

# East Herts Voluntary Sector Compact

A statement of the working  
relationship  
between the voluntary  
and statutory sectors



February 2003

## Foreword

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It is a time of change and modernization. A time for statutory organisations to work more closely than ever before with voluntary groups to achieve the common goal of strengthening communities and improving quality of life in the East Herts Council area.

The statutory sector recognises the essential contribution of the voluntary and community sector in bringing people together and building connections between those that might otherwise feel lonely and unsupported.

Volunteers in the community – Meals on Wheels and lunch club providers, sports coaches, village hall/community centre management committees, volunteer drivers, youth workers, specialist advisors and counsellors, social organisers – are a valuable resource and provide many essential services for statutory organisations and the people of East Herts.

For these reasons, we are pleased to introduce this Compact that clarifies the relationship between locally based statutory organisations and voluntary/community organisations.

It is the hope that the principles listed here will become embedded in the Council's and other statutory sector organisation's ways of working with the voluntary and community sector. Both sectors have much to gain from working side-by-side in partnerships governed by the best practice principles outlined in this important document.

This document will be monitored and annually reviewed and feedback on success will be obtained at the Council's annual Community Planning Conference.

Cllr R L Parker - Executive Member for Community

Angela Alder - Representative of the Voluntary and Community Sector

*At the bottom of each page, you will find an example of statutory/voluntary partnership working.*

## Introduction

In April 2002, East Herts Council signed up to the Hertfordshire Compact, recognising that the principles stated there were best practice (See Appendix 4).

Yet it also realised the importance of adopting its own Compact principles that reflect the fact that the East Herts Council area is the largest and most

rural of all the local authority areas in Hertfordshire. It is not centred around an urban area but has five towns (Bishop's Stortford, Buntingford, Sawbridgeworth, Hertford and Ware) and over 100 villages and rural settlements. Thus, the majority of voluntary organisations are small, independent groups with no paid staff that are run from

people's homes on a shoestring budget.

With many of the 127,000 East Herts residents living in villages and perhaps relying on the activities and services provided by volunteers, it is important that quality standards and effective partnerships are put in place – building on the special relationships that already exist.

## Background

The decision to formalise the relationship between the statutory sector and voluntary and community groups was influenced by a succession of National and local developments.

- Local 'Getting Together' Conference, District Council – June 1998
- Publication of the National Compact – November 1998
- The Modernising Local Government agenda, including the focus on Community Planning and Best Value – Local Government Act 2000
- Strategic and Best Value Reviews of the Council's Discretionary Grants Programme - 2000
- Changes to the National Health Service and the challenge to create a local Health Improvement Plan – Health Act 2000
- Launch of the Hertfordshire-wide Compact - September 2001
- Signed up to Hertfordshire Compact – April 2002

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- *Working closely with District Council and other statutory/voluntary groups on the Buntingford and Area Local Area Partnership, the **Buntingford Town Centre Management Team** has been a driving force in the implementation of the community planning process in Buntingford and the surrounding parishes.*

## Purpose of an East Herts Voluntary Sector Compact

- It is intended that the principles outlined in the Compact will become embedded in the Community Planning process, providing the basis of all strategic and operational relationships between the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Statutory Organisations providing services to the communities of East Herts
- The Compact will strive to be relevant and meaningful to small, independent groups and address practical issues such as funding, providing a framework to ensure sustainability and inclusion for all
- It is intended that the Compact is a 'live' document that is continually referred to, challenged and monitored

The primary purpose of the East Herts Voluntary Sector Compact is to improve the quality of life for local communities as well as individual clients. It is intended that this document will:

- encourage a better understanding of each other's needs and limitations
- clarify what each partner can do to put the Compact into action
- show the value of volunteering and its contribution to economic, environmental and social wellbeing (Appendix 1)

### Shared Vision

- The mutual aim of the voluntary, community and statutory sectors is to improve the quality of life for all communities of East Herts
- The input of the voluntary and community sector is crucial to the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of towns, villages and rural areas (See Appendix 1 for a further profile.)
- The voluntary sector often serves as a catalyst for taking forward new ideas and can be a partner for delivering services

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- *On behalf of East Herts Council, volunteers from 11 **Woman's Royal Voluntary Services (WRVS)** deliver 70,000 meals/year to elderly and/or disabled residents of villages and towns in East Herts through the Meals on Wheels programme, complementing the community meals service provided by Adult Care Services of Hertfordshire County Council to 'at risk' individuals.*

