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# Dover and District Compact

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This Compact establishes a new approach to working together between public sector and voluntary and community organisations in the District of Dover.



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# Aim and background

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This Compact establishes a new approach to working together between public sector and voluntary and community organisations in the District of Dover.

Our Compact recognises the vital contribution that the voluntary and community sector makes to all areas of community life and is the starting point for a partnership based on shared values and mutual respect. We want to help more people to become involved in voluntary activity, which is a vital part of active citizenship, and to support them in this work, as volunteers play a major role in providing services to the community.

We use the term voluntary and community sector to include a wide range of voluntary and community organisations, associations and groups, and the volunteers working within them, for example as trustees or service providers. They bring people together to play an influential part in the life of their local community and thus make a significant contribution to the economy and well-being of the District.

In the late 1990s, it became clear that the Government and the voluntary and community sector nationally could, by working together, make a more beneficial impact on many of the needs of the population as a whole. They shared many values and functions and decided that a 'compact' to improve their mutual understanding and develop their relationship would be highly desirable. Therefore, in 1998 a National Compact was developed which set out the key undertakings by both sides. It was clear that local compacts should be drawn up on a similar basis because the majority of voluntary activity occurs at a local level.

Representatives of local voluntary and community groups, and public sector organisations, have drawn up this document. A Compact Development Group met in April 2002 to develop an approach that applies the principles of the National Compact and makes them relevant to the District of Dover.

Dover & District Compact represents an approach that will develop over time. The Compact Development Group will write an action plan which will be monitored by the partners to the Compact. A key element will be to put mechanisms in place to encourage full involvement by local organisations.

Whilst no partner is legally bound by this Compact it is hoped that all partners will work within the spirit of the Compact.

The aim is to maximise the benefits to the whole community by sharing knowledge, experience, expertise and resources.

The success of our Dover & District Compact will be measured by the improvements this new partnership working makes to the lives of local people.

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# What is the Dover & District Compact?

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The Compact is a voluntary agreement between Public Sector organisations on the one hand and, on the other Voluntary and Community organisations within the District regardless of their size. It describes the relationship between the two sectors. It is not a legally-binding document but sets out an understanding of how the two sectors will work together for the benefit of the community of Dover District.

The Compact provides the means of supporting the development of the voluntary and community sector's capacity so that independent, accountable organisations within it can do more to meet their own community objectives and also those of their public sector partners. To make the local Compact effective, everyone involved must adhere to this agreement and actively support it. By working within the spirit and provisions of the Compact, both sectors can develop good practice.

The Compact will evolve over time and mechanisms will be set up to monitor the development and implementation of the Compact, which itself shall be subject to regular consultation and review.

The Dover & District Compact expresses the commitment of public sector and voluntary and community sector organisations to work in partnership. By working together we can achieve much more than working apart.

# What is the Dover & District Compact?

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# Shared Principles

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The principles which support this Compact are:

- voluntary and community organisations and the action they take are an essential part of a democratic society;
- the public sector and independent and diverse voluntary and community organisations are central to the well being of society;
- the public sector and the voluntary and community sector have distinct but complementary roles in developing and delivering services for the benefit of the local community;
- working in partnership towards common aims leads to increased and improved outcomes;
- voluntary and community organisations are entitled to campaign within the law to further their aims;
- public sector and voluntary and community sector organisations acknowledge the importance of promoting equality of opportunity for everyone, regardless of race, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation or religion;
- sharing of information, good practice and common standards benefits the public sector, voluntary and community organisations and the people of Dover District as a whole;
- respect, openness, honesty and trust are essential components of partnership working.

# Shared Principles

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# Our Shared Vision

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The Dover & District Compact recognises that voluntary and community organisations and the Public Sector both contribute considerably towards improving the quality of life of the people of Dover District. As partners to the compact, we believe this can be achieved more effectively by working together:

## **THE SECTORS JOINTLY UNDERTAKE TO:**

- communicate and listen to each other;
- share knowledge, experience and expertise;
- work together in partnership for the benefit of the local people and their needs;
- work towards common aims and objectives according to the capacity of each organisation;
- encourage and support voluntary and community activity;
- demonstrate commitment to the importance of sustainability in the planning and provision of services;
- promote equal opportunity and diversity;
- demonstrate commitment to communication and sharing of information;
- promote mutual understanding of each other's ethos and roles and create relationships where partners are equally valued;
- encourage the resolution of issues that may arise through an agreed process where negotiations break down.

