



COMPACT

A guide on the relationship between Leicestershire
County Council and the Voluntary and Community
Sector in Leicestershire

“It's all about better relations”

June 2003

THE LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COMPACT

The Leicestershire County Compact provides an essential guide for anyone who needs to know about the way that Leicestershire County Council (the Council) and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) work together in Leicestershire.

1. The Status of the Compact

- This Compact is a **written agreement** that provides a **framework** for the way in which voluntary and community organisations in Leicestershire and Leicestershire County Council work together. It will promote effective working relationships which provide efficient and effective services and involve the VCS in policy development and the delivery of services.
- The Leicestershire County Compact is drawn up between voluntary organisations and community groups in Leicestershire and Leicestershire County Council.
- The Compact is a **voluntary** commitment by these organisations to work together to mutually agreed standards. It is not legally binding. However, **all** organisations that sign up to the Compact are committed to making it work in practice.

2. Why have a Compact?

The VCS is by nature, large and diverse. Most organisations and groups have developed in response to the needs of a geographical area or a community of interest or need. Voluntary organisations therefore have their own distinct ethos and way of working. **Before a better understanding has been achieved, differences in approach between the voluntary and statutory sectors can initially make working together challenging.**

However it is because voluntary and community organisations have **distinctive strengths that government is encouraging increased partnership working between the voluntary and statutory sectors.** Many voluntary organisations can, for example:

- **Provide a channel for the views of communities of interest and communities of place** - they have a greater capacity to reach excluded groups than statutory services;
- **Identify new needs and innovative ways to meet them** - approaches developed by the sector have in many instances in the past been adopted by statutory services;
- **Address poverty and social exclusion** - VCS groups that are generated by communities or operating close to communities are skilled at developing appropriate responses;
- **Encourage and support individuals to become active in their communities** - volunteering, acting as trustees or management committee members, or forming self-help groups.

The **Compact** is an effective way to engage with the VCS in these times of partnership working. It is a **partnership agreement and a process** that is endorsed by Central Government in the **National Compact; Getting it Right Together (1998)**. Local Compacts are now being encouraged, as it is at the local level where most voluntary and community groups have a relationship with their county, district or unitary Council.

The Development of the Leicestershire County Compact

During 2000 and early 2001 colleagues in the VCS and Council officers informally discussed how best to develop a local Compact. In August 2001, the VCS formed its Compact Steering Group and in February 2002 the Council's Cabinet agreed to engage with the Group to investigate the development of a local compact. A working document was drawn up by the VCS Steering Group through a series of consultation workshops within the sector in 2002. A Joint Workshop with all partners in July highlighted shared principles but also a number of barriers that, at this time, prevent us from working together as best we could.

Representatives from the VCS Compact Steering Group and Council officers formed a Working Group to develop the Draft County Compact. The recommendations from the workshop and the comments received on the draft document have influenced this approved Compact. The next steps will be the development of an Action Plan.

3. What defines the voluntary and community sector?

The following are not hard and fast definitions of the VCS but are meant to give a flavour of the types of structures and activity that fall under the VCS banner:

Voluntary organisations are formally structured, not-for-profit; independent and not part of government; managed by unpaid, voluntary management committees or boards of trustees; have paid employees and volunteers; may be registered charities and/or companies limited by guarantee and/or friendly societies.

Community organisations are local community and self-help groups; more informal; often made up entirely of volunteers; any staff are likely to be part-time; independent; without regular income or funding. Community groups are often at the hub of community action and are formed in response to a local need.

Volunteering is an important expression of citizenship and essential to democracy. It is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community, and can take many forms. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain.

Social Enterprises are businesses that trade in the market in order to fulfil social aims. They bring people and communities together for economic development and social gain.

Umbrella organisations also sometimes referred to as infrastructure organisations - are an important force in the VCS. The VCS has developed organically; it has not been centrally planned. Umbrella organisations attempt to link the different levels and type of voluntary sector activity. They fulfill four main functions; development, services to other organisations, liaison and representation. However it is also acknowledged that not all Umbrella organisations perform all of these functions (Deakin Commission 1996). Examples of Umbrella organisations in Leicestershire are CVS Community Partnership (CCP), Councils for Voluntary Services (CVS), Council for Voluntary Youth Services (CVYS), Rural Community Council (RCC), Racial Equality Council (REC) and Volunteer Bureaux (VBx).

