

# PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

## March 2023 - 2028

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**BETWEEN**  
**LONDON BOROUGH OF EALING,**  
**EALING INTEGRATED CARE PARTNERSHIP AND**  
**THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR**

Signed:

..... (LEADER, EALING COUNCIL)  
..... (CHAIR, EALING COMMUNITY NETWORK)  
..... (CHIEF EXECUTIVE, EALING & HOUNSLOW CVS)  
..... (CHAIR, EALING BOROUGH BASED PARTNERSHIP)

Date .....



## 1. Introduction

Ealing has a long and active history of collaboration between public services and the voluntary sector. Together we have achieved many things including a more active engagement of statutory sector partners with the voluntary sector, a better understanding of the barriers to accessing services faced by some of our more vulnerable communities, and more transparent access to funding to support the groups' and communities' aspirations. Over the last ten years, the Compact process has exemplified these successes bringing the relationship closer and ensuring that it is more productive.

However, there is always room for review and improvement and there have been significant challenges in the last few years that have brought the relationship into focus around the various roles, funding, services and expectations of the partners. The next ten years will be characterised by more diversity of voices and groups, more diversity in funding and more innovation in technology. At the same time the needs of the most vulnerable in our communities and the inequalities by age, gender and race remain persistently stubborn. Because of this, a strong partnership between statutory and voluntary sectors based on trust and shared values is vital, and this takes time to build and requires constant attention and effort to maintain.

The purpose of this document is to lay out the shared values, roles, responsibilities, and ways of working for a collaborative, transparent, open, inclusive, and trusting partnership between all partners that will give the ability to respond to the diverse threats and opportunities faced by partners. It recognises the implicit challenges communities face in today's world, the limited resources, changing roles and responsibilities, and the difference in needs between communities, neighbourhoods and groups.

As we work together towards achieving the goals of this document, we will have to establish new ways of thinking and working among our partners, recognising the need to continuously question existing models and collaborate to overcome the challenges we face.

## 2. The agreement

This agreement provides a framework for relationships between the public, statutory and local voluntary and community sectors<sup>1</sup>. It is neither a contract nor legally binding document, but it sets out a number of principles by which partners should work together effectively to help create:

- A strong, diverse and independent civil society
- An equal and fair society
- Effective and transparent design and development of policies
- Responsive and high-quality programmes and services
- Clear arrangements for managing changes to programmes and services

The outcomes that will be achieved through a shared commitment to this agreement include stronger partnerships, better services, the optimisation of resources, improved communication between the voluntary, statutory and public services and better trust and respect across the sectors.

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<sup>1</sup> Previous national guidance in relation to Compacts was introduced by the coalition government in 2015. The political situation and the way in which the public and statutory sectors engage with the third sector especially with the necessary response to the Covid pandemic has changed significantly since then, so it has been agreed amongst all partners that a move away from the term 'Compact' was more appropriate.

### 3. Shared values

The following shared values underpin this agreement:

- **Respect:** Effective partnerships are built on mutual understanding and an appreciation of the differences between partners. These partners have distinct but complementary responsibilities in meeting local needs and the delivery of local services. Public and statutory sectors have legal responsibilities and democratic accountabilities that include local residents, service users, patients, businesses and other stakeholders. Public, statutory and VCS organisations are also accountable in different ways.
- **Independence:** The independence of the VCS is recognised and supported. Voluntary and community groups reflect a wide range of local interests and have a right to campaign within the law on behalf of those interests.
- **Honesty:** Strong partnerships can only be built and maintained through open communication. Full and honest discussions should be the basis for resolving difficulties should they arise.
- **Fairness and equality:** Fairness for everyone, regardless of their background, is a fundamental goal, and the public and statutory sectors and the VCS will work together to fight inequality and promote equality and human rights, regardless of race, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, faith, health, socio economic status or other characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010.
- **Diversity:** The public and statutory sectors and the VCS value the diversity of the community, which allows all groups to have a voice and bring forward new ideas. Voluntary and community groups support the involvement of users in local services and often act as advocates for those who otherwise have no voice, particularly the seldom heard sections of the community.
- **Cooperation and collaboration:** The public and statutory sectors and the VCS have access to information, data and insight that can enhance the understanding of communities and local priorities. Sharing this data and insight not only saves resources, but also improves the quality of decision making and helps deliver better outcomes.

Finally, **taking action** - effective partnerships rely on the commitment of the partners to take action to move towards the shared goals and ambitions.

