



City of Westminster



Westminster



westminster
community
network



Volunteer Centre
Westminster

Working Together

The Westminster Compact 2011

Consultation Draft

*Breaking barriers and fostering good effective relations between
the Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) and the Statutory
Sectors in Westminster*

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Introduction

Westminster's local compact is the agreed framework to strengthen working relations between the public, voluntary and community sectors.

The first Westminster Compact was agreed in 2004. In 2011, the landscape has changed significantly. The City Council and NHS Westminster are now primarily commissioning organisations. This has changed the funding relationship with the voluntary sector in conjunction with a significant review of voluntary sector funding in 2010. There is also significantly less funding available as the City Council and NHS work to make the necessary savings asked for by central government. The Coalition government also sees the voluntary and community sector as a central player as it strives to achieve its vision for a Big Society. In Westminster we recognise that our civic society has been *big* for some time and we will continue to take steps to build it.

All of these drivers, in addition to a new national Compact released in November 2010, make it a timely opportunity to refresh the Westminster Compact to ensure it is still fit for purpose. It is hoped that this refreshed Compact will help lay the foundation for a stable and successful partnership that delivers better outcomes for people and communities in Westminster.

0.1 Partners to the Compact

The current partners to the Compact are:

- Westminster's voluntary and community sector (VCS)
- Westminster City Council
- NHS Westminster

Other statutory bodies in Westminster are invited to join.

0.2 How does the Compact help?

The Compact is designed to support and provide guidance to all sectors on how they work together to deliver better outcomes and better services. It promotes shared understanding and greater levels of trust and cooperation. The Compact is overseen by a Steering Committee which meets quarterly to provide a regular forum for all partners to discuss relevant issues and to drive the implementation of any actions which are necessary to fulfill the aspirations of the Westminster Compact.

0.3 The development of the Westminster Compact 2011

The draft Compact has been developed by a multi-agency Steering Committee made up of statutory and voluntary sector partners. Membership of the Steering Committee can be found in Appendix 1.

0.4 Shared principles

The partners to the Compact are committed to the below principles which we think will help us work more effectively in partnership and achieve common goals and outcomes for the benefit of Westminster's community:

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Openness and clarity | Make sure everyone knows about changes and developments that will affect them, what funding is available, the criteria and how to apply. |
| Values | Recognise and respect the value of the VCS's role in representing the community they serve and the intelligence this can bring to the design, development and delivery of programmes and public services. |
| Timeliness | Have reasonable timeframes so that people know what is required, by when and ensure they have the time to do it. |
| Equality and Inclusion | Mutual respect demonstrated through clear communication and recognition of difference as well as similarity of purpose. |
| Sustainability | Recognise the need for the voluntary and community sector to have stability |
| Collaboration | Working in partnership, involve the VCS in all elements of the commissioning process. Encourage collaboration with each other and other stakeholders to pursue common aims |

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|----------------|--|
| | and objectives. |
| Accountability | All signatories to this Compact recognise the need for accountability. VCS organisations must have robust quality assurance and monitoring systems in place to ensure public money is used well to meet local needs. |

0.5 The Scope of the Westminster Compact

The Westminster Compact covers four broad areas that are dealt with in later sections of this document:

- Strong, diverse and independent civil society
- Effective partnership working to enable well managed services and high-quality programmes that meet the needs of Westminster’s diverse communities
- Volunteering
- Equal and fair society

Each section sets out shared principles and/or agreed commitments particular to each sector.

0.6 Implementation

Following consultation on this draft Compact, and after considering what barriers and issues you would like the partners to tackle and address, an action plan will be developed. The Compact Steering Committee will oversee implementation of the Compact and Action Plan. Each signatory organisation will also appoint a senior officer to be the Compact Champion for that organisation.

0.7 Legal Status

The Westminster Compact is not a legally binding document conferring legal rights or duties on the parties to it which they would not have had previously. It is intended to provide a framework within which relationships between the sectors can develop.

