

2nd Annual Sunderland Compact Conference Report

**Tuesday 3rd November 2009
Swan Street Centre, Sunderland**

Introduction

The 2nd Annual Sunderland Compact Conference was a very positive and encouraging event, with the theme of 'The Compact and a thriving Voluntary and Community Sector'. The format of the day provided opportunities for approximately 60 delegates to hear about the latest developments with the Sunderland Compact, contribute to the action plans that will make the Compact real and hear about national developments on the Compact from the Compact Advocacy Project.

Overview of the Day

Session 1

Jane Hibberd (Assistant Head of Community Services (Community Development) Sunderland City Council) gave an overview of the journey that the Compact has taken over the past year, through the development of the Codes of Practice by the Working Groups through to endorsement by the Sunderland Partnership and sign up by individual organisations. Challenges for the year ahead were outlined – in particular increasing awareness, developing training tools and developing the Compact implementation plans, and most importantly maintaining momentum.

Cllr Gofton (Portfolio Holder for Responsive Services and Customer Care) spoke on why Sunderland City Council has signed up to the Compact, highlighting the importance that the City Council places on its relationship with the Voluntary and Community Sector and the need to establish genuine partnership working which allows each partner to do what they do best, making a difference by improving quality and increasing effectiveness, whilst also deepening mutual understanding and developing trust and respect.

Session 2

Organisations which have signed up to the Compact attended a workshop aimed at sharing understanding of why they have signed up, what they think needs to happen to make the Compact work and practical suggestions.

Why organisations have signed up:

- It is a partnership way of working
- Ensures transparency and accountability – both ways
- Creates a level playing field
- Will help prevent duplication
- Adds value to the work we do
- Creates a 'formal' process to challenge partners
- Gives organisations the ability to influence decision making
- Will help us to weather the recession together

What can we do to make the Compact work:

- Develop a communication tool
- Develop a toolkit

- Develop a plan for how to make the Compact relevant to small groups
- Develop an ICT based training programme
- Keep it live by having it on the agenda at local area meetings
- Come up with a plan for dealing with the training needs caused by high turnover of staff
- Use 'organic osmosis' to get the message out – use networks of networks to spread the message
- Produce A4 size easy read versions of the Compact

Session 3

Pauline Forster (Strategy Development Coordinator, Sunderland City Council) gave a presentation on the Volunteering Code of Practice and informed delegates of the positive work that has happened as a result of the Code of Practice – the development of the Volunteering Toolkit, the Volunteering Expenses Pilot and the ASDAN training.

Daniel Fluskey (Compact Advocacy Project) gave a presentation on the work of the Compact Advocacy Project, Compact Voice and developments on the Compact nationally. He also explained how the Compact contributes to a thriving Voluntary and Community Sector.

Session 4

Delegates had the opportunity to attend one of three workshops:

- Volunteer Toolkit Training
- Promoting the Compact – how to engage your organisation
- Local Strategies – an overview and how to influence them

Session 5

Delegates chose up to three Codes of Practice workshops to attend. At each session delegates were asked to help populate an action plan which will be used to implement the Codes of Practice

