

**Sunderland Compact:
Equality Code of Practice**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Sunderland Compact strengthens and balances the relationships between local voluntary and community sector (VCS) and public sector organisations for the benefit of the city. This revised Equality Code of Practice supports organisations in their existing commitments to recognise and fully accept their responsibilities under equality legislation. The Code also promotes equality between organisations so that all partners are treated with respect and can work together for mutual advantage and community gain, whether this is a geographical community, community of interest or community of identity.
- 1.2 The Code of Practice embraces the spirit of the Equality Act 2010, which legally protects people from discrimination and recognises the protected characteristics including age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. However it extends beyond this scope to include any groups who may be excluded, marginalised or vulnerable as a result of their particular circumstances, and who may require specific considerations or treatment to ensure they have access to the same opportunities as others. Compact signatories recognise that equality in this broader sense is fundamental to supporting strong and resilient communities where local people are in control of their own future.
- 1.3 This broad approach also embraces the fundamental principles of Human Rights, to promote and respect all individuals' dignity, autonomy, freedom, worth and potential, regardless of background or circumstance. Upholding, promoting and protecting each individual's right to equality is integral to the wellbeing and prosperity of the city and its communities and helps people to participate in society on an equal basis with others.

Aims and Commitments

2. Our Shared Aims:

- 2.1 Our shared aims demonstrate a commitment to the Public Sector Equality Duty, set out in the Equality Act 2010, and go further to support the approach outlined above. Together, we aim to ensure that Sunderland is a city where all people are afforded equal access to the best possible opportunities to flourish and achieve their full potential, and where the personal dignity and worth of each individual is valued and celebrated.
- 2.2 Our shared aims are to:
- 2.2.1 Provide opportunities for as many people as possible within Sunderland to be involved in their communities and in our organisations.
 - 2.2.2 Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and promote the safety and security of vulnerable members of the community whatever their particular characteristics and / or circumstances.
 - 2.2.3 Advance equality of opportunity for all people by:
 - Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their particular characteristics and/or circumstances.

- Taking steps to meet the needs of people who may be excluded, marginalised and/or vulnerable as a result of their particular characteristics and/or circumstances.
- Encouraging people with particular characteristics and/or circumstances to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.
- Fostering good relations by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between diverse individuals and communities.

2.3 In working towards our shared aims:

- 2.3.1 We recognise the need for organisations of different types and sizes to have a response proportionate to their size, capacity and focus e.g. in the development of strategies and action plans as required.
- 2.3.2 We acknowledge that in some instances, improving equality may involve treating some people differently than others to ensure everyone has equal access, equitable share and equitable outcomes.

3. Our Shared Commitments

3.1 All signatories of the Sunderland Compact have agreed to:

1. Recognise the diversity of needs and assets within communities.
2. Develop understanding of individuals and communities through working collaboratively and through effective use of data and intelligence.
3. Be open to learning and sharing expertise, information and building a rich understanding of communities, individuals and social cohesion.
4. Work collaboratively to build community capacity and more resilient communities.
5. Strive to be a representative voice of the communities for which they work.
6. Recognise when the strengths of other organisations, and their ability to represent the interests of the communities with which they are engaged, are needed.
7. Promote awareness and understanding of communities and individuals strengths, needs and diversity, and work to dispel myths and misconceptions.
8. Help to build trust, partnership and understanding within and between organisations, communities and individuals.
9. Uphold existing commitments to safeguard children and vulnerable adults from harm and exploitation in the course of their work to promote equality.
10. Work in compliance with the Involvement and Consultation Code of Practice and ensure involvement and consultation has specific regard to the needs of all organisations, communities and individuals
11. Ensure all data collection, monitoring and analysis is inclusive and reflects the diversity of the city and of communities.
12. Recognise that equality and diversity is fundamental in all policy and service development or review, and in decision making. Be transparent in equality considerations.
13. Support other organisations to make a peer challenge where they feel it is necessary and be open to enquiry and dialogue.
14. Promote equality through commissioning and procurement activity.
15. Lead by example in terms of behaviour and language.
16. Support and promote volunteering among people from diverse communities.

4. Governance / Accountability

4.1 Compliance issues for the Equality Code of Practice will follow those set out in the main Compact.

Organisations have been directly involved in the development of this code:

- Age UK Sunderland
- Sunderland BME Network
- City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust
- Gentoo
- ICOS
- SHARP
- Sunderland City Council
- Sunderland College
- Sunderland Minster
- Sunderland Partnership
- Tyne and Wear fire and Rescue Services
- VCAS

Organisations consulted on this code:

- Inclusive Communities
- Disability Independent Advisory Group
- Sunderland BME Network
- The LGBT Equality Forum
- All Compact Members and signatories
- Sunderland City Council Area VCS Networks

National Policies and Legislation

This Code links to existing laws and ways of working and should be used in conjunction with any other guidance available for the promotion of equality and diversity. Partner organisations should be aware of their responsibilities under both United Kingdom and European legislation on equalities and human rights issues. Each organisation will have its own policies and procedures regarding equalities that comply with the relevant legislation. Any organisation delivering a service on behalf of a public body will be required to meet the needs of the Public Sector Equality Duty in addition to the Equality Act 2010.

Useful Information

Government Equalities Office (GEO)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/government-equalities-office>

GEO Equality Act Guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-guidance>

GEO Quick guide to the Public Sector Equality Duty

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-sector-quick-start-guide-to-the-public-sector-equality-duty>

Equality and Human Rights Commission: advice and guidance documents on the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/>

The LGA Equalities Frameworks (Local Government, Fire and Rescue and Social Housing)

<http://www.local.gov.uk/equality-frameworks>

The Equalities Framework for the NHS 'The Vital Connection' at

<http://www.leadershipacademy.nhs.uk/discover/inclusive-leadership/the-equality-deliverysystem-eds/>

The Equality Standard for police services at

<http://www.college.police.uk/en/11975.htm>;

Extensive communication toolkits and case studies available at www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk