

Nottinghamshire Partnership

Nottinghamshire County Compact

Altogether Better

Compact
working together | better together

November 2008

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Foreword

This 'Compact Plus' is an agreement, drawn up jointly by local voluntary and community sector (VCS) groups and public bodies, establishing principles and guidelines on how we should work together.

It links closely to one of the measures of the Local Area Agreement (NI7) which requires that the partnership works together to create an environment where the third sector can thrive and shows its progress towards this goal. Clearly, this framework is the foundation for this work to take place.

In the County we have agreed to try and get one Compact Plus in place across the whole County Partnership so that we can support and work with each other by building up our expertise and sharing our experience around one partnership framework. Local public bodies increasingly commission and procure services from other partners rather than deliver them all directly and we are encouraged to commission services from VCS organisations, who deliver a broad range of local services to individuals and communities.

Increasingly, public and VCS bodies work together in partnerships to develop policies to address real and complex issues in communities – the Nottinghamshire Partnership and the LSP's are good examples of this. In this increasingly complex world where we are involved in developing relationships which are not defined simply by funding and where the funding relationship itself takes a variety of formats, Compact Plus provides a recognised and useful framework to help us manage and improve our relationship as equal partners.

Formalising and improving relationships between public bodies and the VCS will also help to develop a strong, diverse and vibrant VCS that can:

- help build social capital (individual and community knowledge, skills, networks etc)
- give people a way to address issues that concern them
- deliver personalised public services, particularly to marginalised and disadvantaged groups
- be a means through which communities can influence the design and delivery of public services
- ensure that smaller, less vocal organisations also have a voice and access to support

As Chair of the Nottinghamshire Partnership, I strongly commend this Compact Plus framework to you and urge each member of the partnership to embrace its principles as well as to implement its action plan. I believe it can help to make a real difference to communities across Nottinghamshire and those whom we serve, particularly since, its foundation recognises the equal value and unique qualities of all the partners and our commitment to work together for a better Nottinghamshire

David Kirkham

Chair of the Nottinghamshire Partnership

Introduction

We are delighted to introduce this joint Compact Plus between local public bodies and the voluntary and community sector. Compact Plus is an expression of the commitment of all partners to work together to improve the well-being of our local communities.

It recognises the value of the work undertaken by voluntary and community organisations in engaging the commitment, skills and interests of individuals to deliver local services and needs that could not be met by the statutory and private sectors alone.

The Compact Plus framework aims to build upon and improve existing relationships whilst recognising the challenges that we all face. All partners remain committed to the principles of partnership, consultation with, and support for the voluntary and community sector.

Compact Plus is a starting point not a conclusion. All partners are committed to working together to develop its application and effectiveness. As part of this process, supporting Codes of Good Practice and implementation plans will be jointly developed and published periodically.

As a working group we are sure that this practical document can help us to manage our complex relationships and further develop our many excellent partnerships. We look forward to continuing to work on these important issues together and with you and would like to thank all those who have contributed so far.

We have tried to write this document so that it takes into account equalities and diversity issues, we have also kept in mind the legislative framework that we need to work within. In writing it we would particularly like to acknowledge colleagues from the City and County Councils who developed the first Compact and Compact Plus in the City. Both documents have been used directly in the writing of this Compact Plus.

Creating a Thriving Third Sector Working Group
(formerly the Compact Plus Working Group)

Executive Summary

Our Vision

Our vision is that by implementing this Compact, we will improve our cross-sector working arrangements and the impact we make on building fairer and more prosperous communities across the County.

In developing and adopting the Compact Plus we recognise that

- Voluntary and community action is an essential component of democratic society and that an independent and diverse voluntary and community sector is fundamental to the well being of society.
- The statutory and voluntary and community sectors have different forms of accountability and are answerable to a different range of stakeholders, but common to both is the need for integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.
- Voluntary and community organisations are entitled to campaign within the law in order to advance their aims.
- Statutory partners play a significant role as funders of some voluntary and community organisations.
- All partners are concerned to reduce social exclusion and inequalities in our society, and improve community cohesion.
- All partners have different constraints and pressures that can be difficult to control or change.

The Way Forward

In order to achieve our vision we have identified four priorities:-

1. To improve Communication and Engagement
2. To improve Funding Arrangements for the VCS
3. To establish Compact Monitoring and Dispute Resolution Arrangements
4. To improve the Capacity of the VCS

The Compact plus Framework will evolve over time in response to changing circumstances. It is designed to provide the context within which existing partnership arrangements are developed, sustained, improved and scrutinised. We have also agreed an Action Plan (see page 13) to maintain the development process.