Trustees and Management Committees are the group of people legally responsible for the control and management of a charity, which includes members of a charitable associations management committee and directors of charitable companies. Certain specific statutory responsibilities arise from being a trustee.

4. What defines the County Council?

Leicestershire County Council is the largest local authority in the County and provides a wide range of services to local people either directly or through other organisations acting on its behalf. These services include education, social care, waste disposal, road maintenance, libraries, museums and consumer protection. They involve direct employment of 18,500 people to deliver them and the expenditure of over £500 million. The County Council is composed of 54 County Councillors who are each elected every four years to represent the people living in their electoral division. They meet as a Council every two months and elect a leader and a Cabinet every year. The Cabinet is responsible for providing direction and leadership for the Council and for the majority of decisions.

5. What type of relationship can the VCS have with the Council?

Voluntary and community organisations can have a direct relationship with the Council in the following ways:

- Service delivery and funding - Grants/Service Level Agreements/Contracts/Commissioning Agreements
- Consultation - Groups/Volunteers/Users
- Lobbying/Campaigning - influencing the formation of the Council's agenda, policies and practices
- Contributing to partnerships/forums/working groups such as the Local Strategic Partnership
- Volunteers within Council funded provision such as Youth and Community Education or similar type of service
- Providing specialist input to Council policy development where that is appropriate, or where the voluntary organisation delivers a statutory service on behalf of the Council

Where voluntary and community groups feel that they do not have a relationship with the Council and therefore do not see the relevance of a Compact, they may in fact have an indirect relationship in one or more of the following ways:

- As an affiliated member of a Council for Voluntary Service that has a Commissioning Agreement with the Council
- As a user of a community centre or other services provided by the Council
- As a member of a forum that is recognised as a means of communication within a particular geographical area or for a community of interest or need.

Moreover, there may be occasions where a VCS group may need to form a relationship with the Council and they should be able to do this based on sufficient knowledge of the Council and its practices.

6. The 8 Shared Principles in the Leicestershire County Compact

All partners in the County Compact agree with the following principles:

- (a) **Voluntary and community action** is essential to a democratic society.
- (b) An **independent and diverse voluntary and community sector** is fundamental to the well-being of society.
- (c) Both the Council and the VCS acknowledge the importance of promoting **equality of opportunity** for all people, regardless of race, age, disability, gender, sexuality, religion, ethnic or national origin, marital status or medical condition.
- (d) In the development and delivery of public policy and services, the Council and the VCS have distinct but **complementary roles**.
- (e) There is **added value in working together** towards common aims and objectives. Proper communication builds relationships, improves policy development and enhances the design and delivery of services and programmes.
- (f) The Council and the VCS have **different forms of accountability and can be answerable to a different range of people and organisations**. But common to both is the need for selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.
- (g) Voluntary and community organisations are **entitled to campaign** within the law in order to advance their aims.
- (h) The Council and the VCS recognise the need for the Council to allocate resources to voluntary and community organisations. These resources include **funding, advice and other support** and they are important elements of the relationship.

7. Undertakings by partners of

All partners of the Leicestershire County Compact

LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Our complementary roles

- To develop the County Council's role as Community Leader to provide a strategic framework to improve the quality of life of Leicestershire people.
- To work with the VCS to make information and services to the community more accessible.
- To recognise and support the VCS's ability to access external resources that meet shared objectives.
- To support the VCS in developing its resource base to enable it to effectively engage in policy development and partnership activity.

Recognition

- To recognise the VCS's ability to identify and articulate a diverse range of individual and community needs and its value in encouraging people to be involved in community life.
- To recognise the added value brought by volunteers to the quality of services to the community.

Funding and accountability

- To develop funding measures to ensure resources meet agreed priorities and secure continuous improvement.
- To develop within the Council, and with external funders, co-ordinated approaches to funding voluntary and community organisations to ensure the most effective and efficient use of public money.
- To provide a framework to ensure openness in funding and to apply monitoring and accountability systems in proportion to the amount and purpose of funding.

Policy development and consultation

- To involve actively and consistently the VCS in timely and efficient ways in the planning and development of policies and services.
- To work with voluntary and community organisations to enable them to engage more effectively with, and represent the interests of, excluded groups.

Good practice when working together

- To communicate with the VCS on how we can work better together.
- To respond appropriately to issues raised by the VCS through this dialogue.
- To develop with the VCS local codes of practice on funding, consultation, black and minority ethnic and other excluded groups, volunteering and community groups.

