-up of our services to ensure that they are accessible and inclusive and using this data to identify barriers and address and under-representation.
- Ensuring that our procurement and commissioning processes and systems promote equality and diversity. **(See Funding, Commissioning & Procurement Code of Practice).**
- Ensuring equality in the way we work with our employees, volunteers and customers. **(See Volunteering Code of Practice).**
- Taking time to develop trust and confidence within and between organisations and creating an environment where our organisations can act as ‘critical friends’ to each other in terms of promoting equality and challenging discrimination.
- Recognising that the development of a genuinely equal and inclusive society takes time, resources and commitment and that there are no ‘quick fixes’.

In order to achieve these aims, it is important for the third sector and public organisations to work together and support each other. It is also important to recognise that proportionality must be accepted, especially in the case of smaller community groups (i.e. smaller community groups may not have the capacity to fully meet the requirements of this code of practice 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. For example, by opening up training opportunities to staff/volunteers from community organisations. **(See Capacity Building Code of Practice).**

## Appendix 1: Checklist

	✓	X
Do you have an accurate picture of the make-up of your local communities?		
Do you have systems in place that enable you to share demographic data with partner organisations?		
Do you use demographic data to inform the development of your services and help you to ensure that your consultation activities are inclusive?		
Are your consultation and engagement activities genuinely inclusive and representative?		
Do the findings from your consultation and engagement activities inform, shape and develop your services and policies?		
Do you have systems in place which encourage members of the community to comment on your services – both positive and negative feedback – and do you use this feedback to shape services?		
Are your communications clear and accessible and do they take into account the needs of a diverse audience?		
Do you have processes in place to enable you to consider the impact your policies, services and functions are having on diverse communities?		
Do you take action to mitigate any negative impacts you may be having on diverse communities?		
Do you monitor the take-up of your services and do you use this data to identify barriers and address any imbalances?		
Do your procurement and commissioning processes promote equality and diversity?		
Is your employee/volunteer profile reflective of the communities you serve?		
Do you have systems in place for reporting and responding to harassment, bullying and discrimination for your staff, volunteers and service users?		
Are your staff trained in equality and diversity?		