The Nottinghamshire Compact Plus

*‘Working together to improve services
and support thriving communities’*

Our Shared Values & Principles

We propose that these shared values and principles should be used to guide and underpin the long-term development of our working relationships within the Nottinghamshire Partnership.

These are to:

- Promote effective working between the sectors and encourage good practice and a consistent approach
- Together, build a democratic, fair and inclusive society by valuing and fostering VCS action and involvement
- Work together with integrity and communicate in accountable, open and honest ways for mutual benefit
- Recognise that the independence of the VCS is crucial to the development, delivery and scrutiny of quality public services
- Recognise that local public bodies and the VCS have distinct but valuable and complementary roles, in the development and delivery of public policy and services
- Recognise that VCS organisations are entitled, regardless of funding sources, to act as advocates in challenging and seeking changes in public policy
- Encourage all partners to learn from each other and play complementary roles in the development of inclusive, equitable and cohesive communities
- Acknowledge that differences of opinion will arise, but be committed to resolving them within partnerships in a constructive and respectful manner

- Ensure that resources are deployed to the benefit of our communities as efficiently and effectively as possible
- Ensure equity in the support provided to the diverse range of VCS organisations via local public bodies
- Acknowledge that we need to be more active in ensuring that minority ethnic and other disadvantaged groups are included in our consultation and policy development processes so that their views are heard and their concerns acted upon

Our Shared Commitment to Action

What we both need to do...	
Public bodies	VCS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise and support the independence of the sector, the quality of its service provision and its role in advocating for communities and individuals • Operate commissioning and funding processes (including de-commissioning or grant withdrawal) which recognise the sector's need to operate efficiently and effectively • Recognise that liaison and consultation need time and money. The VCS cannot undertake these activities at the expense of service provision. Clear protocols on consultation arrangements must be agreed with resources for liaison and consultation • Recognise the complexity of the sector and the broad range of groups representatives have to reflect. Pay to support proper representative processes and use the channels that are created • Recognise that small, local groups have an important voice. Support the VCS in channelling that voice so that it is heard particularly by supporting the infrastructure leadership role • Allocate resources against clear and consistent criteria in an open and fair process. Use agreed VCS quality standards monitoring processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain high standards of governance and service delivery to meet their obligations to funders and users within the framework of the law • Participate in partnership, liaison and review meetings to ensure that users, volunteers, members and supporters are informed and consulted, as appropriate, about activities and policy positions. So that when a case is presented to statutory partners or a consultation is responded to the views put are clear and have significance • Select and support representatives. However, a representative must say when he/she is speaking for him/herself or their organisation or on behalf of a wider network. Furthermore, the representative should report back to his/her organisation or network and other relevant interested organisations • Help and encourage joint working between small and excluded organisations • Develop quality standards appropriate to the sector, and put in place the leadership and policies for promoting best practice and equality of opportunity in activities, employment, involvement of volunteers and service provision

Our Key Priorities

In the first year our four key priorities are to:

1. Improve Communication and Engagement
2. Improve Funding Arrangements for the VCS
3. Establish Compact Monitoring and Dispute Resolution arrangements
4. Improve the Capacity of the VCS

Although a great deal of good work is already taking place to address the above priorities, there is a need to refocus our efforts to improve our collective impact.

Key Priority 1

Improve Communication and Engagement

Improving how local public bodies communicate and engage with the VCS is important for a variety of reasons. It will ensure that all of our services are more effective; that VCS organisations are not overburdened; that appropriate policies and services are developed in support of the VCS and their communities and that all groups, no matter how large or small, have an in-put. In fact this issue is so important that a Community Engagement Strategy has been produced for the Partnership, and the Compact will operate within that framework.

The VCS has a tremendous amount of existing grass-roots knowledge, skills and experience and its role is expanding to provide more local services – it's important that all members of the partnership have access to their expertise.

What will success look like?

- VCS organisations feel more informed and listened to. They are involved in decision-making and receive feedback, about how their contribution was used.
- We continue to build trust and there are fewer unexplained surprises
- Compact Plus is widely known about and understood within both sectors and used to frame partnership arrangements
- The world outside of Nottinghamshire is aware of a positive story about partnership working between the VCS, and the other LAA partners.
- Smaller groups and unaffiliated organisations increasingly feel that their views are being heard

What do we need to do?

