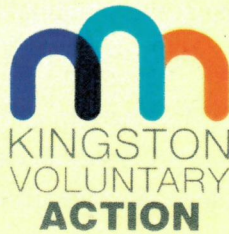


Kingston Compact

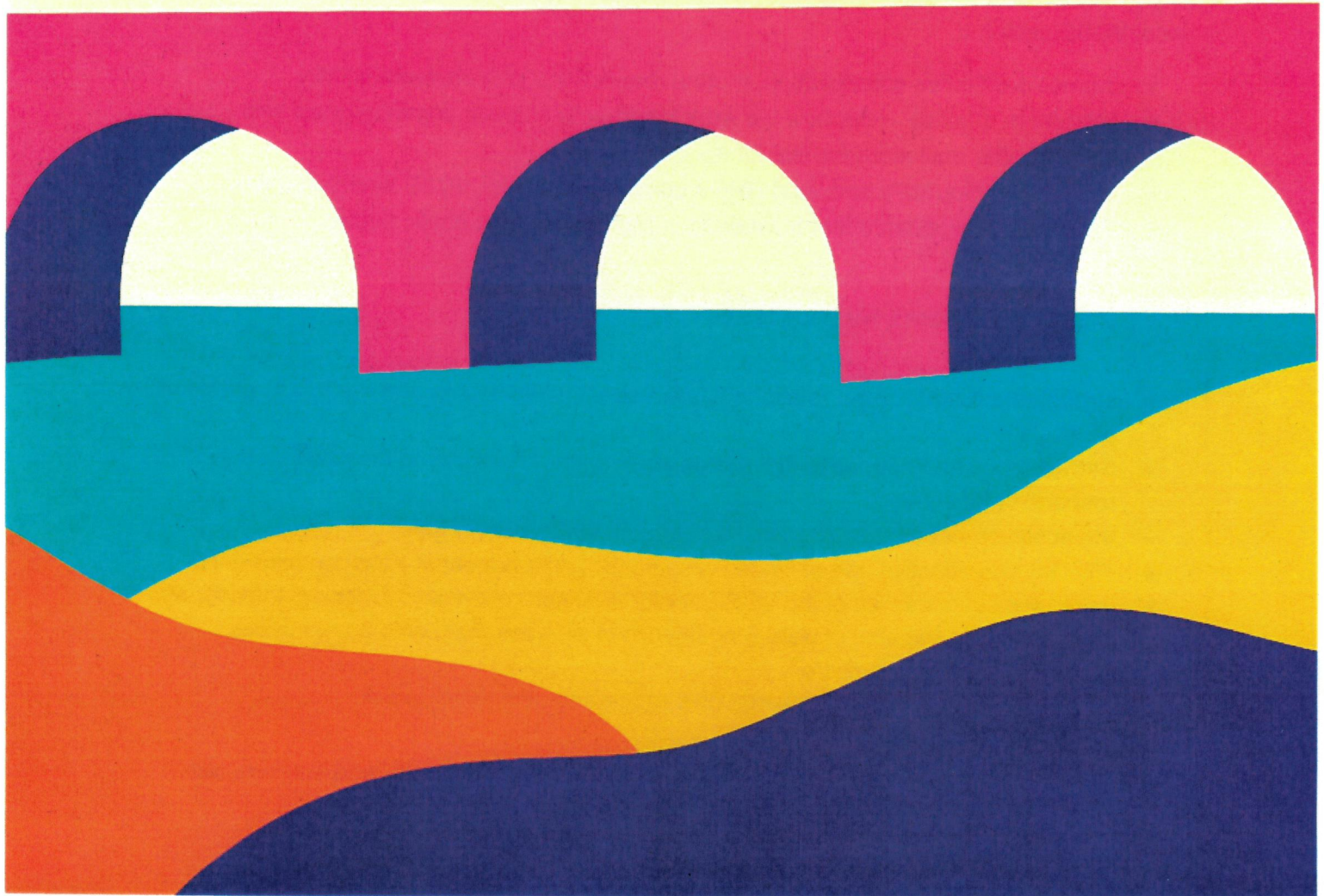
**Working Together for
Kingston's Communities**



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KINGSTON
UPON THAMES



NHS
South West London



The Kingston Compact 2025-2028

1. Vision, context and purpose

Together, Kingston's public bodies and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector envision a borough where everyone can thrive in a fair, inclusive, and supportive community to improve the lives of all, particularly the most vulnerable.