### 4. Operating principles and dispute resolution

The following principles will frame how the partnership agreement operates in practice:

1. This agreement will be reviewed after 5 years and submitted to the relevant decision-making bodies for approval.
2. All parties to the agreement will jointly monitor implementation of the agreement through an annual survey.
3. The partners will each nominate a senior officer to be an overall 'Agreement Guardian'.
4. Should any disputes arise regarding operation of the agreement, then issues can be referred to the relevant 'Guardian' to resolve. These are:
  - VCS: Chair of ECN
  - VCS: Chief Executive of EHCVS
  - LBE: Director of Strategy and Engagement, or other Council Director
  - Ealing BBP: Borough Director – Ealing Borough Based Partnership
5. The parties to this agreement are not exclusive and other partners are invited to sign up to show their commitment to a better working relationship between the sectors.

## 5. Partnership commitments

### A strong, diverse and independent civil society

<b>Undertakings for the public and statutory sectors:</b>	<b>Undertakings for the voluntary and community sector:</b>
Ensure that Ealing Council and Ealing BBP collectively recognise the need to resource local support and development organisations to assist the voluntary and community sector with their capacity and capability to deliver positive outcomes.	Ensure independence is upheld, focusing on the cause represented, regardless of any relationship they have with Ealing Council and Ealing BBP, financial or otherwise.
Support the voluntary sector to access and bring into the borough new sources of funding that only the voluntary sector can access	Collaborate within the sector and with statutory partners to maximise the funding that flows into the borough

### An equal and fair society

<b>Undertakings for the public and statutory sectors:</b>	<b>Undertakings for the voluntary and community sector:</b>
Work with the voluntary and community sector to deliver on the demands of the Race Equality Commission published in January 2022	Work with the public and statutory sector to deliver on the demands of the Race Equality Commission published in January 2022
Take practical action to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity of services and build stronger communities.	Take practical action, such as through funding bids, to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and build stronger communities.
Take practical action to ensure a voice for underrepresented, disadvantaged and under-served groups and that this voice is reflected in decisions	Facilitate opportunities for communities, particularly the more underrepresented, disadvantaged and under-served communities to share their views with the statutory sector via engagement and consultation.

### Effective and transparent design and development of policies, programmes and public services

<b>Undertakings for the public and statutory sectors:</b>	<b>Undertakings for the voluntary and community sector:</b>
Work with the voluntary and community sector from the earliest possible stage to design policies, programmes and services	Promote and respond to Ealing Council and Ealing BBP consultations where appropriate.
Give early notice of forthcoming consultations, where possible, allowing enough time for the voluntary and community sector to involve their service users, beneficiaries, members, volunteers and trustees in preparing responses.	Engage with service users, clients, beneficiaries, members, volunteers, and trustees when making representation to Ealing Council and Ealing BBP. Be clear on who is being represented, in what capacity, and on what basis that representation is being made.

Aim to reduce the bureaucratic burden for the sector, particularly small organisations, as a result of new policies, legislation and guidance.	When putting forward ideas, focus on evidence-based solutions, with clear proposals for positive outcomes
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### Responsive and high-quality programmes and services

<b>Undertakings for the public and statutory sectors:</b>	<b>Undertakings for the voluntary and community sector:</b>
Ensure that the voluntary and community sector have a greater role and more opportunities in delivering public services by opening up new markets.	Ensure eligibility for funding before applying and be explicit about how funding will be used, and outcomes will be achieved.
Consider a wide range of ways to support the resourcing of the voluntary and community sector, through grants, contracts, loan finance, use of premises, match-funding and so on.	Ensure transparent engagement with other VCS partners including EHCVS when applying for external funding to avoid competition.
Ensure well managed and transparent application and tendering processes, which are proportionate to the desired objectives and outcomes of programmes.	Ensure robust governance arrangements so that organisations can best manage any risk associated with service delivery and financing models, including giving funders early notice of significant changes in circumstances.
Ensure equal treatment across sectors, including reporting and monitoring arrangements, when tendering for contracts.	Be open and transparent about reporting, recognising that monitoring, whether internal or external, is an aspect of good management practice.
Ensure transparency by providing a clear rationale for all funding decisions.	Help facilitate engagement of users and communities with Ealing Council and Ealing BBP to help improve delivery of programmes and services.
Recognise the social and added value that the local VCS can bring and consider new models of delivery and ways of working.	Advise Ealing Council and Ealing BBP on the social, environmental and economic impacts for the sector of changes to policies, programmes and public services

### Clear arrangements for managing changes to programmes and services

<b>Undertakings for the public and statutory sectors:</b>	<b>Undertakings for the voluntary and community sector:</b>
Where there are restrictions or changes to future resources, discuss with the voluntary and community sector the potential implications as early as possible, give organisations the opportunity to respond, and consider the response fully, respecting sector expertise, before making a final decision.	Contribute constructively to reviews of programmes and funding practice.
Assess the impact on beneficiaries, service users and volunteers before deciding to reduce or end funding.	Advise Ealing Council and Ealing BBP on ways to minimise the negative effects of funding decisions on people in vulnerable situations

This agreement may be supplemented with additional theme-based commitments as new priorities emerge and with the agreement of all relevant parties.