1. Develop a consistent and simplified cross-agency system for VCS communication and engagement processes
2. Improve and simplify information sharing systems across the sectors - including the development of appropriate contact databases
3. Improve the capacity of the VCS to become more representative of this diverse sector, including small and un-incorporated community organisations

Key Priority 2

Improve Funding Arrangements for the VCS

Naturally, the VCS need greater funding security and stability; local Public Bodies want genuine accountability and the public requires good quality services and value for money.

Our recognition of the important role that the VCS plays in our communities means that there is a need to continue to fund small, new and un-staffed VCS organisations via grant aid, as well as to commission some organisations to provide services that may have been delivered by other sectors previously, or would be better delivered by the VCS. There is also a need to continue to invest in the development and support of the VCS especially through the infrastructure part of the VCS.

We need to ensure that funding and purchasing processes are fair, streamlined and easily understood. That the monitoring and reporting arrangements are proportionate to the level of funding provided, and that we measure and take account of the impact on communities that our funding decisions have made.

We need to ensure that the VCS is involved in the early planning stages of service strategies so that they can assist with the identification of community priorities and requirements, as well as anticipated benefits to service users.

What will success look like?

- A strategic approach is taken to funding allocation and everyone is aware of the extent, purpose and limitations of funding support
- There are open and transparent systems for allocating funding and commissioning services which focus on outcomes and making a difference
- The impact of funding decisions are evaluated and used to inform future decisions
- There is openness and transparency around the commissioning and decommissioning of funding and, where any VCS services are to be decommissioned, a partnership approach with clear consultation channels is agreed
- 'Full cost recovery' is 'the norm' for contracted services.

- A mixed funding approach is maintained with clear and simple grant aid processes.

What do we need to do?

1. Make funding arrangements as transparent and streamlined for VCS organisations as possible.
2. Simplify and streamline commissioning and procurement processes with the support of the VCS, joining up processes where possible
3. Increase the capacity of the VCS to respond to commissioning and procurement processes and to deliver local services
4. Clarify the role of statutory sector development and support officers to make sure they are useful to the development of local groups and that the broadest range and number of groups are supported.
5. Partners need to develop a database to record core details about VCS groups – to enable streamlining of funding applications (e.g. organisation aims, constitutions) to reduce bureaucracy.
6. Partners need to make sure that full cost recovery (FCR) is widely known about and is understood amongst funders and the VCS most importantly there must be a commitment to achieving it.
7. Develop better funding information and advice services including a funding guide.
8. Review and maintain mixed funding streams (grants, contracts and service agreements).

Key Priority 3

Establish Compact Monitoring and Dispute Resolution Arrangements

It is crucial that the Compact Plus framework is used by all the members of the Partnership to improve our joint working practices.

Sometimes disputes between partners will arise. When this happens it is important that efforts are made to resolve matters amicably. Where this is not possible the Compact Plus framework must have a 'Disputes Resolution Scheme' to provide arbitration. More importantly we need to make sure that we are making progress and improving out partnership practice by regularly reviewing our action plan and measuring our impact.

What will success look like?

- All partners use the Compact Plus framework to improve and enhance partnership arrangements and this is bedded into their normal working procedures.
- Cross-sector disagreements are mediated and resolved.
- A cross-sector group is established to monitor and report progress on Compact Plus implementation to the LAA Scrutiny Committee

What do we need to do?

1. Introduce a Compact Plus Impact Assessment system for all relevant partner reports, for example, Local Authority Delegated Decision and Cabinet reports, reports to PCT Boards
2. Establish a cross-sector Compact Plus Implementation Group to evaluate progress at a senior level and report to the LAA Scrutiny Committee.
3. Agree a 'Compact Champion' to Chair the Implementation Group and help partners to 'unblock' processes and make changes if difficulties arise.
4. Develop a 'Disputes Resolution System' – this needs to involve representatives from across the partnership.

Key Priority 4

Improve the Capacity of the VCS

Local Public Bodies have ever increasing expectations that the VCS will be able and willing to be consulted on their plans and priorities. They use the sector to consult and engage local communities. They often expect that the VCS is willing and has the capacity to deliver public services themselves. These expectations put pressure on the VCS - pressure that is not always acknowledged or supported.

What will success look like?

