

insight



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Compact

working together better together

Welcome to the new quarterly newsletter about the Compact. This newsletter is produced by the key organisations associated with the Compact:

- The Commission for the Compact
- Compact Voice
- Compact Advocacy
- The Office of the Third Sector
- The Local Government Association (LGA)

The Compact is all about better partnership working and creating better outcomes for individuals and local communities. Established in 1998, the Compact is an agreement between Government and the voluntary and community sector in England. It recognises shared values, principles and commitments and sets out guidelines for how both parties should work together.

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Compact Debate gets underway

A three month campaign to discuss the future of the Compact and the role of the Commission for the Compact is now well underway.

In early July, Phil Hope MP, Minister for the Third Sector, asked Sir Bert Massie CBE, Commissioner for the Compact, to start a debate about the Compact and try to find some consensus on a way forward.

"The original Compact agreement was agreed back in November 1998 and is now supplemented by Five Codes of Practice," said Sir Bert. "It is now approaching its tenth anniversary, and it's time to consider all the different options for the future of the Compact and the role of the Commission."

To help stimulate the debate, the Commission for the Compact has issued a discussion paper containing questions and set up a dedicated email address to receive comments.

Views and responses can be sent to the Commission until Monday 10 November 2008 at: debate@thecompact.org.uk and the discussion paper can be downloaded from: www.thecompact.org.uk/compactdebate

Compact Voice is consulting widely with the sector and has produced an information pack for local and national organisations. This is available from: www.compactvoice.org.co.uk and its discussion forum can be accessed at: www.compact.ning.com

In addition, nearly 200 delegates are taking part in a one-day conference entitled *The Compact Debate* at the International Convention Centre (ICC) in Birmingham on Tuesday 9 September 2008.

Delegates representing the voluntary and community sector and the public sector will have the chance to participate in the debate and hear key speakers such as Phil Hope MP, Sir Bert Massie CBE, Simon Blake, Chair of Compact Voice, and Sir Jeremy Beecham, Vice Chair of the Local Government Association.

The Commission will then analyse the views and evidence collected during the three month campaign, and forward proposals to the Minister. Following this, the Government will carry out a formal impact assessment on the proposals before undertaking a full public consultation in 2009.

- National News -

New Third Sector Research Centre

The University of Birmingham will lead a new Third Sector Research Centre, dedicated to analysing the impact of the sector's activities. Working in partnership with the University of Southampton, the centre aims to bring about a step change in the quality and quantity of hard evidence available to support the work of third sector organisations.

The centre is funded by the Office of the Third Sector, the Economic and Social Research Council and the Barrow Cadbury Trust, and will receive an investment of £10.25 million.

CAA Consultation

Consultation on the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) framework for local government closes on Monday 20 October 2008. For more information about how to respond or take part in the series of regional events being held during September and October 2008, please visit:

www.audit-commission.gov.uk/caa/consultation.asp

Out and About

Sir Bert Massie CBE, Commissioner for the Compact, and Simon Blake, Chair of Compact Voice, will be attending a lunch event organised by ACEVO to discuss the future of the Compact on Thursday 25 September 2008 in London.

Sir Bert will be one of the speakers at NCVO's autumn conference on Friday 7 November 2008 in Manchester.



New Look for Compact Website

The Compact website has unveiled a brand new look.

The site is aimed at anyone who wants to find out more about the Compact and the latest news and developments. As part of its makeover, the website now features a new forum facility, events section and media centre. The website also includes a **Browsealoud** feature, which reads web pages aloud for people who find it difficult to read online.



Later this autumn will see the launch of a picture gallery and a blogs facility and if you would like to contribute and write one of the blogs then please get in touch!

On the website, you can also sign up for **e-Compact news**, a monthly news update, which is due to start at the end of September 2008.

To view the Compact website, please visit:
www.thecompact.org.uk

For more information, please contact:

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Review of BME Code

The prominent human rights barrister, Karon Monaghan QC (below), has undertaken an independent legal analysis and review of the Compact's Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Code.

