

## What is the Compact?

The Compact is the agreement between government and the voluntary and community sector, 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 service design and delivery, and strengthening independence.

First introduced in 1998, the Compact has enjoyed cross-party support both locally and nationally. Every government department is signed up to the principles of the Compact, and its implementation across government is overseen by the Office for Civil Society which is based within the Cabinet Office.

## Local Compacts: What they are and how they can help

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. Local Compacts may cover different local government areas, and might be established in district, county and regional areas. Different partners will have developed and signed up to principles contained in their local Compact. Signatories can include representation from councils, healthcare organisations, social care organisations, police, fire, and housing, amongst others.

Following principles established in local Compacts has enabled local communities to benefit from greater involvement in policy design, improved reach and understanding, better commissioning and procurement, and better support for the vital role of voluntary and community sector organisations.

Local Compacts have become an established feature of local partnership working in most parts of England - as of October 2013, there were 165 local Compacts. In most cases these local Compacts provide tangible benefits for all partners - and more importantly - the local community. In the 2013 Compact Voice survey of local Compacts<sup>1</sup>, 89% of respondents agreed that 'the Compact is important and effort needs to be made to implement it in full'. Local Compacts can work anywhere and where they do, they are highly valued by all.

## About Compact Voice

Compact Voice works to support the Compact and its implementation across England. We aim to ensure that strong, effective partnerships are at the heart of all relationships between the voluntary sector and government – locally and nationally.

We share good practice, provide training and support and work with government to inform policy decisions and champion the role of the voluntary sector in service delivery.

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.compactvoice.org.uk/survey2013](http://www.compactvoice.org.uk/survey2013)

## Why should a CCG sign up to a local Compact?

It is not a legal requirement for CCGs to sign up to their local Compact. However, we would strongly encourage CCGs to sign up – doing so sends a strong message that a CCG is willing to strengthen relationships with local voluntary organisations.

Signing up to a local Compact should be considered as a way of showing to other partners that you will take a collaborative approach to working together, and that you can be trusted.

Additionally, local authorities and CCGs have equal and joint duties to prepare JSNAs, through the health and wellbeing board.

The Department of Health have issued guidance on Joint Strategic Needs Assessments<sup>2</sup>, which states that:

“Most local areas will have a Compact agreement setting out how local authorities and the NHS will work with voluntary organisations for mutual benefit and these Compacts should be considered, and recognised within the JSNA and JHWS process.”

Signing up to a local Compact can provide a key point of access to engage with the voluntary sector, and also represents standing behind something which has a clearly defined role and recognised purpose which has been developed based on local priorities.

The Compact has brand recognition and goes beyond being merely a list of activities – it signifies a sense of spirit and an approach which people can understand and respond to without ever needing to read a case study or action plan. You shouldn't be fearful of signing up to a local Compact – if you want to be good at partnership working, then why not sign up to it?

Local Compacts can play a crucial enabling role in helping to identify and achieve mutual goals, something particularly useful for CCGs.

The most basic function of a Compact is to provide a space for partners to come together and talk. The nature of the Compact means that partners can talk openly - on an equal footing - and the contents of the Compact ensure that conversations focus on areas of mutual concern.

Finally, local partnerships in your area might be working well now, but how can you be sure they will always be this good? A Compact way of working is about not only doing things the right way, but committing to continue doing so. It is a way of showing to other partners that you will take a collaborative approach to working together, and that you can be trusted.

## More information

To find out more about your local Compact, visit [www.compactvoice.org.uk](http://www.compactvoice.org.uk), phone us on 0207 520 2451 or email [compact@compactvoice.org.uk](mailto:compact@compactvoice.org.uk).

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<sup>2</sup> Department of Health: 'Statutory Guidance on Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies'  
<http://healthandcare.dh.gov.uk/jsnas-jhwss-guidance-published/>