



Kent Partners Compact

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

Kent Partners
Compact 



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Foreword

We are pleased to provide our full support to the Kent Partners Compact – the new “joined-up” approach to Compacts in Kent which has been championed by the Kent Partnership (Kent’s Local Strategic Partnership). The document is both innovative (it aims to make the way we work together more clear) and aspirational (it sets out shared aims to achieve). It captures the spirit of the partnership which has grown and developed over the years between the public sector and the voluntary and community sector (VCS). The difference between this Compact and those that had previously existed is that this brings the public sector together and therefore reduces the duplication and inefficiencies of each organisation having its own Compact.

The Kent Partners Compact sets out a shared vision and principles, with undertakings from both sides and systems to make sure that the agreement works. It not only enables the two sectors to work together to be better together but is increasingly important for securing external funding and investment to support the services we deliver to our communities. It reflects best practice from national and local perspectives. But it will only be effective if partners own its principles and actively engage in their implementation. We commend the Kent Partners Compact to you and ask all partners to play a full and active part in turning its vision into reality



Paul Carter - Chairman - Kent Partnership



Barry Clout, Chairman, Kent CAN

Introduction

The Kent Partners Compact is a partnership agreement between the Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) and the Public Sector in Kent - a jointly agreed framework of principles to guide their future working relationship, for mutual, purposeful and positive benefit for the Kent community.

It is an expression of the desire of the VCS and the Public Sector to work better together and to get the relationships right together

Compacts focus on the relationship between the VCS and the Public Sector with the aim of defining and improving this relationship in order that the two sectors may work together more productively. Working together in this way improves outcomes for the community.

It is a framework where shared respect, understanding and fair treatment are the building blocks for real partnership. Setting out how the two sectors will work together is the purpose of the Compact.



The Local Government Act 2000 charged local authorities with the responsibility of community leadership and of promoting the well-being of local communities. Community engagement has come to the fore in partnership working through Sustainable Community Strategies, Local Area Agreements and Local Strategic Partnerships. Further reinforcement is provided through the Local Government and Involvement in Public Health Act 2007, the new Performance Framework of National Indicators and the Comprehensive Area Assessment and the Empowerment Action Plan. It is important to align Compacts with these initiatives.

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 people across the county are involved in voluntary and community organisations, dedicating their time and skills freely to local communities. They provide statutory services on behalf of the public sector, recruit volunteers, support individuals and groups and provide many other services that contribute enormously to the quality of life people enjoy.

The Kent Partners Compact will be used as an effective tool to bring the two sectors together. With 99% of local authority areas now covered by Compacts, the challenge is now to build on implementation. Resources for the VCS and Public Sector for Compact development and implementation has always been an important issue, and will need careful consideration by all partners to ensure that the aspirations of the Compact are delivered.

Setting The Scene

The Story of Compacts

1998	National Compact is agreed and launched. It initially applies to Central Government Departments including Government Offices for the Regions and Executive Agencies. It also includes an intention to work closely with the Local Government Association to encourage the adoption of its principles and undertakings at local level.
2000	Local Compact Guidelines published.
2001	At the Fourth Annual Meeting of the Compact it was agreed that further clarity is needed about the role of Regional Offices in Local or Regional Compacts.
2004	Local Strategic Partnerships encouraged to be involved in Local Compacts.
2005	Commission for the Compact established
2005	Strengthening Partnerships: Next Steps for Compact published
2006	Local Compact Guidelines are revised and re-launched as the Local Compact Implementation Workbook.
2006	New Compact Commissioner appointed
2007	Launch of the Commission for the Compact.
2008	New Commissioner for the Compact appointed – Sir Bert Massie CBE.

The Kent Perspective - Building On Firm Foundations

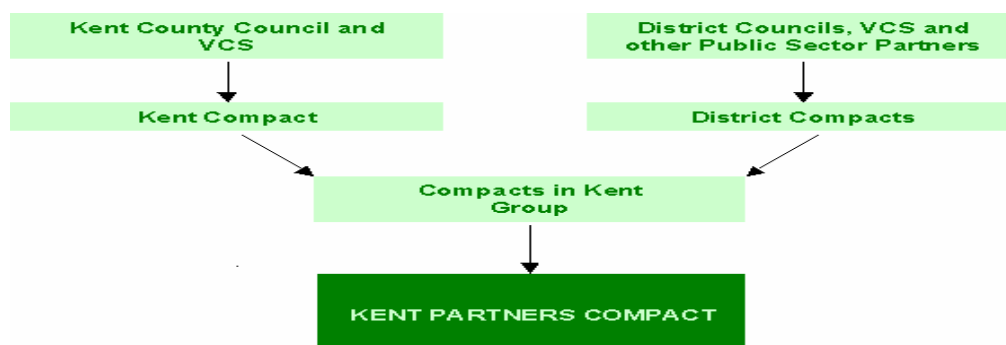
By 2005, a number of **Compacts** had been developed at district and county levels. The existing Compacts were a significant part of partnership working in Kent.