- VCS organisations are able to meet the expectations of funding bodies as a result of collaborative and supportive partnerships
- VCS organisations contribute to commissioning and procurement processes and feel that their contributions are assessed fairly
- Services are increasingly designed and delivered in response to local needs
- The VCS is involved in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of services
- There is a strategic approach to providing VCS infrastructure services which are stable and are of a high level of quality across the County.

What do we need to do?

1. All partners need to recognise the importance and value of investing in VCS capacity building such as infrastructure development, and develop a strategy to do so.
2. Ensure the continuing development of infrastructure organisations in Nottinghamshire building on and implementing the infrastructure review to establish stable funding of and outcomes for VCS support and development.
3. Public sector agencies need to work closely together to improve the development of the VCS, develop shared objectives and share scarce developmental resources and expertise.
4. Introduce a training module for the induction of local public bodies staff on the role of the VCS in improving the quality of life in Nottinghamshire

Looking to the Future

Next steps

This Compact Plus framework document will only be useful if it is used to improve the standard and content of collaborative work-programmes and outcomes.

It is a fresh start in the process of developing our joint work and will be reviewed regularly through the stronger Communities Partnership.

If you have any comments on this framework document, require copies in alternative formats or further information, please contact:

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Definitions and Explanations

What is the Compact?

A national Compact was developed in 1998 by Central Government which recognised that relationships between government and the voluntary and community sector (VCS) needed to improve.

In response to this a Compact for the County and many of its partners was developed in 2000. In 2005 Central Government produced further guidance for public sector organisations on developing 'Compact Plus' in partnership with their local VCS's. These guidelines encouraged the establishment of formal relationships between the sectors to improve the way they work together.

Definitions

- A. Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations are formed managed and directed by a group of people in the community, acting in a voluntary capacity. Registration as charity is not essential, but the organisations governing documents should clearly indicate the voluntary nature of the organisation, and its governing body. The governing documents will also demonstrate that EITHER the organisation runs on a non-for-profit basis, OR that any profits generated must be used for the benefit of the users/community it was set up to serve. A proportion of the services provided should normally be provided through volunteers.

Housing Associations which are registered as Social Landlords, and therefore have a property development role, are not defined and consulted as part of the VCS. Groups which provide/manage housing services, and have a voluntary governing body are, even if their title calls them a Housing Association.

Within Nottinghamshire grant aid budgets and partnership arrangements generally support and involve groups which are located/managed within the County or a neighbouring Authority and provide services/support to County residents. National organisations which happen to be located within the County are only funded/involved for the specific parts of their service which are provided for County residents.

B. Local Public Bodies

All local statutory bodies that have funding or other partnership arrangements with the VCS, specifically the County Council, the District Councils, Primary Care Trusts, the Police, the Fire and Rescue Service, the Probation Service.

C. LSP –Local Strategic Partnership

District based partnership of elected members and local authority officers with voluntary and private sector representatives working together with other statutory partners to draw up and deliver joint plans to tackle issues of concern for the district area.

D. County Partnership.

The group of partners who are jointly responsible for managing and delivering the Nottinghamshire LAA. It is chaired by the leader of the County Council and covers the geographical area of the county. Members include all the District councils, PCT's, VCS, Police, Fire and Rescue, business representatives and so on.

E. LAA –Local Area Agreement

The Government requires all local state partners to work together, to provide co-ordinated services and tackle cross-cutting issues like a healthy, safe and positive environment for the people of Nottinghamshire. Together they sign up to the LAA which has a number of indicators which they are collectively measured against by government

F. Thriving Third Sector (T3S) - National Indicator 7

Is one of the indicators of the LAA that the Nottinghamshire partnership has chosen to be measured against. It is, "the extent to which the partnership creates an environment for a thriving Third Sector". The compact is an important part of achieving this measure and hence the partnership is linking the two together.

Who's who?

Membership of the Thriving Third Sector (T3S) Working Group

VCS

NAVO
Gedling CVS
Rushcliffe CVS
Mansfield CVS
HLG
RCAN

Public Bodies

Nottinghamshire County Council
Nottinghamshire PCT
East Midlands Ambulance Service
Mansfield District Council
Notts County DAAT
Notts Police

Membership of the Nottinghamshire Funders Forum

All potential funders of the VCS are invited to this forum and informed about its progress.

These include District Councils, PCT's, Police, Fire and Rescue, Ambulance Services, Big Lottery, Community Foundation and Nottinghamshire County Council.
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