

**Ribble Valley Voluntary &
Community Sector
Compact**

Introduction

A Compact is a statement of partnership between various organisations. It is a commitment to work together more closely and effectively and to respect each others' rights and responsibilities. It offers a new approach to partnership, and a framework to develop more detailed agreements in specific areas in the future.

This Compact is being drawn up in consultation with the community and voluntary sector * in Ribble Valley and Ribble Valley Borough Council.

The Compact represents a commitment by the Partners - it is not intended to be a legally binding formal contract but derives its authority from the endorsement of the Partners through the consultation process and through formal adoption by partners. The Compact sets out a shared vision for the Partners, establishing the principles for the relationship between the Partners and to clarify the expectations the Partners have of each other.

The Government has recognised that *"the work of voluntary and community organisations is central to (its) mission"* (Tony Blair) and has therefore produced a National Compact to provide a general framework and act as an enabling mechanism to enhance relationships between Government and the community and voluntary sector. The local Ribble Valley Compact draws on the structure and content of the National Compact.

The aim has been to draft a statement that will be applicable across a whole range of relationships between the community and voluntary sector and the Council. Each Council service will be expected to take the Compact into account when revising existing policies, strategies and action plans and when devising new ones.

The Compact will compliment and support Council strategies and plans and those of voluntary and community sector bodies.

In addition, mechanisms should be established to monitor adherence to the principles set out in the document by both the community and voluntary sector and the Council. The Compact itself will be subject to joint review.

* (The voluntary sector is often referred to as the 'third sector' alongside the public sector and private sector. It is generally understood to include voluntary organisations, charities and community groups.

Key Principles and Values:

The following key principles and values are a foundation for the Ribble Valley Compact, and the relationship between the community and voluntary sector and Ribble Valley Borough Council

- The relationship between the community and voluntary sector and the public sector must be one of mutual respect and equality.
- All partners are accountable for their actions and common throughout is the need for integrity, objectivity, openness, honesty and leadership.
- The development of an open and honest relationship between the community and voluntary sector and the Council is based on mutual trust.
- An independent and diverse community and voluntary sector is fundamental to the well being of a democratic society.
- An approach recognising that diversity of funding sources is one of the best guarantees of continued independence of the community and voluntary sector.
- All partners are committed to equality of opportunity for all people, regardless of ethnicity, religion, age, disability, gender or sexual orientation.
- There are varied roles for the community and voluntary sector and the sector has a responsibility and entitlement to campaign and act as advocates, within the law.
- Effective partnerships require communication and collaboration between all levels of the community and voluntary sector and the Council.

Shared Vision:

The Partners recognise their interdependence and reliance on each other to achieve the shared goals of:

- Involving and engaging the community to work in partnership to identify, develop and promote the social, economic, cultural and physical well-being of the community of Ribble Valley in the most efficient, effective and economic manner consistent with the rural nature of the area.
- Working together with people and communities of Ribble Valley to combat social exclusion.
- Working together with people in rural communities to overcome rural isolation
- Enabling the people of Ribble Valley to achieve independence, dignity and self-respect.
- Encouraging self development and enhancing the capacity of communities to participate in decisions affecting their lives
- Being responsive to the needs, ideas and decisions of the people of Ribble Valley.
- Promoting and implementing equal opportunities and equal access to services.
- Ensuring a diversity of service provision and wherever possible, choice for clients.
- Helping to determine and then to meet the priorities and strategic objectives of plans to regenerate Ribble Valley thereby improving the quality of life for all residents.

Mutual Commitments:

Ribble Valley Borough Council and the Ribble Valley voluntary and community sector will:

- Continue to maintain high standards of governance, conduct and openness
- Regularly review the impact of the Ribble Valley Compact
- Promote positive and effective working relations between the local community and voluntary sector, Ribble Valley Borough Council and others in the public and private sectors
- Continue to maintain good practice in meeting legal, reporting and accountability obligations to stakeholders including local residents, funders and service users
- Observe good practice in addressing any issues of concern from partners which may arise.