During this year, a **Compacts in Kent** group was formed from representatives from local Compacts to disseminate good practice and assist the development of more Compacts. In early 2006 members of the Compacts in Kent group agreed that their original remit to share and develop best practice on the development of local compacts had been largely met. It was recognised that there were new needs to be addressed, specifically to support the implementation of compacts and a compact way of working across, and within, the VCS and public sector. The new challenge was to ensure effective implementation to deliver mutual advantage and community gain.

Later in 2006, Kent partners received a commendation from the Compact Working Group for its work on Compact promotion, championing, and sharing best practice. This paved the way for the Kent Partners Compact.

An analysis was carried out to consider the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of how to take Compacts to the next level. The analysis identified that a Kent Partners Compact could add weight to existing Compacts by raising their profile, setting universal standards and providing 'strength in numbers' credibility. This, in turn, would facilitate cross-district/organisation working, help to gain the buy in of all Public Sector bodies and promote implementation.

The relationships between different Compacts in Kent



Benefits of the Kent Partners Compact

The aim of a Kent-wide compact is to make the relationship between public sector bodies and between the VCS and the public sector more clear and simple. It will avoid duplication and confusion for organisations working across more than one area, with multiple Compacts.

This does not necessarily mean that all existing district and county compacts are merged into one - the Kent Partners Compact adds value to existing agreements by building on common ground and good practice which has gone before.

The Kent Partners Compact will:

- **Provide a new Compact for organisations which have not previously been involved or are not signed up to local Compacts or wish to choose to adopt the Kent Partners Compact**
- **Add value by engaging multiple public sector partners, beyond just local authorities**
- **Minimise confusion and duplication by having a single document and set of codes of practice**
- **Help create a more consistent and productive relationship between the VCS and Public Sector and in doing so address any issues that arise**
- **Striving for a more consistent approach on funding relationships**
- **Improve outcomes for the people of Kent through local implementation and development**
- **Be of mutual advantage to all partners**
- **Set a framework for effective engagement, communication, representation and partnership working**
- **Complement two tier working between county and district councils**

How will it deliver?

The Kent Partners Compact requires support from partners at a local level and wide-ranging sign up from the VCS and Public Sector to be successful. Decisions will be made at a local level on whether to adopt the new Kent Partners Compact with local level action plan or to continue to use an existing local Compact. An alternative option includes adopting it as a new or first Compact if your organisation has not had or been involved in Compacts previously.

It will be a tool that empowers people to challenge process and behaviour. Local action plans will define successful Compact implementation and development.

The Codes of Practice featured in this document are the means to ensure Compact compliance, and are the tools through which the Compact will become operational.

Who is involved?

The Kent Partnership brings together representatives from the public, private, and voluntary and community sectors which have an interest in the future well-being of the county.

It was formed in 2002 as the **Local Strategic Partnership** (LSP) for Kent, recognising that partnership working is more effective than organisations working independently.

The Kent Partnership sponsors the Kent Partners Compact, and fully supports it as part of its commitment to the *Vision for Kent* - the countywide Sustainable Community Strategy and the second Local Area Agreement (Kent Agreement 2). This encourages the LSP to "create a framework for positive change and a proactive relationship between partners and the voluntary & community sector".

The Kent Partnership has close links with the LSPs across the county which bring together partners from the VCS, public & private sector at a district/borough boundary level. District LSPs will play a part in implementing the Kent Partners Compact at a local level, complementing any existing or ongoing local Compact work.

Voluntary & Community Sector Partners

Local/Individual Voluntary & Community Organisations play a vital role in Compact, and may choose to endorse this way of working. Further information on this is detailed in the Contacts section under 'Compacts in Kent'.

Kent CAN is the county level Voluntary & Community Sector leadership body that is represented on the Kent Partnership. Kent CAN takes action to ensure that the VCS has a strong voice in Kent. To benefit the people the sector seeks to help, it focuses its work on two key issues: representation and leadership.

Public Sector Partners

The Kent Partners Compact is supported by a range of partners including (but not limited to):

- ⇒ **District Councils**
- ⇒ **Eastern & Coastal Kent Primary Care Trust**
- ⇒ **Kent Association of Parish Councils**
- ⇒ **Kent County Council**
- ⇒ **Kent Fire & Rescue Service**
- ⇒ **Kent & Medway Learning & Skills Council**
- ⇒ **Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust**
- ⇒ **Kent Police**
- ⇒ **Kent Probation**
- ⇒ **South East Coast Ambulance Trust**
- ⇒ **South East Coast Strategic Health Authority**
- ⇒ **East Kent Hospital University Trust**
- ⇒ **West Kent Primary Care Trust**

Working Together - To Be Better Together

A Definition of Partnership

"An Agreement between two or more independent bodies to work together collectively to achieve an objective" (National Audit Office, 2004)

The Kent Partners Compact will help us all work together in the spirit of partnership working - but what do we mean by that?