Kingston has a thriving voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector.¹ It contributes significantly to the borough, including delivering services, connecting and giving voice to communities, mobilising and supporting volunteers, creating job opportunities for local people, as well as attracting significant financial investment into Kingston.

There is a long history of positive collaboration with public sector partners, not just through grants and contracts, but through professional relationships and working together in many ways.

The Compact aims to strengthen these relationships even further. This is particularly important at a time where we all face unprecedented challenges - financial and social. These pressures make cross-sector collaboration even more vital to ensure we can deliver the best possible outcomes for residents.

It is an agreement between Kingston Council, the local health and care system, and the local VCSE sector. It:

- promotes effective collaboration, mutual respect and shared responsibility
- sets out in practical ways how we work together to achieve common goals and deliver better outcomes for residents
- outlines the Council's and local NHS's commitment to the VCSE sector and the VCSE sector's commitment to working in partnership with public bodies

If the Compact is a success, we hope to see:

- strengthened and trustful relationships between public bodies and the VCSE sector at all levels
- transparency and openness in ways of working and the agility to be able to jointly respond to local need
- the achievement of shared goals as set out in various strategies²
- efficient and effective use of limited resources for the benefit of Kingston residents
- increased sustainability of the VCSE sector to ensure it remains a vibrant, thriving, and valued partner, capable of delivering important services that complement those provided by the public sector
- a mutual shift in approach towards prevention and early intervention
- reduced inequity and unfairness

¹ "VCSE sector" includes registered charities, social enterprises, community groups, faith groups, tenants' and residents' associations, co-operatives and community interest companies.

2. Principles of Compact working

We recognise that we can all do much more for the people of Kingston by bringing together the respective strengths and capacities of both public and VCSE sectors.

We value the diverse and integral role of VCSE organisations in providing services, promoting social cohesion, reducing inequities, addressing local challenges and responding to need in Kingston.

We value the wide diversity and range within the VCSE sector itself, from grassroots community groups to larger service providers, recognising the unique strengths, voices, and contributions each brings to Kingston's civic life.

We commit to working together:

- in a way that fosters mutual trust, appreciation, respect, transparency, clarity and openness to two-way dialogue and engagement
- to give marginalised and underrepresented groups a voice and help improve access to services
- to ensure that contracting and funding processes are fair, transparent, and proportionate to the opportunity, with the intention of removing and reducing barriers, particularly for smaller or underrepresented organisations

3. Commitments

Outcome 1: Recognition and respect

The VCSE sector is recognised for the valuable and unique contribution that it makes to the economic, environmental and social development of Kingston, and to reducing inequity. The respect is demonstrated by informed understanding of the sector's contribution to joint goals.

Joint commitments

- We will jointly emphasise and celebrate the VCSE sector's deep connections to local communities and its ability to identify and respond to emerging needs.
- We will jointly encourage new ideas and work together to pilot evidence-based solutions that could be scaled up.
- We will take time to understand the constraints that both sectors face (including financial, capacity, and the processes of local democracy), and the role that both sectors play in supporting local people.
- We will celebrate the invaluable role of volunteers in delivering services and building community cohesion; we will work together to create accessible and rewarding volunteering opportunities.

Public sector commitments

- We will champion our local VCSE sector in local, regional and national forums.

²This Compact supports the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2025-28) the Empowering People, Strengthening Communities Strategy (2023-27)

- We will provide opportunities and resources (where possible) for VCSE organisations to engage in partnerships, forums, and advisory groups.
- We will recognise the VCSE sector's particular strength in prevention and early intervention.
- We will work towards supporting the sector in non-financial ways, such as premises sharing, asset transfer and capacity building.
- We will respect the VCSE sector's right to respectfully challenge and campaign without fear of negative consequences.
- We will accept different forms of evidence from the VCSE sector that includes quantitative, qualitative and participatory methods.

