

Bristol Compact

2012

Improving partnerships between Bristol's Public Sector
and the Voluntary and Community Sectors

> Introduction: What is the Compact?

Bristol's thriving Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) contributes many things to the city, including connection with communities, effective and appropriate service design, creation of opportunity for local people through volunteering and training, and attracting significant financial investment in the city. The Bristol Compact is the agreement made between the public sector and the VCS in the city. The Bristol Partnership has adopted the Bristol Compact on behalf of the city and promotes and encourages its implementation. The Compact recognises that positive working relationships are crucial to Bristol and it seeks to define and strengthen the links between the public sector and the VCS – for the benefit of Bristol, its people and communities.

The national Compact (updated and revised in December 2010), clearly describes the Coalition Government's commitment to positive relationships between the public sector and the VCS. The Compact states that, "An effective partnership between the Government and CSOs* will help achieve the following outcomes:

< A strong, diverse and independent civil society

< Effective and transparent design and development of policies, programmes and public services

< Responsive and high-quality programmes and services

< Clear arrangements for managing changes to programmes and services

< An equal and fair society"

* The national Compact uses the terms 'civil society' and 'civil society organisations' to describe the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and VCS organisations.

> Our commitments

This revised version of the Bristol Compact complements and builds on the national Compact and the strong implementation of the Compact in the city. It includes elements of the national Compact that are most relevant to Bristol. It clarifies and restates the importance of our shared commitments, public sector commitments and VCS commitments. The purpose of including commitments is to enable a constructive dialogue in our relationships.

> Compact Partners' Group

The Compact Partners' Group is the multi-agency group responsible for leading on the implementation, monitoring and championing of the Bristol Compact. The Group's members include representation from Bristol's public sector and VCS. Full details of the Group's membership and a record of its work can be seen at www.bristolcompact.org.uk/compact-partners-group

> Compact values

The Bristol Compact has been developed and implemented jointly by public sector and VCS partners and is underpinned by a set of shared values:

- That everything we do as partners is done for the benefit of Bristol, its people and communities.
- That we share a commitment to maintaining and developing a thriving and sustainable VCS in Bristol.
- That we recognise and celebrate diversity and the things we have in common.
- That we recognise that we are dependent on each other and work together for mutual benefit.
- That we share a commitment to vision and development of Bristol, as currently described in the Bristol 20:20 Plan*.
- That we have to work within available resources that are linked to the city's current priorities, which are established in consultation with the VCS.
- That we ensure that the partnerships that serve the city are as effective as possible.
- That our partnership work is made effective by openness, respect, accountability, integrity, objectivity, honesty, leadership and putting Bristol and its people and communities first.

*Bristol's 20:20 Plan: www.bristolpartnership.org/vision-for-bristol

> Compact themes

The Compact Partners' Group recognises the following themes as especially relevant to Bristol and endorses their implementation through shared commitments, public sector commitments and VCS commitments as described below.

1. Allocating resources efficiently

> Shared commitments

- 1.1. Integrate the principles of intelligent commissioning*¹ and social value*² into all commissioning process and policy.
- 1.2. Agree how outcomes, including the social, environmental or economic value, will be designed and monitored before financial arrangements*³ are made.
- 1.3. Work together to design funding/investment/commissioning opportunities so that resources are used effectively and value for money is achieved.
- 1.4. Apply full cost recovery, which means that VCS organisations can operate in the same way as organisations from other sectors, by including relevant overhead and management costs in financial arrangements and holding reserves (to meet their legal obligations).
- 1.5. Review the efficiency of all stages of the commissioning process.

> Public sector commitments

- 1.6. Put in place multi-year funding arrangements, aiming for three-year arrangements as standard.

- 1.7. Follow realistic time-tables to ensure that financial arrangements allow for the distribution of information.
- 1.8. Choose the most appropriate mechanism (for example, innovation grants, competitive grants, contracts), according to commissioners' analysis of the provider market.
- 1.9. Coordinate funding streams and monitoring processes through joint commissioning and lead funder arrangements.
- 1.10. Balance the needs for accountability and value for money with a commitment to proportionate and effective processes that monitor and evaluate outcomes.
- 1.11. Support the VCS in ways other than funding 1.11. for example, community asset transfer and capacity building support).
- 1.12. Publish in advance information about financial arrangements and opportunities.
- 1.13. Recognise that payment in advance of expenditure enables more VCS organisations to engage in financial arrangements and opportunities and sustainable service delivery.
- 1.14. Consider the size and diversity of the local provider market in designing the procurement options and contractual arrangements in commissioning processes.
- 1.15. Assess the implications for the VCS of new policies, legislation and guidance, and aim to reduce the bureaucratic burden, particularly on small organisations.

*1 Audit Commission's report 'Hearts and Minds: commissioning from the voluntary sector' (2007)

*2 According to the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012

*3 The term 'financial arrangements' refers to funding and commissioning opportunities, including innovation grants, competitive grants, contracts.

> VCS commitments

- 1.16. Respond constructively to funding opportunities.
- 1.17. Respond constructively to advance information about financial arrangements and opportunities by engaging with service users and governance bodies.
- 1.18. Be open and transparent about reporting, recognising that monitoring is an aspect of good management practice and a reasonable expectation of distributors of funds.
- 1.19. Facilitate feedback from users and communities to help improve delivery of programmes and services and ensure that consultation responses accurately reflect the views and experiences of users/communities.
- 1.20. Recognise that public funders can reasonably expect VCS organisations to acknowledge sources of funds (for example in publicity materials).