"Partnership members share resources and responsibilities and agree to work together in a co-operative and mutually supportive fashion to achieve the shared goal" (Kent Children's Fund Creative Partnership Guide)

The purpose of this Compact is to encourage closer working and co-operation between the partners for the benefit of the people of Kent and it builds on the shared values of:

- Openness
- Honesty
- Accountability
- Integrity
- Respect
- Trust
- Confidence
- Objectivity
- Understanding
- Transparency
- Common purpose
- Leadership
- Effective communications
- Listening

The following principles form the basis for a **Compact way of working**. They are the shared values that all partners are committed to working towards. Further detail on implementation and development are in the Codes of Practice.



Kent Partners Compact Codes of Practice

What are Codes of Practice?

Codes of Practice are the way the Kent Partners Compact will become operational. Codes provide consistency and coherence to the way we work and embed the Compact way of working into everyday business. Without codes there will be limitations to what can be implemented, challenged and developed. The codes will provide standard tools to assist partners. An action plan will be developed to deliver each Code of Practice and measure performance and impact.

Codes of Practice

The four codes of practice for the Kent Partners Compact which reflect the national codes are:

- **Funding and Resources Code**
- **Volunteering Code**
- **Communication and Engagement Code**
- **Equality and Diversity Code**

The framework for codes

For ease and clarity, a simple and consistent structure for each code has been developed:

- **Aim** - an overall expression of what the codes aims to achieve
- **VCS undertakings** - actions or principles that the VCS will implement
- **Public Sector Undertakings**- actions or principles that the VCS will implement
- **Joint Undertakings**- actions everyone can endorse that can be further defined in local action plans
- **Examples of good practice**

Code of Practice on Funding and Resources

This Code of Practice needs to be read alongside the Glossary which defines all aspects of finance including: grants, commissioning, procurement, contracting, and shared resources as well as those resources that are not financial. It defines the difference between commissioning and procurement and grants. The public sector is required to follow public procurement principles of openness, transparency and equality, which prevents it from favouring any sector when contracting for goods, works or services

Aim

This code aims to promote an agreed standard, in terms of the financial relationship, between the VCS and public sectors, whether this is for grant funded activity or commissioned services delivered under contract.

VCS Undertakings

- Respect confidentiality and be clear about whom they represent and how they came to their views when engaging in any consultation exercises
- Ensure they are eligible when applying for grants or tendering for services.
- Have clear lines of accountability, especially with joint bids (including consortia arrangements).
- Identify and plan for risk ensuring outcomes are not adversely affected.
- Ensure that appropriate financial and governance systems and quality standards are in place to meet appropriate and agreed reporting and accountability obligations.
- Provide monitoring and evaluation forms promptly when in receipt of public sector grants or contracts
- Agree terms of delivery at the outset and be aware of the risks, which they are responsible for, in particular, the risks associated with the delivery of outputs or outcomes.
- Plan in good time for different situations to reduce any potential negative impact on both beneficiaries and the organisation should there be changes to levels of funding.

Public Sector Undertakings

- Recognise its role in establishing financial stability within the VCS by implementing longer term funding arrangements where this represents better value for money, and is both appropriate and possible.
- Strive for clarity and consistency across the public sector regarding the commissioning and procurement processes.
- Acknowledge the importance and relevance of supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector infrastructure and will reflect this in grant guidelines and objectives.
- Ensure there is fair access to funding and resources by providing clear and simple criteria, objectives and information about how to obtain resources and decision-making processes. Processes should take account of the need to identify new and emerging services.
- Seek to involve the VCS in the development of commissioning and procurement policies and protocols.
- Seek to ensure that the VCS have access to relevant and timely information regarding future public sector commissioning plans and funding opportunities.
- Take into account the Charity Commission's guidelines about the requirement for organisations to maintain reserves, when considering funding applications.
- Provide, whenever possible, an opportunity for the voluntary and community sector to contribute to programme design/design of service delivery.

- Recognise it is legitimate for voluntary and community organisations to include the relevant element of overhead costs in their estimates for providing a particular service (full cost recovery) or grant application. Avoid seeking inappropriate information about management fees and overheads with public procurement.
- Respect the independence of the sector
- Make payments to voluntary and community organisations in advance of expenditure where appropriate and necessary in order to achieve better value for money.
- Be proportionate (to size of funding, size of provider and perceived risk) in monitoring requirements.
- Provide feedback whenever possible.

Joint Undertakings

- Undertake joint work to improve Kent's share of external funding through sharing funding information, joint bidding and lobbying, and major events. Ensure that all available funding opportunities are fully explored.
- 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.
- Acknowledge the issue of Full Cost Recovery, and undertake joint work to agree a clear protocol on this.
- Discuss risks up-front and agree responsibility with the public sector body or voluntary and community organisation best able to manage them
- Work to ensure value for money and high quality service
- Agree terms of responsibility for the balance of risk that the VCS and the public sector are responsible for and identify processes by which these risks will be managed.
- Acknowledge the constraints, limitations and opportunities effecting both sector

Useful 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/guidncefundrs1505061v1.pdf>
<http://62.164.176.164/d/guidncefundrs1505061v1.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.

