

## **Sunderland Compact Update April 2010**

### **Local Update**

#### **Compact Implementation Group**

The first meeting of the Compact Implementation Group (CIG) took place on 7th April 2010. The purpose of the CIG is to drive forward implementation of the Compact – agenda, minutes and papers are posted on [www.sunderlandcompact.org.uk](http://www.sunderlandcompact.org.uk)

An article on the Compact Implementation Group will hopefully feature in a forthcoming issue of Insight, the Commission for the Compact's quarterly publication. This can be found at [www.thecompact.org.uk](http://www.thecompact.org.uk) from the end of May.

#### **Organisational Compliance with the Compact**

We would like to remind all organisations (both organisations of the Sunderland Partnership and VCS organisations) signed up to the Compact that it is their individual responsibility to make sure that they are complying with the Compact commitments.

Over the coming months we will be producing short summaries of the Compact and guidance on implementation with good practice suggestions. To start with we have developed Evidence and Action Logs which organisations can use to demonstrate what they are currently doing in line with the commitments of the codes of practice and to identify what actions they need to take to improve what they are doing. These can be downloaded from [www.sunderlandcompact.org.uk](http://www.sunderlandcompact.org.uk) or hard copies can be sent out by phoning 0191 561 4603.

If you think that your organisation has good practice to share relating to the Compact, either something you are already doing or something you may be planning to do to become Compact compliant, please let us know by emailing [compact@sunderland.gov.uk](mailto:compact@sunderland.gov.uk) or phoning 0191 561 4603, as we are building up a database of case studies that we can use to celebrate the innovation and good practice that exists in Sunderland. An example of this is the work that Sunderland City Council is doing on a corporate grants protocol.

In recognition of the commitments within the Funding and Procurement Code of Practice, Sunderland City Council has commenced work on developing a corporate grants process including streamlined application processes. VCS involvement in the design of the process will be facilitated through Sunderland Community Network.

## **Compact signatories**

There are now 86 organisations signed up to the Compact. If you are not yet signed up, further information can be found at [www.sunderlandcompact.org.uk](http://www.sunderlandcompact.org.uk)

## **Regional Update**

### **Regional Lead for Compact Voice**

Gillian McDonough (Chief Officer Sunderland CVS) has been appointed as regional lead for Compact Voice. Her role includes:

- sharing developments and common issues, keeping Compact Voice informed
- promoting Compact Voice information, campaigns and initiatives
- referring local groups with Compact difficulties to the Compact Advocacy Programme
- being the lead for Compact Voice in the North East
- helping to promote the Compact Voice network, recruiting network members as opportunities arise
- helping to respond to members' postings to the Compact Voice Network online forum, to start new discussions and act as a 'sounding board' for new web developments

This is a positive development for Sunderland, and the North East as a region. Through Gillian's role we will be able to promote the good practice that exists in Sunderland. If you would like to talk to Gillian about her role she can be contacted by phoning 0191 565 1566 or emailing [gillianmcdonough@aol.com](mailto:gillianmcdonough@aol.com)

### **Regional Compact Officers Group**

Sunderland City Council has initiated a Regional Compact Officers group for those local authority officers with responsibility for the Compact. The first meeting took place on 19th April and it was apparent that there are many common areas of concern around the Compact, including:

- the benefit of the Compact in relation to funding issues
- resource to embed the Compact
- how the Compact relates to community groups
- how to maintain the Compact as a living document
- how to demonstrate the value of the Compact as a tool

It is good to note that officers from other Local Authorities were impressed with the approach that Sunderland has taken and felt they had a lot to learn from us. In particular they were impressed by:

- the process used to refresh the Compact (especially the co-chairing arrangements)
- the fact that it is a Sunderland Partnership document and that most of our partners are signed up
- the establishment of the Compact Implementation Group

Discussions on the Compact inevitably led to wider discussions on how local authorities can support the VCS and future meetings will focus on issues such as grants processes and community buildings. An article on the group will hopefully feature in the next edition of Insight. Future updates on the group will be provided to the CIG.