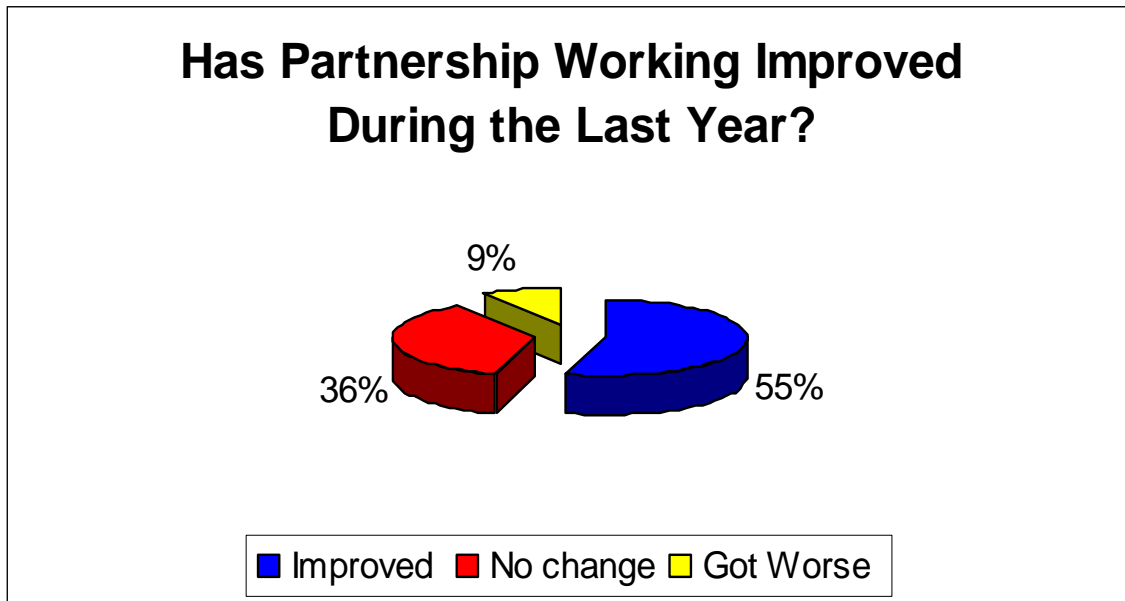
Session 6

Alan Patchett (Chair of Sunderland Community Network and Director of Age Concern Sunderland) closed the conference by speaking on the value of the Compact to the Voluntary and Community Sector, and encouraging organisations to sign up to the way of working.

All powerpoint presentations from the day are available at www.sunderlandcompact.org.uk

The Sunderland Relationship Poll

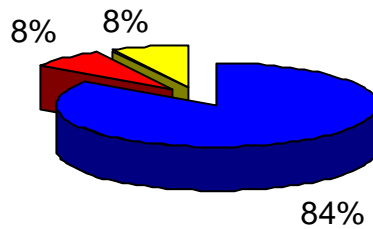
Delegates were asked to complete a relationship poll to help give an understanding on the state of the relationship between VCS organisations and Sunderland Partnership organisations. Twenty responses were received.



Some of the comments received were:

- There are many opportunities to become involved in partnership working and the structures are understandable. However, capacity to actually get involved is a huge issue. This affects levels of partnership working.
- Developing Compact codes of practice has helped improve partnership working.
- Local groups are still afraid to partner with other groups. This will need great publicity to change ideas.
- There has been great support from Community & Cultural Services to achieve new funding for SCN.

How Would You Expect Relations to Change in the Coming Year?

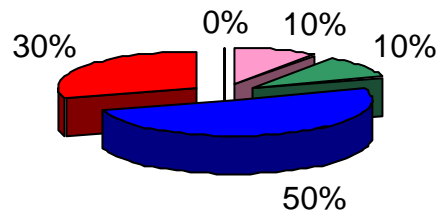


■ Improve ■ No Change ■ Get Worse

Some of the comments received were:

- Partners are aware of the likely cuts to services that are commissioned. If this is done with thought to the Compact F&P code principles relationships should not deteriorate
- There will be increased trust across sectors as organisations develop relationships with the sector
- There is new impetus so things should improve
- There are more organisations on board so there will be better partnership work.
- There is a lack of funds - a shrinking pot will see organisations fold with a negative impact on relationships.
- New strategies, new aims and positive thinking.

Level of Trust Between V&C Sector and Organisations of Sunderland Partnership



■ Poor ■ Satisfactory ■ Excellent/Improving ■ Static ■ Getting Worse

Some of the comments received were:

- There is growing acceptance by the public sector that the third sector has expertise and can deliver creative solutions to both sectors' issues and challenges.
- Movement has been very slow towards true partnership and involvement.
- Things are improving due to the Compact.
- Historic entrenched views, fear, lack of knowledge and understanding. Let's change this!
- It takes a long time to build trust and requires effort from both sides.

Delegates were asked what they would like to see happen to improve relationships now, next year and in 5 years time. The common responses are detailed below

What would you like to see happen?		
Now	Next year	5 years
The VCS to become more capable of applying Compact principles to their activity.		
More awareness training on what the VCS is to improve understanding by organisations of the Sunderland Partnership.	Everyone involved in commissioning processes to have completed training on the Compact	Continued funding of infrastructure VCS orgs which promote shared agendas in SCN.
Recognition of funding constraints i.e. more flexibility in payment methods for contracts, eg payment in advance or monthly payments. There needs to be a less complex application process for small funding pots.	Support development of consortia at area committee & city level.	Thriving 3rd sector demonstrating professional approach to service delivery, contract, management, involvement, consultation and influence
Encourage engagement of more groups.	Strengthened partnerships.	Be a flagship to other councils for strong partnership / Compact.
New beginning.	Progress - alliance with Sunderland CVS.	Working together is the only way to achieve our goal.
More organisations to sign up to Compact.	Improved trust and relations between VCS organisations and organisations of Sunderland Partnership.	
Build trust i.e. VCS and Sunderland Partnership talking together - and most important, listening and providing evidence of commitment	Evaluate 1st year - build on successes, make changes on any failures.	A cohesive Compact community that works together in harmony.
More joint working.	Build on success & fight recession together.	A true & genuine partnership has developed.
Action planning for each code & implementation across partners.	See visible interventions.	The Compact be embedded across organisations - working together, making a real difference in our communities.