Examples of good practice

In 2007 Kent Adult Social Services and the VCS developed a new contracts framework that reflected the best practice in the Kent Compact; this included extensive involvement of VCS partners.

Voluntary Action West Kent (VAWK) has been commissioned to develop a sector approach and involvement in the new Gateway, due to open in Tunbridge Wells in the near future.

Canterbury City Council's new grants policy has been developed on the basis of consultation and evaluation.

Code of Practice on Volunteering

This code of good practice sets out principles and undertakings for both Government and the voluntary and community sector on how to work together to support and promote volunteering and voluntary action and to influence behaviour in order to tackle any barriers.

Aim

- To improve the relationship between the public sector & the voluntary and community sector in Kent to promote and improve volunteering.
- To work together to provide better volunteering opportunities and access to voluntary action in Kent.
- To ensure best practice in volunteering opportunities through policy and delivery.

VCS Undertakings

- Assist potential volunteers to find volunteering opportunities to fit their needs, interests and abilities by working in partnership with other agencies.
- 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.
- Effectively sign post potential volunteers wishing to volunteer outside the boundaries of Kent
- 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.
- Identify named persons within organisations or sign post to appropriate organisations (e.g. Volunteer Centres) who are responsible for volunteer support and the management of information as required by the Charities Commission and Volunteering England. ("Do-it" database www.do-it.org.uk)

Public Sector Undertakings

- 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.
- Encourage and actively support employee volunteering
- To reduce barriers to volunteering and community action through the review of existing policies and practices. The early involvement of the local community and volunteers in policy development is crucial to this undertaking.
- Ensure that the advice from the VCS is taken into account and impact on VCS activity and funding is measured.
- Support and promote the accessibility of information about volunteering at all levels.
- To support the inclusion of costs associated with volunteering to enable greater access to funding grants
- Assess the impact and contribution of volunteering activity to statutory programme and strategic policy objectives.
- Ensure the VCS is represented at a strategic level across the county
- Work in partnership with the VCS to review strengths and weaknesses and make recommendations based on best practice and examples identified.
- Recognise the significant knowledge base and expertise within the VCS to use and build on this effectively.

Joint Undertakings

- Recognise the four principles fundamental to volunteering:
 1. CHOICE: Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual.
 2. DIVERSITY: Volunteering opportunities should be open to all, regardless of background, race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic or national origins, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation or disability.
 3. MUTUAL BENEFIT: Voluntary action should benefit all. Volunteers should benefit in ways other than payment for their contributions and it must be personally fulfilling to them.
 4. RECOGNITION: Kent has a large number of volunteers, and has a history of providing volunteering opportunities to and for the people of Kent.

Example of Good Practice

Voluntary Action Maidstone is the lead partner delivering a project called the Kent Event Team. Funded for three years by Kent County Council, the project aims to build a county wide network of people interested in volunteering at a range of one off activities and events in sport, leisure, tourism and culture. Using the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games as a catalyst, it hopes to inspire the people of Kent to get involved with local community events and try volunteering, as well as helping event organisers to run better events by improving their volunteer recruitment and management.

The Kent Event Team's development was informed by a Kent Voluntary Infrastructure Consortium (KVIC) project called Time2Time. Time2Time was part of the Kent COVE work delivered by Sevenoaks Volunteer Development Agency. It tested methods of recruiting and placing volunteers for one off activities and local events, and was seen as a useful pilot by the partners developing the Kent Event Team.

Code of Practice on Communication and Engagement

How we communicate and engage with one another be it public, private or voluntary and community sector organisations is a vital part to how we work effectively together.

Good communication and engagement will lead to better partnership working which helps to ensure the delivery of high quality services and improved planning that meets the needs and aspirations of the communities we serve.

Where proposed changes or initiatives may have significant impact on voluntary and community sector organisations and their users, the public sector will involve them.

For voluntary and community organisations, engagement presents an opportunity to bring their knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on Government policy on behalf of the people and causes they work for.

Aim

- Strengthen relationships between organisations so that they understand the roles and responsibilities of each other, reduces duplication and makes better use of resources.
- Reduce the potential for misunderstandings, disagreements and disputes
- Value and enables the input of others to contribute to the policy making process
- Develop to robust policy that better reflects people's needs.
- Enable the more effective planning, prioritisation and delivery of better services
- Create a working partnership and mutual understanding
- Provide a means of sharing best practice, innovative ideas and experience in specialist fields

VCS Undertakings

- Embrace the participation in public sector engagement, including co-operating with each other through intermediary bodies and local networks to streamline the process.
- Take account positively of the specific needs, interest, contributions and diversity within the sector.
- Respect the confidentiality of information, when given access to it on that basis.
- Ensure the accuracy and relevance of information presented to public sector partners.
- Communicate and engage in such a way that reflects, as far as is reasonably practicable, the view of the VCS and not simply that of individuals or one organisation.
- Where an individual is in a representative role ensure there are mechanisms in place for appropriate feedback.

