

## **SUNDERLAND COMPACT: WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BETTER FUTURE**

### **Equalities Code – Older People’s Strand**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

##### **Scope of the Compact**

The Sunderland Compact Equalities Code of Practice Older People’s Strand seeks to define the relationship between Sunderland Partnership and Voluntary and Community Sector Older People’s Groups and Organisations throughout Sunderland.

It will provide a starting point for good practice between the different sectors. This Code of Practice Document sets out the framework which the different parties of the Compact will work within when interacting or working together.

Plans to implement and monitor the Compact Equalities Code of Practice will be the responsibility of the individual signatories.

##### **Defining Older People’s Groups**

While the term ‘Older People’s Groups’ recognises the unique characteristic of age within this part of the voluntary and community sector, they nonetheless represent a vibrant and pro-active force within the city, by delivering vital and specific services to a growing population. The contribution of this section of the community to the health, social and economic wellbeing of the city is increasingly important, and the role of Older People’s Groups and Organisations in ensuring this continues, is vital.

It is estimated that by 2029 almost half of the city’s population will be over 50 and the role and number of Older People’s Groups and Organisations might well be expected to grow, in parallel to the population size.

This Code of Practice seeks to address the negative interpretation of the terms ‘older people’ and ‘people’s groups’ by challenging the stereotypical assumptions made about older people’s groups. These groups believe they are an active and productive asset to both their local communities and within the wider city, and consider themselves to be young at heart, with a wealth of experience and expertise gained through ageing. Seniority and maturity should be respected and viewed as a positive attribute by all signatories and partners working within the Sunderland Compact.

##### **The Role of Older People’s Groups**

Older People’s Groups provide a wide range of functions, represent different types of interest and have varying structures. Examples within Sunderland include clubs, groups and organisations whose prime purposes are to provide support and services to older people in the city.

They can be large or small, incorporated organisations with paid staff or smaller local groups run and managed by volunteers. They include neighbourhood groups and groups based on common interests or experiences. They address a wide range of issues through the work they do, e.g. providing educational, learning or leisure opportunities; offering emotional or physical support; organising events and activities; sharing information and advice; helping to build skills; improve health, and provide entertainment and fun.

Such groups play a vital role in providing a voice, building relationships and networks in neighbourhoods and communities, promoting self help and mutual support, and by building social capital and community cohesion.

Often the services provided by Voluntary and Community Sector Older People's Groups and Organisations are due to a response being made to an identified community need or needs. The impact of these activities on older people includes the reduction of isolation through the meeting of people and formation of friendships, raising the confidence and self-esteem of individuals and improving the overall quality of life. People gain a sense of worth through individual and collective participation and a sense of being involved and belonging in their local communities. For some it is bringing about positive change for the benefit of others, i.e. individuals and the wider community.

## **Equalities Statement**

Older People's Groups and Organisations within the city welcome the Equalities Statement within the Main Compact Document, and believe all subscribers to the Compact should wholeheartedly agree and adopt the principles within it. Older People's Groups and Organisations also believe there are dimensions to equality which arise specifically with respect to themselves and those with whom they work.

These are to recognise that the ageing process brings with it certain changes, and that people should not be excluded, or treated less favourably, based on the following characteristics which might be more prevalent within the older population:

- Reduced mobility and health levels
- Physical appearance
- Differing levels of ability e.g. slower mental agility, educational background
- Digital exclusion e.g. access to or ability to use ICT for communication
- Care needs or Carer responsibilities e.g. preventing participation in and access to activities due to timing, transport, back up care support needs

## **Key Principles**

- All parties to this Strand of the Equalities Code of Practice will follow it as a guide which standardises the working relationship between Sunderland Partnership and Older People's Groups and Organisations in the city
- Involvement and consultation with Older People's Groups and Organisations should follow the commitments outlined in the Involvement and Consultation Code of Practice and in this Strand of the Equalities Code of Practice
- Older People's Groups and Organisations should be treated equally in respect of access to funding and opportunities to engage in service planning and delivery
- When engaged in partnership work involving funding and service planning or delivery, all parties should act within the commitments outlined in the Funding and Procurement Code of Practice
- The contribution which Older People's Groups and Organisations make to implementation of the Sunderland Strategy should be fully recognised
- This Strand of the Equalities Code of Practice should spell out clear expectations built on trust which will facilitate open and transparent dialogue between the parties
- This Strand of the Equalities Code of Practice will be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis and positive action will be taken to address issues arising from that process

The organisations of the Sunderland Partnership and the Older People's Groups and Organisations jointly commit to:

- Promote the development of Older People's Groups and Organisations consistently across the Partnership/City
- Work together to promote good practice (including promoting this Strand of the Equalities Code of Practice) and celebrate success by utilising the resources of all the partners, and by being transparent when there is the potential for conflict of interest
- Take active steps to ensure a diverse range of Older People's Groups and Organisations are supported and have an opportunity to express their views and be listened to

