



A Compact for Hampshire

1 What is a Compact?

A Compact is an agreement, drawn up by voluntary and community groups and public bodies together, setting out guidelines for how they should behave towards each other in order to deliver mutual benefits. It is a ready-made manual about best practice.

Mutual respect, understanding and fair treatment are the building blocks for real partnership between the voluntary & community and public sectors. Setting out how the two will work together is what the Compact is all about.

2 Why have one?

The public sector, in particular local authorities, is required to have a community leadership role and works with other organisations to achieve the economic, social and environmental well-being of residents. It relies on the voluntary & community sector to deliver services where, perhaps, it has no expertise in that area or finds it hard to make contact with particular individuals or communities. The voluntary & community sector makes a huge contribution to communities through the activities of volunteers, service provision, and support for individuals. The public sector often provides funding and support for such activities. Therefore it makes sense to have a set of principles and commitments which both agree to, in order to improve the way the two sectors work together.

Instead of doing things separately, a Compact is an expression of the desire of the voluntary & community and public sectors (we shall call these 'partners') to 'get it right together'.

3 Who is it for?

- Public bodies such as local authorities, NHS Trusts, Learning & Skills Council, Probation, Connexions, etc
- Voluntary & community organisations, not-for-profit organisations, registered charities, social enterprises, and small community groups, which may or may not receive any funding

4 What are the benefits of a Compact?

It is important that a Compact delivers real improvements. Where it works well, it changes the culture and behaviour of the partner organisations, for example:

- it gives consistency to the relationship, making it less dependent on particular individuals
- it provides an opportunity to change the way things are done by working together to solve problems and tackle the priorities of the local community
- its principles and commitments can be used as guidelines for all partnerships and multi-agency groups, such as Local Strategic Partnerships, Community Safety, Best Value Reviews, Children and Young People, Health Improvement Programmes, etc
- it can help deliver clearer and fairer funding processes
- it can make sure voluntary and community organisations are given the chance to express their views and to see how these are taken into account
- it helps the partners understand each other's priorities and constraints
- it provides a framework to discuss differences and sort out disagreements in a constructive way

5 Common principles - Working Together in Partnership

The purpose of this Compact is to improve communication, understanding, trust and respect. It seeks to encourage closer working and co-operation between the Compact partners for the benefit of all people in Hampshire.

The following principles have been agreed as a basis for a Compact way of working.

- a The Compact partners recognise the role each sector plays in improving the quality of life of people living and working in Hampshire.
- b All partners recognise the importance of, and are committed to, working together and communicating in an honest and open way for mutual benefit.
- c All partners are committed to valuing and celebrating the contribution of individual volunteers, and promoting voluntary activity.
- d Public agencies recognise the independence of the voluntary & community sector and its right to campaign and to challenge the policies and practices of decision-makers.
- e All partners acknowledge the different constraints under which they each work, for example legal and constitutional requirements on the public sector, and Charity Commission obligations for the voluntary & community sector.
- f All partners accept that both sectors are equally important and will respect and appreciate the rich diversity of roles and objectives of other Compact partners.
- g All partners are committed to being socially inclusive.
- h All partners are committed to the importance of promoting equality of opportunity for all people, regardless of race, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation and belief.
- i All partners will share information with each other with proper respect for confidentiality protocols and the Data Protection Act.
- j All partners acknowledge that differences may arise; however, all are committed to resolving disagreements

within the partnership in a constructive and respectful manner.

6 Consultation

Consultation helps to shape and influence the way decisions are made. Partners can bring a wide range of experience and knowledge to help this process.

It is important that consultation:

- is open and honest, making it clear what can be changed
- is inclusive and uses a variety of ways to collect views. There is no single right way
- has realistic timescales: for example, planning for the recommended minimum of 12 weeks for written consultation. This will allow partners time to talk to and represent the views of their organisations
- uses simple and clear language
- provides feedback and monitoring

When possible, consideration should be given to providing opportunities for joint consultation.

Commitments

All partners agree to:

- a develop and improve ways of consulting
- b make sure that consultation is inclusive
- c consider together new policies and procedures
- d use views and information received to make a difference

However: all partners agree that by following a Compact way of working, there will be more ongoing dialogue between the two sectors and this may mean there will be less need for formal consultation.

7 Funding resources

The aims of funding are to deliver the objectives of the funder and the organisation that is receiving the funding. Importantly we all want the best possible outcomes for local communities, whilst at the same time delivering value for money. In order to do this all partners need a process that is fair and effective with a mix of funding on offer that reflects the diverse

needs of voluntary & community organisations.