Public Sector Undertakings

- Build engagement into regular planning cycles and be clear about the purpose of the engagement.
- Work to ensure that any opportunities for engagement are announced in advance to maximise opportunities for responding and sufficient time allowed for
- Engage the Voluntary and Community sector on issues that are likely to affect them at a early stage of policy development
- Give organisations enough time to respond to consultation and, wherever possible, a standard period of 12 weeks and a minimum of 8 weeks.
- Explore with relevant partnerships e.g. Local Strategic Partnerships, the establishment and maintenance of a central engagement database/calendar, enabling organisations to register

their interest, showing actual or anticipated start and closing dates and contacts points for further information. This database will allow organisations to register their interest in particular policy areas and help them plan and prioritise their engagement. Where organisations are in control, and where organisations are not in control.

- Explain where decisions have already been made – make clear what can and cannot be changed as a result of the engagement.
- Be sensitive to resource implications e.g. in keeping databases of contacts which meet the Data Protection Act 1998, for the sector in disseminating the information and seek their views on the best way to carry out the engagement.
- Consider carefully the right mix of engagement methods in order to get the best spread of views from those most likely to be affected. Engagement should be undertaken in partnership with the Voluntary and Community Sector.
- Take a positive account of the specific needs, interests and contributions of those parts of the sector which represent the diversity of users.
- Prepare engagement documents that are concise, clearly laid out and written in simple language that will be understood by the intended audience. Make materials available in accessible formats, when requested – e.g. Braille, large print or audio.
- Encourage those involved to give honest views by assuring confidentiality to individuals and respecting the confidentiality of information provided by the sector.
- Analyse carefully the results of the engagement and report back on the views that are received and feedback on what has been done as a result.
- Evaluate with a view to developing and spreading best practice and achieving better policy outcomes.

Joint undertakings

- Make clear the purpose of communication and engagement.
- Inform each other at an early stage of developments that may affect their relationship and engage all relevant parties.
- Listen as well as talk.
- Create and maintain a database of key contacts to which information should be sent.
- Identify resources that can act as effective channels for onward distribution of information, avoid information overload by cutting out duplication and ensure communications are clear, concise and relevant.
- Check format and language to improve accessibility.
- Mark every piece of information with “for information” or “for action” – with a clear response date if appropriate.
- Make clear whether or not information is confidential. (However the code recognises that information requested under the Freedom of Information Act will be made available within that framework).
- Recognise the different requirements and value of one to one communication e.g. letter, email, phone, face to face etc., compared with “high volume” communication e.g. leaflets, websites, media relations.
- Work together to implement existing communications strategies.
- Use of the right mix of communication methods to reach the right people in the right way e.g. printed literature, websites, media relations, events, branding etc.
- Take account of religious, faith, cultural and rural needs.

Examples of good practice

Swale has successfully used the principles of the code to secure greater communication and engagement with public sector bodies. Swale challenged the Learning Strategy and subsequently has secured a seat on the Swale Learning and Skills Board.

Thanet District Council and Thanet District Citizen’s Advice Bureau are working together to assist mutual customers to make affordable payments of rent and council tax arrears. Senior staff are

meeting together to discuss protocols, and council staff will have the opportunity to share training and to shadow CAB staff in order to build trust and confidence between the organisations.

Code of Practice on Equality and Diversity

Why is it important?

It is important that the code addresses all groups who may be described as marginalised, polarised or hard to reach. The following list is not exhaustive and every attempt has been made to include as many groupings as possible:

- Black & Minority ethnic community
- Refugee & Asylum seekers
- Migrant communities
- Transient communities
- Gypsies and travellers
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community
- Mental Health
- Physical & Sensory Disabilities
- Learning disabilities and difficulties.
- Carers
- Religious / Faith groups

Herein referred to as 'minority groups'

Aim

This code aims to achieve a positive impact on groups in particular those considered to be marginalised/polarised or hard to reach. It also aims to promote a better understanding of minority groups and their distinct and diverse needs. These groups/individuals bring distinct value to society helping to contribute to civic life and support the ongoing process of a thriving, inclusive and cohesive community.

VCS undertakings

- Work with minority groups to tackle disadvantage
- Ensure equality of opportunity in partnership
- Work to ensure minority groups are included within existing and new and emerging VCS structures
- Minority groups working across the VCS to improve access to services, quality of life and alleviate poverty.
- Work with minority groups to develop and access training opportunities
- Play an enabling role that supports minority groups

Public Sector Undertakings

- Better support & resource minority groups ensuring value for money and a high quality service.
- Value the knowledge and expertise that minority groups bring.
- Acknowledge the importance of specialist Voluntary and Community Sector infrastructure.
- Work to ensure race, disability and gender equality schemes / equality strategies are robust and reflect local circumstances
- Provide whenever possible opportunities for minority groups to contribute to the service planning process
- Encourage representation on strategic partnerships from minority groups.
- Ensure fair access to information and resources in relation to funding for minority groups.