We believe that by working together towards the achievement of democratic and socially-inclusive objectives, we can achieve positive benefits for the District.

# Our Shared Vision

#### **THE PUBLIC SECTOR UNDERTAKES TO:**

- recognise that volunteers bring considerable added value to the well-being of the District;
- consider the potential impact on voluntary and community organisations of any changes in policy;
- recognise the right of voluntary and community organisations to comment on policy and challenge it where appropriate, regardless of any funding arrangements that exist;
- recognise the breadth of knowledge and ideas within the voluntary and community sector and to value and utilise these resources when developing policy, strategy and service delivery;
- promote effective partnership working with voluntary and community organisations at all levels within their organisations;
- recognise the importance of infrastructure to voluntary and community organisations and to support its development;
- develop a long term policy of support and investment in voluntary and community activity wherever possible.

#### **THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR UNDERTAKES TO:**

- maintain high standards of governance and conduct and meet reporting and accountability obligations to funders and users;
- ensure that users, carers, volunteers and members are informed and involved when responding to consultation and to involve them in the management and development of their services;
- develop quality standards appropriate to each organisation;
- make use of infrastructure organisations in Dover such as Mid & South East Kent Council for Voluntary Service, Dover District Volunteering Centre and Action with Communities in Rural Kent, and offer suggestions and ideas to help them maximise their benefit to voluntary and community organisations;
- recognise the decision-making role of public sector organisations and their responsibility to balance the needs of the whole community when allocating resources.

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# Code of Good Practice on Resources

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## AIM

To improve the relationship between the public sector and voluntary and community organisations within the District of Dover in managing and using resources such as statutory funding, external funding, human resources and skills, equipment, buildings and transport.

## THE SECTORS JOINTLY UNDERTAKE TO:

- share and optimise the use of resources by developing a common approach to shared use of, for example, transport, buildings, equipment and training as far as possible whilst recognising the constraints on each sector;
- seek to develop a real culture of co-operation and the ways in which we take account of issues and pressures arising between funders and recipients;
- acknowledge that the respective focus, needs and priorities of each sector have to change to meet the changing demands of the community as a whole;
- work together to simplify and / or standardise all funding processes, so that they are acceptable and common to all;
- support joint training of staff and secondment opportunities to promote greater mutual understanding;
- work to develop procedures that are consistent with the principles of accountability for use of public money;
- work together to identify and share best practice and value;
- to enhance Dover District's capacity and capability to deal with community needs through sharing of funding information, joint bidding and lobbying, and events.

## THE PUBLIC SECTOR UNDERTAKES TO:

- develop a clear, simple and standardised process for grant application, monitoring and quality evaluation, and provide feedback on unsuccessful applications;
- accept that appropriate reserves of funds held by voluntary and community organisations are a sign of good management;



# Resources

- identify a named point of contact to provide information on public sector funding streams;
- make every effort to provide at least three months' notice about any changes in funding levels or contractual arrangements;
- recognise the different circumstances and needs of smaller organisations;
- where possible, offer financial stability in terms of contracts by developing three-year funding of voluntary and community activity;
- recognise that a crucial aspect of support for voluntary and community organisations is an effective system of infrastructure organisations and, where appropriate, support its development;
- recognise that the funding of core work is vital to the sustainability of service delivery provided by voluntary and community organisations;
- draw on local knowledge to ensure that funding decisions take account of level of need and existing provision, in order to ensure that it is supported, not duplicated, and that areas lacking services are provided for;
- the public sector must not assume that voluntary and community services are a free resource.

## **THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR UNDERTAKES TO:**

- recognise that public sector organisations are accountable bodies with strict priorities and funding constraints placed upon them, with a need to balance competing needs when allocating resources;
- abide by Charity Commission regulations and accounting rules, and obligations to users and funding bodies;
- work to high standards in all areas of operational governance and financial management to ensure accountability to stakeholders;
- adopt a sustainable and justifiable reserves policy where appropriate;
- give public acknowledgement of resources provided by public sector organisations.

