

# Code of practice

For Voluntary and Community Groups  
Facing Marginalisation Including Black and  
Minority (BME) and Disability Groups



**Who is the Code of Practice for?**

- Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Voluntary and Community Sector Groups (including traveller, refugee/asylum seeker, migrant worker and minority ethnic faith groups).
- Disability Voluntary and Community Sector Groups including mental health groups.
- Other marginalised groups as appropriate.
- Organisations supporting these groups.
- Public Sector Bodies active in Essex.

**What is the aim of this Code of Practice?**

This Code of Practice focuses on the needs of marginalized communities in Essex. It recognises that in particular BME and disability groups still experience social exclusion, discrimination, marginalisation and disadvantage, and aims to set up a framework for promoting:

- a joint commitment to taking forward equal opportunity and access, in particular race and disability equality, including sharing best practice and promoting good relationships;
- improved quality and quantity of consultation and participation with marginalised groups, in particular BME and disability groups;
- recognition of the specific needs of BME and disability groups;
- better access to resources and support for marginalised groups.

Where points appear to be specific to BME or to disability groups and not common to both, they are listed as such. While all groups and agencies working with BME, disability or other marginalised groups should take account of this code, the voluntary and community groups whose rights the code is intended to support are those whose membership is drawn predominately from disadvantaged or marginalised communities, and not any who provide a service to such communities.

**Joint Undertakings: all Groups**

The Voluntary and Community Sector and Statutory Agencies will:

- Develop a partnership approach to responding to policy issues and strategies for achieving disability and race equality, including the promotion of fairness and a positive environment for diversity.
- Work in partnership with other agencies on initiatives to improve services for the BME communities and disability groups, social inclusion and cohesion.
- Encourage and support volunteering by and within BME communities and disability groups in line with this Compact's Code on Volunteering.

- Consult BME and disability groups on policy documents to ensure that they address the needs of their specific communities.
- Challenge institutional racism and discrimination against disabled people constantly
- Detect and take action on processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, racist and disability stereotyping which disadvantage these groups of people.

**The Statutory Agencies will:**

- Encourage the development and integration of BME communities and disability groups that represent the diverse communities in Essex.
- Seek and value the contribution the BME communities and disability groups can make in helping them achieve their objectives.
- Recognise and support the independence of the BME communities and disability groups, their uniqueness and diversity.
- Operate effective and transparent equal opportunity policies with monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that the BME communities and disability groups are treated fairly and with respect in all their interactions with statutory agencies.
- Support and advise BME communities and disability groups to access grants and funding administered by local statutory agencies and government funded programmes, particularly those important to these groups.
- Positively target initiatives at BME and disability groups and work with these groups to make intervention effective.
- Ensure that policy development and implementation meets the needs of BME communities and disability groups.
- Seek the views and encourage the active involvement and participation of the BME communities and disability groups in the LAA, the development of community plans/ strategies and the Essex Compact.

**The BME and disability sectors will:**

- Play a full and active part within the wider VCS by making sure that the Compact undertakings are realised.
- Work with statutory agencies and the wider VCS in promoting race and disability equality, tackling social exclusion and promoting cultural understanding.
- Make use of appropriate training and capacity building opportunities for the BME communities and disability groups of Essex.

**On Consultation**

- Consultation with the BME communities and disability groups should be all inclusive, recognising the broad spectrum of interests, including women's groups, gay and lesbian groups, age groups, disability specific groups, service user groups such as mental health service users, ethnic groups and faith groups.
- Aim to recruit a wide range of individuals to act as representatives from BME communities and disability groups to avoid individual overload.

**Specific to BME groups: statutory sector commitment:**

Barriers to the effective involvement of the BME communities and small community groups in consultation processes must be overcome, especially by engaging the many smaller, under-resourced groups, for example by:

- informal interactions;
- meeting language and communication needs;
- meeting access requirements including premises;
- offering financial support for expenses incurred;
- specific issues concerning faith and language will be dealt with sensitively and taking into account needs and characteristics of the relevant groups.

**Specific to disability: joint undertaking**

- Adopt the social model of disability and accept a broad definition of disability including mental health issues.
- Communicate and consult in accessible and unthreatening ways.

**This booklet is issued by the Essex Partnership.**

You can contact us in the following ways:

**By Post:**

Community Planning and Public Engagement, Essex County Council, County Hall,  
Chelmsford, CM1 1LX

**By telephone:**

01245 430478

**By fax:**

01245 345009

**By email:**

[simon.banks@essex.gov.uk](mailto:simon.banks@essex.gov.uk)

**Visit our website:**

[www.essexpartnership.org](http://www.essexpartnership.org), select Voluntary Sector and Essex Compact

The information contained in this document can be translated , and/or made available in alternative formats, on request.

Published February 2009.