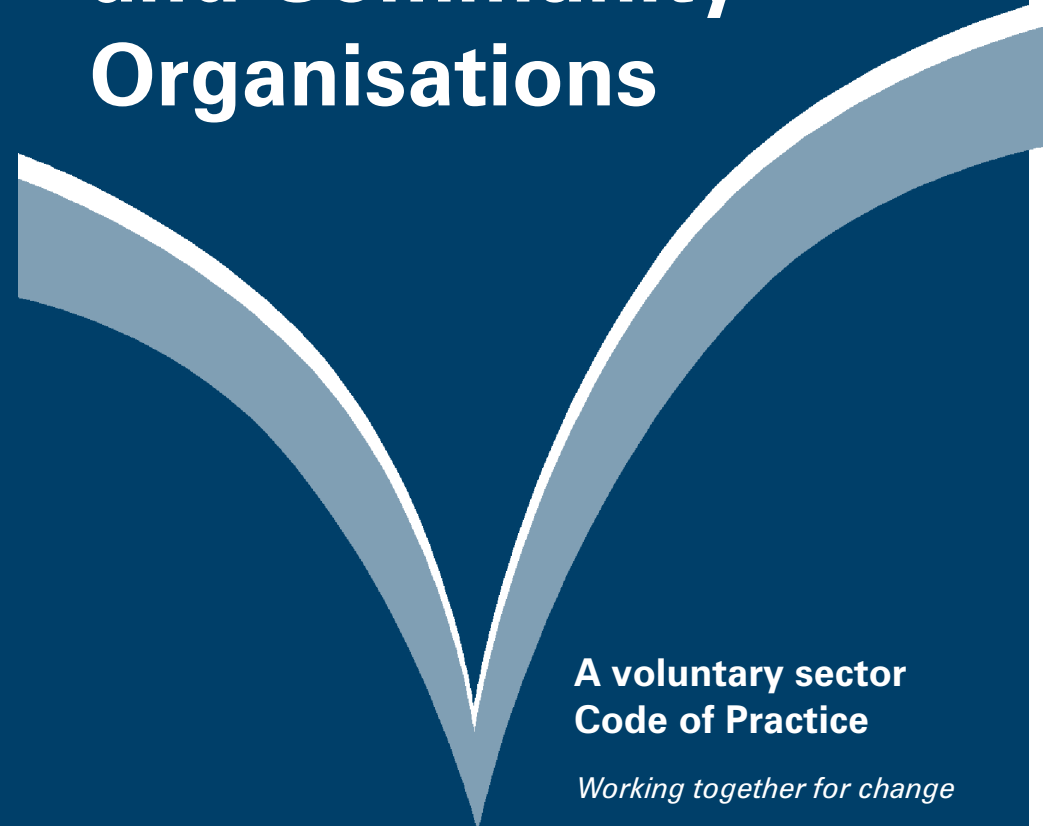




# Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Organisations



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**A voluntary sector  
Code of Practice**

*Working together for change*

# Introduction

This booklet sets out a Code of Practice agreed by Gateshead Council and the voluntary and community sector in relation to Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary and community organisations. It describes:

- how the Council and Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary and community organisations should work together in a positive way;
- what this involves, and
- what the Council and Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary and community organisations will undertake to do as part of their commitment to working in partnership for the benefit of all.

This is one of a series of booklets on good practice produced by Gateshead Council and GVOC (Gateshead Voluntary Organisation Council) - the others are:

## **Valuing Volunteers**

## **Community Participation, Consultation and Communication**

## **Finance and Funding**

**If you would like more information on this or any of the other codes of practice please contact:**

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## Other issues also need consideration

Faith organisations often play a vital role in leading voluntary action within their communities. The Council should recognise the potential of faith organisations to contribute to social inclusion and that this is distinct from the promotion of religion. A failure to understand this distinction could lead to faith groups being incorrectly assessed as ineligible for funding.

The funding needs of those organisations working with refugees and asylum seekers should also be taken into account. Public bodies with welfare responsibilities should consult with the BME voluntary and community sector about their role in helping to meet the needs of refugees and asylum seekers. It is also important that funders take note of good practice models within the BME sector.

## Scope and application of the code

The Code of Practice is not a legally binding document. It is an enabling mechanism to enhance the relationship between the Council and the voluntary and community sector. Its authority is derived from its endorsement by the Council and the sector itself through its consultation process. The code covers all Council functions and applies to the range of organisations in the voluntary and community sector.

