

What is the Compact?

Compacts are partnership agreements between statutory bodies and the voluntary and community sector designed to promote effective joint working. They are written documents which provide a framework within which the public and third sector organisations can understand what to expect from each other.

The Compact provides a way of supporting the development of the third sector's capacity so that local community groups can do more to meet both their aims and those of their public sector partners.

The National Compact (between central government and the voluntary and community sector) was launched in 1998. It was developed from recommendations made by the Deakin Commission Report on the Future of the Voluntary Sector and from the policy document Building the Future Together.

The Deakin Commission concluded that Government should recognise the legitimacy of the voluntary and community sector's diverse roles and its own responsibility to promote a healthy sector.

In 2007 the government set up a Commission for the Compact, acknowledging that there is still a lack of awareness of the Compact and because there are still real barriers to its adoption and implementation.

The views of the voluntary and community sector are represented to Commission by Compact Voice, who are based at the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO).

It is now a requirement for all local authorities and Primary Care Trusts to develop a Compact with the voluntary and community sector.

Key Compact Principles

- Voluntary action is an essential component of a democratic society.
- An independent and diverse voluntary and community sector is fundamental to the well-being of society.
- In the development and delivery of public policy and services, the Government and the voluntary and community sector have distinct but complementary roles.
- There is added value in working in partnership towards common aims and objectives. Meaningful consultation builds relationships, improves policy development and enhances the design and delivery of services and programmes.
- The Government and the VCS 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.
- VCS organisations are entitled to campaign within the law in order to advance their aims.
- The Government plays a significant role, among other things, as a funder of some VCS organisations. Funding can be an important element of the relationship between the Government and the VCS.
- Both Government and VCS acknowledge the importance of promoting equality of opportunity for all people regardless of race, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation or religion and or belief.

Codes of Practise

The Compact is made up of five codes of good practice. These documents act like a legal agreement with clear points that outline both government undertakings and undertakings by the voluntary and community sector. The five areas:

- black and minority ethnic groups,
- community groups,
- consultation and policy appraisal,
- funding and procurement,
- volunteering.

Local Compacts

Each local authority in London now has its own compact which sets out ways of working between local government, local public bodies and the local voluntary and community sectors. They are crucial to local relationships and are becoming the benchmark for improving them. Key to Local Compacts are links to local policy including Local Area Agreements and Local Strategic Partnerships.

Compact Breaches

The NCVO runs a Compact Advocacy Programme which takes up individual instances of Compact breaches, it provides support through a mixture of lobbying, Advocacy, wider campaigning and negotiation to ensure local Compacts work.

There is also a Compact Mediation Scheme that offers a neutral mediator's service (for a fee) to help resolve disputes related either to the letter or the spirit of the Compact.

Further Resources

- **Commission for the Compact**
Set up by the government to improve awareness and implementation of the compact
<http://www.thecompact.org.uk/>
- **Compact Voice**
Representing the voluntary and community sector in England on taking the Compact forward
<http://www.compactvoice.org.uk/>
- **National Council of Voluntary Organisations**
The Compact Advocacy Programme and further information of voluntary sector groups
<http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/thecompact.asp>
- **Compact Mediation Scheme**
Professional mediation service, specialising in resolving Compact disputes.
http://www.cedr.com/CEDR_Solve/services/mediation/schemes/sector/compact.php

Downloads

- **The National Compact and Codes of Good Practice**
The National Compact and Codes of Practice are available to download or to purchase from the Commission for the Compact.
<http://www.thecompact.org.uk/information/100023/100219/publications/>