## Shared Principles for How We Will Work Together

- Realise that every partner can be “a teacher” and “a learner” – recognising the equal and complementary value of each others contribution
- Listen and attempt to understand each other’s point of view
- Respect each other’s aims, objectives, and independence
- Acknowledge the limitations in which the organisation, either statutory or voluntary/community may be working (for example, changing political or organisational structure, limited resources, ageing volunteer workforce, difficulty in recruiting staff or volunteers, limited time for meetings)
- Make every effort to ensure that all people, especially those who are disadvantaged in some way, are enabled to access our services and are made welcome and have an equal opportunity to participate
- Be flexible, transparent and provide honest feedback on a timely and regular basis
- Recognise the need for both the statutory agencies and voluntary/community sector to make changes in the way they do and to develop their services based on emerging and agreed priorities
- Ensure financial sustainability and integrity in partnership arrangements

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- *East Herts Cross Roads, working closely with Adult Care Services of Hertfordshire County Council, provides free respite breaks to carers throughout the District. Twenty trained staff members provide personal care services to disabled and/or housebound residents.*
  - *The **Citizens’ Advice Bureaus** in Ware, Buntingford, Bishop’s Stortford and Hertford provide free advice and information on welfare/housing benefits and debt relief among other topics. Advisors work closely with the Benefits section of District Council, the Money Advice Unit of Hertfordshire County Council and the various housing associations. In 2001/2002, the four CABs received more than 30,000 enquiries. Several of the CABs provide venues for satellite services of the Herts and Essex Family Mediation Services and Chrysalis and Vale House.*

## Putting the Compact into Action

In our work with the voluntary and community sector, the **STATUTORY SECTOR** promises to:

- Respect the voluntary sector's independence and role of championing those in need
- Continue to improve the openness, accessibility and sustainability of grants to the voluntary sector, especially by providing opportunities for longer term funding arrangements
- Provide advice and support on applying for grants and introduce more statutory/voluntary partnership bids
- Where voluntary sector input is required, all attempts are made to allow for sufficient time to consult, so that the voluntary/community sector's Management Committees and Board of Trustees have a chance to meet and agree a response
- Try to better co-ordinate consultation between different statutory organisations and departments within individual organisations
- Proactively seek the views of members of existing Voluntary and Community infrastructures (networks, forums, residents' groups) as part of the formal consultation process
- Where appropriate, include the voluntary and community sector in decision making and provide evidence that community views have been heard and steps taken to address these views
- Recognise that the voluntary and community sector can be an equal partner in service delivery but, as volunteers, have limited time
- Encourage Elected Members to serve on Board of Trustees or local management committees working in their constituency
- Investigate the feasibility of making training for statutory sector employees available to volunteers of community groups, when spaces are available and the training is appropriate. Shared training opportunities can improve mutual understanding.

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*Homestart East Herts provides families (with children under 5) that are under stress with emotional and practical assistance. At least 56 volunteers complement the services of Children Schools and Families, Hertfordshire County Council, by conducting home visits to 107 families in the villages and towns of East Herts.*

## East Herts Voluntary Sector Compact

- Consider setting up Employee Volunteer Programmes (via a secondment, or one-off organised group activity during work time)
- Enable and encourage East Herts voluntary groups to identify other and diverse funding sources – helping to maintain their independence from the local authority
- Develop a training programme that will improve the skills, knowledge and confidence of volunteers and more effectively focus their energy and experience

In our work with statutory bodies, the **VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR** promises to:

- Work in partnership with other voluntary and community groups, submitting joint requests for funding when appropriate
- Investigate opportunities for working with voluntary groups in other counties and encourage cross border co-operation
- Work toward adopting appropriate quality standards
- Recognise that statutory bodies have limited resources and that developing diverse funding sources is a step to independence
- When representing other voluntary and community groups at a strategic level, inform and talk to other volunteers and clients so their opinions are also put forward
- Further develop and improve services and activities by obtaining feedback and involving members and clients

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- The District Council's Supporting People Officer works closely with such voluntary groups as the **Herts Young Homeless Group in East Herts**, which works with homeless people to resettle, support and empower them. In 2000-2001, HYHG helped 83 clients who were homeless, sleeping rough or under threat. **The Stortford Outreach and Re-Settlement Project** provides similar services in the Bishop's Stortford area. Shelter – Herts and the YMCA also have a supporting people (in housing) role.*

- Ensure that all volunteers are trained to the level needed to do the job effectively and safely so that the public has confidence in the services
- Encourage volunteers to take advantage of the free training offered through the Herts Community Development Agency and other organisations
- Properly monitor all accounts and grants received from statutory bodies
- Keep informed of on-going legislation and ensure information/advice given is as accurate as possible

### Monitoring Arrangements

At the East Herts Health Improvement Conference in 2001, an initial discussion on the issues around voluntary/community groups and their relationships with statutory bodies was held. On 19 September 2001, a wider reference group meeting was held and volunteers were identified to serve on a Compact Steering Group (Appendix 2).