VCSE sector commitments

- We will actively participate in local, regional and national forums, raising the community's voice in discussions that affect them.
- When representing the community or VCSE sector's interests, we will ensure that we encompass a wide diversity of views, including the seldom heard.

Outcome 2: Effective partnership working

Effective partnership working across sectors ensures that resources and data are used effectively, value for money is achieved, service delivery is effective, and inequity is reduced.

Joint commitments

- We will actively develop and refine partnership structures and processes, ensuring they are fit for purpose and reflect the needs and capabilities of all stakeholders.
- We will explore new methods of working together that enhance our effectiveness, such as integrating digital tools for data sharing, sharing outcome frameworks and communication platforms.
- We will co-develop and participate in joint training and capacity-building initiatives that enhance the skills of staff and volunteers and foster a deeper understanding and trust between VCSE and public sector teams.
- We will be as transparent as we can be, thereby building mutual understanding and trust.

Public sector commitments

- We will work with the VCSE sector from the earliest possible stage to design policies, programmes and services and assess their impact on the VCSE sector; we will build on existing effective work where possible.
- We will work towards coproduction with residents and codesign of services with the VCSE sector as the default approach.
- We will have strong communication with VCSE partners, keeping the sector informed

in all stages of planning and implementation.

VCSE sector commitments

- We will participate in problem-solving forums and think tanks with public sector partners to co-develop solutions that are innovative and practical for addressing community challenges.
- We will actively seek to partner and collaborate with other VCSE organisations.

Outcome 3: Participation, representation and engagement³

The people and communities of Kingston are heard, equipped and enabled to make a difference in decisions that affect them.

Joint commitments

- We will work together to develop and use innovative tools and methods to encourage diverse participation in engagement processes, advance equality and ensure a voice for underrepresented and disadvantaged groups.
- We will tailor engagement approaches (for example events, written communications and online methods) to the target group, bearing in mind the accessibility needs of specific demographic groups.
- We will provide feedback to our communities about the outcomes of consultations and how their input has influenced decisions, enhancing transparency and trust.

Public sector commitments

- We will do our best to adhere to the highest standards in community engagement (for example being clear on what we're consulting on, building on existing knowledge, being clear on what can and what can't be changed, making engagement accessible, and feeding back ("You said this, we did this, we didn't do that, and why".) We will also regularly review and update our community engagement strategies to ensure they remain effective and responsive to community needs and technological advancements.
- We will work effectively with the VCSE sector at all stages of community engagement; we will harness the reach of VCSE organisations into communities; we will engage relevant VCSE organisations as early as we can; we will work with VCSE organisations to provide excellent communication; we will recognise the role of VCSE organisations in helping us to organise and deliver engagement activities, and support the costs of this to VCSE organisations where we can.
- We will recognise the role of voluntary sector infrastructure organisations that represent the views of their member organisations.

VCSE sector commitments

- When assuming representative roles, we will represent the sector (not only our own organisation); we will seek the views of service users, clients, carers, volunteers, and trustees; we will be clear on who we are representing and why.

³ What we mean by engagement: <https://www.kingston.gov.uk/communications/community-engagement-framework>

- We will support the dissemination of feedback on what changes resulted from consultation exercises.
- We will be clear on the cost to our organisations of supporting consultations.
- We will proactively reach out to and engage with underrepresented and disadvantaged communities to ensure their voices are heard, especially in areas where participation is traditionally low.

Outcome 4: Sustainability and funding

Activities and services address and prioritise need, support communities and reduce inequities; they are supported through efficient and effective funding processes.

Joint commitments

- We will recognise the additional social value that VCSE organisations bring.
- Where appropriate and feasible, we will support the development of VCSE sector-led consortia.
- We will take a joint approach to the rising costs of delivering services, lever additional funding where we can, and when that is not possible, work together to find ways to be as efficient as possible. This might sometimes mean reducing service outputs, while also drawing on agreed best practice from other boroughs and systems where approaches have proved effective.
- We will work together to ensure funding arrangements are fair, transparent and sustainable, including a shared commitment to recognising the true and reasonable costs of delivering services.