The Compact partners will actively encourage the extension of this code to other local public bodies, who will be invited to adopt and adapt the Compact and its associated Codes of Practice.

The development of action plans to implement the good practice guidance in this code will be the responsibility of individual agencies such as the Council and the range of organisations in the voluntary and community sector. Where they do not follow this good practice, they must satisfy themselves that, if asked, they have good reasons for not doing so.

As part of the process of making the Compact work, there will be an annual review by the Council and the sector to review the development and operation of the Compact, including this Code of Practice. A monitoring report will be presented to Gateshead Voluntary Organisations Council's AGM and the relevant committee of the Council in October of each year.

## Aim of code

To make a positive impact on the relationship between the Council and the black and minority ethnic communities within Gateshead's voluntary and community sector.

### Key points for successful partnership working between the Council and the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) voluntary and community sector

- It is vital that the Council and the BME sector engage in a positive relationship for mutual benefit.
- The Council must recognise the important role of the BME voluntary and community sector and the diverse communities it seeks to represent including faith groups and refugee and asylum seeker organisations.
- There must be commitment by both the Council and the sector to taking forward Race Equality together.
- BME organisations must be an inherent part of the consultation and policy appraisal processes through involvement from a large pool of individuals and organisations.
- Investment must be made in the BME voluntary and community sector to help in the development of culturally appropriate services and community support.
- The Council must support the development of capacity and infrastructure within the BME sector at local, regional and national levels.
- The Council should recognise the importance of local relationships and partnership involvement.
- Both the Council and the sector must value and celebrate volunteering by BME people.

## The BME voluntary and community sector

A report by the Government's Social Exclusion Unit, "Bringing Britain Together - a national strategy for neighbourhood renewal, 1998" states that "ethnic minority disadvantage cuts across all aspects of deprivation. Taken as a whole, ethnic minority groups are more likely than the rest of the population to live in poor areas, be unemployed, have low incomes, live in poor housing, have poor health and be the victims of crime."

The BME voluntary and community sector works to tackle the disadvantage experienced by the communities from which it springs. It is therefore vital that BME voluntary and community organisations are included in the traditional structures of the voluntary and community sector, to ensure that they have equal opportunities to be directly involved in partnership, consultation and decision-making with the Council.

This Code of Practice seeks to address the exclusion experienced by the BME voluntary and community sector so that policy and implementation outcomes can be improved for BME communities.

The key issues to be addressed are:

- a joint commitment to taking forward the race equality agenda as well as recognition of the significant role to be played by the BME voluntary and community sector in partnership with the Council and others towards achieving race equality;
- an improvement in the quality and quantity of consultation and participation by the BME voluntary and community sector in policy development, implementation and evaluation;
- better support and resources to the BME voluntary and community sector which reflect its role in addressing access to services and measures to allow the BME sector to operate, develop and contribute on an equal footing with other partners, particularly the Council and the mainstream voluntary and community sector;
- recognition of the specific contribution and needs of the BME sector, and how this impacts on funding, capacity and sustainability.

A number of barriers exclude BME voluntary and community organisations from effective involvement in consultation processes. Implementation of the Compact Codes of Practice will go some way to addressing these. Particular attention should be given to the most appropriate means of engaging smaller under-resourced groups (these constitute the majority of the BME voluntary and community sector).

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

Faith based groups and organisations addressing the needs of refugees and asylum seekers are important parts of the BME voluntary and community sectors. The Council should recognise these interests as valid and important contributors to policy making and implementation.

## Funding and support

The BME Sector requires long term funding stability to:

- establish a level playing field with the mainstream voluntary and community sector;
- build sustainable infrastructure at national, regional and local level;
- represent and support BME communities;
- fill the gaps in services to BME communities;
- deliver services;
- play a meaningful role in building a fair and just society.

## Tackling racism, inequality and inclusion

The need to tackle racism effectively has long been recognised. The Council is committed to an inclusive society, and is determined to address social exclusion and promote race equality.

The independent inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence, the amendment of the Race Relations legislation, and the Government's agenda for action in Race Equality In Public Services (2000) are some of the key actions taken to push forward race equality.

The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report (1999) noted that: "Institutional racism consists of the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people".

The Compact provides a framework through which the BME voluntary and community sector can develop partnership with the Council. This Code of Practice builds on and contributes to addressing the post Lawrence Inquiry challenges.

