

# Working Together

A Compact for the  
communities of Chelmsford



## Foreword

A Compact Way of working is almost second nature in Chelmsford as we have been working this way since 2005.

Our experience has been that local Compacts help to build trusting relationships and foster a spirit of collaboration between the statutory and voluntary and community sectors. The Chelmsford Compact has encouraged some vibrant and robust working relationships to develop that have stood the test of time.

We realise that the aims and ambitions we have in common are greater than the perceived differences that might have caused barriers in the past. There are many local examples of effective partnership working leading to better outcomes for our local community.

This renewed Compact comes at a very challenging time for us all when public sector cuts will begin to hit many aspects of our lives, and strong partnerships between the sectors will be more important than ever before.

We already work well together to provide solutions to local issues but the challenge continues to find creative ways of responding to needs and to develop solutions and methods of working which have positive outcomes for everyone involved especially in these financially difficult times.

Compact working has definitely helped to make our local communities stronger, better and more resilient.

*Steve Packham*

**Chair, One Chelmsford Partnership**

# What is this Compact?

This Compact, *Working Together*, is a written agreement setting out guidelines for working relations between independent voluntary organisations, charities, community groups (known collectively as Civil Society) and Statutory Sector organisations working within Chelmsford borough.

The Chelmsford Compact aims to promote partnerships between the Statutory Sector and the Voluntary Sector for the benefit of everyone in Chelmsford. It provides a framework for collaborative working and, as a result, more effective and co-ordinated services for the local community.

By making clear statements about expected standards for organisations to work to, *Working Together* is designed to improve the relationship for mutual advantage, underpinning principles that we already share. In practice, *Working Together* is about:

- Raising mutual awareness, respect and honesty between the sectors
- Changing attitudes and building positive commitments to working in partnership, equality and diversity
- Empowering the wider community to engage in decision making and volunteering

By working to these commitments, this agreement aims to achieve:

- 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

A section has also been included on what to do if things go wrong and the next steps the Compact Steering Group will take in embedding this revised Compact.

## What a Compact is not

- Legally binding
- A Service Level Agreement
- A guarantee of funding
- A contract
- A replacement for existing partnership working agreements
- Committing your voluntary organisation to extra work by signing up

# The Compact in Context

All councils in England have a Local Compact which improves their relationship with the sector and other local public bodies. Chelmsford Compact, *Working Together*, was launched in February 2004. Since then many changes have occurred, including the strengthening of local partnership working and a move to commissioning.

The National Compact, which was originally produced in 1998, was renewed and published in December 2010, along with an Accountability and Transparency Guide which outlines steps to take at national and local level, including dispute resolution, internal complaints procedures and ombudsmen functions. The key motivations for the renewal were the changed priorities of the new coalition government.

The National Compact highlights the government's continued commitment to working with 'civil society', and provides a valuable tool in helping to build strong and successful partnerships. The government has also outlined a new agenda for strengthening communities and new Best Value guidance.

This revised local Compact is designed to encompass these changes to benefit all organisations that work within the Chelmsford borough. A Chelmsford Compact Working Group has come together to undertake the review and as an advocate to ensure that the Chelmsford Compact is publicised and understood across all sectors. Current members of the Working Group, represented by Compact Champions from within their own organisations, are:

- Chelmsford Borough Council
- Chelmsford Council for Voluntary Service
- Chelmsford Volunteering Centre
- Essex County Council
- Guinness Trust
- NHS Mid Essex

*Working Together* will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it continues to guide and strengthen relationships as well as align with changes in the political sphere. All signatories are invited to take part in this process.

## What it could mean for you:

- Clearer roles and responsibilities of the different sectors
- Shared definitions
- Recognising shared goals
- Easier communication and getting to know people in different sectors
- Finding out more about how other sectors work

# Compact Commitments

The following commitments, which are grouped under headlines taken from the National Compact, show how compact principles can be put into practice through the daily operations of both the statutory organisations and the voluntary sector.

## I. A strong, diverse and independent civil society

*Working together* is about recognising the strength and diversity across all sectors and identifying the unique and independent nature of the voluntary sector which enables it to work closely with, and respond to, the needs of local communities. This Compact recognises the need to resource local support and development organisations in order to assist VSOs with their capacity and capability to deliver positive outcomes.

<b>Statutory organisations aim to.....</b>	<b>VSO's aim to.....</b>
Respect the independence of VSOs to deliver their objectives, including their right to campaign, regardless of any relationship, financial or otherwise, which may exist.	Ensure independence is upheld, focussing on the cause represented regardless of any relationship, financial or otherwise, which may exist.
Ensure VSOs are supported and resourced in a reasonable and fair manner where they are helping the statutory sector fulfil its aims.	Recognise that VSOs have a key role to play in helping statutory organisations to engage with communities.
Ensure transparency by making data and information more accessible, so that VSOs may challenge existing provision of services, access new markets and hold statutory organisations to account.	When campaigning or advocating, ensure that robust evidence is provided, including information about the source and range of people and communities represented.
Consider a range of ways to support VSOs, such as enabling greater access to premises and resources.	Work with statutory organisations to develop innovative and flexible approaches to support and resources.
Recognise that volunteers make an important contribution to Chelmsford borough both socially and economically.	Raise awareness of the impact that volunteers and voluntary action have on individuals, VCOs and local communities.
Recognise the importance of good practice and effective management of volunteers, and the need for organisational support for their work.	Recognise the importance of good practice and effective management of volunteers, and the need for organisational support for their work.