## **National Compact**

### **Compact Implementation Events**

Compact Voice has announced a series of Compact implementation events, to be held around the country through spring and summer 2010. These events, which will bring representatives from regional and local voluntary sector groups, public bodies and Local Compact implementation groups, will help Compact partners to strengthen their own Compact working in light of the recent refresh of the national Compact. The sessions will be interactive, focused on getting results for all partners, and will be held in a central location within all nine English regions.

Confirmed dates and locations:

Birmingham: 19th May BVSC - [Book now](#) or [read the agenda](#)

London: 25th May [Resource Centre, Holloway Road](#)

Leeds: 2nd June [Carriageworks Theatre](#)

Manchester: 15th June [GMCVO](#)

Leicester: 22nd June [Voluntary Action Leicestershire](#)

Newcastle: 13th July [Centre for Life](#)

Stephanie Blayney will be attending the Newcastle event on behalf of the Sunderland Compact, but it would be great to have as many representatives from Sunderland to attend as possible! To register for the event please access [www.compactvoice.org.uk](http://www.compactvoice.org.uk).

### **Compact Voice Briefings**

Compact Voice has produced two briefings:

- Make procurement work for you by using your Compact
- Righting Public Law Wrongs: Challenge Unfairness

Both documents can be accessed on [www.compactvoice.org.uk](http://www.compactvoice.org.uk).

**Compact Voice collects the views of election candidates**  
(from [www.thirdsector.co.uk](http://www.thirdsector.co.uk))

Compact Voice (infrastructure representing the voice of the voluntary sector in the Compact) has contacted more than 1,700 parliamentary candidates in an attempt to gauge their views on the Compact. The organisation has written to the candidates in the 533 constituencies in England and is uploading their responses to a publicly accessible website - <http://election.compactvoice.org.uk/> Compact Voice has asked candidates what efforts they would make to work with local charities and voluntary organisations in their constituencies if they were elected and whether they would champion the Compact.

People are being encouraged by Compact Voice to contact candidates who have not responded to remind them to take part. A spokesman for the organisation said one of the aims of the exercise was to raise the profile of the Compact. "It is about putting partnership working onto the agenda and getting people who might be elected to commit themselves to the Compact and the principles of partnership working," he added.

**Compact breach by Westminster City Council**  
(from [www.thirdsector.co.uk](http://www.thirdsector.co.uk))

Compact Voice is very disturbed by recent cuts planned for the next financial year by Westminster city council, as it appears that affected voluntary groups were not consulted about the impact of the cuts and will also have a reduced role in future decision-making. This action is not only a breach of the Local Compact but of their legitimate expectation to be consulted, and such a hit and miss approach is unlikely to lead to the best outcomes for the area. Bernard Collier, chief executive of Voluntary Action Westminster, said "we are left with the choice of cutting support to small groups or our engagement work with the council and the public sector. Whichever we choose we will be letting people down."

This is in stark contrast to the recent experiences in Thurrock and Merton, which hold lessons for partners in Westminster, and other areas, about the value of following Compact principles. In Thurrock, impact assessments conducted by the council with input from local sector representatives, meant that unstrategic, flat cuts across the board were rejected - and in the end no cuts to voluntary groups were made.

Similarly, partners in Merton reached an understanding of the best use of expenditure, by conducting a joint strategic needs assessment, resulting in cuts which nevertheless still represented both best value for expenditure, and mutually agreed priorities.

Compact Voice believes this kind of collaboration is crucial to ensuring that, during the lean fiscal year ahead, the best outcomes for communities are

delivered. We urge Westminster to follow the example of Merton and Thurrock, and to reverse the cuts until proper consultation has been undertaken.

Oliver Reichardt, Head of the Compact Team said: "Local areas that follow Compact principles when looking for cost savings make better decisions. Involving groups at the outset and working with them is even more important during the current economic difficulties. We would urge local groups to get out their Compacts and start talking to local authorities now: don't wait until it's too late."

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If your contact details have changed please either email your updated details to [compact@sunderland.gov.uk](mailto:compact@sunderland.gov.uk) or return this slip to:

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