"The work has been undertaken to ensure that the Compact remains relevant, useful and challenging on BME and equalities issues, and takes into account recent developments in equality, diversity, race relations and human rights law," explains Nick Drew, Policy Adviser at the Commission for the Compact, which commissioned the research.

The BME Code was launched in February 2001 and it sets out the way in which government should aim to work in partnership with organisations representing BME groups. Karon's research findings and recommendations will be announced this September, and consultation activity concerning the BME Code with the voluntary and community sector will take place this autumn. This will include a series of workshops, the first of which will take place on Friday 7 November 2008 in Leicester.

For more information, please contact:
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Take the Independence Pledge

Compact Voice's campaign on independence entitled *It's Our Shout* runs until Christmas, giving voluntary organisations time to take the independence pledge and register at www.ncvo-consult.org.uk/ip

The pledge reads:

"We will give voice to the needs of communities and those we represent, campaign fearlessly and responsibly for our causes and uphold our independence by using our Compact, resisting external interference, and being mission focused."

At the Sector Independence Day event on Friday 4 July 2008 in London, organised jointly with the Commission for the Compact, participants discussed the latest research findings and produced ideas for strengthening independence. These included taking specific steps to underpin sticking to organisational mission and developing skills to use the Compact smarter.

Whilst the campaign asks the sector to take responsibility for their independence, it also calls on town and county halls to invite in groups rarely engaged.

National and local campaign packs are available from:
www.thecompact.org.uk/compactvoice

The Compact takes to the Stage

The Compact takes centre stage in a play commissioned by the One Compact for Hampshire. Entitled *Volunteer Vera*, this play was commissioned in 2005 and is now available on dvd.

The storyline highlights the complexities of the Compact, and follows the trials and tribulations of Vera, who runs an informal youth group. When the Government issues a White Paper outlining requirements for voluntary and community groups, Vera finds that she has no choice but to come face to face with her local authority, and the play addresses the often difficult relationship between members of the voluntary sector and local authority officers.

Since 2005, the play has toured across England to conferences and seminars, supported either by a Q&A session with members of the production team or in partnership with local professionals. It was devised to help promote Compact development and targets both statutory organisations and voluntary and community groups, with a humorous, tongue-in-cheek approach.



A dvd of the play, with accompanying worksheets, is available from Hampshire County Council and can be obtained at the following link:
<http://www.hants.gov.uk/shop>

- Local News -

Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire Compact will be holding a conference on Wednesday 29 October 2008. The theme will be *Partnership and Public Law - creating the environment for a thriving third sector* and the speakers include representatives from Compact Voice, Compact Advocacy, the Public Law Project and the Commission for the Compact.

Shropshire

Shropshire Local Compact is expecting nearly 150 delegates at its Annual Compact Conference on Wednesday 5 November 2008 at Shrewsbury Football Club. The theme of the conference is *New opportunities and consultation on One Council Compact*.

South East

A draft of a Regional Compact for the South East is to be discussed at the annual conference of Regional Action and Involvement South East (RAISE). This takes place in Oxford on Thursday 6 November 2008 and Richard Corden, Chief Executive of the Commission for the Compact, will be one of the speakers.



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If you have any news items for [insight](#) we'd love to hear from you.

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This month, insight talks to Jeremy Crook OBE, Director of the Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG)



Making Changes for the Better

With over 25 years' experience of promoting diversity and developing practical solutions in the public, private and third sectors, Jeremy is a leading authority on the subject. He is a member of the Department for Work and Pensions Ethnic Minority Advisory Group, the Department for Communities and Local Government Third Sector Partnership Board, Vice Chair of the national Learning and Skills Council's Equality and Diversity Committee, Government Office for London's BME Refugee and Faith Advisory Group and a member of the Compact Voice Board.

How would you describe the BME third sector at the moment?

"Quite frankly, the sector is in a fragile state. It's under resourced and threatened by some central government policies which seem to reward large providers and penalise those service providers which focus on BME communities. Many are lacking sustainable funding and premises from which to operate.

"On the positive side, Voice4Change England, the national voice for the BME third sector, provides significant support to strengthen smaller voices across the BME third sector."

What are the most pressing issues facing the sector?

