



Kent Partners' Compact 2012

An agreement for mutual benefit between the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Public Sector in Kent

Kent Partners' Compact Refresh 2012

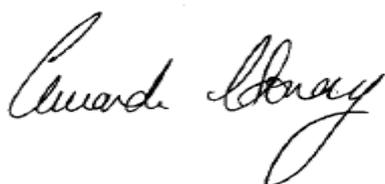
Foreword

In the years following 1998 a number of Compacts were developed in Kent at county, district and local level. In January 2009 a single Kent Partners' Compact was launched to establish consistency in the relationship between the public and the voluntary sectors. In December 2010, the National Compact was renewed and this has been recognised within the refreshed Kent Partners' Compact.

The Kent Partners' Compact sets out a shared vision with commitments from both sides to make sure the agreement works. It is a set of principles which will help our businesses work better for everyone – especially Kent's residents. This is particularly important at a time when the country is facing significant financial challenges. With this challenge comes a need for the public sector to review its policies, its services and the way it staffs them. Reviewing what happens in the public sector will, of course, have an impact on the voluntary and community sector, which is also working to respond to tough financial times. Finding effective solutions and securing value for money will need an innovative and integrated approach to the way services are commissioned by the public sector. At the same time, the relationship between the public sector and its voluntary and community sector colleagues will need both sides to think creatively and to evolve if we are to continue serving the best interests of Kent residents.

We are pleased to provide our full support to this refreshed Kent Partners' Compact. It captures the spirit of the working relationship between the public sector and the voluntary and community sector which has grown and developed over the years,

We commend the Kent Partners' Compact to you and ask all partners to play a full and active part in turning its vision into reality.



Amanda Honey

Director of Customer and Communities



Malcolm Barry

Chair of Kent CAN

Introduction

The Kent Partners' Compact is a partnership agreement between the Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) and the public sector in Kent. It is a jointly agreed framework for a mutual working relationship with positive benefit to the Kent community.

It expresses the desire of the VCS and the public sector to work together better. It also provides a framework where mutual respect, understanding and fair treatment are the building blocks for true partnership.

The VCS has a vital role to play in society and in the delivery and development of effective public services for the people of Kent. Thousands of individuals donate their time and skills to voluntary organisations all over Kent. They provide statutory services on behalf of the public sector, recruit volunteers, support people and communities and provide many other services that contribute to our quality of life.

There is acknowledgement of the current national economic climate and the impact this has on all public sector organisations. The Kent Partners' Compact does not exist to protect funding. Rather, by describing good funding practices it helps to ensure that funding decisions are more likely to be the right ones. It is imperative when securing value for money that an integrated approach to the commissioning of services by the public sector is developed. Such an approach will clearly have an impact upon the VCS in Kent.

With central and local government focussing on putting the citizen in control and localism and the restructure of many public sector organisations, the Compact remains as relevant as it was in 1998 when the government launched the first national Compact.

Useful web links

The following link www.kentcan.org will give you access to the national Compact & the Kent Partners' Compact.

The following link www.compactvoice will provide information and guidance on best practice for the implementation of local compacts.

This Compact contains Codes of Practice on Funding, Communication and Engagement and Volunteering

There is additional information on Compliance and Dispute Resolution and local contact details.

The Kent Partners' Compact will:

- **Support the development of a strong, diverse and independent voluntary and community sector.**
- **Improve outcomes for the people of Kent through effective engagement and communication.**
- **Involve the voluntary sector and service users in the design, development and changes to policies and services.**
- **Be of mutual advantage to all partners through meaningful representation and partnership working.**
- **Provide a mutually agreed framework on which to base discussions if any partner feels the other has not met their commitments to the Compact.**
- **Promote a fair and equal society by contributing to a better understanding of minority groups and their distinct and diverse needs. Ensure a voice for under-represented and disadvantaged groups.**

The Kent Partners' Compact contains a number of commitments which have been agreed by both sectors that reflect good working practice.

The commitments are practical tools which will support joint working and act as a framework for discussion when there are differences.

Each commitment starts with a general aim, explains which commitments apply to each sector and, finally, lays out shared commitments.

Code of Practice on Funding and Resources

Aim: to promote good practice between the VCS and the public sector in terms of their financial relationship.

VCS commitments

- Ensure eligibility for funding before applying and clearly explain how results will be achieved.
- Ensure robust governance arrangements are in place so organisations can manage the risks associated with service delivery and financing models well, and give funders early notice of significant change in circumstances.
- Provide ways for users to feedback to the public sector how they can improve services.
- Ensure that appropriate systems and standards are in place to meet agreed financial, governance and quality reporting obligations.
- Look ahead and plan to reduce the negative effects on the beneficiaries and the organisation from changes in the levels of funding.
- Contribute positively to reviews of funding programmes and practice.

