

Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People: A Code of Good Practice

Compact on relations between Public Bodies and the Lesbian, Gay and
Bisexual Community in Northamptonshire



What is the Compact?

The Compact is the agreement between Northamptonshire public bodies and the voluntary and community sector to improve their relationship to benefit each other. **The Compact** sets out:

- ❑ a shared vision and principles;
- ❑ promises from both sides;
- ❑ a public sector commitment to respect the independence of the voluntary and community sector; and
- ❑ systems to help make sure that the agreement works.

The Compact has been supported by six **Codes of Good Practice**, covering:

- ❑ Funding;
- ❑ Consultation and policy appraisal;
- ❑ Volunteering;
- ❑ Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) voluntary and community organisations;
- ❑ Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People
- ❑ Community Groups

Glossary of Terms

Public Bodies

Statutory agencies including local government, NHS organisations, police forces, schools, colleges, etc.

Voluntary Sector

Consisting of those organisations that rely largely on volunteers to deliver their service. Includes charities and non-charities. Often having some paid staff to operate core functions.

Community Sector

Consisting of personal relationships, groups, networks, traditions and patterns of behaviour among people who share physical neighbourhoods, living conditions or common understandings, health conditions, interests or religious beliefs. It is the community itself taking action to get things done, although much of its activity is informal and often invisible. The community sector ranges from small informal community groups to large multi-purpose community organisations.

An Equalities Declaration

We, the Compact partners, declare ourselves wholeheartedly in favour of our diverse community in Northamptonshire and opposed to any form of unfair discrimination.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank those who developed the Bristol Code of Good Practice between LGB Community and Bristol City Council for permission to use some of their document. In particular, they wish to thank ????

The main points for a framework of partnership between Northamptonshire public bodies and the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) voluntary and community sector:

- Vital that public bodies and LGB sector engage in a positive relationship for mutual benefit.
- Recognition of the important role of the LGB voluntary and community sector and the diverse experiences it seeks to represent.
- Commitment by both public bodies and the sector to taking forward Sexual Orientation Equality together.
- Ensure LGB organisations are an inherent part of consultation and policy processes through involvement from a large pool of individuals and organisations.
- Invest in the LGB voluntary and community sector.
- Support the development of capacity and infrastructure within the LGB sector at a local level.
- Recognise importance of local relations and partnership involvement.
- Value and celebrate volunteering by LGB people.

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1. Statement of intent

All parties are committed to addressing the issues identified within this Code by working in partnership and with respect to improve the quality of life for lesbian, gay and bisexual citizens of Northamptonshire.

2. What the partnership recognises

2.1 That lesbian, gay and bisexual citizens have always been actively involved in Northamptonshire's community and have contributed towards the enrichment of its economic, social and cultural life.

2.2 The contribution and sacrifice made by lesbian, gay and bisexual citizens throughout the history of Northamptonshire during times of peace and war.

2.3 That lesbian, gay and bisexual citizens make a positive contribution towards the delivery of vital public services and successful commerce within the county.

3. Aims

3.1 This Code of Good Practice aims to ensure the continued and developing engagement of the lesbian, gay and bisexual communities of Northamptonshire in the corporate life of the county.

It seeks to do this through codifying the ways in which Northamptonshire's statutory bodies intend to work with LGB agencies and groups in the fulfilment of their obligations under law and in the delivery of government policy at a local level.

3.2 Northamptonshire public bodies recognise the unique contribution to civic cohesion that LGB agencies and community groups make. Lesbians and gay men are among the most marginalised in our society, despite the high-profile acceptance afforded some individuals in the world of entertainment and national politics.

For those living a more mundane existence, the isolation can be crushing and the existence of agencies and groups that reach out to these individuals is often the only source of support for them.

This Code therefore aims to ensure the continued partnership between the statutory sector and the LGB communities in Northamptonshire to reduce isolation, to promote both mental and physical well-being and to enable the increased involvement of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals in the further development of services that meet the changing needs of their communities.

