

The Bristol Compact

2008

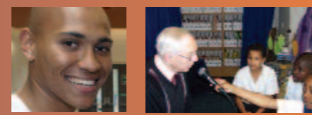


Photo courtesy of Janet Deverell



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Introduction

What is a Compact?

The Bristol Compact is an agreement made between local public agencies and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSES) in the city. The Bristol Partnership has adopted the Compact and endorses its implementation. It defines and strengthens positive working relationships between the public and voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors by establishing a set of working principles that all partners are signed up to and a framework for developing better working practices and positive partnership working, particularly within the Bristol Partnership and in the delivery of the Local Area Agreement.

Why have a local Compact?

In 1998 the Government published a national Compact with the VCSES (Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector). This recognised the



value and importance of the sector and made a number of commitments about ways of working together. The Government required local Compacts to be in place by April 2004. The Bristol Compact was adopted in November 2003. This updated version was agreed in February 2008.

Since then Government has reinforced the need for implementation of local Compacts as a tool for achieving positive working relationships and ultimately positive benefits for local citizens. The final report of the Third Sector* Review in July 2007 under the theme of

“supporting a thriving, healthy third sector” states the need for “a continued focus on the Compact as a means to build the relationship between the third sector and all levels of Government”. (*The Third Sector is an alternative title for the VCSES.)

At the heart of the Compact is the need to acknowledge the power imbalance between the public sector and the VCSES and implement a Compact way of working at all times to ensure positive partnerships and outcomes.

The implementation of the Compact principles will lead to better partnership working and ultimately better community-focused services that deliver to local people.

Compact Steering Group

The Compact Steering Group is the current multi-agency group responsible for leading on implementing, monitoring and championing the Compact. The Group’s members include representation from the Black Development Agency, The Care Forum, Volunteering Bristol, Voscur, Bristol Primary Care Trust and Bristol City

Council. The Group reports annually and makes recommendations to the Bristol Partnership

Guidance Documents

A number of guidance documents have been produced by the Compact Steering Group to expand on the principles of the Compact and in line with other national Compact guidelines and local needs. These documents set out standards for relationships between the sectors and for challenge by the VCSES where public agencies are breaching a Compact way of working.

Guidelines in place are:

- Equalities
- Consultation
- Landlord Role
- Funding and Procurement
- Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Sector
- Resolution of Complaints
- Volunteers Charter.

These guidelines can be accessed at: <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/compact>



The Compact Statement

The Bristol Compact aims to build and sustain positive partnership working between public sector agencies in Bristol (including local government) and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (third sector). It sets the standard for co-operation and joint working to ensure the greatest benefits for Bristol's citizens.

The public and voluntary and community sectors share many common aims including the delivery of high quality public services, effective engagement of local communities and the development of cohesive and sustainable communities. The Compact provides a framework for achieving this across the sectors based on shared values and mutual respect.

The Compact has been adopted by The Bristol Partnership and is monitored by the Compact Steering Group which keeps the Compact under review and ensures it is a live agreement that underpins cross sector working relationships in the city.

The Shared Principles

The VCSES is an essential partner in the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy, in creating sustainable communities, campaigning for positive change and in influencing and often delivering public services.

Voluntary action is an essential component of a democratic society.

In the development of public services, community engagement and community cohesion, public and VCSES agencies have complementary roles. Both sectors are committed to the delivery of high quality services for the benefit of local people, which does not mean using the VCSES as a cheap option.

Working in partnership means we can achieve more. Positive partnership working builds relationships, improves policies, enhances the design and delivery of services and makes us more effective in delivering what communities really need.

Whilst the public sector and VCSES may have different structures, lines of accountability and stakeholders, both sectors share the need for openness, transparency, accountability, integrity, objectivity, honesty, leadership and putting citizens first.

Compact partners are committed to equalities, community cohesion and to

reducing social exclusion and disadvantage.

Compact Themes

The Bristol Partnership recognises the following four themes, and endorses their implementation as described below.

Resourcing and Commissioning

- The Partnership is committed to put in place longer-term funding agreements where practical.
- The Partnership is committed to intelligent commissioning and to implementing the recommendations of the Audit Commission's report "Hearts and Minds: commissioning from the voluntary sector", July 2007.
- The Partnership is committed to achieving better co-ordination of funding streams and monitoring processes.
- The Partnership will balance the need for accountability with a commitment to simplifying





monitoring processes and evaluating outcomes.

