

County Durham Compact



June 2011

The County Durham Compact

The Compact outlines the principles for a working relationship between the public sector and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) sometimes known as Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in County Durham. It is designed to enable them to work together more effectively to strengthen communities and improve people's lives. While there are many differences between the public sector and the VCS in County Durham, - which should be acknowledged and respected - the sectors have much in common; principally their mutual desire to help enhance the quality of life for the people and communities that they serve.

County Durham is a diverse County, the historic district areas of which were brought together under one Unitary Authority in April 2009. In 2010 the County Durham Partnership published: 'Altogether Better Durham', the Sustainable Community Strategy for County Durham 2010 – 2030. This is the overarching plan for County Durham and shows how partners will work together to improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area. A County Durham Compact Implementation Group with representation from all partner agencies has produced this refreshed local Compact. This new local Compact has been substantially based on the renewed national Compact. It is not only easier to use and understand but also upholds the principles and commitments previously agreed, as well as remaining relevant to the economic challenges being faced by both sectors.

The Compact embraces the principles of: respect, honesty, equality and diversity, citizen empowerment and the value of voluntary activity; these underpin our working relationships and the partners' commitments put these shared principles into practice. They provide the framework to reflect distinctive local issues and partnership undertakings in order to help achieve the following agreed outcomes:

- **A strong, diverse and independent voluntary and community sector**
- **Effective and transparent design and development of policies, programmes and services.**
- **Responsive and high quality programmes and services.**
- **Clear arrangements for managing changes to programmes and services.**
- **An equal and fair society**

This document is set out in a way that identifies each outcome followed by the undertakings to which the public sector and the VCS have agreed to meet that outcome. Towards the end of the document is a section that offers advice to both sectors on how to make the Compact work and how to tackle problems or issues that

may arise and how to resolve differences; including providing the contact details of organisations that may be able to offer advice and guidance on Compact issues.

The following are the Commitments that the Public Sector and the VCS in County Durham have made in order to achieve their agreed outcomes:

Outcome 1: A strong, diverse and independent voluntary and community sector

Undertakings for the Public sector:

- 1.1 Respect and uphold the independence of the VCS to deliver their mission, including their right to campaign, regardless of any relationship, financial or otherwise, which may exist.
- 1.2 Ensure the VCS are supported where they are helping the public sector fulfill its aims and resourced, when commissioned, in a reasonable and fair manner.
- 1.3 Collectively recognises the need to resource local advice and development support in order to assist the VCS with their capacity and capability to deliver positive outcomes.
- 1.4 Ensure greater transparency by making data and information more accessible, helping the VCS to challenge existing provision of services, access new markets and hold the public sector to account.
- 1.5 Consider a range of ways to support the VCS, such as enabling greater access to premises and resources owned or managed by the public sector.
- 1.6 Promote and implement the principle of good practice that provides volunteers with free Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks when engaged as volunteers within public sector organisations.

Undertakings for the VCS:

- 1.7 When campaigning or advocating, ensure that robust evidence is provided, including information about the source and range of people and communities represented.
- 1.8 Ensure independence is upheld, focusing on the cause represented, regardless of any relationship they have with the public sector, financial or otherwise.
- 1.9 Ensure that local support and development organisations understand and represent the diverse needs of local voluntary and community sector organisations.
- 1.10 Support and disseminate the principle of good practice that provides volunteers with free access to CRB checks.

Outcome 2: Effective and transparent design and development of policies, programmes and public services

Undertakings for the Public sector:

- 2.1 Ensure that social, environmental and economic value* forms a standard part of designing, developing and delivering policies, programmes and services.
- 2.2 Consider the social impact that may result from policy and programme development, and in particular consider how these may impact on local efforts to inspire and encourage social action and to empower communities.
- 2.3 Work with the VCS from the earliest possible stage to design policies, programmes and services. Ensure those likely to have a view are involved from the start and remove barriers that may prevent organisations contributing.
- 2.4 Give early notice of forthcoming consultations, where possible, allowing enough time for the VCS to involve their service users, beneficiaries, members, volunteers and trustees in preparing responses. Where it is appropriate, and enables meaningful engagement, conduct 12-week formal written consultations, with clear explanations and rationale for shorter time-frames or a more informal approach.
- 2.5 Provide feedback (for example through an overall public sector response) to explain how respondents have influenced the design and development of policies, programmes and public services, including where respondents' views have not been acted upon.
- 2.6 Assess the implications for the sector of new policies, legislation and guidance, aiming to reduce the bureaucratic burden, particularly on small organisations.

Undertakings for the VCS:

- 2.7 Work with the public sector from the earliest possible stage to design policies, programmes and services. Ensure those likely to have a view are involved from the start and remove barriers that may prevent organisations contributing.
- 2.8 Promote and respond to public sector consultations where appropriate.
- 2.9 Seek the views of service users, clients, beneficiaries, members, volunteers, and trustees when making representation to public sector. Be clear on who is being represented, in what capacity, and on what basis that representation is being made.
- 2.10 When putting forward ideas, focus on evidence-based solutions, with clear proposals for positive outcomes.
- 2.11 Assist the public sector to identify the implications of new policies, legislation and guidance on the VCS aiming to reduce the bureaucratic burden, particularly on small organisations.