2. Promoting equality, community cohesion and social inclusion

> Shared commitments

- 2.1. Understand the specific needs of under-represented and disadvantaged groups by actively seeking the views of service users and clients. Take these views into account, including assessing impact, when designing and implementing policies, programmes and services.
- 2.2. Actively promote good relations between diverse VCS organisations and between the VCS and public agencies by communicating clearly and developing and supporting opportunities for collaboration and partnership working.

- 2.3. Take practical action to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality and to ensure a voice for under-represented and disadvantaged groups.

> Public sector commitments

- 2.4. Work with VCS organisations that represent, support or provide services to people specifically protected by legislation and other under-represented and disadvantaged groups.
- 2.5. Acknowledge that organisations representing specific disadvantaged or under-represented groups can help promote social and community cohesion and should have fair access to public funding.

> VCS commitments

- 2.6. Demonstrate how the value of the work can help the funding body deliver its public sector duties on promoting equality and tackling discrimination.

3. Consulting with and involving the VCS, service users and governance bodies

> Shared commitments

- 3.1. Clearly explain the purpose of each consultation exercise, describing who to talk to and why and ensure appropriate and accessible communication with the target group.
- 3.2. Be clear about what can and cannot change in each consultation process (for example, policy, service or outcome).
- 3.3. Allow sufficient time (12 weeks) for responses to written consultations and avoid holding consultations over extended holiday periods.

- 3.4. Use a variety of quality and accessible approaches (for example, events, written communications, online) depending on the consultation target group and understandings of how best to engage with them.
- 3.5. Provide reasonable expenses (for example, for access costs, travel, childcare, personal assistance) so that diverse involvement of service users is encouraged.
- 3.6. Publish feedback after consultations to describe views and themes and actions arising from them (for example, on Bristol City Council's Consultation Finder).
- 3.7. Find out what is already known about people and communities so that duplication is avoided.
- 3.8. Provide advance notice and promotion of consultations.

> Public sector commitments

- 3.9. Recognise that VCS organisations are connected with people and communities and that those relationships can help make consultation more thorough and effective.
- 3.10. Facilitate appropriate involvement of the VCS in all key stages of the commissioning process.

> VCS commitments

- 3.11. Facilitate feedback from users and communities to the public sector to help improve delivery of programmes and services.
- 3.12. Recognise that consultations are opportunities to input the perspectives of VCS to influence policy, strategy and practice.

- 3.13. Seek the views of service users, clients, carers, beneficiaries, members, volunteers, and trustees when making representations. Be clear on who is being represented, in what capacity, and on what basis that representation is being made.

4. Promoting and supporting volunteering

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

> Shared commitments

- 4.1. Recognise that volunteering is a choice freely made by each individual.
- 4.2. Recognise that volunteering should be open to all.
- 4.3. Recognise that giving time voluntarily establishes a reciprocal relationship in which the volunteer also benefits.
- 4.4. Recognise the contribution volunteers make to organisations, the community, the social economy and wider social objectives.
- 4.5. Include the cost and value of volunteer contributions in proposals and reporting.
- 4.6. Recognise that volunteers are not substitutes or replacements for paid employees.
- 4.7. Manage volunteers respectfully and professionally, including through support, management and training of volunteers and volunteer managers, and payment of out-of-pocket expenses.

5. Managing changes to services

> Shared commitments

- 5.1. Recognise that it may be necessary to end or change funding arrangements (for example, when people or communities' needs change; when funding streams cease).
- 5.2. Work together to ensure that the impact of any changes on service users and employees is considered before deciding to end or change funding.
- 5.3. Work together to ensure that any changes are implemented respectfully and legally and negative impact on service users and employees minimised.

> Public sector commitments

- 5.4. If a programme or service is encountering problems, discuss and agree with the service provider a timetable of actions to improve performance before making a decision to end a financial relationship.
- 5.5. Give a minimum of three months' notice in writing when changing or ending a funding relationship or other support, apart from in exceptional circumstances (for example, a serious breach of funding conditions). Provide a clear rationale for why the decision has been taken and details of any appeal process.
- 5.6. Where there are restrictions or changes to future resources, discuss with VCS organisations the potential implications as early as possible, give organisations the opportunity to respond, and consider the response fully, respecting sector expertise, before making a final decision.

> VCS commitments

- 5.7. Contribute positively to reviews of services.
- 5.8. Advise funders on the social, environmental or economic impact of funding changes, and on ways to minimise their effects on people in vulnerable situations.

Resolving Complaints

Bristol Compact policy is to resolve disputes about Compact compliance at early stages. This is an acknowledgement that disputes can be damaging to relationships and can result in wasted resources. In some circumstances disputes may not be resolved in a timely and satisfactory way and may be processed using the Compact Complaints Procedure. Full details of the Compact Complaints Procedure can be seen at www.bristolcompact.org.uk

The Bristol Compact and you

The Compact is relevant to all VCS groups – large or small – and public sector organisations and is our shared responsibility. Its successful implementation depends on those in the public sector and the VCS. The Compact Partners' Group oversees the implementation and monitoring of the Compact in Bristol.

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www.bristolcompact.org.uk

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