

The North East Compact Network: Coming together to work better in partnership

About the North East Compact Network

The North East Compact Network was established by Compact Voice in 2012, to allow representatives from various local Compacts across the region to meet and learn from each other's experiences.

This document is a compilation of some of the Compact and partnership working activities happening across the region, and provides a brief overview of the state of Compact working in the different areas across it. It is designed to encourage good practice by showcasing some of the excellent work being done in the North East, and the benefits this has brought to different organisations in both sectors.

This document also highlights the benefits of Compact networking across a large regional area. Local Compacts often cover quite small areas such as local Compact agreements at a district or borough council level. This can lead to multiple local Compacts in one large regional area and - as was the case in the North East - the people involved in each of these Compacts did not have a means of meeting regularly or coming together online to learn from each other.

The degree to which local Compacts are implemented and actively used varies from area to area in any region, so there are obvious advantages in learning from areas where the Compact is strong and used to facilitate successful partnerships.

The Compact has, historically, had varying degrees of success in the North East. However, as this document shows, the network has had a real impact in the region, and partnership working across sectors has improved as a result.

Compact Voice is looking to establish other self-sustaining networks across regional areas, to enable local Compacts to come together and learn from each other. If you're interested in finding out more, we'd be keen to hear to hear from you. Please contact the Compact Voice Engagement Officer in your area - details can be found at <http://www.compactvoice.org.uk/support/engagement-team>.

About the Compact

The Compact is the agreement between government and the voluntary and community sector (VCS) which sets out key principles and establishes a way of working that improves their relationship for mutual advantage. It considers areas such as involvement in policy design and consultation, funding arrangements (including grants and contracts), promoting equality, ensuring better involvement in delivering services, and strengthening independence.

As well as the national Compact, most areas in England also have a Local Compact, which interprets the principles set out in the Compact to reflect local need.

About Compact Voice

Compact Voice represents the voluntary and community sector on the Compact. We are cosignatories on the national Compact, and negotiated its content on behalf of the sector and based on the views and opinions of our members.

We provide training, support, advice, and information about better working in partnership to both sectors nationally and locally, represent the voluntary and community sector's interests to government, and champion the principles of the Compact.

Compact working across the North East:

1. [Darlington](#)
 2. [Durham](#)
 3. [Gateshead](#)
 4. [Hartlepool](#)
 5. [Middlesbrough](#)
 6. [Newcastle](#)
 7. [North Tyneside](#)
 8. [Northumberland](#)
 9. [Redcar and Cleveland](#)
 10. [Stockton-on-Tees](#)
 11. [South Tyneside](#)
 12. [Sunderland](#)
 13. [Work across the region](#)
-

Darlington

Darlington's local Compact was refreshed in 2009/10 following a comprehensive consultation. Darlington took part in Compact Voice's Priority Areas Programme in 2012/13, which is a programme with agreed objectives and outcomes where a representative from Compact Voice will work closely with the area for a set period of time. As a result of the work, awareness of the Darlington Compact has been raised, more organisations have signed up to it and there has been an increase in people acting to champion of the Compact.

Darlington Link were awarded a Compact Advancing Equality Award in 2012, at the local [Excellence Awards](#) run by Evolution Darlington, the local voluntary sector infrastructure organisation.

Partners in Darlington are looking to refresh their Compact in 2013, and their Compact steering group is now well attended with partners from both sectors.

Durham

Historically, the Compact has been very strong in Durham – it was one of the first areas to have a local Compact. The latest County Durham Compact was developed in 2011 by a cross sector Compact Implementation Group. This included representatives from the VCS, the council, NHS, Police and Fire and Rescue Service.

The [Durham Compact](#) has influenced the council's Corporate Strategy for Commissioning and Procurement 2012-2015¹. This in turn has led to a specific commitment being included in the Sustainable Commissioning & Procurement Policy 2012 – 2015:

'We will recognise the commitments made in the *County Durham Compact* when engaging with third sector suppliers.'

¹ Durham Council: 'Corporate Strategy for Commissioning and Procurement 2012-2015'
<http://content.durham.gov.uk/PDFRepository/CorporateStrategyCommProc.pdf>

The Compact Implementation Group in Durham has also developed an [introductory e-learning course](#) on the Compact for staff and volunteers from both the public sector and Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS).

A Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy has been developed between partners. The strategy remains faithful to commitments made in the Durham Compact and seeks to build on these. Following the adoption of this strategy by partner organisations, a joint Action Plan will be developed which will set out specific deliverables and mechanisms for partnership groups to achieve the objectives.

The strategy will be available on the [County Durham Partnership website](#) once it has been agreed by the council's Cabinet.

Gateshead

In Gateshead, the Compact has been signed up to by the Gateshead Strategic Partnership. While it keeps the original principles of the Compact it is formatted as a partnership document which commits all partners to good communications, equality and diversity, and fair treatment in funding and procurement.

Gateshead's Strategic Partnership is governed by '[Vision 2030](#)' which includes 'six big ideas', one of which is Gateshead Volunteers, and jointly developed Gateshead Volunteering Plan/Framework. The Compact was referred to throughout the process of developing the framework. Partners in Gateshead are also discussing the role of volunteers in ensuring public services such as libraries remain central to local communities.

Voluntary and community sector partners in Gateshead have spent 18 months developing a consortium approach to winning tenders called the Commissioning Exchange. Gateshead Council, along with ACEVO and the Local Government Association are funding work in partnership to develop this programme, as well as a family support service which currently being co-designed.