0.8 Compliance with the Compact Agreement

The Westminster Compact is intended to govern relations between the sectors and it is expected that all organisations will follow its principles. It should be used as a reference point in negotiations and discussions in order to engender good relations and clarity over role and responsibilities. It is important to note that legal and resource restrictions may influence the extent to which some commitments can be implemented.

0.9 Accountability and Conflict Resolution

Each party that signs up to the Compact must be accountable for any departure from it. If any party feels there has been a breach of the Westminster Compact, or if any disputes arise around the meaning of any part of the Compact, the aggrieved party will raise it first with the party responsible, and then the Westminster Compact Steering Committee if the issue is not resolved. If there is still not a satisfactory resolution, the aggrieved party can raise the issue with the Compact Champion who will, in consultation with other senior members of the Compact Group, attempt to find an agreeable solution.

0.10 Review of the Compact

The Westminster Compact Steering Committee will continue to monitor the Compact to determine whether it is still fit for purpose. The Steering Committee will consider annually whether the Compact should be refreshed.

1. Strong, diverse and independent civil society

The statutory sector undertakes to:

- Respect and uphold the independence of the VCS to deliver their mission and vision including their ability to campaign, regardless of any relationship, financial or otherwise which may exist.
- Recognise the role of the VCS in enabling consultation, participation and helping to shape policy for a diverse society.
- Consider the social impact that may result from policy and programme development, and in particular consider how these would impact local efforts to inspire and encourage social action and to empower our diverse community.
- Work with the VCS from an early stage to design policies, programmes and services where relevant and appropriate. Ensure those likely to have a view are involved from the start and remove barriers that may prevent organisations contributing, where relevant & appropriate.
- Give early notice of forthcoming consultations and allow the VCS a reasonable time (minimum of 12 weeks) to respond to major consultations where reasonable and practical. A shorter timescale is acceptable when circumstances dictate, though the reasons must be set out.
- Consider the views of the VCS before making final decisions.
- Share the findings of any involvement with those who have taken part.
- To value and support the role of infrastructure support organisations in supporting frontline VCS organisations.
- Recognise there is value in having a wider civil society and the dual role of the VCS in both supporting the state agenda and proactively helping the community to grow.
- Recognise the VCS will take grassroots direction in enriching the life of the local community.

The voluntary and community sector undertakes to:

- Campaign and advocate responsibly and ensure that any campaigning or advocacy is based on robust evidence, including information about the source and range of people and communities represented and engaged.
- Ensure its own financial independence by focusing on the needs of its beneficiaries regardless of any relationship that the VCS has with the statutory sector, financial or otherwise.
- To promote, as far as practicable, consultation and community engagement and facilitate all sections of the community and individual citizens to take part.
- Ensure the accurate reporting of the views received and give feedback to the communities they service on the outcomes of the consultation.
- To participate in joint working groups and partnerships where they are of relevance to the organisation and where resources allow.
- Support small, emerging and issue-specific voluntary and community sector organisations to participate as a full and respected member of Westminster's voluntary sector community.

2. Effective partnership working to enable well managed services and high-quality programmes that meet the needs of Westminster's diverse communities

The statutory sector undertakes to:

- Involve the voluntary and community sector in all elements of the commissioning process: needs assessment; service development; procurement; monitoring and evaluation. Agree how outcomes will be monitored before a contract or funding agreement is made.
- To provide support to enable voluntary sector groups to participate in commissioning.
- Make sure the VCS knows what money is available, the criteria and how to apply.
- Keep the process for applying for funding as simple as possible and to only ask for essential information and policies.
- Have reasonable, realistic and achievable timeframes so that people know what has to be done by when.
- Recognise that there are costs associated with effectively monitoring and evaluating services that are delivered on behalf of the statutory sector.
- Make sure monitoring requirements strike the balance between being proportionate to the amount of funding and its purpose, and being robust to ensure public money is used well to meet local needs.
- Recognise the added value that local knowledge and understanding of the local community can bring to service delivery and policy development.
- Recognise the need for the voluntary and community sector to have stability through committing to multi-year funding where appropriate and to give a minimum of three months notice in writing when changing or ending a funding relationship, apart from in exceptional circumstances when funding needs to be withdrawn. Provide a clear rationale for why the decision has been taken.
- Recognise the right for VCS organisations to price tender submissions on a full cost recovery basis.