The Steering Group will continue to meet three times a year with a

wider reference group meeting once a year, possibly at the same time as the East Herts Community Planning Conference.

An Action Plan will be developed and measurements for evaluating success. Two of the priority actions include developing and implementing a Grants Strategy for 2003/2004 and working with the voluntary sector and other statutory partners to set up a new District-wide Council's for Voluntary Service.

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- *The East Herts Community Playbus Association and the Children's Integrated Play Schemes (CHIPS) work closely with the District Council and local schools, health visitors, and carers providing services complementary to the Council's holiday play schemes. The Playbus takes its services to more isolated areas of the District.*
  - *The District Council and Adult Care Services of Herts County Council gain added value from the presence of many grass roots social clubs for older people. Some have existed for more than 40 years and members get together for a chat, tea and/or cards. These groups include Benington Over 60s, Aston Over 60s, Pinehurst Over 60s, Thundridge and High Cross Friendship Club, Datchworth Elderberry Club, Stanstead Abbotts Evergreen Club, Kingsmead Friendly Club, High Wych, Allens Green, Gilston and Eastwick Silver Lining Club, Age Concern – Ware; Age Concern Bishop's Stortford and Hertford Evergreen Club among others.*

## Appendix 1: Profile of the voluntary and community sector

The selection of voluntary and community organisations profiled in this document gives a snapshot of the varied and valuable work conducted by volunteers. They are, by no means, the only examples of the type of work.

The voluntary and community sector is a rich mixture of organisations and groups, which can be divided into two distinct sectors.

The **voluntary sector** comprises local groups of national charities, county-wide organisations and voluntary organisations that employ one or two staff as executive officers or managers (e.g Citizens Advice Bureau, Hertford Age Concern).

The majority of groups in East Herts fall into the **community sector**. These small, grass roots groups include: all types of sport and

leisure groups, health and social clubs, and other small, independent groups of volunteers that have come together for very personal reasons. These groups are run from people's homes on a shoestring budget.

Volunteers often contribute more than 50 hours a week to promoting and fundraising for their cause. Many fund activities out of their own pockets. Volunteers are not 'do-gooders' but rather ordinary people who "fill a need and [volunteer] to give something back in an area that I enjoy and believe is important."

The European Social Fund has estimated the financial value of volunteers, stating that specialist volunteers are worth £10.85 an hour and generalist volunteers at £7.75 an hour.

The voluntary and community sector assists the statutory sector by:

- Helping to enhance the quality of life for East Herts residents by providing activities and services in sports, arts and heritage, culture/leisure, environment/conservation, health and social care
- Providing essential services such as: Disability Discrimination Act Training, rescue services, meals delivery for residents at risk, benefits and advice and support services.
- Providing opportunities for building skills and confidence of volunteers – helping them to return to work or progress toward employment.

## Appendix 2: East Herts Compact Working Group

Member	Organisation
Angela Alder	Hertfordshire Age Concern and Sawbridgeworth Councils for Voluntary Service
Brian Wallis	The Willing and Able Project
Claire Pullen	East Herts Council
Eunice Woods	Buntingford Citizens Advice Bureau
Evelyn Proudfoot	East Herts Voluntary Sector Development Agency
Nicolette Meyer	East Herts Crossroads
Mary Dance	Alzheimers Society
Sylvia Mear	Sele Farm Community Association
Sylvia Summerton Sarah Harris	Herts East Region ME Support

- ❑ *East Herts Victim Support is a part of the East Herts Community Safety Partnership and assists the Hertfordshire Police in providing emotional support and practical help to victims of crime. 20 volunteers supported 4,168 victims of crime in 2001.*
- ❑ *Chrysalis, Vale House Stabilisation Service, Parents for Prevention are examples of organisations working in partnership with many statutory organisations such as the two Primary Care Trusts, Youth Offending Team and Adult Care Services, police and schools to provide drug, alcohol and addiction counselling as well as information and referrals.*
- ❑ *The Council's 2002 Arts Directory lists 47 voluntary and community organisations ranging from performing art and drama clubs to photography and visual arts and crafts (such as the East Herts & West Essex Guild of Spinners and Weavers) but there are many more groups encouraging participation in the arts. Please contact the Arts Development Officer for more information.*