Public sector commitments

- Respect the independence of the VCS to deliver their mission and campaign regardless of any financial relationship with the public sector.
- Ensure that the VCS have a greater role and more opportunities to deliver public services.
- Consider a range of ways to fund or resource the VCS, including grants, contracts, loans, use of premises etc.
- Work to remove the barriers that stop the VCS accessing public sector funding in order to allow smaller organisations to deliver services where they are best placed to do so.
- Consider a range of ways to support the VCS such as enabling greater access to public sector owned premises resources, expertise, training and asset transfer.
- Ensure transparency by providing a clear rationale for all funding decisions.
- Ensure well managed and transparent application and tendering processes, which are proportionate to the required objectives and outcomes of the programme.
- Commit to multi-year funding where appropriate and where it adds value for money. The funding term should reflect the time it will take to deliver the outcome. If multi-year funding is not considered the best way of delivering the objective, explain the reasons for the decision.
- Strive for clarity and consistency across the public sector regarding the commissioning and procurement processes.
- Involve the VCS in the development of commissioning and procurement strategies, policies and protocols.

- Provide advice and guidance to the VCS to ensure commissioning, procurement and tendering processes are understood.
- Ensure the VCS have access to relevant and timely information regarding future public sector commissioning plans and funding opportunities.
- Recognise the legitimacy of Full Cost Recovery (appropriate and relevant overheads) when voluntary and community organisations seek to secure grants or contracts.
- Agree in advance of contract or agreement with voluntary and community organisations how outcomes will be monitored, ensuring monitoring and reporting is relevant and proportionate to the nature and size of the opportunity.
- Agree terms of responsibility for the balance of risk the VCS and public sector are responsible for and identify processes by which these risks will be managed. Ensure delivery terms and risks are proportionate to the nature and value of the opportunity.
- Make payments to voluntary and community organisations in advance of expenditure, where appropriate and necessary, in order to achieve better value for money.
- In the event that funding or services are proposed to be reduced or withdrawn an Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken, giving sufficient time for all relevant parties to inform the consultation and influence decision making.

Joint commitments

- Work to ensure procedures used are consistent with the principles of accountability for public money.
- Undertake joint work to explore opportunities to share non-financial resources, such as personnel and property, and to work on innovative solutions to shared problems.
- Work to ensure value for money and high quality service.
- When ending or changing a financial relationship, a three month period of consultation shall be undertaken, prior to a minimum of three months written notice, together with a clear rationale for the decision.

Useful web link

In September 2011 the Department for Communities and Local Government published Best Value Statutory Guidance reinforcing funding and consultation principles in the national Compact.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/1976926.pdf>

The following link gives access to the HM Treasury document entitled *improving financial relationships with the third sector: Guidance to funders and purchasers*.

<http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk./media/9/4/guidncefunders1505061v1.pdf>

The recommendations within this document are based upon good practice, following two successive Treasury Cross-Cutting Reviews, the Gershon Efficiency Review and a National Audit Office report.

Code of Practice on Communication and Engagement

Aim: to enable communities to influence the development of policies and services delivered by both the public and voluntary and community sectors.

VCS commitments

- When campaigning or advocating, ensure robust evidence is provided including the source and range of people represented.
- Ensure independence is upheld, focusing on the cause represented regardless of any relationships with the public sector.
- Promote and respond to public sector consultations where appropriate.
- Seek the views of service users, beneficiaries, volunteers and trustees when making representation to public sector organisations, clarify who is being represented and in what capacity that representation is being made.
- When acting as representatives of a group or community, be responsible for collecting views from that group or community and disseminating information to them.
- When putting forward ideas, focus on evidence-based solutions with clear proposals for positive outcomes.

Public sector commitments

- Ensure greater transparency by making information more accessible, enabling the VCS to challenge existing provision of services and hold the public sector to account.
- Provide details on The Kent & Medway Information Governance Programme Board that oversees and ensures effective implementation of information sharing governance arrangements between public sector organisations in Kent & Medway.
- Engage with the VCS at the earliest possible opportunity when developing policies and services, removing barriers that may prevent organisations and individuals from contributing.
- Consider the social impact that may result from policy and service development and how these would enable social action and empower communities.
- Ensure that social, environmental and economic value forms a standard part of the design, development and delivery of policies and services.
- Give early notice of forthcoming consultations allowing sufficient time for the VCS to involve service users, beneficiaries, members and trustees in responding. Conduct 12 week written consultations with clear explanations and rationale for shorter time-frames.
- Prepare consultation documents that are concise, clearly laid out and written in language that will be understood by the intended audience.

