

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

The Yorkshire and the Humber Support and Development Organisations Alliance (**Hereinafter called “The Alliance”**)

This MoU will begin on the date of receipt of the signed membership form.

By returning a signed membership form, partners become Members of the Alliance and subscribe to the principles set out in section 2.

1. Introduction

Support and development organisations in Yorkshire and the Humber ensure that voluntary and community sector organisations are sustained in their work with people and communities. The aim of the Alliance is to help support and development organisations to collaborate more so that there continues to be high quality services for voluntary and community organisations across Yorkshire and the Humber.

The Alliance aims to be the essential strategic framework for organisations engaged in supporting a vibrant voluntary and community sector across Yorkshire and the Humber.

2. Principles

2.1 All front line organisations in Yorkshire and the Humber should have access to high quality, accessible and relevant support; structured and organised for maximum efficiency.

2.2 Investment in support and development organisations that meets the needs of the breadth of voluntary and community sector activity should be a priority in every area as well as a collaborative approach by all stakeholders.

2.3 Core support and development services can best be provided by locally accountable organisations. The autonomy of voice provided by the community reach, local accountability and engagement of local support and development organisations is essential.

2.4 Investment to ensure that specialist voices can be heard should be a priority in every area as well as a collaborative approach by all stakeholders.

2.5 Genuine and proactive collaboration between development and support organisations is essential, not optional. Signatories will seek to work in partnership in the first instance and not normally compete for resources.

2.6 A priority for all Alliance Members is to explore opportunities for joint working, collective action and consortium building where this improves services for local voluntary and community sector organisations and adds value to core activities.

2.7 Demonstrating the value and impact of locally accountable support and development services is a priority for all Alliance members and the Alliance as a whole.

3. Strategy

Members of the Alliance agree that adopting the strategy below will improve our services and increase resilience, by maximising the effectiveness and affordability of support and development services for the voluntary and community sector in Yorkshire and the Humber.

3.1 Support and development organisations serving the same geographical area (at all spatial levels including single and two tier authorities, sub regions/City regions and regions) will work towards a unified framework for support and development services including, for example, common quality standards, mutual referrals and joint marketing. Further, members will seek to collaborate as closely as possible and examine the business case for becoming one organisation. This will take practical account of the geography of particular areas.

3.2 Generalist Support and Development organisations will co-operate and work across boundaries to provide specific services where there is a strong business case for improved provision.

3.3 At all levels generalist and specialist support and development organisations will collaborate as closely as possible and examine the business case for becoming one organisation.

3.4 At all levels it is vital that specialist and minority voices are heard. In some cases this will require the existence of a separate organisation. These should work closely with other support and development organisations in accessing services for the communities represented by these specialist voices.

3.5 Organisations delivering specific services to all voluntary and community sector organisations (for example safeguarding, community accountancy, human resources support) and organisations providing support to specific types of organisation (for example BME voluntary and community sector, rural, older peoples' organisations) will work closely with generalist organisations and work towards agreements about collaboration.

3.6 At each appropriate level there will be discussion and engagement with statutory and other agencies providing support and development services to the voluntary and community sector.

4. Practice

Key: italicised text indicates Alliance actions

4.1 Alliance Members will work in collaboration to ensure that core support services (Development, Support, Liaison, Representation and Strategic Partnership work) are available across all areas of Yorkshire and the Humber.

The Alliance believes that these local services should:

- represent the needs and views of frontline organisations and their clients within each relevant area (including representation on Local Strategic Partnerships, leading on Compact development etc)
- maintain local public sector relationships
- maintain relationships with voluntary and community sector members
- co-ordinate local collaboration and networking

The Alliance will take an overview of the availability and quality of core support and development services across Yorkshire and the Humber on an annual basis in collaboration with its members. The Alliance will identify areas for development, collaboration, quality improvement and gaps in provision.

4.2 Where it enhances quality and efficiency of delivery to the voluntary and community sector the Alliance will encourage collaboration between members, and across boundaries, where there is a business case to do so and where effective arrangements can be made. Members will not normally compete for resources within each other's districts.

4.3 The Alliance will work to ensure that all these core services are delivered to a baseline standard (through agreeing appropriate quality indicators) and will undertake benchmarking, peer review and support, and virtual team working.

Alliance members will discuss and agree appropriate quality standards for support and development activity and review these on an annual basis.