## Appendix 3: Glossary of terms

<b>Accountable</b>	Being responsible to someone or for some action.
<b>Catalyst</b>	Something that aids change.
<b>Clients</b>	Users of a service or people who benefit from or use a service. They are also called customers, consumers, beneficiaries, service users and recipients.
<b>Compact</b>	Binding agreement or understanding.
<b>Complementary</b>	Finishes off or makes perfect.
<b>Consultation</b>	Process by which the opinion of others is sought within defined parameters, in an organised and equitable way about future decisions. It may involve testing the impact of decisions.
<b>Community</b>	Joint ownership; body of people working together who identify with a common concern, interest, issue or place.
<b>Community Planning</b>	A new statutory duty for local authorities. This is a process by which local people identify their needs and aspirations for their community.
<b>Disadvantaged</b>	In an unfavourable condition or circumstance.
<b>Grant</b>	A sum of money provided by a government or public fund to a person or organisation for a specific purpose.
<b>Legislation</b>	A body of laws.
<b>Monitor</b>	The process of gathering and recording information on a regular basis. It allows voluntary/community organisations to keep track of progress and work undertaken against the agreed objectives.
<b>Operational</b>	In working order or ready for use.

## East Herts Voluntary Sector Compact

<b>Partnership</b>	A formal relationship between two or more people or organisations in a joint venture.
<b>Quality Standards</b>	A degree of excellence.
<b>Statutory Bodies</b>	Organisations created through Acts of Parliament whose functions are determined by the law. Local authorities, including parish and town councils, are democratically elected and are accountable to the voters and central government. Other statutory agencies include: health authorities and the probation, police, fire and rescue and ambulance service.
<b>Strategic</b>	Characteristic of planning for success, as in politics or business
<b>Sustainability</b>	The ability to keep something going
<b>Volunteer</b>	An individual who performs or offers to perform voluntary service
<b>Voluntary and Community Sector</b>	<p>The Improvement and Development Agency (IdeA), formerly the Local Government Management Board, has defined this as:</p> <p><i>“Independent, voluntary or community groups that are Voluntary and Community organisations formed by people who have come together of their own free will to respond to issues regarding the quality of life of themselves or fellow citizens.”</i></p>
<b>Wellbeing</b>	The condition of being contented or healthy

- ❑ **PoHWER (People of Herts Wanting Equal Rights)** is an advocacy group for people with disabilities. It works closely with the East Herts Community Mental Health Team of the Hertfordshire Partnership Trust (Mental Health and Learning Disabilities services) and the two Primary Care Trusts.
- ❑ The Council's **2002 Sports Directory** contains more than 300 entries ranging from the 8 Ladies Indoor Bowls Clubs to 27 town and village cricket clubs. Please contact the Sports Development Officer for more information.

## Appendix 4: Shared Principles in the Hertfordshire Compact

- We believe that voluntary action and community involvement are essential components of democratic society.
- We believe that an independent and diverse Voluntary & Community Sector is fundamental to the well-being of society.
- We believe that people who work in the Voluntary & Community Sector make a vital and unique contribution to the well being and health of people and communities in Hertfordshire.
- We believe that by working together we will achieve more for the people and communities of Hertfordshire.
- We believe that working in partnership enhances the ability of public sector bodies and of Voluntary & Community Sector Organisations to fulfil their own purposes, but also imposes a responsibility to contribute towards achieving common aims and objectives, according to the capacity of each organisation.
- We believe that, irrespective of any funding relationships, Voluntary & Community Organisations are entitled to campaign in order to advance their aims and objectives, to comment on public sector policy, to challenge policy, and to determine and manage their own affairs.
- We agree that genuine partnerships across the sectors require integrity, objectivity, understanding, accountability, openness, honesty and collaboration and a recognition of the equal value of their contribution.
- We agree that purposeful consultation improves policy development, builds relationships and enhances the design and delivery of services and programmes.
- We recognise that whilst each organisation will have its own priorities the statutory bodies have a responsibility to give priority in funding to activities supporting their statutory responsibilities.
- We are committed to promoting and striving for equality of opportunity, in all aspects of our work, for all people regardless of race, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation or religion.
- We are committed to an inclusive approach which means that every effort will be made to include groups that wish to be included.
- We are committed to recognising the importance of sustainability in the planning and provision of services.

If you would like a copy of this leaflet in large print, braille or on tape, please contact Public Relations on (01279) 655261.



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