- Work with voluntary and community organisations that represent, support or provide services to people protected by legislation and other under-represented groups and understand the needs of these groups by actively seeking the views of service users and beneficiaries.
- Provide feedback on consultation, including information about how respondents have influenced final decisions and where their views have not been acted upon.
- Build engagement and consultation into planning cycles.

Joint commitments

- Make clear the purpose and process of communication and engagement.
- Develop a range of communication and engagement methods that best involve communities, service users, beneficiaries, members and trustees.
- Ensure communication is clear, accessible and relevant.
- Share information which may have an impact on their working relationship.
- Support each other in disseminating information, whilst avoiding duplication.
- Respect confidentiality.

Useful web link

Kent and Medway Information Sharing Protocol Agreement.

The objectives of the new information sharing agreement are to make the arrangements for sharing personal information between organisations more straightforward and readily comprehensible, particularly by frontline staff. For more information contact: Charlie Beaumont - Effective Practice & Performance Manager at Kent County Council Charlie.beaumont@kent.gov.uk

Code of Practice on Volunteering

Aim: to develop best practice between the public sector and VCS in promoting, supporting and improving volunteering opportunities in Kent.

VCS commitments

- Promote and support volunteering to all within Kent by seeking to reflect the diversity of all communities through positive and robust application of equality of opportunity.
- Ensure sufficient time and resources are available for the training of volunteers and training is tailored to needs and abilities.
- Recognise the particular value in trustee volunteering and governance roles as underpinning the VCS and seek to promote and attract volunteers with suitable skills.
- Support the involvement of volunteers in policy and programme development to encourage ownership and responsibility and to recognise volunteers as stakeholders in organisations.

Public sector commitments

- Acknowledge the physical and mental health benefits of volunteering.
- Acknowledge the value of an individual's right to volunteer and the value of volunteering within the community.
- Acknowledge that VCS organisations are independent and have flexibilities and constraints within the powers of their constitution to respond to local need.
- Consider the development and support of employee volunteering, recognising the benefits to the individual volunteer, public sector organisation, VCS organisation and the community.
- Reduce barriers to volunteering and community action through the review of existing policies, procedures and community engagement strategies.
- Establish measurements for the impact of volunteering activity.
- Support the inclusion of costs associated with volunteering to enable greater access to funding.
- Ensure there is no charge for volunteers to access Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks.

Joint commitments

Recognise the four principles fundamental to volunteering:

- **Choice:** volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual.
- **Diversity:** volunteering opportunities should be open to all, regardless of background, race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic or national origin, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation or disability.

- **Mutual benefit:** voluntary action should benefit all. Volunteering should benefit in ways other than payment for their contribution and must be personally fulfilling.
- **Recognition:** Kent has a large number of volunteers and has a history of providing volunteering opportunities to and for the people of Kent.

Useful web links

The following link provides useful information on volunteering.

www.kentcove.org.uk

Information from KMIP (Kent & Medway Infrastructure Partnership) about the voluntary sector in Kent offering support for non-profit organisations. Links to local Volunteer Centres with information about opportunities to volunteer & advice for voluntary organisations wishing to involve volunteers. Access to training, news and events.

www.kent.gov.uk/volunteers

Kent County Council promoting volunteering across the County. Information on volunteering and links to opportunities across all sectors. Employee Volunteering scheme. Information to support volunteers, fundraising and development.

www.volunteering.org.uk Volunteering England.

National volunteering development, a powerful force for change, both for those who volunteer and the wider community. Information about volunteering opportunities, managing volunteers, news reviews and research.

Additional Guidance on Compact Compliance and Dispute Resolution

Compact compliance is about partners working together to make commitments, calling partners to account and resolving differences.

As far as possible, disagreements about the Kent Partners' Compact compliance should be resolved directly between the parties involved. The implementation of the Kent Partners' Compact will be a learning experience for both the public and voluntary and community sector organisations and it is recognised that the relationship will be strengthened by an open and honest examination of practice. 'Disputes' about the meaning of the Kent Partners' Compact and its application in practice can be used to assist this process.

There is an expectation that if the individuals involved, and subsequently their managers, cannot successfully resolve a dispute or disagreement then existing partners complaints procedure should be utilised.