Ribble Valley Borough Councils commitments to the Community and Voluntary Sector:

Ribble Valley Borough Council recognise and value the contribution that the community and voluntary sector makes to the community and want to ensure this contribution continues, and throughout their work they will:

- Support partnership working with voluntary and community sector to maximise access to financial resources not normally available to the Council as a statutory body but which the voluntary and community sector can access.
- Respect and value the community and voluntary sector
- Actively encourage the participation of the community and voluntary sector in the development of strategies and policies.
- Consult the community and voluntary sector on issues that are likely to affect it, particularly when new roles and responsibilities for the sector are being proposed and seek to ensure that realistic timescales for consultation are given, to enable effective and meaningful local consultation
- Recognise that whilst groups may have few fiscal or physical resources the true economic value of the community and voluntary sector will always be acknowledged.
- Actively encourage the involvement of the community and voluntary sector, acknowledging that this may influence future plans and decisions.
- Actively encourage the involvement of service users who have an interest in Ribble Valley Borough Council and relationship with voluntary and community sector.

The Community and Voluntary Sectors' commitment to Ribble Valley Borough Council:

The Community and Voluntary Sector recognises that it has a responsibility to Ribble Valley Borough Council and the residents of Ribble Valley and others with whom it may serve and or interact with. The community and voluntary sector will:

- Observe guidance from the Charity Commission to ensure best practise in running voluntary and community groups and in service provision.
- Develop quality standards to measure standards of service delivery, whilst ensuring that they are relevant and appropriate to the different sizes and structures of local voluntary and community groups.
- Consult with service users, carers, volunteers and members on policy development activities and planning and development of local services.
- Actively and accurately communicate the views put to them in the course of a consultation carried out on behalf of the public sector or when presenting a case to the public sector.
- Implement policies that promote best practice and equal rights in activities, employment, involvement of volunteers and fair service provision.
- Observe Charity Commission guidance on political activities and campaigning whilst making effective use of that campaigning role to improve practice, policy and services.
- The voluntary and community sector acknowledge that they have a key role to play by actively promoting and participating in consultation processes initiated by Ribble Valley Borough Council and other public sector agencies.

GLOSSARY

Accountability	Responsible for, reporting actions to others.
Advocate	To put forward a cause, to enable others to present their own views.
Carer	An individual looking after a friend, relative or neighbour who cannot manage without help because of sickness, disability or age.
Charity Commission	A government department set up to further the work of charities by giving advice and information and investigating misconduct. It also maintains a public register of charities.
Community Groups	Small locally based groups established for a range of reasons, generally having no paid staff or premises and access to only small amounts of funding.
Community and Voluntary Sector	A sector distinct from the 'private' and 'public' sectors which is made up of the following: community groups, residents and tenants associations, self help groups, mutual support groups, registered charities and charitable companies limited by guarantee.
Compact	A mutual agreement.
Consensus	Agreement in opinion.
Constitution	A type of Governing document or set of rules for an organisation or group to work to.
Funder	An organisation or individual providing cash or in-kind support (funding).
Governance	To carry out duties within legal requirements.
In Kind	Non cash resource, eg use of meeting rooms, photocopying, staff time etc.
Not for Profit	To make sure any surplus finance is reinvested to the group or organisation as a whole and not to distribute this to individual shareholders.

Quorum	An agreed minimum number of people required for a meeting to take place.
Rural Proofing	Consideration and acknowledgement given to the additional requirements needed to deliver services in rural areas eg higher costs of travel.
Social Exclusion	"A shorthand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low income, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown" (index SEU, 1998)
Service Provider	An organisation that provides a direct service to the public.
Service Users	Individuals who use direct services.
Voluntary Organisation	Generally established to carry out "charitable" activities and functions. Often known as 'not for profit' organisations. Voluntary organisations generally have a formal legal structure, Governing document (Constitution), Governing body (made up of volunteers) and may employ paid staff and own or rent premises.