"The issue of inconsistency with regards to funding reaching BME groups continues to be a challenge. Mechanisms need to be put in place to

ensure funding reaches those groups who are making a difference rather than commissioning opportunities going straight to the larger organisations. Very few BME groups are active in Local Strategic Partnerships. In order to improve, it is critical that this changes and there is more representation from BME organisations.

"The lack of investment in the BME sector and engagement from government at all levels continues to be a major concern. Voice4Change England is making positive steps to improve this but there is still a lot of room for improvement."

Sir Bert Massie and Phil Hope MP have recently announced a debate on the future of the Compact. How would you like to see the Compact develop?

"The Compact certainly needs to be moved on. I support the arguments being made for the Commissioner's office to have legal powers but I'm not convinced the Compact itself should be given a different status in law at this stage.

"Capacity on the ground to champion the Compact and the scope for delegation of Commissioner Office powers at the local level would also be conducive in the development of the Compact for the BME third sector.

"It should also be remodelled to ensure it is free from loopholes. In its current form, particularly within the BME Code, there are more than a few and these

obviously undermine its credibility as a useful document."

Does the BME third sector make sufficient use of the Compact?

"The Compact for the BME third sector is important and needs updating. BME groups that focus on meeting the needs of their own communities should be valued and funded and not penalised in any shape or form. You can't have cohesive communities when the social and economic needs of some ethnic groups are not being met.

"One of the challenges in implementing the Compact comes back to the issue of the lack of resources within the BME sector. We would support actions to strengthen the Compact through investment in resources to enable the BME third sector to be better positioned to use it effectively."

What one change would you like to see in the relationship between the government and the BME sector to improve how they work together?

"What is needed is greater recognition of the BME third sector across the whole of government. It should be across the board, not just the role of Office of the Third Sector, to identify with BME groups. A formal advisory group on policy and development should be put in place to achieve this."

For more information about BTEG, please visit:
www.bteg.co.uk

Compact at Work

The Compact Advocacy Programme provides free advice and support for voluntary and community organisations that are experiencing problems with their statutory partners. Their level of involvement can vary from a chat over the phone to arranging and attending meetings with officials, lobbying Ministers and talking to the press.

Below are two examples illustrating how the Compact Advocacy Programme has helped resolve situations where the Compact was not followed.

Case Study 1

Advocacy case with the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG)

In April, just as many organisations were expecting a funding decision from CLG's Strategic Partnership Programme, the Department instead decided to cancel the programme. The letter informing applicants said there would be a replacement funding programme but did not give much detail.

This meant time and money had been lost for organisations that had applied and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) decided it wanted to challenge this poor practice by CLG. On behalf of NCVO, the Foyer Federation, the National Housing Federation and Voice4Change England, the Compact Advocacy Programme wrote to Secretary of State Hazel Blears, outlining how CLG's actions were in stark contrast to Compact principles.

The Compact Funding Code lists principles of good funding, which had not been followed in this case, and there is also a paragraph on timely decisions (3.11) which was relevant for this situation.

CLG was quick to apologise for the way the funding programme had been handled and expressed their commitment to the Compact. They also asked for Compact Advocacy's help in putting things right and ensuring that the replacement funding programme was Compact compliant. Compact Advocacy met with CLG to discuss the implications of the cancellation and to discuss next steps.

In July, CLG announced the replacement programme, the Empowerment Fund, which was put out for consultation. The money that was originally set aside for the Strategic Partnership Programme is still available to the sector, but the fund now fits better with the main focus of the Department.

Case Study 2

Advocacy case on South London HIV Commissioning

The Compact Advocacy Programme was approached by various voluntary organisations, including Feedback South London, a representative body for HIV-positive service users. These organisations were concerned about the recent consultation and retendering process for South London HIV services.

Their concerns included the lack of clarity on how the consultation process would work and short timescales, which limited organisations' ability to consult their service users. The organisations also felt their consultation feedback was not reflected in the final tender documents. All of these issues are covered in the Compact's Consultation Code of Good Practice and the Funding Code's section on involving the voluntary sector in programme design.