Despite best intentions, disputes arise and sometimes threaten important partnerships. The following advice may help avoid disputes in the first place or assist in dispute resolution.

- There is a better chance of settling a dispute successfully if you make sure you abide by funding agreements, honour your Kent Partners' Compact commitments and fulfil financial obligations. This includes sending reports on time and keeping a written record of all communication with your partner(s).
- If you have concerns about your funding or relationship with a partner(s), don't wait for it to turn into a problem. Read the Kent Partners' Compact and open up a dialogue. If you can engage your partner(s) constructively before something really becomes an issue, you'll have a better chance of getting it solved.
- The longer the time that elapses after a decision has been made, the harder it may be to reverse it. In cases of Public Law breaches, a challenge has to be brought to court promptly and in any case no more than three months after the decision was taken.
- Be clear about your objectives, know what you are unhappy about and what you want to achieve. Keep it as straightforward as possible and be realistic.
- Emotions can run high; you are more likely to achieve what you want if your organisation is viewed as professional, effective and good to work with.

- Every organisation has the right to their independence and to manage their own affairs, but some are reluctant to be seen to confront their funder. It may be that you can raise the issues through the Kent Partners' Compact Champions' Group, an organisations complaint procedure or an appeal process. Think about what would be best for your organisation and beneficiaries.

It can be useful to get an outsider's perspective on the dispute. The Compact Advocacy Programme can help the VCS identify Compact or Public Law breaches, suggest next steps, help draft letters, attend meetings and sometimes take on your case, advocating on their behalf.

Useful web links

Compact Advocacy Programme, evsadvise@ncvo-vol.org.uk or visit <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/compactadvocacy> or on 020 7520 3161

Glossary

Big Society – The three strands of the Big Society are:

- a. Social action - the Government fostering a culture of voluntarism and philanthropy.
- b. Public service reform – reducing centralised bureaucracy - as relevant for the council as it is for central government.
- c. Community empowerment.

Compact Voice - Compact Voice is a charity that represents the voice of the voluntary sector on the Compact. Compact Voice has a network of over 2,300 members ranging from community organisations to large national charities, and has Board members from front line groups and umbrella bodies, in turn representing over 20,000 voluntary and community groups. www.compactvoice.org.uk

Champion - To act as a supporter of a cause, person, activity or agreement.

Commissioning - Commissioning is the process for deciding how to use resources available in order to improve outcomes in the most efficient, effective, equitable and sustainable way.'

Commitment - An obligation, pledge or promise.

Equality Impact Assessment - An equality impact assessment (EIA) is a tool to assess the impact any policies, strategies or revised documentation would have on race, age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation and religion or belief.

Full Cost Recovery -Under the full cost recovery, organisations and their funders ensure that the price of contracts and grants reflects the full cost of delivery, including the legitimate portion of overhead costs.

Governance arrangements - The management systems, policies, processes and decision rights for a given area of responsibility.

Kent Partners' Compact Champions Group - a small multi-agency group established initially to champion the Kent Partners' Compact and latterly to oversee the Kent Partner's Compact Refresh 2011. See following page for contact details.

Kent Partners' Compact - A partnership agreement between the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and the public sector in Kent.

National Compact - An agreement for mutual benefit between central government departments and the VCS. Originally produced in 1998 and renewed in 2010. This was published along with an Accountability and Transparency guide.

Procurement - The process of obtaining goods and services.

Tendering - To present an unconditional offer to enter into a contract.

Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) – The VCS, in the context of the Kent Partners' Compact, refers to voluntary organisations, charities, community groups, non profit making organisations and social enterprises.

Kent Partners' Compact Champions Group

Contact details for members: Details to be confirmed

Kay Byatt
kay@tvcsf.org.uk

Brian Clacy
Brian Clacy@kent.gov.uk

Karen Edmunds
Karen.Edmunds@kentcht.nhs.uk

Jay Edwins
jay.edwins@nhs.net

Karen Garrett -
karen.garrett@kent.fire-uk.org

Keith Morris
Keith.morris@kentcan.org

Sarah.Phippin
Sarah.phippin@thanet.gov.uk

Sari Sirkia-Weaver
sari@homestartcanterbury.org

Stuart Skilton
stuart.skilton@kent.fire-uk.org

Barry SPRUCE
barry.spruce@kent.pnn.police.uk

Martin Vye
Martin.vye@kent.gov.uk

Sarah Williams
Sarah.Williams@swalecvs.co.uk

Trevor Williams
Trevor.williams@kent.gov.uk

Jacqui Ward
Jacqui.ward@kent.gov.uk

