

Report to Compact Partners' Group and Compact Champions

From: Mark Hubbard, Compact Liaison Officer
Period: 2015/16 Quarters 3 and 4 (October 2015 – March 2016)

This summary report is for the first two quarters of the 2015/16 Compact Liaison Work Programme and progress is reported against the programme outcomes:

- 1) Improved partnership working between public and VCS sector**
- 2) Awareness of Compact is high amongst public sector and VCS partners**
- 3) Improved VCS engagement with commissioning through support and advocacy**
- 4) Compact principles promoted and integrated into commissioning practice**

Highlights from this period

- Positive aspects of the Social Value Policy
- Compact principles embedded in VCS Grants Prospectus
- Compact Voice work across West of England
- Changes to Community Support Services commissioning process

1) Improved partnership working public and VCS sector

Commissioning and procurement

The draft Commissioning Action Plan has not progressed in this period despite efforts to get it onto BCC's Strategic Leadership Team agenda. We have, however, used the plan to inform our input into Bristol's Social Value Policy. The plan – and progress – is being reviewed by the Compact Partners' Group.

Social Value Policy

Following input into BCC's Social Value Working Group (alongside representation from the Federation of Small Businesses), the draft policy went out to consultation (Oct 15-Jan 16). Our consultation event (21 Oct), attended by 60 reps from community organisations, was the main VCS engagement and produced a report with 18 recommendations. Many of those were implemented and the subsequent policy – approved by Cabinet, March 16) includes very positive commitments:

- the target of 25% of contract spend going to micro, small and medium size businesses, social enterprises and voluntary / community organisations,
- 10% of the quality element of the price/quality ratio allocated to social value,
- the inclusion of positive action in respect of organisations led by or for equalities groups, and for the development of small and micro organisations and businesses, and
- the commitment to regular evaluation and improvement.

There are other things that we would have liked to see in the policy (for example, a social value minimum of 10% of tender scores in every contract; specific targets for micro, small and equalities organisations) but we are now working to support the development of social value measures and the VCS in articulating its social value.

VCS Grants Prospectus

Our active involvement in the Prospectus Co-Design Group has led to the very positive inclusion of many Compact principles in the proposals that went out to consultation (Oct 15 – Feb 16). The

focus for work over the coming months is preparation of the final application process and guidance prior to the launch.

2) Awareness of Compact is high amongst public sector and VCS partners

In addition to the Compact Week event (Social Value, 21 Oct), other activities were completed in tandem with the Compact Voice project (across the West of England). These were:

- South Gloucestershire VCSE Conference (11 Dec)
- 'Strategic Planning and Partnership Working' conference in North Somerset.

3) Improved VCS engagement with commissioning through support and advocacy

A number of advocacy cases have progressed and led to improvements in commissioning and relationships, as follows.

- Previous Compact brokered meetings between Bristol City Council and a bidder led to an out-of-court agreement (re-evaluation of bids) and a potential saving in legal costs of around £600,000. [Blog¹](#) produced for Compact Voice.
- Provided support to a review and collaborative discussions led by Voscur into the proportionality of Bristol City Council's Neighbourhood Wellbeing small grants scheme have led to more proportionate monitoring processes and papers.
- Provided advice to a voluntary organisation to challenge the decommissioning and contract management of carer services process which appeared to not comply with Bristol City Council's Decommissioning Policy, Best Value Statutory Guidance or Compact. Local authority has since agreed to pay outstanding invoices (total £40,000) and has extended contract to end June 2016, with possible extension to March 2017 (total £61,000).
- Following previous disagreement about a commissioners' lack of willingness to accept a voluntary organisation's service user intelligence in a consultation in sexual health services commissioning process; the commissioner has now agreed to accept the submission.
- Advised voluntary organisations about an issue with repeated annual grants and late extensions with Avon & Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner, and wrote to the PCC on the matter. Case ongoing.

BME organisations and VCS Grants Prospectus

In collaboration with Bristol BME Voice, I was involved in a series of facilitated workshops that focussed on an examination of BME organisations' engagement in the Prospectus. This was an acknowledgement that some BME organisations are struggling to engage and an attempt to mitigate risks with a targeted action plan.

4) Compact principles promoted and integrated into commissioning practice

Provided support to Voscur's Voice & Influence team to challenge BCC's Community Support Services commissioning. After representing the views of VCS providers (lack of understanding), commissioners wrote to all current providers to explain the timetable and rationale for change. Additionally, the process timings were ambitious (particularly for the development of collaborations) and were extended as a result of our representation.

Also in this period, Compact input has been requested on the Integrated Healthy Lifestyles commissioning board. Two previously controversial commissioning processes – Bristol Youth Links

¹ <http://www.compactvoice.org.uk/blogs/compact-voice/2016/03/22/talking-vs-litigation-compact-brokerage-predicted-save-%C2%A3500000-public>

and Recovery Orientated Alcohol & Drugs Service, ROADS – are about to start and Compact involvement is anticipated.

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