- Encourage funding applications from minority groups – where need is identified

Joint Undertakings

- Undertake joint work to improve Kent's share of external funding to minority groups.
- Work to ensure minority groups are engaged in positive relationships/partnerships by a variety of means.
- Support the ongoing development of minority groups
- Take forward equality and diversity together. Ensure minority groups are integral to the consultation and policy processes through involvement from a diverse range of individuals and groups.
- Help alleviate poverty, improve quality of life & empower minority communities in the design and delivery of services.
- Recognise the specific needs of minority groups.
- Address appropriate means of engaging minority groups
- Make suitable mention of this Code of Practice in all relevant and appropriate documentation.
- Work to develop best practice systems and processes when dealing with minority groups

Example of Good Practice

The Kent BME Network is being developed through the Government's ChangeUp programme. The aim of the Kent BME Network is to increase the effectiveness of BME community groups in relation to local, countywide and regional service provision.

Implementation, Monitoring & Review

The Kent Partners Compact builds on and strengthens the existing solid basis of Codes of Practice and action plans at a local level. By working together with better communication we can strengthen their impact through implementation and compliance.

Compact principles and codes should be included in sustainable community strategies, Kent Agreement outcomes and local plans/strategies. This can be achieved through careful negotiation within any action plans drawn up at a local level.

Ensuring the Kent Partners Compact remains a relevant and meaningful living document will require us all to be creative, take risks, trust each other and change the way we work. It is essential that the document is regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure it is taken forward effectively.

Who will have responsibility for regular progress reports and reviews?

By far the preferred option is a new Kent Partners Compact Implementation Group with consistency and linkages to the local groups – the make-up of this group is very important to ensure this happens. The principle of **Compact Champions** from both sectors is a popular choice to support the implementation and development of future Compact work. A clearly defined role description for Compact Champions will provide consistency across the County.

How could progress be monitored and reviewed?

The Implementation Group will operate a robust and transparent monitoring and reviewing process which will:

- Involve users, wherever possible in the monitoring and reviewing processes
- Promote an ongoing monitoring process through linkages with the local steering groups and the Kent Partners Compact steering group
- Continually develop Compact ways of working to ensure that it is effective.
- Link the Compact review with other on-going reviews

The progress will be reviewed on an annual basis with local reports reflecting local circumstances being fed into the Kent Partners Compact review.

Compact Compliance & Resolution

Compact Compliance

Compact Compliance is about partners working together to make commitments, calling partners to account and resolving differences.

Importantly, Compacts are about partners working together for mutual benefit. If issues arise they can be resolved through the following processes:

- **Compact Advocacy Programme** - run by the NCVO this is a scheme that provides practical support and wider campaigning to the sector in cases where the government has breached the Compact
- **Local & Health Ombudsman** - investigate complaints about councils and certain other bodies about issues including planning, housing, education and social services
- **Public Law Project** - an independent, national legal charity that aims to improve access to public law remedies, especially when there are overlaps between the Compact and public law principles
- **Commissioner for the Compact**
- **Complaints procedures and local dispute procedures for local Compacts**

Conflict Resolution

The Compact is about working together to be better together. However we should expect some disagreements or disputes as part of an ongoing learning experience. It would be surprising if disputes did not happen if an organisation from one sector believes an organisation in another sector has failed to abide by the principles of the agreed Compact. There is a need to be prepared to do something about disputes and the first action is always to bring it to the other party's attention – knowing who the key players are is important and time should be taken in all sectors to find out who they are.

Challenging in this way, on the basis on the Compact, is one of the surest methods of bringing the Compact to life, and using it appropriately.