The Alliance will support and promote peer review and support within and across boundaries to promote practice sharing in support and development work across Yorkshire and the Humber.

4.4 Where a support and development organisation is unable to deliver all core services, or where a core service is not being provided in a given area, or where local support and development organisations are unable to deliver to a required quality standard, or where the relationship with the local authority has broken down, the Alliance will work with local stakeholders to seek to support it to recover.

In this situation the Alliance will support investment in locally accountable and strategic local support and development organisations. It will work with local public bodies, where there are difficulties, and co-ordinate with NAVCA to ensure that interim arrangements are in place to enable continuity of support for front line organisations.

The Alliance will encourage local authorities, or relevant public bodies, to approach it if they have concerns about support and development service delivery and to give an opportunity for the Alliance to offer advice, support, brokerage or remedial action, as appropriate. The Alliance will work closely with NAVCA to co-ordinate activities where relevant.

4.5 The Alliance will develop a Plan to market local support and development organisations, jointly promote the value and impact of Members and develop relationships with stakeholders.

4.6 The Alliance will actively seek opportunities for joint working, consortium building and collective action where this improves services to local voluntary and community sector organisations.

5. How the Alliance will work

5.1 The Alliance is a mechanism not an organisation.

5.2 Membership

Eligible signatories to this MoU must be support and development organisations in Yorkshire and the Humber that are:

- Engaged in supporting a thriving voluntary and community sector within Yorkshire and the Humber, and
- members of NAVCA, and/or
- members of their relevant support and development consortium (i.e. WYLDA, FOLDA, South Yorkshire ChangeUp Consortium, York and North Yorkshire Infrastructure Consortium, Regional Infrastructure Consortium) and/or
- members of local support and development consortia in Yorkshire and the Humber.

Eligibility criteria for membership will be reviewed at six monthly intervals.

By returning a signed membership form, signatories will become Members of The Alliance, and be committed to the principles and actions set out in the Memorandum of Understanding.

It is expected that Member organisations will be represented by their chief officer and that their signature of the MoU implies the support of their Management or Trustee Boards.

Members of the Alliance will sign up to the principles contained within it. If there is a breach of this Memorandum of Understanding, the Steering Group will work with Alliance partners to reach agreement about the best course of action.

5.3 Co-ordination

Once the MoU has been adopted, an initial Steering Group will be elected from Members of the Alliance, and bi-annually thereafter. The Steering Group will provide functional leadership for the Alliance. It will include:

- 2 support and development organisations from each functioning sub region. These will be elected by Alliance members in each sub region.
- 2 regional support and development organisations or networks. These will be elected by Alliance members.
- Yorkshire & the Humber Forum
- 2 co-opted places appointed by the Steering Group at its discretion to complement the elected membership taking into account thematic and specialist representation.
- NAVCA and Capacitybuilders will be invited to attend in an advisory capacity.

At the end of two years, half of the members will retire and these positions will become vacant for election.

A Chair will be elected at the first meeting of the Steering Group, and thereafter annually, on a simple majority. Sub groups may be delegated for particular tasks and will be expected to report back at the next full Steering Group meeting.

The Steering Group will meet quarterly. Notes of meetings will be kept and circulated as soon as conveniently possible by e-mail. Members will be responsible for informing and ensuring the agreement of their trustee or management boards as individually appropriate.

Decision making

- The Steering Group will make decisions on behalf of the Alliance including regular review of opportunities for joint working, consortium building and collective action.
- Where possible, the Steering Group will try to achieve a consensus. If there is a vote on any issue, the decision will be carried by a majority vote of those present.
- Only the Chair shall have the power to make statements on behalf of the Steering Group to external stakeholders and these actions will be reported back at Steering Group meetings.

Resolving problems – Steering Group

Where there is a conflict, dispute or difference within the Steering Group, in the first place it will try to resolve the matter with the parties concerned. If there is still no resolution then an independent third party will be nominated by the Steering Group. Their recommendation to the Steering Group shall be binding on the parties, subject only to a right of appeal to the Alliance Members where matters are deemed by the Steering Group to be of appropriate significance.

5.4 Financial arrangements

Funding

Members will be responsible for meeting their own costs of participation – for example; time, travel and incidental expenditure.

Fund-raising

Members will assist the Steering Group where possible to identify resources to support the project development and realisation, including feasibility.

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