- 3.3 In a broader sense, this Code aims to work towards equality of access to services and resources which are controlled by Northamptonshire public bodies.
- 3.4 In a proactive way, this Code aims to promote understanding and respect for the lesbian, gay and bisexual community and its citizens within the wider community and to challenge homophobia and address heterosexism wherever it arises and especially where it is deemed to be institutionalised.
- 3.5 In recognition that people are greater than the sum of the labels they attach to themselves – or that others attach to them – another aim of this Code is to empower lesbian, gay and bisexual citizens to become more actively involved in community life; not just LGB community life but also the broader, mainstream community of Northamptonshire.

4. Social factors

The partners recognise that:

- 4.1 Citizens from the lesbian, gay and bisexual community face oppression caused by institutionalised homophobia. This can be expressed indirectly by an individual being afraid to come out for fear of reprisal, or directly through joke-telling, name-calling or physical abuse.
- 4.2 Lesbian, gay and bisexual people exist within all cultural, religious and racial groups. It is also recognised that sexual behaviour and identity do not always run in tandem: in other words, one can be behaviourally homosexual or bisexual and yet identify as heterosexual.

Similarly, the labels of lesbian, gay and bisexual have a Northern European provenance and do not always relate to the behaviours and

identities of people from other cultural and religious backgrounds. Care should therefore be taken with regard to how these labels are used.

4.3 Lesbian, gay and bisexual people are not restricted to early adulthood: they are also children, young people and the elderly. With an aging population, the number of lesbians and gay men who have lived an openly gay life who are over retirement age is increasing. Hospitals and homes for the elderly need to be prepared for an increasing number of men and women whose life experience is very different to that of the average heterosexual married man or woman.

4.4 Being lesbian, gay or bisexual is not necessarily the defining factor in many people's identity. This sense of self may be premised more prominently on being male or female or transgendered, being disabled either physically or mentally, belonging to a particular social or religious group. This means that approaching lesbian, gay and bisexual people's needs is more than a matter of recognising and respecting their sexual orientation.

5. Framework of partnership between Northamptonshire's statutory agencies and the LGB voluntary and community sector

Joint undertakings

5.1 Northamptonshire's public bodies and the LGB voluntary and community sector are committed to establishing and maintaining best practice in their relationship. Both parties undertake to:

- develop a partnership approach to carry forward the statutory agencies' strategy for achieving equality, including promoting and sharing best practice and celebrating success;
- work together in partnership with other agencies to promote joint working initiatives which improve the policy and implementation outcomes for LGB communities at regional and local level (particularly those programmes aimed at community regeneration and a more inclusive and cohesive society);

- encourage, develop and support volunteering by and within LGB communities in line with the Compact Code of Good Practice on Volunteering and the Code of Good Practice for Community Groups;
- make suitable mention of this Code of Good Practice in all appropriate statutory documentation and voluntary and community sector publications;
- improve access to information and services provided by statutory and community agencies.
- challenge homophobia at an individual and organisational level and play an active and constructive role in the emerging scrutiny function of the county's public bodies.

Statutory sector undertakings

5.2 The public bodies recognise and value the distinctive skills, expertise and experience that the LGB voluntary and community sector holds. They undertake to implement an effective framework of engagement to:

- value the work, knowledge and expertise of the LGB voluntary and community sector, including its important role in helping public bodies to achieve their objectives;
- recognise and support the independence of the LGB sector and its right within law to challenge institutions, policy and practice, irrespective of any funding relationship that might exist, and to determine and manage its own affairs;
- operate effective and transparent equal opportunity monitoring and evaluation systems that ensure LGB voluntary and community organisations are treated fairly and with respect in all their interactions with statutory agencies;
- build, as appropriate, consultation with the LGB voluntary and community sector into plans for policy development from the pre-consultation stage through to implementation, with the aim that implications for LGB communities are examined and considered;
- establish sexual orientation equality strategies within the corporate planning processes of all statutory agencies at organisational and departmental levels, with clearly expressed objectives and targets;