## 2. Effective and transparent design and development of policies, programmes and public services

*Working together* on policy development is mutually beneficial for both the statutory and voluntary sector. Statutory organisations recognise that VSOs have expertise in many areas because they are often working directly with people and groups, enabling policies, programmes and services to be developed that better meet the needs of local people.

<b>Statutory organisations aim to.....</b>	<b>VSO's aim to.....</b>
Include social value as part of policy, programme and service design, development and delivery.	Help to identify and highlight the potential impact of new policies and services on communities.
Involve VSOs at the start of policy development, remove barriers that may prevent organisations from contributing, and empower the voluntary sector to start discussion within affected communities.	When possible, promote and respond to consultations, as appropriate, ensuring that the voices of traditionally hard to reach people and communities can be heard.
Identify the implications and social impact of policy and programme development on inspiring and empowering communities.	When putting forward ideas, focus on evidence-based solutions, with clear proposals for positive outcomes.
Give early notice of consultations and allow enough time (12 weeks) for VSOs to involve their service users, members beneficiaries, volunteers and trustees. Use a range of consultation methods to be as accessible as possible to smaller and hard to reach groups. Where a shorter time frame is necessary, provide sound reasons.	Involve service users, beneficiaries, volunteers when preparing responses, being clear about who is being represented, in what capacity and on what basis representation is being made. Recognise that, in rare occasions, consultations may need to take place in shorter time frames.
Be clear which matters are open to change and which are not, providing feedback on how responses have influenced new policies, programmes and services.	Provide feedback to statutory partners when collecting the views of local communities.
Assess the implications of new policies or practices and aim to reduce the bureaucratic burden, particularly on small organisations.	Highlight when new policies or practices are likely to become burdensome or disproportionate, particularly on small organisations.

### 3. Responsive and high quality programmes and services

By *working together* statutory organisations and CSOs can deliver policies and programmes that are built around communities and individuals.

<b>Statutory organisations aim to.....</b>	<b>VSOs aim to.....</b>
Ensure that VSOs have a greater role and more opportunities in accordance with national and local government strategy for public services and commissioning.	Demonstrate the social, environmental or economic value of programmes and services provided, where appropriate.
<p>Consider a range of ways to resource VSOs, including grants, contracts, loan finance, use of premises; committing to funding agreements of 3 years or more where possible.</p> <p>Work to remove barriers to enable smaller VSOs to access funding and become involved in delivering services, where they are best placed to achieve the desired outcomes.</p> <p>Ensure that the widest possible range of organisations can be involved in the provision of services by using appropriate funding models, including payment in advance of expenditure.</p>	<p>Ensure eligibility for funding before applying and be clear about how outcomes will be achieved, the scale of the proposed project, and realistic on timescales for delivery.</p> <p>Work with statutory organisations to develop innovative and flexible approaches to funding.</p> <p>Recognise that statutory organisations can legitimately expect VSOs to give public recognition of its funding.</p>
Ensure well managed and transparent application processes, and provide clear information regarding funding decisions.	Ensure that robust financial planning arrangements are in place so that money is managed effectively.
<p>Ensure that monitoring and reporting is relevant and proportionate to the opportunity, agreeing how outcomes will be monitored at the outset.</p> <p>Be clear what information is being asked for, why and how it will be used.</p>	<p>Work with funders to achieve clear and proportionate reporting and monitoring.</p> <p>Recognise that reporting and monitoring, whether internal or external, is an aspect of good management practice.</p>
Recognise that when VSOs apply for funding they should include appropriate and relevant overheads to ensure full cost recovery for their activities.	Be open and transparent about how costs have been formulated when working up proposals.
Allocate risks to the organisation best equipped to manage them, proportionate to the size and scale of the opportunity.	Ensure robust governance arrangements to best manage risk associated with funding and service delivery.
Encourage feedback from a range of sources on the effectiveness of the service or activity in delivering objectives.	Facilitate feedback from clients and beneficiaries to help improve delivery of programmes and services.

## 4. Clear arrangements for managing changes to programmes and services

By *working together* statutory organisations and VSOs are able to be more flexible to changes that may need to be made to programmes and services.

<b>Statutory organisations aim to.....</b>	<b>VSOs aim to.....</b>
If a programme or service is encountering problems, agree an action plan for improvements before making decision to end a financial relationship.	Give early notice of significant changes in circumstances or potential interruption to a programme or service.
Assess the impact on all stakeholders before reducing or ending funding. Consider the wider impact on the continued viability of the VSO or service.	Highlight the impact of funding changes, and their effect, on communities and people in vulnerable situations.
Where there are restrictions on future resources, discuss the potential implications with VSOs as soon as possible.	Contribute in a meaningful way to reviews of programmes and funding practice.
Give a minimum of six months notice, in writing when ending a funding agreement.	Prepare for when funding ends with exit plans that are mindful of the needs of local communities.