The voluntary & community sector understands that public bodies must comply with financial procedures set out by government and are accountable for the way public money is used. Public bodies recognise that many organisations are bound by the requirements of the Charity Commission, for example in relation to reserves.

Commitments

Public bodies are committed to:

- a making clear and publicising their priorities and conditions for funding
- b allocating resources and funding in an open and consistent manner
- c being clear about how the range of funding (grants, contracts or service level agreements) will be used to support different activities
- d recognising that the cost of providing a service includes a percentage of costs allocated to cover overheads
- e supporting voluntary & community organisations in obtaining funding from other sources

The voluntary & community sector is committed to:

- f developing and sharing its resources for the good of the whole community
- g operating proper management, control, accountability, and audit of finances
- h providing information about how the money has been used and what has been achieved as a result of the funding

8 Volunteering

Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy and can take many forms. It is freely given.

Individual volunteers make a huge contribution to local organisations and communities, and bring a range of social and economic benefits to Hampshire.

All partners recognise that volunteers bring a variety of qualities, skills, knowledge and experience.

The act and experience of volunteering:

- connects people to their local communities
- keeps people involved in lifelong learning
- can help break down social exclusion barriers as individuals gain skills, experience, confidence and contacts while helping others.

Commitments

a Volunteering is not a cheap option. The recruitment, training, support and management of volunteers costs money. All partners recognise the need to invest in volunteering and to follow best practice in order to ensure that there are sufficient resources to make volunteering a positive experience, and are committed to supporting and strengthening a volunteering infrastructure.

b Diversity is recognised, respected and valued. Volunteering should be open to all, regardless of background, age, race, sexual orientation, faith, etc.

9 Infrastructure

Voluntary & community organisations, whatever their size, need access to information, advice and training to help them achieve their aims. Generalist infrastructure organisations, sometimes called umbrella bodies, meet this need and also help the sharing of information and news between the sectors, and between voluntary and community organisations themselves. Examples of generalist infrastructure bodies are councils for voluntary service, rural community councils and volunteer bureaux.

Because of the sort of work they do, infrastructure organisations are not likely to attract public donations or funding from grant givers who often prefer to give money to groups working in the 'front line'. Yet without their efforts, opportunities that can help voluntary & community organisations be more effective can be lost. So these infrastructure bodies need access to strategic core funding.

Commitments

The public bodies are committed to:

- a the long term development of and investment in infrastructure support for the voluntary and community sector.

Hampshire's network of infrastructure bodies are committed to:

- b working together to build the capacity of the voluntary & community sector by providing high quality information, advice and training.
- c promoting quality standards and by working towards an appropriate quality mark themselves, they will aim to lead by example.

10 How do we know if the Compact is working?

The partners will develop together relevant and appropriate indicators to show whether a 'compact way of working' is being adopted. Local action plans will be drawn up to include arrangements for an annual review and annual work programme, including the adoption and implementation of Codes of Practice.

There will be a Hampshire-wide Annual Meeting open to everyone.

Commitments

All partners are committed to:

- a nominating a 'Compact' champion to raise awareness of and oversee implementation of the Compact within their organisation; in addition, within local authorities one councillor should be nominated to lead on Compact issues, and within other agencies this should be a member of the board or management committee.
- b set up a Compact development group at a district level to monitor progress. A representative of that group will report back to a countywide group.

11 Dealing with disagreements

The mark of a good Compact is what happens when things go wrong.

In the event of a disagreement in which the 'compact way of working' is at issue, it is important for all partners to have access to a process set up to deal with disagreements about whether the Compact and its Codes are being put into practice.

Commitments

Local arrangements will be set in place to discuss disagreements in which 'the Compact way of working' is at issue. If the disagreement cannot be resolved at this level, an organisation may request that the matter is considered by Compact Champions from a neighbouring district.

In the last resort, it is also possible to refer a disagreement to the Local Government Ombudsman if appropriate in cases of maladministration. Maladministration could include failure to follow the Compact in dealings with voluntary organisations. The local government ombudsmen also say that maladministration can include failure to follow a council's own policies. This could include Local Compacts.

Final 03.08.04

A number of partner organisations have already signed-up to this Compact. It is now available for local groups to sign.

A launch meeting for Fareham will be held on Thursday November 4th 04 at Ferneham hall. To which all local organisations are invited.

For further explanation contact Paul O'Beirne at Fareham Community Action
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A copy of the sign-up sheet is available (from 5th October) at
www.farehamaction.org.uk/compact