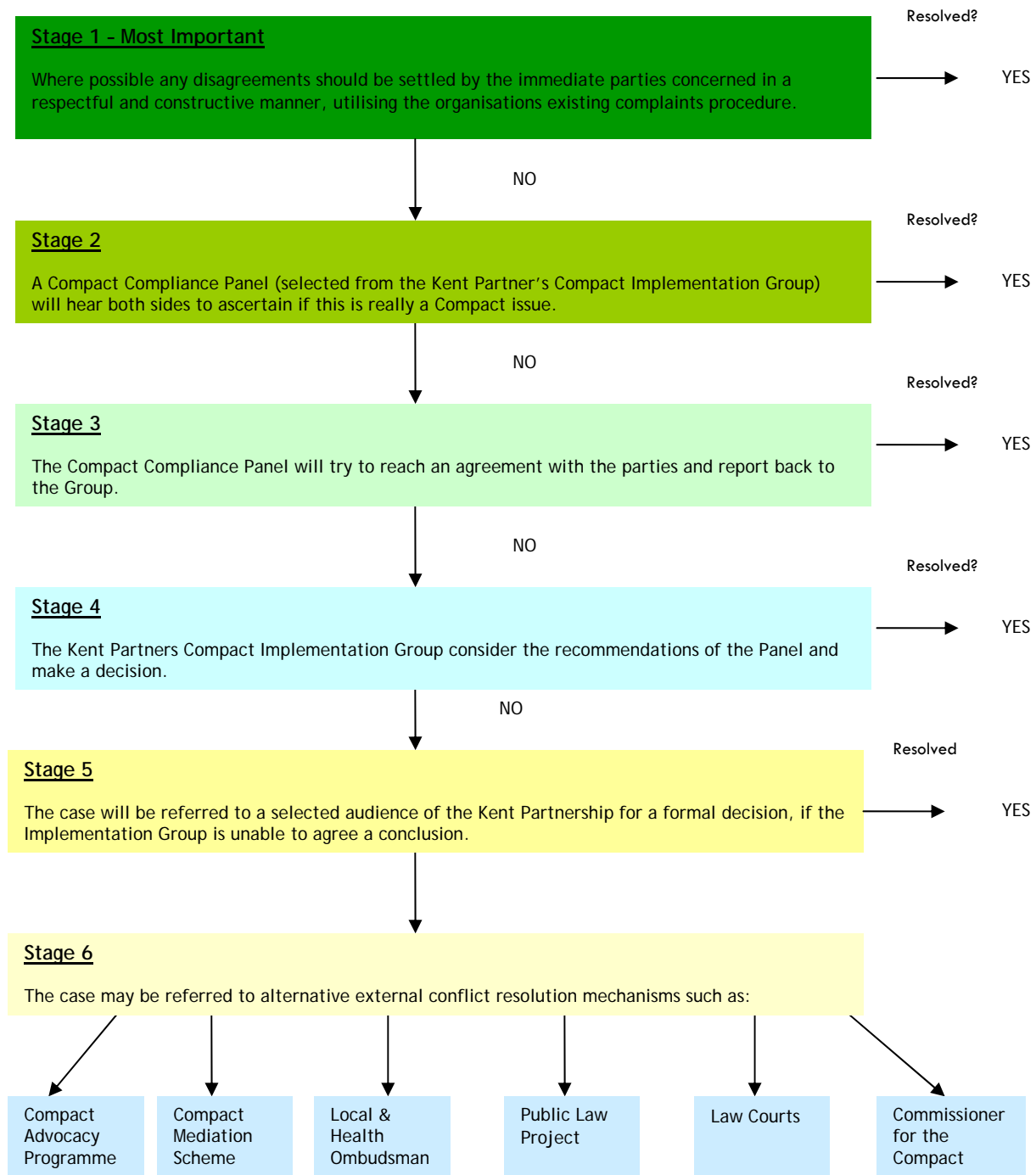
Resolving Disputes

Resolving disputes is best done at the most informal level possible - conciliation is better than arbitration. For the Compact to be effective, there needs to be a system for hearing and mediating on these disputes, otherwise the perception will grow that the Compact is not worth the paper it is written on. Mediation is also used to describe this situation. It is not about winning and losing, but sorting issues out, maintaining relationships and learning.

Case Law has established that the rights are enforceable. For example public law will recognise the right to be consulted before a funder takes a final decision to change funding arrangements. If the Compact sets a period for doing so then that timescale can be expected to be upheld by the courts.

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The proposed Kent Partners Compact system for ensuring compliance



It is important that local steering groups are kept informed of what is going on at all times. If there is no requirement for the local steering group to get involved or the Implementation Group to get involved, this should not create a problem. However it may help others in similar circumstances if the communication channels are kept open – it is also a great way to celebrate the success of partners working together in an open and transparent way.

Example of Good Practice

Compact Mediation Scheme - From April, 2008 the Commission for the Compact has been responsible for overseeing the Compact Mediation Scheme. The Commission for the Compact is examining the potential for greater use of the Compact Mediation Scheme and other forms of alternative dispute resolution. This includes evaluating the effectiveness and use of the Compact Mediation Service and examining the range of dispute resolution processes available locally, regionally, and nationally. It will also give consideration to how it might support the capacity building local structures based on the informal processes and procedures already in place in some local Compacts. The Commission for the Compact will publish their approach when responding to requests to intervene or adjudicate in particular cases in the near future.

Glossary

Capacitybuilders - a national agency with responsibility initially to manage the ChangeUp programme

CEDR Compact Mediation Scheme – applies to disputes relating to the Compact. Its scope includes Central Government departments, their executive agencies, Government offices for the regions and all VCS organisations.

ChangeUp - a programme of capacity building for the infrastructure of the VCS, developed in partnership with the sector. The aim is to catalyse the modernisation of infrastructure provision in order to improve its sustainability, quality and reach

Codes of Practice - help to achieve the principles and objectives agreed in the Compact document, and help it to become operational

Commission for the Compact - the independent organisation for the Compact, overseeing the relationship between government and the VCS

Commissioning – members of our staff who have responsibility for determining what services will be purchased in order to meet assessed eligible needs.

Compact - a written agreement, drawn up between the VCS and the government and/or other Public Sector organisations, setting out their conduct towards each other when working together in order to deliver shared benefits. It is a shared framework for partnership working.

