

South Gloucestershire



The Power of Community: Keep it Local

The new Compact

Partners in South Gloucestershire are proud of the enduring Compact between public sector agencies and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations working in the area. The Compact represents a shared recognition that collaborating in partnership can more strongly serve, represent, develop and promote the wellbeing of local people and communities in the South Gloucestershire area.

The Compact has provided a framework for both public and VCSE sectors to recognise and respect the various roles, accountabilities, and knowledge they bring in the service of their communities. It is intended to ensure that even the smallest local organisations, however informal, are recognised and valued for their work in the community.

This new Compact is part of an approach to partnership working under the framework of the Keep it Local pledge that South Gloucestershire Council signed up to in 2019, and which is supported by the commitments in the Council Plan and the Town and Parish Council Charter.



We believe in the power of community. That's why we understand the best way to tackle the challenges we face as an authority and create transformative local services for our residents is to Keep it Local.

This means we will work to harness the local potential that exists in our town/area, by building strong local partnerships, sharing power and maximising local strengths.

In doing so, we can use public resources to invest in the local economy and support community capacity; and provide services which intervene early to reduce long-term costs and drive down pressures on our public services.

Recent years have seen a trend towards outsourcing services at scale, which has crowded out local community organisations. Our Council aspires to a different way: to Keep it Local.

This new Compact seeks to simplify and update the principles and codes of good practice contained in Getting it right together², reflecting the collaborative working that has taken place between the sectors under the Keep it Local banner, the practical experience of the collective response to the COVID-19 pandemic and other structural changes, for example in the local delivery of health services. The signatories to the new Compact include the whole range of public sector bodies operating in the area, including the Town and Parish Councils, and a number of VCSE organisations that represent that sector, who also recognise that often the hyper-local neighbourhood initiatives are the most effective at articulating and responding to the communities' needs. Implementation of the principles of the new Compact is overseen by a representative group of participant organisations under an independent Chair and answerable to South Gloucestershire's Safer Stronger Communities Strategic Partnership, a statutory partnership at which the adherents to the Compact are also represented.

A Culture of Respect

We recognise the distinctiveness of all our organisations and that we all have legitimate roles in the communities we serve with different approaches and associated timescales to decision-making.

We respect the expertise, knowledge and dedication of individuals and value diverse perspectives.

We undertake to engage with and understand the views of all sections of the community by fair, open and accessible communication and consultation.

We understand that resources are under pressure in all sectors and that mutual co-operation and sharing can make best use of available funds.

We interact with partners honestly and challenge each other respectfully recognising that leadership and power are shared for the benefit of the community.

We work and learn together to embed the culture of mutual respect in our organisations.

Mutual respect and collaboration should mean that disputes and conflicts do not arise or are addressed openly through discussion. Complaints procedures are available as a last resort.



Working in Partnership

We aim to grow a flexible, well-governed, resilient and self-sustaining VCSE sector that serves the community long-term and is responsive to future shocks and expectations.

We collaborate at the earliest stage in the shaping of services, policies, programmes and strategies bringing in expertise and views from relevant perspectives.

We expect and ensure that the voice of the VCSE, in all its diversity of type and scale, is heard at all levels in the shaping and implementation of policies, programmes, projects and initiatives.

We respect the principles of well-planned and effective consultation, ensuring that methods and timetables of engagement are respectful of VCSE capacity and sufficient to give relevant stakeholders voice and influence.

We recognise that all VCSE organisations, large and small, may need additional resources and support to participate effectively in co-production and shaping public sector services, policies, programmes and strategies.

We know that collaboration works most effectively in a non-competitive environment; VCSE organisations will be supported to form collaborative partnerships where it will bring strength and capacity in serving neighbourhoods or community needs.

The learning from partnership working at all levels will be shared and used to make continuous improvement.

Effective Delivery

We recognise that understanding of communities and their needs sits most often with voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations operating locally, sometimes at a very local and informal level. Keep it Local commissioning – local by default – will harness this strength.

Where funding is awarded to VCSE groups the application process and contractual terms and conditions will be proportionate to the scale of the project or commission.

Public sector funders will seek to optimise their investments by commissioning collaboratively on shared understandings of needs, including by supporting leverage of external funding sources where possible.

Full cost recovery principles will apply when public sector funds are provided for services, projects or programmes delivered by VCSE organisations.

Good VCSE delivery requires that jobs and volunteering opportunities are of high quality and VCSE organisations should be invested in to help ensure this.

VCSE organisations will be expected to adhere to the CVS quality standards, as appropriate to the size and maturity of their organisation, when seeking funding from public sector organisations.

Funded organisations will respond in a timely way to reasonable and planned requests for information and reports to funders and statutory organisations will, where needed, offer support and advice on methods of collection and monitoring.

The outcomes of service, project or programme delivery will be shared collaboratively with the relevant partners so that future service design can benefit from lessons learned.

Organisations that are signed up to the new Compact

Public Sector Organisations

South Gloucestershire Council

South Gloucestershire Locality Partnership

Avon and Somerset Police

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

Town and Parish Councils through the T&PC Forum

Avon Local Councils Association

Avon Fire and Rescue Service

Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector Organisations

CVS South Gloucestershire

The Care Forum

Southern Brooks