- The Partnership is committed to supporting VCSES organisations in other ways apart from funding, eg Community Development support, asset transfer, low cost use of community buildings, training and fundraising support.
- The Partnership will share information about funding and investment opportunities and opportunities to tender for commissioned/procured services.



Equalities and Community Cohesion

- The Partnership is committed to improving access to partnerships and to building relationships with the most excluded, discriminated and disadvantaged communities and more specifically BME communities (including asylum-seekers, refugees, Gypsies and Travellers); women; disabled people; older people; children and young people; lesbian gay and bisexual people; transgender people; faith communities; people living in deprived areas of the city; homeless people; ex-offenders; people in the criminal justice system and single parents.
- The Partnership is committed to use the Compact to build positive relationships, understanding and to share good practice between people of diverse backgrounds (community cohesion).

Consultation, Information and Engagement

The Bristol Partnership agrees:

- that in any communication/consultation with the VCSES and communities the public agencies will clearly explain the purpose of the exercise, who they need to talk to and why and ensure they communicate appropriately and accessibly with the target group
- that consultation will apply only to processes where there is a clear agreed opportunity to change the policy, service or outcome
- that 12 weeks will be allowed for responses to written consultations
- that public agencies will resource the consultations and dialogue with the VCSES, eg costs of reasonable adjustments, travel, childcare.
- that public agencies will publish feedback for consultees outlining the information gathered during the consultation and actions arising as a result
- that VCSE organisations are encouraged to work closely with

Bristol's Infrastructure Organisations in order to benefit from the wider knowledge base.



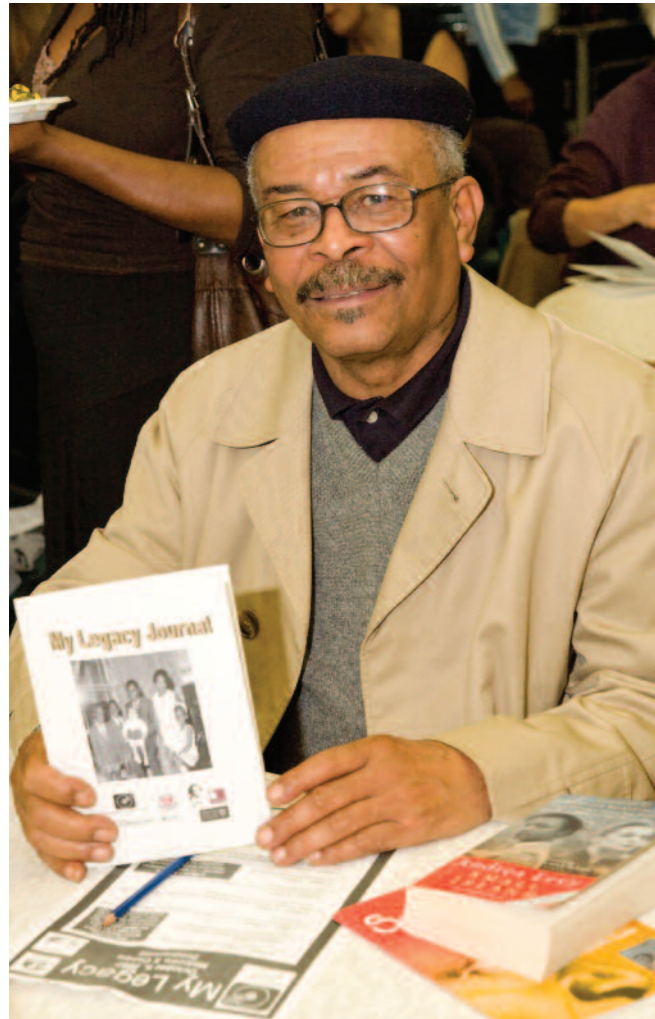
Volunteering

Volunteering involves spending unpaid time on an activity that aims to benefit the community. People volunteer for many different reasons: to develop skills or gain experience, to socialise or to give something back to society in general and their local community.

The Compact recognises four principles fundamental to volunteering:



- Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual.
- It should be open to all.



- That giving time voluntarily establishes a reciprocal relationship in which the volunteer also benefits.
- That the contribution volunteers make to the organisation, the community, the social economy and wider social objectives is recognised and valued.

Resolving Complaints

Guidelines have been developed so that tensions and disputes over Compact compliance can be resolved in a timely and satisfactory way. The public sector will respond to complaints from the VCSES in line with these guidelines.