Public sector commitments

- We will work to ensure a diverse range of funding options is available; ensure smaller organisations have access; make sure funding arrangements are fair and sustainable with an understanding of the real and reasonable costs involved in service delivery; provide multi-year grants and contracts where possible; execute grant and contract agreements and payments in a timely manner and distribute funding based on identified community need.
- We will work to create a level playing field in the commissioning process, for example, using smaller contract lots and grants that enable more equitable access for smaller organisations.
- We will make application processes as simple as possible, especially taking into consideration the capacity and capability of small organisations; and we will support access for organisations representing communities whose first language is not English. We will prioritise best practice in commissioning, adopting a 'local first' policy where feasible, ensuring transparency and reducing barriers to smaller providers in accessing contract opportunities, in line with relevant procurement legislation and frameworks.
- We will make funding application and monitoring processes fair and proportionate, with realistic performance indicators and expectations.
- We will provide excellent contract management, with responsive officers who help organisations to succeed, and ensure there is always a named person in the Council that will be reachable.

- We will work to understand legitimate overhead costs to support our commissioning approaches, learning from best practice whilst recognising what is affordable.
- We will invest in a local infrastructure function that will provide the four functions of infrastructure to local VCSE organisations: (1) strengthen local VCSE leadership and advocacy; (2) develop networks and partnerships; (3) build the capacity of VCSE organisations and (4) create and support volunteering opportunities.

VCSE sector commitments

- We will strive to be financially efficient by sharing functions with other organisations where possible, for example collaborating on providing training.
- We will ensure eligibility for funding before applying and be explicit about how outcomes will be achieved.
- We will be as transparent as possible in situations where a VCSE organisation is struggling to meet performance targets and seek support.
- We will be open and transparent in our reporting, recognising that monitoring, whether internal or external, is an aspect of good management practice and public accountability.
- We will advise funders on the social, environmental or economic impact of funding changes, and on ways to minimise their effects on people in vulnerable situations.

4. Implementation of the Compact

a. Principles for Compact implementation

We see Compact implementation as a positive process that brings colleagues across sectors together to solve problems, share successes and do things better.

Having a clearly defined process for implementing and monitoring the Compact ensures that difficulties, which may be unintended, can be picked up early, and lead either to a resolution, or to an understanding that a resolution of a particular problem might not be possible.

Even with this intention, things may go wrong sometimes. In line with the spirit of the Compact, we will all do our best to manage any issues in a transparent, constructive and fair way. Anyone should be able to raise an issue confidently, knowing that there will be no negative ramifications. We will take a collaborative, problem-solving approach that focuses on strengths, shared goals and mutually agreeable solutions.

This Compact does not replace the obligations that are written into grant agreements and contracts.

b. Ownership of the Compact

The compact is owned by the VCSE sector, Health, and Kingston Council. It is born out of the Empowering People, Strengthening Communities⁴ Strategy, which feeds back to the Kingston Partnership Board⁵

c. Compact Champions

There will be three Compact Champions who are senior staff of partner organisations (Local Authority, Health, and VCSE sector). They will have the mandate from their sector or organisations to take a leadership role in embedding and supporting Compact implementation.

The Champions should be senior staff of partner organisations, who have the mandate and authority from their sector or organisation to take this leadership role, and have strong influence and communication channels that will give them the ability to embed and support Compact implementation.

Meetings

The Compact Champions will meet a minimum of twice per year.

Role of Compact Champions

The Compact Champions will:

- ensure that the Compact, as a way of working, is adopted and embedded across different Council and NHS Departments as well as VCSE organisations.
- support the positive resolution of concerns
- coordinate learning from issues
- lead the process of reviewing the effectiveness and usefulness of the Compact over time
- coordinate the cycle of refreshing and rewriting the Compact

d. Embedding the Compact

Induction

All public sector staff who interact with the VCSE sector, and all VCSE sector staff who interact with the public sector, will be required to understand the purpose and scope of the Compact as part of their induction.