* Social value encompasses a broad concept of value by incorporating social, environmental and economic costs and benefits. This means that as well as taking into account the direct effects of interventions, the wider effects on other areas of the economy should also be considered.

Outcome 3: Responsive and high-quality programmes and services

Undertakings for the Public sector:

3.1 Ensure that the VCS are enabled to deliver public services by opening up new markets in accordance with wider public service reform.

3.2 Consider a wide range of ways to fund or resource the VCS, including grants, contracts, loan finance, use of premises and so on. Work to remove barriers that may prevent the VCS accessing public sector funding, thereby enabling smaller organisations to become involved in delivering services where they are best placed to achieve the desired outcomes.

3.3 Ensure transparency by providing a clear rationale for all funding decisions.

3.4 Commit to multi-year funding where appropriate, where it adds value for money, and where it is within the scope of the public service settlement. The funding term should reflect the time it will take to deliver the outcome. If multi-year funding is not considered to be the best way of delivering the objective, explain the reasons for the decision.

3.5 Ensure well managed and transparent application and tendering processes, which are proportionate to the desired objectives and outcomes of programmes.

3.6 Agree with the VCS how outcomes, including the social, environmental or economic value, will be monitored before a contract or funding agreement is made. Ensure that monitoring and reporting is relevant and proportionate to the nature and size of the opportunity. Be clear about what information is being asked for, and why and how it will be used.

3.7 Ensure equal treatment across sectors, including reporting and monitoring arrangements, when tendering for contracts.

3.8 Recognise that when the VCS apply for a grant they can include appropriate and relevant overheads, including the costs associated with training and volunteer involvement.

3.9 Discuss and allocate risks to the organisation(s) best equipped to manage them. Where prime contractors are used, ensure they adhere to the principles of this Compact in allocating risk. Ensure delivery terms and risks are proportionate to the nature and value of the opportunity.

3.10 Ensure that the widest possible range of organisations can be involved in the provision of services through appropriate funding and financing models, for example outcome based payments and payment in advance of expenditure. Payment in advance of expenditure should be considered on a case by case basis where this represents value for money.

3.11 Ensure all bodies distributing funds on the public sector's behalf adhere to the commitments in this Compact. This includes the relationship between prime contractors and their supply chains. Demonstrate how funding arrangements and financial support can allow smaller and specialist providers to play a greater part.

3.12 Apply the Compact when distributing European funding. Where conflicts arise

with European regulations, discuss the potential effects and agree solutions together

3.13 Encourage feedback from a range of sources on the effectiveness of the Public sector's partnership with the VCS and how successful it has been in delivering their objectives. Consider placing this feedback in the public domain.

Undertakings for the VCS:

- 3.14 Ensure eligibility for funding before applying and be explicit about how outcomes will be achieved.
- 3.15 Ensure robust governance arrangements so that organisations can best manage any risk associated with service delivery and financing models, including giving funders early notice of significant changes in circumstances.
- 3.16 Be open and transparent about reporting, ensuring that there is no duplication in recording outputs, and recognise that monitoring, whether internal or external, is an aspect of good management practice.
- 3.17 Demonstrate the social, environmental or economic value of the programmes and services provided, where appropriate.
- 3.18 Help facilitate feedback from users and communities to the public sector to help improve delivery of programmes and services.
- 3.19 Recognise that the public sector can legitimately expect the VCS to give public recognition of its funding.

Outcome 4: Clear arrangements for managing changes to programmes and services

Undertakings for the Public sector:

- 4.1 If a programme or service is encountering problems, agree a timetable of actions with the programme or service to improve performance before making a decision to end a financial relationship.
- 4.2 Assess the impact on beneficiaries, service users and volunteers before deciding to reduce or end funding. Assess the need to re-allocate funds to another organisation serving the same group.
- 4.3 Where there are restrictions or changes to future resources, discuss with the VCS the potential implications as early as possible, give organisations the opportunity to respond, and consider the response fully, respecting sector expertise, before a final decision is made.
- 4.4 Give a minimum of three months' notice in writing when changing or ending a funding relationship or other support, apart from in exceptional circumstances, and provide a clear rationale for why the decision has been taken.

Undertakings for the VCS:

4.5 Plan for the end of funding to reduce any potential negative impact on beneficiaries and the organisation.

4.6 Contribute positively to reviews of programmes and funding practice.

4.7 Advise the public sector on the social, environmental or economic impact of funding changes, and on ways to minimise their effects on people in vulnerable situations.

