

# **THE ACTIVE COMMUNITY UNIT**

**(Home Office - Voluntary and Community Research Section)**

## **THE COMPACT**

**– the Challenge of Implementation**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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# THE COMPACT – THE CHALLENGE OF IMPLEMENTATION

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Section 1: BACKGROUND

This section:

- Sets out the aims of the Compact: “the creation of a new approach to partnership between the statutory and voluntary and community sectors – an approach which is of mutual advantage based on shared values and mutual respect”
  - Summarises the work to date of the Compact Working Group (CWG) including the production of five *Codes of Good Practice* and other guidance
  - Describes the purpose of the Annual Meetings between government ministers and representatives of the voluntary and community sectors
  - Explains the background, scope and methodology of this study
- and emphasises the author’s view that the key test of the successful implementation of the Compact will be the creation at all levels of partnerships incorporating the Compact principles and recommended practice – whether or not these partnerships are called Compacts is of minor significance.

### Section 2: COMPACT IMPLEMENTATION: THE TIMING – AND URGENCY

This section acknowledges that much of the framework of the Compact is in place but that its implementation is patchy at all levels; and identifies several factors – some positive, some less so – which combine to make the present time a critical stage for the implementation of the Compact principles and codes:

- The gap between Compact enthusiasts and sceptics
  - A loss of momentum – “yesterday’s initiative”
  - The recommendations of the *Cross Cutting Review of the Role of the Voluntary Sector in Service Delivery*
  - New leadership of the ACU
- and argues that an injection of short-term resources (new and/or temporarily reallocated) – at several levels in/by the statutory sector as well within/by the voluntary and community sectors – is needed urgently or the prospects for the successful implementation of the Compact principles and codes of good practice are likely to be fatally undermined.

### Section 3: THE COMPACT – PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION

This section summarises the formidable amount of work carried out over the last three years by the CWG and its partners in government and the positive impact and mutual benefits derived from the partnerships that have been developed.

A number of concerns are then set out about the speed and quality of Compact implementation and various issues are identified which could inhibit effective implementation.

***Central Government:***

- The status, authority and capacity of Voluntary Sector Liaison Officers within government departments
- Breaches of Compact principles – undermining the credibility of the government’s commitment to the Compact
- The low status of grant-making and grant-management functions
- The scope of the Compact – and the need for clarification, especially about the lottery fund distributors.

***Local/Regional:***

- ‘Off the shelf’ implementation – local authority prescribed and lacking adequate investment in the development process
- Patchy health service involvement
- Lack of engagement with or commitment to Compact principles or codes by ACU funded Regional Forums and Networks
- A decline in support from the LGA and other statutory ‘umbrella’ organisations.

***Voluntary and Community Sectors:***

- A variable quality of commitment by national organisations
- A lack of collaboration within and between the sectors
- Insufficient involvement of trustees and committee members.

**Section 4: IMPLEMENTING THE COMPACT – THE CORE OF THE STRATEGY**

As most statutory – voluntary/community sector interactions take place locally, the key test of the Compact principles having become fully established will be that they are a ‘normal’ part of the local infrastructure and day to day activity – and are recognised by all sectors as being to their mutual advantage. Support for local development has, therefore, to be the central objective of all Compact related activity over the next three years – but full adherence to the Compact principles and action at central and regional levels of government and within the leading national voluntary and community ‘infrastructure’ organisations and networks will be a vital ingredient of successful local implementation.

This section sets out six core elements of a possible implementation strategy and six requirements that would have to be met if the strategy is to be successful.

***The aims of the strategy:***

1. Effective and inclusive Compacts (or partnership structures that incorporate explicitly the Compact principles) within all localities and regions.
2. Compact principles and codes to be standard features of Best Value and Beacon Authority type quality initiatives.
3. The adoption of Compact principles and codes and the appointment of “Departmental Champions” to be standard features of the spending settlement agreements between government departments and the Treasury.

4. Leading organisations within the voluntary and community sectors working in collaboration at the heart of the Compact implementation strategy.
5. Representative/coordinating organisations within the local and regional statutory sectors fully engaged in Compact implementation.
6. Trustees and committee members within the voluntary and community sectors and councillors and board members in the statutory sector fully engaged in Compact implementation.

***The requirements:***

1. Institutional commitment at the centre of all sectors – driving the strategy forward and working with and within an enlarged CWG to implement the principles and codes at all levels.
2. An effective working partnership between leaders and leading organisations at a national level within the voluntary and community sectors.
3. A recognition within central government of the central role of the ACU in Compact implementation – and a single minded focus on Compact implementation across all aspects of the ACU’s work.
4. Adequate resources (financial and skills) at all levels and in all sectors dedicated to promoting and implementing Compact principles and the codes.
5. A standardised format for setting outcomes and measuring qualitative achievements within each component part of Compact implementation.
6. A mediation system which is seen to be independent and the use of which does not threaten continued funding of the complainant.

There is also a case for an additional Funding Code of Good Practice on contracts.

**Section 5: IMPLEMENTING THE COMPACT**

This section set out a series of inter-linked recommendations directed at each of the key players in Compact implementation:

**1. Ministers**

Continued joint ministerial support for the Compact plus the addition of a ministerial commitment of cabinet status.

