

COMPACT AT WORK

Compact
VOICE

Compact Awards 2012:
Highly Commended

West Midlands Compact Panel: Promoting good practice locally

The West Midlands Compact Panel has enabled the sharing of good practice about the Compact and Compact principles and helped to strengthen partnership working across the West Midlands. It is attended by both public sector and VCS representatives who have an open and honest dialogue about how best to deal with current issues and challenges.

Impact

The 2012 survey of local Compacts indicated that the West Midlands is one of the best areas for Compact implementation, and this is partly attributed to the effectiveness of the Compact Panel.

A recent review of the panel found that it supported local Compacts by enabling members to learn about what is working in the region and by providing a forum to sense check and peer-review new ideas.

The panel is also a place where members can exchange information on rapidly changing central government policy and the implications for their work locally. This in turn helps to ensure that local partners in the West Midlands are able to make the most of new ideas, funding streams and policy initiatives as they arise.

What Happened

The West Midlands Compact panel is an informal network of both VCS and public sector people who are working on the Compact in the region. It has been meeting for about eight years and a core of members attend most meetings, whilst others come along when the agenda interests them.

The fact that both sectors are represented on the panel and are treated equally is important. This promotes open and honest dialogue about current issues and increases understanding of the challenges faced by both sectors. The spirit of the meetings is lively and sometimes challenging, but also firmly founded on Compact principles of respect and positive inter-sector relationships.

The panel meets four times a year and members also communicate and network between meetings by email and face to face. Meetings usually include an information exchange, with updates from each locality and from regional and national practitioners including the Office for Civil Society and Compact Voice.

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Implementing
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Compact Principles

- 1: Partnership working
- 2: Designing policies and services
- 3: Delivering programmes and services

Tags

Local Compacts
Engagement
Implementation
Working groups

...Continued

The panel helps members to consider the implications on their area and work as a result of the wide ranging policy changes that are being introduced by government. The agenda also includes focussed discussion about topical issues such as:

- How to implement Localism
- New developments in infrastructure support services and funding;
- Ensuring the application of Compact Principles in the commissioning and procurement of public services from voluntary and community organisations; and
- Impact assessment and social value.



Pictured: Martin Honeywell at the 2012 Compact Awards

“We are all facing the same challenges. The Panel enables me to check that I am not too far off the mark in our local responses to new challenges.”

- West Midlands Compact Panel member

Panel members value the relationships that have been successfully developed over eight years of working together. These relationships have created a learning and innovation space based on positive experiences of Compact principles. In the past the Compact Panel has supported members’ learning by holding conferences and organising action learning groups or expert briefing sessions. It previously carried out an annual self-assessment to monitor effectiveness and highlight innovations and directions for future work.

The panel is not currently funded, although it has accessed pots of funding for specific pieces of work in the past. Panel members take it in turns to host meetings. The panel has an independent facilitator, Martin Honeywell, and this helps the panel to function well by ensuring impartiality and that the views of both sectors are equally represented. He plans the agenda, chairs the meetings, takes notes and maintains the membership list, in consultation with an informal steering group of active members. Martin was highly commended in the Leadership category of the 2012 Compact Awards in recognition of his contribution in the West Midlands.

Quote

“I have found the panel simply invaluable. Support has been there from colleagues in both sectors in the region for the review of our local Compact and those working relationships have increased understanding here of the bigger picture, and of opportunities we may not have considered. It also enables us to work in a wider Compact sense - collaboratively across sectors within the region.”

- Response gathered during the review of the West Midlands Compact Panel

Relevant Compact Principles

- 1: A strong, diverse and independent civil society
- 2: Effective and transparent design and development of policies, programmes and public services
- 3: Responsive and high-quality programmes and services

Related links

- [Compact Awards 2012](#): Shortlisted nominations booklet which includes the highly commended leadership nomination for Martin Honeywell