

### **What is it – in short**

The term ‘civil society’ broadly refers to your work as someone in the Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise sector.

It will be a new formal agreement between the government and civil society which will define a new two-way relationship, one that is set on a national level, but also has the potential to change the way that we interact and work with both our local authority (Bristol City Council, BCC) as well as our combined authority (West of England Combined Authority, WECA) and local NHS.

The Covenant aims to:

- support collaboration between civil society organisations and government
- ensure respect for the different roles we play, and protect our independence
- support all public bodies and civil society organisations
- build on and support existing agreements in place at a local level

### **Why now?**

We have a new central government, and the new Prime Minister has made it a priority to reset the relationship with civil society.

NCVO (The National Council for Voluntary Organisations), who have been a key part of this work, have stated that *“While there have been some positive examples of collaboration, for too long our relationship has been transactional. Now we have an opportunity to reset it”*

### **What stage are we up to?**

We have the following draft principles, which make up the draft ‘framework’, which will be what the final agreement is centred around:

- **Recognition:** To ensure a strong and independent civil society
- **Partnership:** To ensure effective service delivery and policy-making
- **Participation:** To ensure people and communities can be heard and make a difference
- **Transparency:** To ensure civil society and government have the information needed to best serve people and communities

At this stage NCVO and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport particularly want to hear from organisations led by marginalised groups, and now is the perfect time for us to share our views.

### **How might this affect me and my organisation?**

This new agreement at both a national and local level has the potential to unlock new ways of working, initiatives and partnerships. At Voscur, we feel this is likely to be a positive benefit to the local VCSE sector, but only with input from you, sharing experiences both positive and negative. Your input at this early stage will help ensure this agreement makes a difference to the people and causes we work with and for.