- Encourage and support members of Older People's Groups and Organisations to take on leadership roles
- Make the Code of Practice a reality within their group or organisation and will contribute to the development and implementation of an agreed Action Plan
- Recognise the lack of resources within Older People's Groups and Organisations
- Inform themselves fully and support the scrutiny process
- Identify and support the implementation of legislation, and other policies, strategies and programmes which impact on Older People and on Older People's Groups and Organisations
- Work together to promote joint working initiatives which improve the policy and performance outcomes for Older People's Groups and Organisations, particularly those programmes which are aimed at creating a more inclusive and cohesive society
- Encourage, develop and support Volunteering by and within Older People's Groups and Organisations in line with the Volunteering and Voluntary and Community Groups Codes.
- Promote this Code of Practice in all appropriate documentation and publications

**The organisations of the Sunderland Partnership commit to:**

*(Note: These are suggestions made by Older People's Groups and Organisations, during Focus Groups Events, which aimed to gather their views on what they would like to see in the Older People's Strand of the new Compact. All suggestions will be subject to consultation and validation by the Sunderland Partnership).*

*(In respect of '**Consultation**', the Older People's Groups and Organisations would like to see the organisations of the Sunderland Partnership commit to):*

- Undertake a city wide mapping exercise to identify all Older People's Groups and Organisations, to provide a Directory, which will be kept up to date by the Partnership and which will be available for use by all parties as the key tool for all future consultation exercises, thereby recognising the importance of wider consultation
- Recognise the wealth and breadth of Older People's Groups and Organisations across the city, and the contribution they make, including the potential savings made to public and other services
- Ensure that all Older People's Groups and Organisations are made fully aware of the membership, role and responsibilities of the Sunderland Partnership and of the role and implications of the Sunderland Compact
- Ensure that all communication with Older People's Groups and Organisations is in clear, accessible language, which is easy to read and to understand, avoids jargon and is in a suitable form and format
- Participate in meaningful dialogue with Older People's Groups and Organisations, involving all groups and not focusing solely on well known or larger organisations
- Ensure there is a realistic timeframe for consultation exercises which relate to the older people's agenda, and that the outcome of each such consultation is fed back to all Older People's Groups and Organisations
- Involve Older People's Groups and Organisations in the early stages of developing policies and strategies, procedures and decision making which may impact on their work

*(In respect of '**Working Practices**', the Older People's Groups and Organisations would like to see the Partnership commit to):*

- Treat all Older People's Groups and Organisations the same by working to a standard set of actions e.g. by utilising a check list
- Put in place the systems and processes to enable regular monitoring and evaluation of this Strand of the Compact and to communicate the findings to all interested parties
- Actively engage with the Older People's Groups and Organisations, through a variety of methods, including visits and quarterly newsletters, and recognising that many are digitally excluded
- Involve Older People's Groups and Organisations in the early stages of planning new services or changes to existing services, to establish the needs of or potential impact on the Groups and Organisations and the people they serve and support

- Respect the integrity and independence of the Older People's Groups and Organisations involved in joint work with members of the Partnership, including them in target setting and informing them of their responsibilities when developing grants or contracts, ensuring that there are realistic expectations of what can be delivered and achieved
- Recognise the role neighbourhoods can play in delivery of support and services to older people, via the Older People's Groups and Organisations in each locality and utilise these opportunities
- Ensure that Older People's Groups and Organisations have fair and equal access to information relating to relevant funding programmes, and opportunities for accessing funding
- Treat Older People's Groups and Organisations as an equal partner, respect their opinions and celebrate their successes

**The Older People's Groups and Organisations commit to:**

In respect of Consultation Older People's Groups and Organisations would commit to:

- Contribute to the mapping exercise needed to identify existing Older People's Groups and Organisations in localities and across the city
- Larger organisations making a positive contribution by disseminating information widely across their known contacts
- Participation in consultation exercises directly and by acting as a facilitator by engaging other groups known to them on a local level
- Inform and present local community concerns to the Sunderland Partnership based on local experience, knowledge and networks within local communities

In respect of Working Practices Older People's Groups and Organisations would commit to:

- Assist the Partnership to identify what types of funding streams will be needed by Older People's Groups and Organisations to carry out their current work or to deliver new areas of work
- Jointly support the development of new groups and ways of working by sharing good practice and offering other areas of support as needed
- Larger Older Peoples' Groups and Organisations will work with smaller groups and organisations, by offering either financial support or by sharing information on where they can get the advice and support that they need.
- Support the Partnership by giving voluntary support as needed which is based on their experience and expertise
- Be open and welcoming to working within the spirit of the Sunderland Compact and to developing partnership work
- Work in an open and transparent way with the Sunderland Partnership
- Be prepared to share information with the Sunderland Partnership and particularly where this will be of benefit to Older People's Groups and Organisations and seek to ensure their continuity
- Treat the Sunderland Partnership as equal partners, respect their opinions and celebrate their achievements
- Seek to provide opportunities to help and support Sunderland Partnership to link with localities and to hear views and concerns
- Be open to consultation and to take part in open dialogue with the Sunderland Partnership, as needed, providing there will be feedback
- Provide helpful criticism to Sunderland Partnership, as needed
- Contribute to the delivery of the Sunderland Strategy on a local level
- Make use of potential training opportunities which may be offered by Sunderland Partnership
- Use public funds appropriately and inform funders when challenges are faced

Further information on the Sunderland Compact is available at [www.sunderlandcompact.org.uk](http://www.sunderlandcompact.org.uk)