

“Its our shout” Independence Day National Pack

Whats the Campaign?

4th July has been established as Sector Independence Day. Compact Voice is calling on every national organisation in England to take a practical step towards strengthening their independence. It's an on-going campaign which will be officially launched on 4th July under the slogan "It's Our Shout"

Why does independence matter?

Independence is crucial to our performance and reputation. It is:

- * our birthright: all organisations were created to be free and also help maintain a free society.
- * valuable to our own organisation, the whole sector, public body partners and the community we all serve.
- * under threat and draining away.
- * upholding our own organisation's independence is our responsibility – *if we don't do it, nobody else will.*
- * voice is a key role of groups – *we need to be better heard.*

How can I get involved?

Take the pledge

This pack has been developed to highlight the need for us to take responsibility for our independence and campaigning as a key issue. Trustees of organisations are being invited to take a pledge to:

- * Give voice to the needs of those we represent
- * Campaign fearlessly and responsibly for our causes
- * Uphold our independence by using our Compact, resisting external interference, and being mission focused

To take the pledge go to www.ncvo-vol.org/ip

Attend the Independence Day learning event

Compact Voice has recently undertaken research across the country and the findings will be presented at cross sector learning event on 4th July. The event will also present research findings from eight government departments and will explore the role of the Compact in helping to protect and promote the independence of the sector. Feedback from the event will be incorporated into Compact Voice's Annual Sector Report presented to Parliament in November

To attend the event go to <http://www.ncvo-consult.org.uk/side>

Express yourselves

If you are unable to attend the event you can still be involved in the ongoing discussions on independence and other Compact issues by joining Compact Voices National Network discussion forum.

To join the discussion go to <http://compact.ning.com>

Promote the campaign

Here's a message for your website and newsletter:

4th July is Sector Independence Day. This year's theme is "It's Our Shout," designed to encourage groups to take responsibility for strengthening their independence. Trustees are being asked to sign up to a pledge on this, which is included in the local groups campaigns pack produced by Local Compact Voice and available from ...

Either include your own contact details or
stefan.simanowitz@ncvo-vol.org.uk

Reviewing your organisations independence

Questions for your Board to discuss –

- ▶ Is our independence becoming stronger or weaker? How well are we managing the risks to our independence?

- ▶ How does any funding we receive from public sources affect focussing on our mission and the impact we seek to make on outcomes for beneficiaries?
- ▶ Staff and trustee roles on funding – have we got these right so that we protect each other? Does the board sign off both grant bids/tenders and grants/contract terms?

How you can use the Compact to ensure you are independent?

- 1) Read up. All voluntary and community organisations should read all the codes of good practice or their local Compact. You should ensure you are upholding all your undertakings. This will go a long way to making sure you are working independently.
- 2) Take responsibility: take action. It is your responsibility as a good voluntary sector organisation to maintain your own independence but this undertaking for government can help you protect it. If you feel your independence is being compromised by your government partner use this undertaking, send round a copy of the Compact, discuss it in meetings, include it in written correspondence. There is support available for you in doing this – see below.
- 3) Start with the Compact. The Compact outlines the best possible relationship you can have with government. It is a great tool for setting boundaries and working together to improve things for the people you help and issues you work on. At the beginning of any relationship you have with funders or policy makers in government you should know what it is you are supposed to be doing and what it is your government bodies are supposed to be doing. Using the Compact from the start can stop all manner of problems arising. For more information see below for support you can get in doing this.
- 4) Using and implementing the Compact. Use all aspects of the Compact and ensure your government partner is adhering to it. Where problems arise it is important to remember that if you don't challenge bad practice you cannot expect your relationship to get better. The Compact is there to support you doing this and ensure you operate independently and in the interests of your wider mission. You should make sure your relationship with government is the best it can be in the interests of the people you work for and issues you work on.

Useful definitions

What is the Compact?

The Compact is the agreement between government and the voluntary and community sector. It outlines how these two sectors of society can work together to achieve better outcomes. The Compact itself is a document which sets out what this relationship is. It also has five codes of good practice which makes lists undertakings for both sectors. There are also local Compacts which define local relationships and list undertakings for local officials and organisations.

The first undertaking of the Compact is “[t]o recognise and support the independence of the sector, including its right within the law, to campaign, to comment on Government policy, and to challenge that policy, irrespective of any funding relationship that might exist, and to determine and manage its own affairs.’

What is Independence?

Independence is way in which voluntary organisations manage their relationships. For Compact Voice, independence is defined as the freedom of voluntary organisations to define their own mission and carry out that mission without fear of interference.

Independence is not just about the impact on the sector of government (funding). It is about the full range of relationships with a variety of funders (including individual and corporate donors), supporters, volunteers, trustees, staff and the public.

Key to being independent is having a clear mission and placing the interest of the people and issues you work for at the heart of all decisions. Voluntary organisations should be independent in all their relationships as well as those with government. This is not always easy but is central to the way good voluntary organisations operate.

What might independence mean to my organisation?

- Freedom to campaign
- Freedom to manage affairs without interference
- Not being dependent on a single funder
- Not having overly prescriptive contracts
- Not being overly monitored and evaluated
- Awareness and use of the Compact

Resources and links

National Compact Voice

Free to all local voluntary and community groups wanting:

- ▶ representation and support on Compact issues
- ▶ the chance for on-line forum discussion whenever you want
- ▶ access to the know how of over 200 members across England

To join: email stefan.simanowitz@ncvo-vol.org.uk Also available:

Stronger independence, Stronger relationships, Better outcomes (166kb)
http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/uploadedFiles/NCVO/What_we_do/Compact_Advocacy/Compact%20Voice%20Report%2004July07%20PDF.pdf

Standing apart, working together: A study of the myths and realities of voluntary and community sector independence

<http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/policy/values/index.asp?id=1393>

The Compact

Check out what it says on independence at www.thecompact.org.uk

Compact Advocacy Programme – National Compact Advocate

Ingela Anderson 020 7520 2460 ingela.anderson@ncvo-vol.org.uk

Campaigning fearlessly and responsibly but also effectively

The Campaigning Effectiveness Programme's new publication: ***Is your campaign making a difference?***

www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/publications/publication.asp?id=8612

Sector Independence Day events on 4th July

Date: 4th July 2008

Venue: LVSC, 356 Holloway Road, London N7 6PA

Time: 10.30am – 1.30pm (followed by lunch)

Cost: Free