- ensure that LGB voluntary and community organisations have fair and equal access to statutory funding programmes, particularly those that impact significantly on LGB communities;
- consider the case for setting aside additional funds for LGB organisations to build capacity, prepare and deliver projects;
- ensure that statutory grants are appropriately administered and allocated to LGB groups with the capacity to deliver agreed outputs and outcomes to agreed and predetermined standards;
- endeavour to include consultation, partnership and funding of the LGB voluntary and community sector within guidance on the statutory duty of public authorities to promote equality;
- include within the Best Value framework for Local Authorities specific and robust requirements to ensure equality of access to quality public services and that LGB groups are actively involved in service planning, performance target setting and scrutiny processes;
- consider the views and encourage the active engagement of the LGB voluntary and community organisations (along with other voluntary and community organisations), in the community strategies that local authorities will prepare under Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2000 and in development of local strategic partnerships; and
- require all partnership bids to statutory programmes to demonstrate genuine consultation and involvement with LGB communities, inclusive of partnership boards, programme plans, outputs and outcomes.

Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual voluntary and community sector's undertakings

5.3 The LGB voluntary and community sector recognises that receipt of public funds, and active involvement in the processes of public bodies, carries with it responsibilities. In order to meet these responsibilities the sector undertakes to:

- seek adequate resources for Northamptonshire's lesbian, gay and bisexual voluntary and community sector groups.
- lobby for equity of officer resources which are provided to other equalities Forums by public bodies.

- play a full and active part within the wider voluntary and community sector in fulfilling the significant undertakings in the Compact, this Code of Good Practice and the other Compact Codes of Good Practice;
- work in partnership with Northamptonshire's statutory agencies and other voluntary and community organisations in promoting equality, tackling social exclusion and promoting civil society;
- aim to establish a responsive regional structure that is accountable to local groups and which will enable communication and consultation with them in order to provide LGB perspectives on key local, regional and national issues;
- facilitate consortium and partnership working within the sector, sharing professional leadership expertise and other practical skills;
- inform and present community concerns to Northamptonshire's public bodies and other partners based on accountable partnerships with local communities;
- ensure proper governance, placing clear responsibility on trustees and chief officers to use public funds appropriately and inform funders when organisations face significant management and resource challenges, including financial difficulties;
- adopt appropriate quality standards and apply best practice in management and delivery within organisations;
- make use of appropriate training opportunities, particularly support and training for trustees and senior staff; and
- develop open and dynamic organisations providing opportunities for voluntary and community action by a diverse range of individuals demonstrating a commitment to wider equality issues in addition to sexual orientation equality.

6. Tackling homophobia, inequality and exclusion

- 6.1 The need to tackle homophobia effectively has long been recognised. The Government has stated its commitment to an inclusive society, and its determination to address social exclusion and promote equality and justice. Northamptonshire's statutory agencies share this commitment.
- 6.2 The Compact provides a framework through which the LGB voluntary and community sector can develop partnership with local public bodies. This Code of Good Practice builds on and contributes to addressing the challenges of a society that in many ways is still homophobic and heterosexist.
- 6.3 A successful LGB voluntary and community sector is an important partner in helping the statutory sector make its commitment to equality a reality. Support from the statutory sector to the LGB voluntary and community sector should be a central feature of pushing forward on this agenda.
- 6.4 Joined up action on equality between public bodies and between departments within them is required. This should be planned and implemented in partnership with key stakeholders, including those from the LGB and mainstream voluntary and community sectors.
- 6.5 The negative outcomes of social exclusion are disproportionately represented within LGB communities. Tackling social exclusion effectively should include initiatives which target LGB individuals and communities. Through partnership with the LGB voluntary and community sector, which draws on the experience and knowledge of the sector, local public bodies can make such targeted interventions more effective.
- 6.6 Tackling homophobia, heterosexism, inequality and exclusion should be kept firmly on the agenda right across the statutory sector within Northamptonshire.