- Work with providers to address underperformance before making a decision to end a financial relationship. Assess the impact on service users and other beneficiaries before deciding to reduce or end funding. Assess the need to re-allocate funds to another organisation serving the same group.
- Recognise that the VCS has limited resources, so that any views sought and time given by the VCS is proportionate and appropriate.
- Where there are restrictions or changes to future resources, discuss with the VCS the potential implications as early as possible, give organisations the opportunity to respond, and consider their response fully, respecting sector expertise before making a final decision.

The voluntary and community sector undertakes to:

- Recognise the availability of public sector funding is significantly reduced as a result of central government changes.
- Ensure eligibility for funding before applying and be explicit about how outcomes will be achieved.
- Ensure robust governance arrangements so that organisations can best manage risk associated with service delivery and financing models, including giving funders early notice of significant changes in circumstances if possible.
- Be open and transparent about reporting, recognising that monitoring and evaluation is an aspect of good management practice and should record clearly what has been achieved as a result of the funding.
- Facilitate feedback from users and communities to help improve delivery of programmes and services where resources permit.
- Recognise that the statutory funders can legitimately expect VCS organisations to give public recognition of its funding.
- Plan for the end of funding to reduce any potential negative impact on beneficiaries and the organisations.
- Diversify funding bases and avoid reliance on any single source of funding.
- Contribute positively to reviews of programmes and funding practice.

3. Volunteering

The statutory sector undertakes to:

- Recognise the role and benefit that volunteers make to individual organisations and communities in general.
- Support the infrastructures that support volunteering activity.
- Recognise that there are costs associated with volunteering and volunteer management.

The voluntary and community sector undertakes to:

- If working with volunteers, the organisation has a best practice volunteering policy and provides sufficient resources and expertise to support volunteers.
- Gather appropriate data on volunteers and volunteer outputs so that this information can be shared with the partners in order to demonstrate the added value volunteering brings.
- Encourage, where possible, volunteers who reflect a diverse society.

4. An equal and fair society

The statutory sector undertakes to:

- Understand the specific needs of people protected by The Equality Act 2010 by seeking the views of a diverse range of service users and clients. Take these views into account, including assessing impact, when designing, implementing and evaluating policies, programmes and services.
- Ensure that the commissioning process does not disproportionately disadvantage VCOs that work with specific disadvantaged or under-represented groups.

- Take practical action to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations and ensure a voice for underrepresented and disadvantaged groups.
- To provide services which are reasonably, fairly and equitably available and take account of the needs of a diverse society recognising that a specific service for a disadvantaged group will not necessarily be equitably available.

The voluntary and community sector undertakes to:

- If receiving funding from a government body, show how the value of the work can help that body deliver its public sector duty to advance equality, tackle unlawful discrimination and foster good relations.
- Take practical action to eliminate unlawful discrimination as a service provider, employer and where applicable a deliverer of public functions. Where possible seek to advance equality of opportunity and build stronger communities.

Appendix 1

Compact Steering Group Members

Statutory sector

Westminster City Council

- Westminster Compact Champion
- Representative from voluntary sector policy & commissioning
- Representative from Procurement

NHS Westminster

- Senior Public Health Manager
- Public Health Programme Manager

Voluntary & community sector

- Voluntary Action Westminster
- Volunteer Centre Westminster
- Westminster Community Network
- Westminster Equalities Partnership

Appendix 2: The Westminster Compact Conflict Resolution Process

Westminster’s Compact seeks to break barriers and foster good effective relationships between the partners to the Compact. It is recognised however that different accountabilities and agendas could create areas of disagreement and/or conflict. In a number of cases it will be possible to resolve an issue without recourse to a formal procedure by taking the following steps.