# Code of Good Practice on Consultation and Policy Appraisal



## AIM

Ensure that voluntary and community organisations are able to comment on and influence public sector strategies and service delivery plans, and provide timely feedback on all consultation, in order to develop more reliable and robust policies that better reflect the community's needs and wishes.

## THE SECTORS JOINTLY UNDERTAKE TO:

- ensure that, when consultation takes place, the outcome is able to influence decisions;
- develop, build upon and improve consultation mechanisms by using and enhancing existing networks, partnerships and forums;
- explore and develop alternative forms of effective consultation, particularly with hard to reach groups;
- provide and publicise feedback on the results of consultation;
- define clearly which policies and practices are open to change and which are not;
- ensure early publication of consultation timetables and provide realistic timescales for consultation processes;
- use language that is simple and clear, avoiding jargon and overuse of abbreviations.

## THE PUBLIC SECTOR UNDERTAKES TO:

- provide clear information on organisational structure, priorities, strategic plans and decision-making processes;
- consult voluntary and community organisations on all issues that are likely to affect them, particularly when proposing new roles or responsibilities for the sector;
- make it easier for voluntary and community organisations to find ways of accessing public sector organisations, given their complexity;
- remain sensitive to the resource implications, for voluntary and community organisations, of participating in consultation exercises and explore alternative methods of obtaining feedback;

# Consultation

- consult voluntary and community organisations in good time, and involve them at a sufficiently early stage of policy development;
- provide contact details of staff who have specific roles in liaising with and supporting voluntary and community organisations, and explain their roles;
- assist the work of voluntary and community infrastructure organisations in facilitating consultation;
- prepare consultation documents that are concise, clearly laid out and written in language appropriate to the wide range of intended audiences.

## **THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR UNDERTAKES TO:**

- make every effort to participate in relevant consultation exercises and help improve public sector consultation procedures;
- recognise the value of consulting with public sector bodies when developing policies and priorities;
- support infrastructure organisations and networks such as Mid & South East Kent Council for Voluntary Service, Dover District Volunteering Centre and Action with Communities in Rural Kent, which raise the profile of the needs of individual organisations, communities and voluntary and community organisations as a whole.
- work to ensure high quality of information and communication, including point of contact information;
- contribute actively, within resource constraints, to sharing information through infrastructure organisations and independently, in order to promote better working towards shared aims;
- ensure, where possible, that information is provided to volunteers and service users and that their views are incorporated where appropriate when responding to consultation;
- ensure, when responding to consultation, that it is clear whom the feedback represents, for example trustees, staff, volunteers or service users.

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# Code of Good Practice on Valuing Volunteers

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## AIM

To recognise the major contribution that volunteers make to the delivery of services within Dover District and recognise that volunteers have similar needs to those of paid members of staff within the organisations in which they work.

## THE SECTORS JOINTLY UNDERTAKE TO

- although this is undertaken by choice and without concern for financial gain, make no assumption that volunteers are a free resource and recognise they need support and resources to undertake their role;
- recognise that volunteers commit time and energy to benefit their communities and share the same requirements for professionalism;
- recognise that volunteering is a choice freely made by individuals and that volunteering should not be the result of coercion or compulsion. Freedom to volunteer also implies freedom not to volunteer;
- give publicity to the achievements of volunteers and volunteering activity;
- work together to improve the status, image and perception of volunteering;
- ensure that decision makers are 'volunteer-friendly' and 'volunteer-literate' and are aware that their actions and decisions may affect community and voluntary activity;
- support the provision of and recognise the benefits that appropriate training and ongoing support can give to volunteers and evaluate practices accordingly;
- develop appropriate information and support structures to ensure that volunteers are offered induction programmes, training, information and on-going support;
- identify and, where possible, remove barriers to volunteer participation;
- encourage employers to give staff time off to become involved in volunteering;
- recognise the value of a focal point for volunteering such as Dover District Volunteering Centre, to help those requiring support;

- ensure that volunteers are able to claim out-of-pocket expenses that they incur where possible;
- recognise that using volunteers needs resources to support them;
- recognise, encourage and use appropriately the knowledge and skills that volunteers bring.