7. Consultation, participation and representation: developing inclusive statutory policy

- 7.1 All participants in consultative processes need to work in a respectful, open and honest manner which enables partners to challenge in a positive and constructive way. The county's statutory agencies also need to respect and recognise the legitimate role of the lesbian, gay and bisexual community representative bodies to advocate for their communities, notwithstanding the inherent difficulties that this involves, as are outlined below.

Consultation

- 7.2 The activities and knowledge of the LGB voluntary and community sector can provide public bodies with experience and skills of vital importance in the effective development and delivery of policy to LGB communities. Consultation with the sector should be all inclusive, recognising the broad spectrum of interests, such as women-only and men-only groups, youth groups, disabled groups, age groups, religious and faith groups, ethnic minority groups which make up the LGB voluntary and community sector.

- 7.3 A number of barriers exclude LGB voluntary and community organisations from effective involvement in consultation processes. Implementation of the Compact Code of Good Practice on Consultation and Policy Appraisal will go some way to addressing these.

Particular attention should be given to the difficulties of identifying people prepared to declare themselves to be gay / lesbian / transgendered [in other words to "come out"] who are also in some way representative of the constituencies they claim to speak for. [see 7.6 – 7.7 below for more detailed discussion].

There is also the need to identify the most appropriate means of engaging smaller under-resourced groups. This may include informal interactions, as well as offering financial support for expenses incurred for being part of the consultation process, such as financing meetings and offering payment for attendance.

Participation and representation in policy development, delivery and appraisal

- 7.4 The cost of social policy interventions that fail LGB communities is not known but is potentially large, not only for public expenditure but

also in terms of community confidence, cohesion and leadership. It is imperative therefore that policy development and implementation adequately meets the needs of LGB communities.

- 7.5 Public bodies should draw on the expertise and unique experience of the LGB voluntary and community sector throughout policy and consultation processes, including maintaining links with specialist organisations to ensure the impact upon LGB communities is taken into account.

LGB representation

- 7.6 Careful consideration should be given by public bodies and the voluntary and community sector to the selection of individuals to act as representatives from LGB communities.

To avoid individual overload, diversify input into statutory policy and practice; while to extend opportunities for involvement, representatives from the LGB sector should be drawn from a large pool of individuals and organisations.

In addition, it is important that all relevant skills, experience and knowledge held by LGB individuals are recognised and valued.

- 7.7 The very different perspectives of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals need to be recognised when identifying representatives for the LGB community. There are also the differences between urban and rural, people of faith and those who espouse no faith, young and old.

There is no simple solution to this but it is necessary to be mindful of these differences when identifying individuals or groups with whom to consult.

8. Funding and other support

Funding needs

- 8.1 In most parts of the UK – and Northamptonshire is no exception – the main source of funding for gay men’s support work has been through the HIV/AIDS allocation managed by the NHS. This money was ring-fenced for the purpose of running HIV prevention programmes within the gay and male bisexual communities. That ring-fencing has now been removed and funding for HIV prevention

work with all affected communities has to be argued for against the competing demands of all other areas of health services. The need for alternative strands of funding for gay men is therefore urgent.

- 8.2 As for lesbians, however, there has been no identified funding streams of any consistency whatsoever.
- 8.3 LGB voluntary and community groups have not been beneficiaries of legacies and other sources of funding often available to more mainstream agencies, in much the same way as BME groups. This leaves them particularly vulnerable and dependent upon statutory funding sources.

Why fund?