Outcome 5: An equal and fair society

Undertakings for the Public sector:

5.1 Work with VCS organisations that represent, support or provide services to people specifically protected by legislation and other under-represented and disadvantaged groups. Understand the specific needs of these groups by actively seeking the views of service users and clients. Take these views into account, including assessing impact, when designing and implementing policies, programmes and services.

5.2 Acknowledge that organisations representing specific disadvantaged or under-represented group(s) can help promote social and community cohesion and should have equal access to public sector funding.

5.3 Take practical action to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality and to provide a voice for under-represented and disadvantaged groups to ensure that communities are inclusive and fair for all.

Undertakings for the VCS:

5.4 If receiving funding from a public sector body, show how the value of the work can help that body deliver its public sector duties on promoting equality and tackling discrimination.

5.5 Take practical action, such as through funding bids, to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and build stronger communities.

5.6 Enable the public sector to understand the needs of people specifically protected by legislation and other under-represented and disadvantage groups by proactively representing their views.

Making the Compact Work

The Compact should be viewed as an active agreement that sets out values and principles outlining a way of engaging and behaving between the public sector and the voluntary and community sector (VCS). It is a policy tool that should underpin working together in partnership however there may be occasions when both the public sector and the VCS need to refer to the Compact to resolve a problem.

Using the Compact is a two-way process that offers a way forward to tackle issues that may arise.

Resolving differences

By agreeing to the County Durham Compact the public sector and the VCS in County Durham have demonstrated their commitment to it. However, sometimes partners may fail to comply with the Compact and on these occasions those involved should explain why.

Disagreements over meeting the Compact commitments should be resolved, amicably and informally, between partners through open dialogue and negotiation before they escalate.

The Compact principles should form the basis of the relationship. Where issues are not covered in the commitments, compromise and discussion should be based on these principles.

When things do go wrong (as they sometimes do) there should be an open admission of the fact and an honest discussion to resolve the situation. The Compact is there to help build effective partnerships, and this includes navigating difficult times. Ignoring it would be both unacceptable and unhelpful. The Compact should be at the heart of dispute resolution as a constructive tool towards better partnerships

Ways in which organisations can make use of the Compact to resolve problems:

- Identify the key decision makers and write to them in terms of the Compact, identifying where there may have been a breach of the Compact and requesting that they investigate and justify the decision.
- Work with contacts in both sectors and get assistance with cases in a way that complements their work.
- Show how the Compact supports good working practice and policy development that agencies should abide by and demonstrate how the integration of the Compact into working practices is the basis of good practice.
- Work with organisations in a spirit of co-operation to bring the dispute to an end.

- Refer to policy lead from central government, seek to reinforce Compact principles and understand that a Compact way of working together can help enhance relationships.

Ensuring that working within the Compact agreement promotes good practice and supports effective working relationships will require monitoring of its implementation. The responsibility for this will lie with the County Durham Partnership who will rely upon the offices of One Voice Network and the Assistant Chief Executive's Service of Durham County Council to inform and report upon the impact of the Compact. Contact details for these may be found below:

One Voice Network
Park House
Station Road
Lanchester
Co. Durham
DH7 0EX
Tel: 01207 529621
Web address:
www.onevoice.co.uk

Assistant Chief Executive's Service
Durham County Council
County Hall
Durham
DH1 5UF
Tel: 0300 123 7070
Web address:
www.durham.gov.uk

For further advice on the Compact and how to resolve disagreements please contact the Office for Civil Society (for the public sector) and Compact Voice (for the VCS):

The Office for Civil society – Cabinet Office

Responsibility for the Compact at a national level sits with the Office for Civil Society (OCS). OCS is based within the Cabinet Office at the heart of public sector and works to support civil society organisations (otherwise known as the voluntary and community sector – VCS)

Office for Civil Society
2nd Floor, Admiralty Arch
South Side
The Mall
London SW1A 2WH
Tel: 0207 276 6400
Email: ocs.info@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk
Web address: www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Compact Voice

Compact Voice is the independent body representing the VCS in taking the Compact forward. It is made up of an autonomous alliance of leading third sector organisations with national, regional and local reach, providing the voice of the sector on issues relating to the Compact.

Compact Voice

Regent's Wharf
8 All Saints Street
London N1 9RL
Tel: 020 7520 2451
Email: compact@compactvoice.org.uk
Web address: www.compactvoice.org.uk

Other useful contact details:

Compact Advocacy

The Compact Advocacy Programme advocates on behalf of the VCS to ensure that public bodies treat the sector fairly. It handles cases for individual organisations when they have concerns with Compact practice at a national or local level. The programme is based at the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and is funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

Compact Advocacy
NCVO
Regent's Wharf
8 All Saints Street
London
N1 9RL
Tel: 020 7520 3161
Email: evsAdvice@ncvo-vol.org.uk
www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/compactadvocacy

Local Government Association (LGA)

Local Government House
Smith Square
London SW1P 3HZ
Tel: 020 7664 3131
Email: info@lga.gov.uk
Web address:
www.lga.gov.uk

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