# Code of Good Practice on Valuing Volunteers

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# Code of Good Practice on Community Groups

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Community groups are formed by people who have come together to respond to common issues or interests and are often locality-based. They are run by their members, have limited funding and no paid staff. They include self-help groups, tenant or resident associations, local clubs and societies. Local regeneration initiatives are most successful where communities are involved and empowered.

## **AIM**

To promote a clearer understanding of community groups within the voluntary and community sector as a whole and to ensure a positive impact on the way all sectors relate to them through their policies and practices.

## **THE SECTORS JOINTLY UNDERTAKE TO:**

- develop a partnership approach to strategies for communities and promote and share best practice and celebrate success;
- develop and maintain mutual respect within partnership relationships;
- be inclusive of black and ethnic minority groups and people with mental, physical and learning disabilities;
- recognise and promote the need for accessible learning and development support for community groups and active community members in both urban and rural areas of the District;
- ensure that community groups are considered within consultation processes;
- create and maintain the conditions and support that help community groups to succeed and consider how to make it easier to access the resources needed to develop and maintain community sector infrastructure;
- publicise and promote community achievement;
- ensure that community needs are identified by communities themselves and that community groups have opportunities to manage projects and have a view in deciding what is a successful outcome;
- tackle racism and all other forms of discrimination, no matter where it comes from;
- encourage quality partnership working and community involvement.

#### **THE PUBLIC SECTOR UNDERTAKES TO:**

- simplify the delivery of small-grants funding programmes for community groups, to increase access to them and, where possible, to get as many local people involved in administration and decision making;
- recognise that the work of monitoring a grant should be proportional to its size;
- recognise the value of contributions to projects, such as volunteer time, as equivalent to match funding.

#### **THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR UNDERTAKES TO:**

- channel information and views to public sector bodies, where appropriate and where possible;
- share information with other groups within the community to ensure that they are able to operate and participate on an equal basis.

# Community Groups

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# Implementation, Monitoring and Review

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## THE SECTORS WILL JOINTLY IMPLEMENT THE COMPACT BY:

- establishing a partnership group to oversee and monitor the Compact and act as 'Compact champions'. This group will report into the Dover District Local Strategic Partnership;
- encouraging wide ownership and support for the Compact through various methods and channels of consultation;
- providing a mechanism for organisations to sign up to the principles outlined in the Compact;
- identifying measurable short-term and long-term outputs and outcomes of the Compact (e.g. an action plan).

## MONITORING THE COMPACT

The sectors will jointly identify:

- how well the Compact is known at all levels within the organisations involved or affected;
- how the relationship between the sectors is perceived;
- significant achievements resulting from the Compact and publicise them;
- issues and policies that do or will impact on both sectors;
- learning points or missed opportunities and take appropriate measures;
- how frequently, and for what reasons, issues between partners are identified and resolved.

## REVIEWING THE COMPACT

We will hold an annual review and consultation process to consider jointly how well existing structures and ways of working match the agreed outputs and outcomes of the Compact. We will also identify, continually, what can be done to improve the Compact.



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# Resolving Disagreements

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We recognise that there may be issues in implementing the Compact. These are rarely caused by the unreasonable behaviour of one or other party but are usually symptoms of wider problems. The objective is not simply resolution, but the identification of wider issues that may be contributing to the problem so that these may be addressed in a non-confrontational way. Airing concerns and resolving difficulties will help us improve the way we work and improve the quality of what we do.

The Compact sets out a general framework for enhancing the relationship between the statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sector. As far as possible disagreements over the application of that framework should be resolved between the parties. To assist this process, where both parties agree, the services of a mediator who is acceptable to all parties may be sought. Where issues cannot be resolved by mediation the matter should be referred to the National Compact Mediation Scheme.

We are sure, given the spirit of agreement that has drawn up this Compact, that the need for the extended process of resolving disputes will be infrequent or non-existent.

# Resolving Disagreements

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# The Key Partners

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## THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

Voluntary and community organisations are:

- independent in that they determine their own existence, constitution and objectives;
- controlled by volunteers in that their trustees derive no financial benefit from their positions and all surpluses are re-invested in the organisation rather than distributed;
- providers of social, health, environmental, economic and other public benefits to the community.