- 8.4 The LGB sector requires stable and adequate funding for the long-term because of the need to:
- ❑ establish a level playing field with the mainstream voluntary and community sector;
 - ❑ build sustainable infrastructure at local level;
 - ❑ represent and support LGB communities;
 - ❑ fill the gaps in services to LGB communities;
 - ❑ deliver mainstream services to society; and
 - ❑ play a meaningful role in building a fair and just society
- 8.5 Implementation of the Compact Code of Good Practice on Funding will help to address many of the issues raised here.
- 8.6 However, other specific action required includes regular review of:
- ❑ what the needs of the various LGB communities are and their degree of priority within a broader agenda for social change;
 - ❑ which LGB communities are not receiving funding;
 - ❑ how access, approval and funding rates compare with the mainstream voluntary and community sector;

- the scope provided for new or unfunded LGB groups to secure funding, advice and support; and
- policy or service areas where funding is allocated to the voluntary and community sector but not to LGB organisations.

Redistribution of funding

- 8.7 In circumstances where strategic grants are withdrawn from LGB organisations, consideration should be given to whether there is an alternative organisation within the LGB sector that is well positioned to take receipt of such strategic funding. Prioritising the redistribution of funds within the LGB sector will help to ensure that services to the community and resources to the sector are not lost.

Reducing risk

- 8.8 Organisational crisis happens within all sectors. It is therefore crucial that public bodies adopt a flexible and supportive approach to LGB organisations experiencing organisational difficulties.

- 8.9 It is important that public bodies and the sector undertake a joint review where withdrawal of funding has occurred. Identifying key causes, sharing lessons for organisational management practice and highlighting general support needs will help to prevent similar problems in the future. Actions that can be taken by public bodies and the sector at the outset of funding to reduce risk of failure include:

- ensuring that each funding allocation is adequate for purpose;
- providing accountable mechanisms at organisational and individual grants officer level;
- developing effective and supportive monitoring and evaluation systems.

9. Local relations and partnerships

- 9.1 The majority of LGB voluntary and community groups work at a local level, delivering crucial frontline services. Consequently, relations

with local statutory agencies are key. However, the sector often finds itself playing the joint roles of providing services for local LGB communities while challenging the performance on equality of statutory institutions within the context of sexual orientation.

The Northamptonshire Compact

- 9.2 The development of the Northamptonshire Compact provides a framework for the LGB voluntary and community sector to establish strong and supportive partnerships with local statutory bodies based on mutual respect

- 9.3 The diversity of the LGB voluntary and community sector should be adequately represented on Northamptonshire's Local Compact Steering Group and in consultation. When action plans are being drawn up to implement aspects of the Compact, consideration should be given to the inclusion of a protocol on LGB groups or joint review of any existing strategy on working with LGB groups.

This Code may act as a template for such agreements.

Promoting equality

- 9.4 Local statutory agencies need to ensure that there is commitment throughout their organisation to the new statutory duty to promote equality based on sexual orientation. By doing so the challenges of establishing such equality and tackling social exclusion within LGB communities can be met within reasonable timescales. Developing partnership with the LGB voluntary and community sector on this agenda will be a key to success.

Regeneration

- 9.5 Local regeneration initiatives are most successful where communities are involved and empowered. The LGB voluntary and community sector plays a vital role in ensuring that LGB community involvement in regeneration is effective. Mutually advantageous local partnerships should be formed between LGB and mainstream voluntary and community organisations.

- 9.6 Where new local partnership arrangements are being established, such as local strategic partnerships, or where public services are being reconfigured, it is vital that proper consideration is given to

ensuring good links with, and the involvement of, LGB voluntary and community groups.

10. Developing capacity

Capacity building at all levels

- 10.1 The LGB voluntary and community sector is limited in its capacity to be a full and equal partner with Northamptonshire's public bodies and the mainstream sector. All parties should take proactive measures to further develop the sector's capacity.

It is important that activities to develop the capacity of the sector are targeted at all levels; therefore sustainability should drive public funding for the sector, provided that applicants have also been able to demonstrate that such funding represents value for money and contributes to policy aims.

- 10.2 Capacity building activity should focus on the divergent needs of individuals, groups and partnerships. It should be robust and clear about the purpose of capacity building, who the activity is aimed at and what methods will be used to evaluate its impact.

- 10.3 Capacity building should be a prerequisite for the effective implementation and sustainability of social and economic strategies and programmes.