The Compact Advocacy Programme wrote to the lead Primary Care Trust (PCT) outlining the Compact issues and the suggested ways forward. Lead PCT commissioners agreed to a meeting with the concerned organisations to discuss the issues raised and to enter into a dialogue about how to improve processes in future.

The result of this meeting was a draft timeline, showing the necessary timescales for a fully-Compact compliant process, which can be implemented in the next round of consultation and tendering. Commissioners also demonstrated commitment to exploring development opportunities for smaller voluntary organisations that were not successful in the recent tendering round.

These discussions also led to the creation of a formal Partnership Board structure, which includes representatives from commissioners, providers, service users and clinics. This will have direct input into the consultation process and the next tendering round for these services.

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“... we are challenging the perception that the Compact is a dry document and showing that it can be a tool for developing constructive relationships.”

Close up on Gloucestershire Compact

First launched in May 2004, the Gloucestershire Compact has been developed to include an additional six - not the usual five - Codes of Practice.

“We have an extra Code focusing just on multi-sector partnerships because that’s very important within our local area,” explains Angela Gilbert from Cheltenham Voluntary and Community Action (VCA).

“When we developed this Code of Practice, a lot of thematic partnerships were springing up and we felt it would be useful to have a code to specifically address effective partnership working and ensure that the voluntary and community sector was enabled to fully participate.

“Although the Compact itself is in effect all about multi-sector partnerships, our Code goes into more detail about the practicalities and things to consider when starting out.”

Both Angela and her colleague Diana Billingham from Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust firmly believe the Gloucestershire Compact is now becoming deeply embedded in their local infrastructure.

Angela continues, “The biggest challenge is getting buy-in from everyone but we are starting to see results. Our Compact is becoming part of the normal working day practice and we are challenging the perception that the Compact is a dry document and showing that it can be a tool for developing constructive relationships.”

One initiative taking shape at the moment is their reciprocal work shadowing programme. This involves people from both the voluntary and community sector and the public sector spending half a day in each other’s workplaces to gain an insight into what it is really like to work in that environment.

“It’s a great scheme and we’ve had some really good feedback,” comments Diana.

“We’re also signing up Compact Champions and Compact Ambassadors to implement and raise awareness of the Compact. So far, we’ve been fortunate that many people across numerous organisations are willing to get involved but we’re always on the lookout for more volunteers!”

Gloucestershire Compact was awarded a Compact Commendation in 2005 in recognition of its robust progress review systems and training mechanisms. Since then, they have continued to use the Compact to improve relationships between the public and voluntary community sectors both contractually and strategically in Gloucestershire.

“One example of this can be seen in our approach to grant funding,” explains Diana. “Our Funding and Procurement Code is being used as an effective instrument to prevent conflict in this area. It ensures everything is discussed openly and there are no unexpected surprises.”

The Gloucestershire Compact is determined to keep this momentum going and during this year’s Compact Week in early November, they will be holding an event showcasing positive examples of good practice taking place in Gloucestershire and showing how much progress has been made in the last four years.

“There’s still a lot of work to be done to further partnership working within the region but it’s looking good and we have strong commitment from both the voluntary and community sector and the public sector,” adds Angela.

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Top, left to right: Angela Gilbert and Diana Billingham

Research findings due out

This autumn, the Commission for the Compact is publishing the findings of two pieces of research.

The first piece of research concerns the independence of third sector organisations and how government departments approach this issue. The research found that the effectiveness of the Compact on independence is *"neither as dire nor as desirable as either its detractors or supporters would suggest"* and makes recommendations for addressing some of the issues.

The second piece of research concerns the role of the Compact in improving relationships between hospices and Primary Care Trusts. This research was commissioned in partnership with Help the Hospices and the final report uses evidence gathered from ten case studies and identifies a series of learning points for both hospices and Primary Care Trusts. It found that the Compact can be used as a tool for positive relationships, although implementation of the Compact varied in the different areas.

For news about the research and to download copies of the reports, please visit:

www.thecompact.org.uk

New Consultation Code

In July 2008, the Government published a new Code of Practice on Consultation. This new Code is the result of a thorough review of Government consultations and it will apply from November 2008 to all Central Government Departments' formal, written consultation exercises. Other public sector organisations are invited to sign up to the Code and a list of organisations adopting the Code will be published in November along with supporting guidance.