The voluntary and community sector makes a significant contribution to the local economy through the provision of services, which are often beyond the resources of the public sector even though they are essential to the well-being of local people.

## THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Public sector organisations are the publicly-owned part of the economy, controlled by the Government and / or local authorities to provide services to the community as a whole. They perform functions that have been established in law and have a legal responsibility to fulfil these functions. Public sector organisations are also enablers and co-ordinators of services through many different partnerships.

Public sector organisations within the District of Dover that are party to this Compact are Dover District Council, East Kent Coastal Teaching Primary Care Trust and East Kent Hospitals NHS Trust. Kent County Council has developed an independent Compact between itself and voluntary and community organisations in Kent and is supportive of Local Compacts.

The organisations represented on the Compact Development Steering Group are:

Age Concern Dover	Dover District Council
Age Concern Deal	Dover District Volunteering Centre
Arthritis Care	East Kent Coastal Teaching Primary
Christians Together	Care Trust
Connexions	East Kent Hospitals NHS Trust
Deal Centre for the Retired	Home Start Dover District
Disability Information Services in Kent	Kent County Council Social Services (advisor)
Dover Access & Mobility	Kent Refugee Action Network
Dover Carers Support	Mid & South East Kent Council for Voluntary Service
Dover Counselling Centre	Parkinson's Disease Society

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# Glossary of Terms

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**Campaign** To try to influence decision-makers to introduce specific policies and programmes or to try to change existing ones.

**Codes of Good Practice** Detailed guidelines on good working practices.

**Compact** An agreement which will help guide and develop relationships between the parties.

**Community** Any group of people, working together, who identify with a common concern, interest, issue or place.

**Community Strategy** A District Strategy to promote and improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area, and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK.

**Consultation** The process by which the opinion of others is sought. This is carried out in an organised and equitable way within defined parameters and may also involve testing the impact of decisions that have already been taken.

**Diversity** In the context of the Compact this term refers to the range of views, groups and approaches within the community and voluntary sector and among residents of the district.

**Governance** The legal exercise of authority and control of an organisation.

**Infrastructure Organisations** In this context, these are local organisations which exist to provide information and support to community and voluntary sector organisations of all sizes.

**Local Strategic Partnership** The LSP is a multi-agency group bringing together, at a local level, the different parts of the public sector as well as the private, business, community and voluntary sectors so that different initiatives and services support each other and work together. The LSP is also responsible for producing the Community Strategy.

**Monitoring and Evaluation** The systematic collection and recording of information (monitoring) and interpretation of that information (evaluation) to help an organisation assess how well it is delivering its service.

**Partnership** A number of organisations who agree to work together for a common aim or compatible objective, for example to deliver an activity or share information. Partnerships can be formal or informal and may involve sharing resources and responsibilities. Members of, or representatives elected to, partnerships agree to work together in a co-operative way to achieve partnership aims.

**Public Sector** Organisations created through Acts of Parliament whose functions are determined by law, for example: District Council, Primary Care Trusts, Probation Service, Fire and Ambulance Service.

**Representatives** People who are appointed, or elected, to put forward the views of a wider constituency. Representatives should consult with and feed back to this constituency to ensure their views are put forward.

**Stakeholders** The agencies and people who have a key interest or stake in an organisation, for example: service users, volunteers, funders, trustees, members and supporters.

**Sustainability** The ability to keep delivering services in order to allow effective management and planning.

**Trustees** The group of people responsible for the control and management of a charity, which includes members of a charitable association's management committee and directors of charitable companies. Certain specific statutory duties arise from being a trustee as detailed in the Charities Act.

**Users** The people who benefit from using a service provided by an organisation. May also be called clients, customers, consumers or recipients.

**Voluntary and Community Sector** The collective name for the wide range of community and voluntary organisations. This includes: neighbourhood based groups, communities of interest, self-help groups, campaigning organisations, plus national, regional and local charities. Groups may be run solely by volunteers or employ paid staff.

**Volunteering** An unpaid activity that a person (a volunteer) chooses to undertake, whereby they do something to benefit either an individual or a group (not relatives) or to benefit the community.

Other versions of this document can be made available, please contact either;

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