Compact Advocacy Programme - a scheme that provides practical support and wider campaigning to the sector in cases where the government has breached the Compact

Compact Champion - a person who raises awareness of and oversees implementation of the Compact within their organisation

Compact Commissioner - the head of the Commission for Compact (see above)

Compact Compliance - act of adhering to, and demonstrating adherence to the Compact way of working

Compacts in Kent Group - a group where representatives discuss recent developments and issues about all compacts, and share best practice.

Compact Mediation Scheme - handles disputes relating to the Compact - including central Government departments, their executive agencies, Government Offices for the Regions and all VCS organisations

Compact Plus - the new agreement proposed by the Government between the Public Sector and the VCS to try to address the problems identified in the original Compact

Conflict Resolution - process of attempting to resolve a dispute or a conflict

Contract - A bargain agreed between two (or more) parties that is binding in law and may be enforced in the courts. In law it can be created verbally or in writing.

Destination 2014 - a strategic framework reflecting a new way forward for the ChangeUp programme

District/Local Compact - an agreement for mutual benefit between a district council, VCS and sometimes other public sector partners e.g. Primary Care Trusts (see Compact)

Full Cost Recovery – Under 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.

Grant – is a financial transfer used to fund an activity that is in broad alignment with the public sector objectives

Kent Agreement - see Local Area Agreement

Kent BME Network - a network to increase the effectiveness of BME (Black Minority Ethnic) community groups in relation to local, countywide and regional service provision.

Kent CAN - the Kent Community Action Network, which is the County Level Voluntary/Community Sector Infrastructure Organisation that ensures the VCS has a voice in Kent to benefit the people the sector works to help.

Kent Compact - an agreement for mutual benefit between Kent County Council and the VCS in Kent (see Compact)

Kent Compact Implementation Group - group composed of representatives from Kent County Council and Kent CAN who lead on the Kent Compact

Kent Consortium Delivery Board (KCDB) see also Kent Voluntary Infrastructure Consortium (KVIC)- the board responsible for delivery of the Kent Infrastructure Development Plan in Kent.

Kent Infrastructure Development Plan (KIDP) - the document aimed at delivering the Government's ChangeUp agenda in Kent, Kent CAN took over its delivery in April 2006 in partnership with the Kent Consortium Delivery Board

Kent Partnership - the countywide Local Strategic Partnership

Kent Partners Compact Task Group - a small multi-agency group established to devise the Kent Partners Compact document and oversee the consultation process

Kent Partners Compact Wider Reference Group - a multi-agency wide reference group who are key stakeholders in the development of the Kent Partners Compact

Kent Voluntary Infrastructure Consortium – the new name for the KCDB.

Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) - a non-statutory partnership that brings together the views of the local private, voluntary and community sectors with the Sustainable Community Strategy in an area, to turn the vision of a sustainable community into a reality.

Local Area Agreement (LAA) - a three year 'contract' between a local area (represented by the local authority and other partners through the local strategic partnership) and central Government to deliver particular priorities as set out in its sustainable community strategy. Known in Kent as the "Kent Agreement 1 & 2".

Local Compact – an agreement between the VCS and organisations working on/within a district.

Local Government Act - passed in 2000, the act introduced a new power for local authorities to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of an area (subsequently updated through the Local Government and Involvement in Public Health Act 2007)

Local & Health Ombudsman - investigate complaints about councils and certain other bodies about issues including planning, housing, education and social services

National Compact - an agreement for mutual benefit between central government departments and the VCS (see Compact)

National Council for Voluntary Organisation (NCVO) - the largest umbrella body for the VCS in England who seek to give voice and support to Voluntary and Community organisations

Partnership - an agreement between two or more independent bodies to work together collectively to achieve an objective

Partnership Working - partnership members share resources and responsibilities and agree to work together in a co-operative and mutually supportive fashion to achieve the shared goal

Performance Indicators - quantifiable measurement of progress towards delivery of an outcome

Procurement: The acquisition of goods works or services in line with public sector policy for maximising value for money which is normally achieved through competition.

Public Law Project - an independent, national legal charity that aims to improve access to public law remedies, especially when there are overlaps between the Compact and public law principles

Public Sector - organisations that deal with the delivery of goods and services by and for the government, whether national, regional or local e.g. local authorities, police, health

Strengthening Partnerships: Next Steps for Compact - a paper published by the Home Office in 2005 to consult on the relationships between central government and the VCS

Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) - a statutory document produced by local authorities that sets out a long-term, sustainable vision in an area and sets the agenda for priorities in the Local Area Agreement.

Third Sector - see Voluntary & Community Sector

VCS - see Voluntary & Community Sector

Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) - Voluntary sector organisations are usually non-profit distributing, non-statutory, autonomous and may be charitable. Community sector organisations are active on a local or community level, usually small, modestly funded and largely dependent on voluntary, rather than paid, effort. They can be seen as distinct from the larger, professionally staffed agencies which are most visible in voluntary sector profiles.

VCS Local Infrastructure Organisation – Local Infrastructure Organisations work with local community groups and voluntary organisations which provide services, regenerate neighbourhoods, increase volunteering and tackle discrimination in partnership with local public bodies.

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