Utilising the Empowering People, Strengthening Communities (EPSC) Working Groups

The Compact will be supported by the wider Empowering People, Strengthening Communities (EPSC) partnership. Its three working groups - communications, volunteering and social value, and data insight and action - will provide a practical and inclusive space to embed Compact principles, share good practice, and identify opportunities for joint working.

Embedding the Compact in Grant and Contract Management Processes

All contract and grant officers in public bodies - and all VCSE sector managers responsible for delivering commissioned or grant-funded services - will use the Compact to underpin how we conduct our partnership business.

e. Resolving and learning from issues arising

We anticipate that by adopting the processes described in the Compact, issues of concern will be rare. However, a defined process is helpful for addressing situations where there are differences.

This process is intended to address **systemic or recurring issues** that affect partnership working across the borough. (For commissioned/grant services: service-level or individual contract/grant concerns will continue to be addressed through standard contract and grant

management escalation procedures for each organisation.)

Stage 1: Direct discussion

- If an individual or organisation from any partner believes there have been systemic or recurring occasions where the Compact's principles or commitments have not been followed, the first point will be to resolve the issue directly with the relevant party.
- The aim is to resolve concerns informally and quickly through discussion and mutual agreement.
- Most issues are expected to be resolved at this stage.

Stage 2: Compact Champions review

- If the issue is not resolved, the Compact Champions will meet to review the concern.
- The Group will discuss the issue and may suggest a course of action/recommendation but will have no role in decisions relating to individual contracts. This will be communicated to all involved.

Stage 3: Referral to authorised individual

- Where an issue raised highlights wider, systemic implications that cannot be resolved by the Compact Champions, the matter may be referred to an authorised individual (Compact Champions' senior manager/officer) from each of the Compact partners for any final decision making.
- This group will consider whether the issue has implications for borough-wide collaboration, policy, or Compact review, and will advise on appropriate actions or learning to be shared.
- The intention is not to resolve individual cases, but to ensure system-wide concerns are heard at the highest level of the Compact partnership and reflected in strategic thinking.

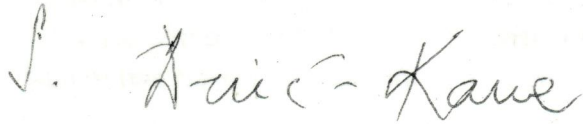
Learning

- We value the learning that will arise from dealing with Compact-related issues, whether or not they are resolved to the full satisfaction of all parties.
- Once per year, Compact Champions will provide an update at The Kingston Partnership Board on how the Compact has been used during the previous year, and, where relevant, produce communications to go out via VCSE and public sector communications channels and networks.

⁴The **EPSC Strategy (2023–2027)** sets out a shared vision for a more inclusive and equitable Kingston, where no one is left behind. It focuses on strengthening collaboration between the Council, VCSE organisations, and local communities to tackle shared challenges and improve outcomes for residents. The strategy emphasises collaboration and partnership across sectors, empowerment and inclusion to ensure all residents can shape their communities, and resilience and adaptability to support communities in responding to immediate pressures while building long-term sustainability.

⁵The **Kingston Partnership Board** is a strategic group that brings together senior leaders from statutory, voluntary and community, and private organisations. Its primary role is to shape and drive collaborative work across the borough, focusing on improving outcomes for residents and ensuring effective partnership working. The Board sets the strategic direction and oversees the implementation of key initiatives and frameworks, including the Kingston Compact.

Signed by:



Sanja Derić-Kane, Chief Executive Officer, Kingston Voluntary Action, on behalf of the VCSE Sector



Sarah Ireland, Chief Executive Officer on behalf of Kingston Council



Denise Madden, Deputy Executive Lead for Kingston and Richmond Places, on behalf of South West London Integrated Care System

3rd December 2025

The Kingston Compact is a shared commitment between the Royal Borough of Kingston, the local NHS, and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector. It sets out how we will work together with mutual trust and respect to improve outcomes for Kingston's residents. By strengthening collaboration, valuing community insight, and aligning our efforts, the Compact lays the foundation for more inclusive, effective and locally rooted public services.

To learn more visit www.KVA.org.uk/compact