**2. The Cross Cutting Review of the Role of the Voluntary Sector in Service Delivery – recommendations to central government departments**

Endorsement of the anticipated recommendations that:

- ‘Departmental Champions’ should be appointed
- a strategic plan for full Compact implementation should be drawn up by each department
- effective Compact implementation to be a condition of each department’s allocation of resources in the Spending Review.

**3. The Home Office**

The Home Office needs to demonstrate visible and enthusiastic engagement with the implementation of the Compact – as the ‘home’ of the ACU, for the Home

Office to do less would have a disproportionately negative impact on the prospects of a successful implementation of the Compact principles. The growing involvement of the Home Office in regional government structures provides an additional opportunity for it to demonstrate positive and practical support for Compact implementation.

#### **4. The Active Community Unit (ACU)**

##### ***Existing ACU practice***

A 'positive contribution to Compact implementation' criteria should be applied to all programmes and initiatives undertaken by the Unit.

##### ***ACU strategy***

3-5 year plans need to be agreed and published which will then underpin the Unit's work on Compact implementation with the rest of the Home Office, with other Departments and with the national and other organisations it funds.

##### ***Coordination across government***

The ACU should set up inter-departmental groups of the 'Departmental Champions' and the Voluntary Sector Liaison Officers to consider recommendations from the CWG, share and publicise good practice, identify and meet information gaps, lead cross-departmental initiatives and ensure that Compact principles and the codes are integrated within other departmental partnership, service development and regeneration initiatives.

##### ***ACU grants***

- implementation of the Compact in their own work to become a standard grant conditions of ACU national and regional grants
- additional weighting to be given to organisations able to demonstrate a sustained practical contribution to local Compact implementation
- introduce long term grants to part-fund 'Compact Champions' at a senior level within national organisations
- introduce project grants for promotional or pilot projects which aim to enhance or extend local compacts.

##### ***ACU support for the Compact Working Group (CWG)***

The ACU should immediately respond to the CWG outline funding application and:

- affirm its continuing support for the current definition of the role and informally constituted status of the CWG
- indicate that it accepts that the Secretariat needs more capacity to assist the further promotion of local compacts and the Codes of Good Practice
- ask the CWG to develop their outline funding application in more depth – in effect to produce a 3 year business plan with a budget that includes full overheads and support costs; ask the CWG to include in their response plans to extend and strengthen further the membership of the Group and sub-groups and for the future management and governance of an enlarged Secretariat.

The ACU should also:

- agree a tight timetable with the CWG for processing this funding application – the further strengthening of the Secretariat is an urgent necessity if the pace of Compact implementation is to be maintained
- endorse the proposal that the Secretariat should continue to be based within NCVO – but emphasise the need for the CWG Secretariat to be clearly and independently ‘branded’ – and not perceived as a department of NCVO.

### ***Local government and the health service***

The ACU should join with the CWG and other departments in seeking the active and sustained involvement of the Local Government Association and the NHS Confederation (and any other relevant ‘umbrella’ organisations within the statutory sector) in Compact implementation.

### ***External Social Audit***

The ACU could set an example to other departmental funders by commissioning an external ‘social audit’ of the implementation in its own work and grant programmes of the Compact and the Codes of Good Practice.

## **5. National Voluntary and Community Sector organisations funded by ACU**

National organisations funded by the ACU should:

- agree to an amendment of their current terms of grant to include an obligation to promote and support implementation of Compact principles and codes within their own parts of the sector;
- and should be encouraged by the ACU to:
- nominate a senior staff member to become a Compact ‘ambassador’
  - co-brand promotional and dissemination material with the CWG
  - publish annual plans for the promotion of the Compact principles and codes within their own membership and part of the sectors
  - participate in annual joint meetings – involving Chairs as well as Chief Executives – with CWG and the ACU;
- and should expect the ACU to include in the criteria used when grant renewal applications are being considered an assessment of how positive a contribution to Compact implementation an organisation has made.

## **6. The Compact Working Group (CWG)**

### ***Status and membership***

The CWG’s unconstituted status seems likely to continue to be an advantage during the Compact implementation phase. The CWG should move forward quickly with its plans to enlarge and broaden its membership and to create the National Forum on Local Compacts.

### ***Funding proposal***

The detailed bid and three year business plan should be prepared as a matter of urgency – with graded priorities and qualitative as well as quantitative measures of

success; the CWG should confirm that the role of the Secretariat is to provide administrative and coordinating support to the CWG and its sub-groups and associated networks and forums: an enabler and resource to others – not a development agency directly engaged in detailed and sustained work on individual local compacts.

Detailed justifications for each new proposed staff post should be included in the plan along with proposals for a continuing series of detailed ‘warts and all’ case studies of effective implementation of the Compact principles and codes.

***Other recommendations to the CWG***

That it consider:

- preparing bids for project grants from the ACU which aim to enhance or extend local compacts
- branding its work clearly to emphasise its independence
- introducing periodic meetings with the Generalist and BME Voluntary and Community Regional Networks
- holding at least 33% of its meetings outside London, each combined with open events designed to reach regional and local players within the statutory, voluntary and community sectors
- introducing additional information flows within the CWG and sub-groups between meetings.