

# The Merthyr Tydfil Compact

## Partnership Working Code of Practice

### Introduction - The Compact

The Merthyr Tydfil Compact is a partnership agreement which supports strategic working relations between the third sector and the public sector as represented by the local authority and the Health Board in Merthyr Tydfil.

It is written in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding and provides a framework for developing shared aims and objectives to improve the quality of life of people in the local community and to provide them with effective support.

The Compact Implementation Plan sets out objectives that support continuous improvement and development relating to the Compact themes. This is one of the Codes of Practice that has been produced by the Merthyr Tydfil Compact Board.

### Partnership Working is:

"A joint working formal arrangement where partners meet in order to agree and achieve a common goal, by making decisions, sharing information and often pooling resources, risks and rewards, which are monitored and evaluated."

*(Partnership Rationalisation Advice Note - Welsh Assembly Government 2007)*

The third sector in Merthyr Tydfil is involved in partnership working with statutory partners through a number of partnerships and joint working groups and arrangements that include:

- Statutory / Strategic partnerships
- Strategic Planning or Commissioning Groups
- Sub Groups or Task Groups which undertake detailed work and feed into thematic or strategic partnerships
- Joint projects and ventures
- Forums and networks
- Consultative bodies

### Aims of the Partnership Working Code of Practice:

- To support partnership working for the benefit of Merthyr Tydfil
- To achieve consistency and transparency of process across the range of areas where there is joint working and where third sector involvement is required
- To develop greater understanding and respect for each other's roles



## **The Role of the Third Sector in Partnerships and Joint Working Groups**

The third sector is often ideally placed to identify the needs of citizens and communities and communicate them to planners, based on:

**Experience** - of addressing gaps in provision or meeting needs that are not met by statutory services; of drawing on individual and community resources; of service delivery and innovation.

Experience and knowledge of **Engagement** – through strong links to citizens, service users and communities; a tradition of innovation in engaging with service users and communities; and focussing on developing the confidence of people and communities to take part in local decision making.

**Independence** – which allows it to be an advocate for citizens and service users and to challenge service design and delivery in a constructive manner.

### **Code of Practice**

#### **All parties will:**

1. Contribute to creating a positive environment which develops and maintains mutual respect and encourages and supports the involvement of the third sector in partnership working
2. Make explicit mention of this code in appropriate documents (including individual partnership terms of reference, policy, press releases and publications) and agree to adhere to it
3. Engage communities, including the most disadvantaged, in partnership working
4. Support joint training of staff and secondment opportunities to promote greater mutual understanding
5. Recognise the need to have third sector representatives who are accountable to wider interests at all levels of partnerships and joint working groups
6. Review the effectiveness and quality of partnerships
7. Respond positively to any problems or issues arising from partnership working
8. Tackle all forms of discrimination, no matter from where they arise
9. Adopt and implement transparent procedures for addressing organisations' conflict of interests whether they are statutory, private or third sector

### **Public sector organisations will:**

1. Recognise the full contribution that the third sector makes to partnership planning and policy development
2. Ensure that third sector organisations are involved in partnerships and joint working groups from the outset
3. Liaise with Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil to establish the nature of third sector involvement in partnerships and joint working groups and use agreed recruitment processes in accordance with the process outlined in Appendix 1.
4. Recognise the role of third sector networks and fora as the main route to involving third sector organisations in partnerships and joint working groups
5. Recognise the role and responsibilities of third sector representatives, as outlined in the *Third Sector Representatives' Code of Conduct and Agreement* (Appendix 2) and take responsibility for engaging with the appropriate representative as required
6. Liaise with Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil if there is a problem relating to third sector involvement in partnerships and joint working groups
7. Recognise that the third sector needs resources to support its strategic engagement in partnership working

### **On behalf of the Third Sector, Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil will:**

1. Encourage and develop representation that is accountable to wider third sector interests
2. Run third sector networks that are representative of the range of third sector interests in the area
3. Strive to identify representatives in partnerships or joint working groups who work at an appropriate level and have the relevant skills and expertise
4. Channel information from partnerships and joint working groups to the wider third sector
5. Offer induction, training and support to third sector representatives on partnerships and joint working groups and require them to sign up to the *Representatives' Code of Conduct and Agreement*
6. Make links to third sector members of partnerships and joint working groups

### **Third sector organisations will;**

1. Play a full, active and responsible role on all partnerships and joint working groups
2. Channel information from the wider third sector to partnerships and joint working groups via networks and fora
3. Be aware of, and deal appropriately with, possible conflicts of interest

### **Implementation and Monitoring**

- This Code of Practice will be circulated to all partnerships in Merthyr Tydfil and referenced by them as appropriate e.g. in any partnership terms of reference
- The Compact Board and the Local Service Board will promote the Code and make reference to it as appropriate
- Its implementation will be monitored and reviewed by the Compact Board as part of the Compact Implementation Plan. Any issues arising from the Code that are considered through the Compact Mediation and Disputes Resolution Process will also be monitored by the Compact Board.