## 5. An equal and fair society

Equality and fairness are core values for both statutory organisations and the voluntary sector. Statutory organisations recognise that the voluntary sector works closely with specific groups who may be under represented or marginalised in society. *Working Together* means that the needs of these groups can be better met by both sectors.

<b>Statutory organisations aim to.....</b>	<b>VSOs aim to.....</b>
Work with VSOs to take practical steps towards eliminating discrimination, promoting equality and ensuring the voice of the under-represented and disadvantaged may be heard.	Demonstrate how their work promotes equality, tackles discrimination, particularly when receiving funding from a statutory organisation.
Work with VSOs that represent, support or provide services to under-represented and disadvantaged groups to actively seek their views, including assessing impact, when designing and implementing policies, programmes and services.	Support the statutory sector to engage with under-represented and disadvantaged groups, recognising that all organisations have a role to play in helping the sector understand and engage with communities.

## If things go wrong

The Compact offers clear commitments around funding, consultation and other partnership working relationships; so don't wait until things go wrong before using it. A diplomatic approach to challenging bad practice often works best, so asking whether a decision or process is Compact Compliant can often spark a joint resolve to make things right.

Sometime it's not easy *working together* and where problems arise:

- Each organisation has the right to raise concerns and be listened to positively.
- *Working Together* can be used as a framework to underpin discussions and encourage disagreements to be resolved between the parties concerned.
- Where this is not possible, the support of an independent mediator should be sought. The Essex Compact Steering Group has a mediation panel that may be able to help or suggest a neutral figure who could be approached .
- Please let a member of the Compact Steering Group know about any disagreements that require mediation so that *Working Together* can be adapted and strengthened.

## Resources

For more information about the National Compact, the Essex Compact, other local compacts and guidance on how the Compact can work for you, call Compact Voice on 0207 520 2451 or visit [www.compactvoice.org.uk](http://www.compactvoice.org.uk)

The Compact Advocacy programme exists to offer support and advice to voluntary and community organisations in their dealings with public bodies. Visit: <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/compactadvocacy> or call their helpline on 020 7520 3161.

Chelmsford Council for Voluntary Service also has a wealth of information and can offer support to local voluntary and community groups and charities wishing to engage with the Compact. Call 01245 351888 or visit [www.chelmsfordcvs.btck.co.uk](http://www.chelmsfordcvs.btck.co.uk)

For printed copies of this document, or to have it made available in large print or electronic format, translated into other languages or recorded onto audio tape, please contact: Chelmsford Borough Council. Call 01245 6066289 or email [grantsandfunding@chelmsford.gov.uk](mailto:grantsandfunding@chelmsford.gov.uk).

## Sign up and Support Chelmsford Compact

The Compact can only work effectively if organisations commit to it and it becomes part of any joint undertaking between the sectors. We would like to encourage all voluntary, community and statutory organisations working in Chelmsford to sign up to and re-commit to a Compact Way of Working.

To sign up please, in the first instance, contact Chelmsford CVS or Chelmsford Borough Council (contact details above).

# Chelmsford Compact is working for us

Some examples of successful Compact working in Chelmsford district since *Working Together* launched in 2004:

- Upfront payment to agencies in receipt of Chelmsford Borough Council corporate grants.
- Consultation and agreement of reporting and monitoring changes before these were implemented for agencies in receipt of NHS Mid Essex Partnership funding.
- Ongoing monitoring arrangements and streamlined bi-annual reporting when funded under Service Level Agreement with Chelmsford Borough Council and NHS Mid Essex.
- 3 year funding agreements for voluntary agencies in receipt of core funding.
- Retaining of grant funding in the commissioning mix to enable continued support of smaller voluntary sector agencies.
- Compact partners involvement on the Executive and Sub-groups of the Chelmsford Partnership (Local Strategic Partnership), including one or more places at each partnership table for the Voluntary Sector.
- Employer Supported Volunteering scheme instigated by Essex County Council which will enable staff to get first hand knowledge and experience of the local voluntary sector.
- Moving funding to voluntary organisations with a similar purpose to enable a much needed service to continue (Chelmsford Volunteer Centre).
- Open discussion about the impact of wider funding cuts on local services and a partnership approach to enabling some services to continue (managing PRG cuts).

## **Compact Review 2011**

Thank you to the members of the local Compact Working Group who undertook a complete review of the Chelmsford Compact, which included referencing the Essex Compact, the National Compact (2010) and Best Value Guidance.

Thank you to all agencies who submitted a response to the consultation, and to the Essex Compact Steering Group. We hope you will remain involved as the Chelmsford Compact develops further.

Thanks also to external consultant, Katherine Eglington, who worked on the review to first draft.