How has the Compact been implemented to date?

The Community Strategy embeds and refers to Compact principles:
The Strategy sets out the plans for Bristol's future and recognises that all partners are vital to its delivery. The membership of Bristol Partnership demonstrates partnership in action between the VCSES and the public, private and independent sector.



A Local Area Agreement (LAA) founded on partnership working and delivery:

Bristol's LAA sets out Bristol Partnership's delivery priorities for 2007–10 and is described by Government as “a new contract between central and local government to deliver the priorities of local people”. A new LAA for 2008–11 has been put into place. The VCSES is essential to the development and the delivery of the LAA and has been fully involved in the process in line with the Compact. The VCSES has also played a key role in the equalities impact assessment of the LAA.

The Voluntary and Community Sector Partnership Board (Bristol City Council): following the recommendations made by a council scrutiny select committee on the VCSES in 2006 this Board of council officers has been set up to improve co-ordination of communication, funding and monitoring of the VCSES across the council. The Board is co-ordinating a lead funder approach to the VCSES and a web portal to enable VCSES to access council funding and commissioning processes through an electronic “one stop shop”.

The role of the VCSES within strategic partnerships has been strengthened by: including the VCSES in Community Strategy delivery groups and other partnerships such as the Older People's Partnership Board and Bristol Partnership Against Racial Harassment.



How can you get involved? . . .

As a voluntary or community group:

The Compact is relevant to all VCSES groups whether funded or unfunded and from small self-organised groups through to larger service providers with significant resources. The Compact Steering Group drives implementation and monitoring of the Compact. If you are interested in the work of the Steering Group or in being involved in any aspect of the Compact contact one of the VCSES representative organisations:

Black Development Agency

5 Russell Town Avenue, Bristol BS5 9LT.
0117 939 6645, director@blackdeva.org.uk
www.blackdeva.org.uk

The Care Forum

The Vassall Centre, Gill Avenue, Bristol, BS16 2QQ, 0117 965 4444,
admin@thecareforum.org.uk
www.thecareforum.org

Volunteering Bristol

Royal Oak House, Royal Oak Avenue,
Bristol BS1 4GB, 0117 989 7733,
info@bristolvolunteers.org.uk
www.bristolvolunteers.org.uk

Voscur

CREATE Centre, Smeaton Road,
Bristol BS1 6XN, 0117 909 9949,
info@voscur.org www.voscur.org

Avon and Somerset Police

Community Safety Team, Newfoundland
Road Police Station,
83 Newfoundland Road, Bristol BS2 9LU.
0845-456-7000 (main switchboard)
mark.runacres@avonandsomerset.police.uk

Bristol PCT

King Square House, King Square,
Bristol BS2 8EE. 0117 976 6600
daniel.messom@bristolpct.nhs.uk

United Bristol Healthcare NHS Trust

Trust HQ, Marlborough Street,
Bristol, BS1 3NU. 0117 9283601
Lindsey.Scott@ubht.nhs.uk

Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust,

Jenner House, Avon Way, Chippenham,
Wiltshire SN15 1GG, 01249 468243
alison.griffin@awp.nhs.uk

Further information

Anyone interested in finding out more about the Compact, the implementation plan or the Steering Group contact:

Community Development

Room U17, The Council House, College
Green, Bristol BS1 5TR. 0117 922 2664,
communitydevelopment@bristol.gov.uk

Bristol Partnership

(www.bristolpartnership.org)

Members (March 2008):

Business

- Business West, Executive Chair
- Business in the Community
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Social Economy
- BME Business Leader

Independent of business and public agencies

- Infrastructure Voluntary Organisations
- Black Development Agency
- The Care Forum
- Voscur

Elected and accountable community partnerships

- Community at Heart
- Hartcliffe & Withywood Ventures
- Equalities Communities
- Faith communities
- Trade unions

- Sustainable Development Advisory Group
- Neighbourhood Renewal Residents Forum
- University of Bristol
- City of Bristol College
- UWE

Public agencies

- Learning and Skills Council
- JobCentre Plus
- South West Regional Development Agency
- Bristol Primary Care Trust
- Avon and Somerset Constabulary
- Wessex
- Councillor (Labour)
- Councillor (Lib Dem)
- Councillor (Conservative)
- Bristol City Council

Non-voting member

- Government Office for the South West

Compact on the web

- www.bristol.gov.uk/compact
- www.voscur.org/compact
- National website:
www.thecompact.org.uk