How we demonstrate commitment to the Compact

- To set up new working arrangements and allocate appropriate resources to put into practice the commitments in the Compact.
- To promote understanding throughout the Council of the commitments in the Compact and how they are to be put into practice.

the Leicestershire County Compact

agree to work in line with the relevant undertakings below

VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Our complementary roles

- To recognise the value of working together and the different strengths that the Council and the VCS bring to the relationship.
- To acknowledge that the Council complements the work of the VCS by providing resources, structures, accountability, access to information and expertise and support.
- Through umbrella organisations to support local groups, policy development and partnership working.

Recognition

- To recognise the commitments made by the Council to involve, consult, resource and support voluntary and community organisations.
- To acknowledge that the Council's primary role is to provide community leadership in Leicestershire.

Funding and accountability

- To ensure the most effective and efficient use of funding for the benefit of service users.
- In relation to funding received from the Council, to demonstrate accountability to them and to service users.
- To comply with the law and, where necessary, appropriate guidance from the Charity Commission.

Policy development and consultation

- To work together with the Council to ensure effective consultation takes place.
- To provide a voice for communities in Leicestershire to influence policy for the provision and delivery of services.

Good practice when working together

- To develop and promote beneficial working relationships with the Council, within the VCS and particularly to marginalised black and minority ethnic organisations in the County.
- To involve service users in the development and management of activities and services.
- To be open and transparent in all dealings with the Council and other voluntary and community organisations.
- To give a clear idea of the VCS capacity for involvement when working together with the Council.

How we demonstrate commitment to the Compact

- To support and where possible, commit time and resources to implementing actions and taking part in planned reviews of the Compact.
- To promote the adoption of the Compact to voluntary and community organisations working in Leicestershire.

8. How will we know if the Compact is working?

All partners in the development of this Compact want to see the following outcomes between the VCS and the Council:

- Increased **understanding**
- Better **communication**;
- Better **consultation** processes and procedures;
- Increased joint **planning and policy** initiatives;
- Review of **funding** arrangements and procedures
- Efficient **information** flow
- Better **service delivery**

In order to achieve these outcomes, an Action Plan will be prepared. This will:

- (a) adapt the National Codes of Practice on funding, consultation, black and minority ethnic groups, volunteering and community groups to fit local circumstances;
- (b) establish mechanisms to review and monitor the impact of the Compact;
- (c) set out a mediation and conciliation process.

The Action Plan will be subject to annual review.

The Action Plan will include a list of all participating groups and organisations who sign up to the County Compact and who are therefore committed to working with Compact partners in a fair and equitable manner.

9. Accessibility of the Compact document

The County Compact is available in a variety of community languages and in a variety of formats upon request.

You will find a poster as an insert that outlines the shared principles of the Compact and includes a section for groups and organisations to sign that declares their commitment to working in the spirit of the Compact. The purpose of the poster is to raise awareness of the County Compact to staff, volunteers, service users and other groups and organisations that may visit your premises.

The County Compact also includes a sign up pro-forma that groups and organisations complete and return if they wish to sign up to the County Compact. 'Signing up' means that groups and organisations agree to work with the Council and VCS partners in the spirit of the Compact agreement.

If you require information contained in this booklet in an alternative version, e.g. large print, Braille, tape or an alternative language, please:

Call: 0116 265 8015

Fax: 0116 265 6260

Email: access@leics.gov.uk

আপনি যদি বাংলা ভাষায় এই ধরনের কোন একটি তথ্য বা খবরা খবর চান, তাহলে আরো বিস্তারিত জানা 0116 265 8015 নম্বরে ফোন করুন।

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਵੀ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਨੂੰ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਹੋਰ ਵੇਰਵੇ ਦੇ ਲਈ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ 0116 265 8015 ਉੱਪਰ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

यदि आपको इसमें से कोई भी जानकारी की आवश्यकता हो तो (आपको चाहिए वो भाषा दर्ज करें) अधिक विवरण के लिए 0116 265 8015 टेलीफोन करें।

अगर तमने आमांथी ओर पड़ा ज़ाहकारी ओरती होय तो मडेरबानी करीने (तमने ओरती भाषा अर्डी ज़ाहवो) विगतवार ज़ाहकारी माटे 0116 265 8015 टेलिफोन करी.

اگر آپ ان میں سے کوئی معلومات اُردو میں حاصل کرنا چاہتے ہیں تو مزید معلومات کیلئے براہ کرم 0116 265 8015 پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