The Office of the Third Sector, Compact Voice and the Commission for the Compact will be forwarding suggestions for inclusion in the supporting guidance, and will consider the impact of the new Code on the Compact's own Consultation and Policy Appraisal Code of Good Practice.

To download a copy of the Government's new Code of Practice on Consultation, please visit:

www.berr.gov.uk/files/file47158.pdf

What makes a successful Local Compact?

Research identifying the key factors behind successful Local Compacts and positive local partnership relationships will be explored at five regional seminars this September and October 2008.

Organised by the Commission for the Compact, the seminars follow on from research carried out earlier this year with the Institute of Voluntary Action Research (IVAR). This report was published at the end of August 2008.

The seminars are free of charge and will take place in:

- Birmingham (22 September 2008)
- Exeter (23 September 2008)
- London (26 September 2008)
- Liverpool (29 September 2008)
- Newcastle (1 October 2008)

For further information and to download the findings from the research, please visit

www.thecompact.org.uk/events

Going Online

The Office of the Third Sector (OTS), the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and the Local Government Association (LGA) are working together to develop an online Community of Practice. This aims to support local authorities and their partners in improving performance against National Indicators 6 and 7, which cover *participation in regular volunteering* (NI6) and *environment for a thriving third sector* (NI7). The online Community of Practice will go live in October. It will ensure that local authorities have access to information and support and examples of good practice. Features will include a discussion forum, a document library, an event calendar, news feeds and blogs. In addition, a series of events for key local authority staff will also take place this autumn.

IDeA provides a whole range of communities of practice for local government, which can be found at:

<http://www.idea.gov.uk/welcome.do>

For more information, please contact:

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Compact Week2008

'Making the Compact a Reality' is the theme for this year's Compact Week campaign, which takes place from Saturday 1 November to Saturday 8 November 2008.

This is the fifth year that Compact Week has taken place and this national awareness week aims to promote the Compact and engage national Government bodies, regional bodies, local authorities and other public sector partners who have Local and Regional Compacts.

The week includes a series of co-ordinated activities, events and media activity across England, with the aim of publicising the Compact as well as encouraging greater understanding and wider implementation of the Compact.

"Compact Week is the ideal opportunity to fix a date in everyone's diary to do something to drive the Compact forward and make it a reality for all involved," explains Richard Corden, Chief Executive of the Commission for the Compact.

From mid August, the Compact Week 2008 website has been up and running. Here Local Compact partners and Government bodies can download logos, register and promote their activities and events, and see what other areas are doing. A diary of events will be maintained on the Compact website and will be updated on a regular basis.

Events taking place include an awards luncheon in London on Wednesday 5 November 2008 to announce the results of the Compact Awards 2008. This will be followed by an early evening reception at No 11 Downing Street to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Compact.

Other events will take place in Gloucestershire, Shropshire, East Sussex, Oxford and Harrogate, and Derbyshire and London will also be holding their own regional versions of the Compact Awards.

The Compact Week website also features a **Compact Week Guidance Pack**, which contains information and guidance materials to assist Local Compact partners and Government bodies in their communications activities.

It also recommends that during Compact Week 2008, Local Compact partners should aim to:

- Raise awareness of their Local Compact, targeting at least 100 local groups
- Recruit at least 10 Compact Champions
- Identify any gaps where they think there should be a Local Compact link (Local Area Agreement, scrutiny process, commissioning, etc) and develop links with potential partner organisations
- Tie in any local events and initiatives into the current national debate on the future of the Compact

For more information, please visit the Compact Week 2008 website at:

www.thecompact.org.uk/compactweek

Resources, resources, resources

A limited supply of Compact-branded merchandise is available free of charge for Local Compact partners holding events during Compact Week. This includes Compact-branded pens and notepads plus enamel Compact badges for your Compact Champions.

If you would like to order any items, please download and complete the order form from the Compact website at:

www.thecompact.org.uk/compactweek

If you have any queries, please contact:
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