



# Kent Partners' Compact

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

## Kent Partners' Compact Refresh 2011

### Foreword

This will be inserted after the consultation period.

### 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 that will guide their working relationship, for mutual and positive benefit of the Kent community.

It is an expression of the desire of the VCS and the public sector to work better together. It also provides a framework where shared respect, understanding and fair treatment are the building blocks for real partnership.

The VCS has a vital role to play in society and in the delivery and development of excellent public services to 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 enormously to our quality of life.

With central government focussing on issues such as the Big Society Agenda, the Localism Bill and the restructure of many public sector organisations the Compact remains as relevant as it was in 1998 when the government launched the national Compacts. Furthermore, the rationale behind its establishment was to support the local Compact forums and to promote implementation across the public sector and this voluntary sector.

In the years following 1998 a number of compacts were developed in Kent at district and local level subsequently in January 2009 a single Kent Partners' Compact was launched which sought to establish consistency in the relationship between the public sector and the voluntary sector. In December 2010, the National Compact was refreshed and this has been recognised and embedded into the refreshed Kent Partners' Compact.

### **Useful web links**

The following link [www.kentcan.org](http://www.kentcan.org) will give you access to the national Compact & the Kent Partners' Compact.

### **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 of 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; and**
- **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 lists a number of agreed commitments by both sectors that reflects good working practice.

The commitments are practical tools which will support joint working and will 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 the financial relationship.

### **VCS commitments**

- Ensure eligibility for funding before applying and explain clearly 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.
- Plan to reduce the negative effects on the beneficiaries and the organisation if fund ceases altogether.
- 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 in delivering public services.
- Consider a range of ways to fund or resource the VCS, including grants, contracts, loans, use of premises and so on. 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 the best way to do this.
- Consider a range of ways to support the VCS such as enabling greater access to public sector owned premises and resources 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 desired 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.
- Ensure that 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 that monitoring and reporting is relevant and proportionate to the nature and size of the opportunity.
- Agree terms of responsibility for the balance of risk that 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 that 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**

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 polices and services delivered by both the public and voluntary and community sectors.

### **VCS commitments**

- When campaigning or advocating, ensure that 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 stage 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 organisation 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 engagements methods that best involve communities, service users, beneficiaries, members and trustees.
- Ensure that communications are 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 in all kinds of engagement activity.

# **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.
- To ensure that sufficient time and resources are available for the training of volunteers and that 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**

- Recognise the physical and mental health benefits of volunteering.
- Recognise the value of an individual's right to volunteer and the value of volunteering within the community.
- Recognise 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.
- To 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.
- To support the inclusion of costs associated with volunteering to enable greater access to funding.
- Ensure that it is free 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](http://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](http://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](http://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

# 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 which 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.

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

**Commitment** - An obligation, pledge or promise.

**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.

**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.