Gateshead have a [good practice case study](#) on the Compact Voice website, and were awarded the [Local Compact Partnership Award in 2011](#).

Hartlepool

The Hartlepool Compact was refreshed in 2008, and the Voluntary Sector Strategy was subsequently aligned to the Compact in 2012. An action plan is being developed to raise awareness of Compact principles amongst both the VCS and public sector partners. Mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that this is monitored on a regular basis.

Middlesbrough

There are plans to refresh the Middlesbrough Compact over the next year or so to develop understanding and improve its practical application, and, in particular, to link the Compact to the commissioning framework.

Newcastle

The Newcastle Compact was refreshed in 2007. Originally it had only been an agreement between the council and local VCS, but has now been widened to include all partners from both sectors. The Compact was reviewed in 2011, and was also used to review commissioning and contracts processes. The Acting CEO of Newcastle Council confirmed in October 2012 that the council are 'very committed to working with the VCS'.

The Newcastle Compact is being completely rewritten to reflect new partnerships, organisations and the changed environment. A working group has been established to involve the voluntary and community sector, the local authority and local health representatives. The draft document is currently out for consultation. An agreed draft will be discussed at the Voluntary Sector Liaison group (a high level strategic meeting between the council's Cabinet members and voluntary sector representatives) and then finally at the local health and wellbeing board.

North Tyneside

North Tyneside's local Compact is used for funding and procurement purposes, and helps to define the role of grants and contracts. The Compact also helps to ensure that all partners are clear about what funding they receive from the council and when they can expect to receive it, along with clarifying monitoring activity linked to this funding.

North Tyneside also has a Compact on volunteering which is focused on ensuring that people have positive volunteering experiences, and sets out what they can expect as a volunteer or as an organisation offering volunteering opportunities.

Northumberland

Northumberland are represented in the North East Network via the virtual email network established as part of it. Both sectors in the area have welcomed the development of the North East Compact Network, and if issues relating to partnership working emerge in Northumberland, they seek advice and support from the North East Network.

Redcar and Cleveland

The Local Authority and VCS in Redcar and Cleveland have both grown over recent years. The Redcar and Cleveland Compact was refreshed in 2010, and there has been a Compact Implementation Group in place for some time.

The Compact is not part of a particular person's job in the area. However a new Compact Champions meeting has been set up, which includes heads of departments and cabinet members at the council. They have recently undertaken work to review the commissioning cycle, testing out its effectiveness for the council. The Compact is also used by the council during consultation processes.

The council is looking into integrating the Compact into other areas as well, including community asset transfers, mapping and gapping in the sector, and public sector volunteering - all of which are underpinned by the Compact. The Redcar and Cleveland Compact is currently being refreshed, and it is being benchmarked against the Equalities Act. As part of this process, the Compact has been redrafted to make it clearer and easier to follow, followed a large scale consultation process, which ended on March 31st 2013.

Stockton-on-Tees

Stockton has a campaign for their local Compact called 'Getting it off the shelf'.

Catalyst Stockton (the local voluntary sector infrastructure organisation) are currently looking at how to make the Compact more visible, and how to get people involved and using the Compact. They are planning a timetable to refresh the Stockton Compact and, like Darlington, were part of Compact Voice's Priority Areas Programme, which resulted in increased awareness and involvement.

Catalyst carried out a survey during Compact Week 2012 on awareness and understanding of the Compact, which has been used to plan further training and information sessions. There is both a [case study](#) and a [blog](#) on Compact Voice's website about this exercise.

The Chief Executive of Stockton Borough Council has reiterated their support for the local voluntary sector. In conjunction with the VCS, the council has revised its approach to 'core funding' of the voluntary sector, which has seen benefits in terms of sustainability, increased turnover for voluntary organisations, supporting access to commissioning opportunities and raising awareness of services provided by the sector.

The council has also reiterated their continued commitment to ensuring that consultations on service changes are Compact compliant.

Stockton are aiming to review their Compact in 2013.

South Tyneside

The Compact in South Tyneside is not actively used, and there is a reported lack of leadership on it.

However, the Volunteering Code, written by the Volunteer Centre was approved by the council a few years ago, is about to be revised.

Sunderland

Sunderland has an active local Compact, which was shortlisted for a [Compact Innovation Award](#) in 2012.

The Sunderland External Funding Working Group and the Compact e-learning package have been the subject of good practice case studies, [published on the Compact Voice website](#).

Sunderland have started a pilot in order to get the voluntary sector 'Fit for Purpose', and one of the sections in the Fit for Purpose manual is the local Compact. The pilot is running in early 2013 with view to it being evaluated and rolled out from April 2013 onwards. The Compact section of the pilot will include information about the Sunderland Partnership, the history of the Sunderland Compact, what the Compact is and what it means locally, and how to sign up to the Compact. Additionally, it provides information about the Compact e-learning programme and the role of Compact Voice.

Sunderland is also in the process of producing a new equalities code.

Other work happening across the region

[Safer Future Community \(SFC\) Networks](#) are being set up in each police authority area to help the sector to prepare for the major changes to the delivery of local public services. The SFC Networks are aiming to ensure the VCS can engage and influence Police and Crime Commissioners.

VONNE are leading on the SFC network in Durham and Northumbria, and Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency are leading on developing the SFC network in Cleveland.

A new directory has been developed to provide information and contact details about VCS organisations working within the criminal justice field. The directory will be used as a tool for Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to commission community safety services and, in the future, wider criminal justice services. The directory will also be highlighted to police, probation and other agencies working in this field.