### **Supporting Documents**

- The Merthyr Tydfil Compact (2008)
- Code of Practice on Funding, Procurement and Commissioning (in development)
- Code of Practice on Consultation and Public Engagement (to be developed)
- Code of Practice on Volunteering
- Code of Practice on Third Sector Governance (to be developed)
- Mediation and Disputes Resolution Process
- Protocol for Third Sector Involvement in Partnerships and Joint Working Groups (see Appendix 1)
- Third Sector Representatives' Code of Conduct and Agreement (see Appendix 2)

For further information about the Merthyr Tydfil Compact see [www.vamt.net](http://www.vamt.net)

## **Appendix 1:**

### **Protocol for Third Sector Involvement in Partnerships and Joint Working Groups**

#### **Introduction**

In order to ensure appropriate third sector involvement and participation, Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil (VAMT), Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and the Cwm Taf Health Board have agreed the following processes under the Merthyr Tydfil Compact:

- Process for achieving third sector **representation**
- Process for achieving third sector **membership**

As the County Voluntary Council for Merthyr Tydfil, VAMT has the role of representing the views and interests of the third sector in partnerships and joint working groups.

#### **Process for Achieving Third Sector Representation on Partnerships and Joint Working Groups**

It is recommended that where Merthyr Tydfil Council or Cwm Taf Health Board and VAMT agree there is a need for third sector representation; VAMT will be the appropriate organisation to facilitate the selection process.

#### **This process will ensure:**

- Consistency and transparency of process across the range of areas where there is joint working and where third sector representation is required
- That those with the relevant skills and experience are appointed to serve
- That appointed representatives are accountable to the third sector by reporting back to the sector through appropriate channels
- That representatives act on behalf of the sector rather than the organisations to which they belong
- That VAMT are able to offer appropriate support to all those who are involved
- There is clarity about the role and expectations of third sector members on partnerships and joint working groups

#### **The agreed process:**

1. VAMT and Merthyr Tydfil Council / Cwm Taf Health Board will agree the timescale for selection to an agreed timetable
2. VAMT will canvass the third sector (either through appropriate networks and forums or through its wider membership) for nominations
3. VAMT will facilitate an election process via the appropriate constituency
4. VAMT will inform Merthyr Tydfil Council / Cwm Taf Health Board of the name and contact details of the representative
5. VAMT will provide induction and support for the representatives

## **Support for Third Sector Representatives**

VAMT's support to third sector representatives will include:

- An induction process for third sector representatives that serves as an opportunity to brief representatives about their particular function and to make them aware of their roles and responsibilities including in relation to conflict of interest.
- Facilitating or supporting representatives to feedback to the sector and collating issues from the sector for representatives to take to partnerships or joint working groups.

## **Process for Achieving Third Sector Membership of Joint Working Groups**

On some occasions, statutory agencies and VAMT will agree there is a need for input from third sector organisations or individuals from organisations without necessarily requiring third sector representation. For example, this may be the case where a specialist perspective is required, the involvement required is for a time limited arrangement or third sector membership is an inherent part of the arrangement, as is the case with the Local Health Board.

In these circumstances, statutory bodies will:

- Request assistance from VAMT in finding third sector members
- Contact the individuals who have expressed an interest and establish who should be invited
- Inform VAMT of the result

In circumstances where there are existing agreements or direct links between statutory partners and third sector organisations or forums it is agreed that;

- Statutory partners will inform VAMT of the third sector membership of the partnership or joint working group
- VAMT will establish and maintain links with the third sector member and invite to meetings and events as appropriate

## **The role of VAMT in Partnerships and Joint Working Groups**

There are certain partnership arrangements that require the VAMT Chief Officer to attend in order to represent the interests and views of the third and community sector, for example:

- Merthyr Tydfil Local Service Board
- Merthyr Tydfil Compact Board
- Other strategic partnerships

The VAMT Chief Officer's role notwithstanding, VAMT's role in relation to joint working is primarily concerned with developing an effective infrastructure for third sector involvement. Given the complexity and breadth of joint working across the county, it would also not be feasible for VAMT staff to represent the sector on each partnership. However, it is recognised that there are other joint working arrangements where, capacity allowing, it may be appropriate to involve VAMT staff, namely:

- The CVC perspective is required and, in some cases, stipulated or recommended by government policy or guidance.
- As impartial a viewpoint as possible is required, e.g., Commissioning Groups
- There has been no previous third sector representation and VAMT wishes to assess the skills, knowledge and experience required
- VAMT staff sit on the partnership in order to support the third sector representatives
- VAMT can contribute specialist knowledge and information

The role of VAMT staff on all partnerships would be to represent the interests and views of the third sector.

### **Regional Arrangements**

Where a partnership or joint working group covers more than one county or is coterminous with a regional statutory body such as the Health Board, VAMT will consult with the CVC in the other counties to agree CVC and / or third sector representation.

## Appendix 2

### Third Sector Representatives Code of Conduct and Agreement

This Code of Conduct outlines the role of a third sector representative on partnerships and joint working groups or scrutiny committees on behalf of the third sector in the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil.

#### The Third Sector Representative will;

- Fulfil the role for an agreed term as stipulated within the role description
- Clearly be able to demonstrate knowledge, skills and experience required to fulfil the role (as outlined in the role specification document) effectively
- Have a mandate from the appropriate VAMT Forum/network, from which they can canvass views
- Actively participate in the partnership arena, and support good communication between the partnership and the third sector
- Act as a voice for the third sector within the partnership arena, and provide feedback information from the partnership arena, to the wider sector, via appropriate VAMT networks
- Liaise with your deputy representative, where applicable and vice versa to ensure continuity of representation
- Where there is a conflict of interest between their representative role and the remit of their organisation or group, the representative will make arrangements for this to be dealt with in an open way
- Contribute to meetings and events convened by VAMT which are designed to support the third sector representatives in carrying out their role in the partnership arena

Seek advice and support from VAMT as and when necessary

*Signed* .....

*Organisation* .....

*On behalf of Partnership / Working Group* .....