A successful BME voluntary and community sector is an important partner in helping the Council make its commitment to race equality a reality.

The negative outcomes of social exclusion are disproportionately represented within BME communities. Tackling social exclusion effectively should include initiatives that target BME communities. Through partnership with the BME voluntary and community sector, which draws on the experience and knowledge of the sector, the Council can make such targeted interventions more effective.

## Consultation, participation and representation

The activities and knowledge of the BME voluntary and community sector can provide the Council with experience and skills of vital importance in the effective development and delivery of policy to BME communities. Consultation with the sector should be all inclusive, recognising the broad spectrum of interests, such as women's groups, gay and lesbian groups, youth groups, disabled peoples groups, age groups, religious and faith groups, which make up the BME voluntary and community sector.

There is huge diversity within the BME voluntary and community sector in the borough due in part to:

- asylum seekers
- a greatly under developed infrastructure
- a fluctuating population due to Jewish colleges
- the travelling community
- a regional dimension for some communities

## Joint undertakings

The Council and the BME voluntary and community sector are committed to establishing and maintaining best practice in their relationship, and therefore undertake to:

- develop a partnership approach to taking forward the Government's strategy for achieving race 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 BME communities at a local level (particularly those programmes aimed at community regeneration and a more inclusive society).
- encourage, develop and support volunteering by and within BME communities in line with the Compact Code of Practice on Valuing Volunteering and the Code of Practice on Community Participation, Consultation and Communication.
- make suitable mention of this Code of Practice in all appropriate Council documentation and voluntary and community sector publications.

## Council undertakings

The Council recognises and values the distinctive skills, expertise and experience that the BME voluntary and community sector holds. The Council undertakes to:

- value the work knowledge and expertise of the BME voluntary and community sector, including its important role in helping the Council to achieve its objectives;

*Continued overleaf*

- recognise and support the independence of the BME sector and its right within law to challenge institutions, policies and practice, irrespective of any funding relationship that might exist, and to determine and manage its own affairs;
- operate effective and transparent equal opportunities monitoring and evaluation systems that ensure BME voluntary and community organisations are treated fairly and with respect in all their interactions with the Council;
- build, as appropriate, consultation with the BME voluntary and community sector into plans for policy development from the pre-consultation stage through to implementation, with the aim that implications for BME communities are examined and considered;
- establish race equality strategies within the corporate planning processes of the Council, with clearly expressed objectives and targets.
- ensure that BME voluntary and community organisations have fair and equal access to Council funding programmes, particularly those that impact significantly on BME communities.;
- consider the case for setting aside additional funds for BME organisations to build capacity, prepare and deliver projects;
- ensure that Council grants are appropriately administered and allocated to BME groups with the capacity to deliver agreed outputs to agreed and predetermined standards;
- endeavour to include consultation, partnership and funding of the BME voluntary and community sector within guidance to staff on the statutory duty of public authorities to promote race equality;
- include within the Best Value framework of the Council specific and robust requirements to ensure equality of access to quality public services and the BME groups are actively involved in service planning, performance target setting and scrutiny process.
- consider the views and encourage the active engagement of the BME voluntary and community organisations (along with other voluntary and community organisations), in the community strategy that the Council will prepare under Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2000 and in the development of the local strategic partnership.
- require all partnership bids to Council programmes to demonstrate genuine consultation and involvement with BME communities, inclusive of partnership boards, programme plans, outputs and outcomes.

## Black and Minority Ethnic voluntary and community sector's undertakings

The BME voluntary and community sector recognises that receipt of public funds, and active involvement in local government processes carries with it responsibilities. It therefore undertakes to:

- play a full and active part within the wider voluntary and community sector in fulfilling the significant undertakings in the Compact, this Code of Practice and the other Compact Codes of Practice;
- work in partnership with the Council and other voluntary and community organisations in promoting race equality, tackling social exclusion and promoting civil society;
- aim to establish a responsive local structure that is accountable to local groups and which will enable communication;
- consult in order to provide BME perspectives on key local and regional issues;
- facilitate consortium and partnership working among diverse ethnic and religious groups within the sector, sharing professional leadership expertise and other practical skills;
- inform and present community concerns to the Council 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 of trustees and senior staff;
- develop open and dynamic organisations providing opportunities for voluntary and community activity by a diverse range of individuals demonstrating a commitment to wider equality issues in addition to race equality.