It is therefore imperative that capacity building plans are resourced adequately and built into planning at an early stage. Such plans should be long term and should reflect the development of LGB organisation as the programme progresses, whilst allowing flexibility to adapt to pertinent changes.

Fundraising and capital investment

- 10.4 Whilst accepting that premises acquired through public funding may not be used as collateral to obtain private sector loans, where the law permits, statutory agencies should aim to support the efforts of LGB organisations to generate income and increase fundraising capacity.

Policies that support capital acquisition, backed up with professional help to build organisational capacities through knowledge management and skills development, are most effective.

Premises

- 10.5 Affordable office space of high quality construction, often with multi-functional use, is increasingly required by LGB groups to deliver essential services. To guarantee self-sustaining growth, capital grant schemes should consider support for the acquisition of premises.

Training and support

- 10.6 Capacity building within LGB organisations should also be directed towards policies and initiatives that enhance the skills of individuals within organisations. This can be achieved by developing initiatives which provide various types of support and advice in addition to strategic and/or project funding.

There are a number of ways to implement such support. These may include:

- ❑ structured schemes of training in monitoring and evaluation, financial reporting and budgeting;
 - ❑ mentoring; and
 - ❑ project support officers.
- 10.7 Important methods of developing capacity are shared training initiatives and secondment schemes between the public sector, the mainstream and the LGB voluntary and community sectors. These enable all parties to gain an insight - and develop understanding of - the issues confronting respective organisations.

Services to all

- 10.8 The main strength and value of the LGB sector lies in its support and delivery of services to LGB communities. However, as the sector grows it will become increasingly important to view the sector as a potential provider of generalist services. It is important that funders recognise this potential.

11. Volunteering and mentoring

The Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual experience of volunteering

- 11.1 The LGB voluntary sector offers people from LGB communities the opportunity to volunteer. There is a well-established history of

people from the LGB communities volunteering, not only within the LGB voluntary sector itself but also within the broader sector as well. The latter is usually conducted without people in the agencies concerned being aware of the sexual orientation of the volunteer, although this is changing over time.

- 11.2 The statutory sector should recognise the different experiences of volunteering and construct support for volunteering in the LGB communities that meets their differing needs.

Involving LGB volunteers

- 11.3 Attracting LGB people to volunteer in other sectors and without fear of prejudice will require organisations to ensure that the experiences they offer are relevant to the concerns of LGB individuals and that the volunteering environment is safe and supportive.

Mentoring

- 11.4 Mentoring programmes between the statutory and voluntary sectors should be encouraged as a means of skills development and access for all involved.

12. Scope and application of the Code

- 12.1 This Code of Good Practice is not a legally binding document. Recognising the diversity of the voluntary and community sector and its activities, it should be seen as an enabling mechanism to enhance the relationship between Northamptonshire's statutory agencies and the LGB voluntary and community sector.

Its authority is derived from its endorsement by key public bodies in the county and by the sector itself through its consultation process.

The national Code covers central Government Departments, including Government Offices for the Regions, and 'Next Steps' Executive Agencies in England (the other home countries have their own Compacts), while this Code applies to the public bodies and organisations in the voluntary and community sector within Northamptonshire

- 12.2 The statutory sector and the LGB sector are mindful of the particular need to build confidence among LGB voluntary and community groups that this Code will be adhered to.

The development of action plans to implement the good practice guidance in this Code will be the responsibility of individual departments, agencies and bodies and the range of voluntary organisations in the voluntary sector.

Where they do not follow this good practice, they must satisfy themselves that, if asked, they have good reasons for not doing so.

- 12.3 As part of the process of making the Compact work, there will be an annual meeting between the statutory sector and the representatives of the sector to review the operation and development of the Compact, including this Code of Good Practice on relations between public bodies and LGB voluntary and community organisations. The report of that meeting will be published.

Further Information and Contact Details

For copies of all the national Codes of Good Practice (including this one), the Compact or for further information, please contact:

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