

Introduction

The Hertfordshire Compact is a written understanding between the voluntary and community sector and statutory sectors about how they will co-operate and continue to develop positive working relationships for the benefit of Hertfordshire's communities. The Compact process is one of learning, development and dialogue.

The agreement has been developed by the Hertfordshire Compact steering group, a multi-agency group responsible for leading on the implementation, monitoring and championing of the Hertfordshire Compact. The group includes representation from a number of Hertfordshire's statutory and voluntary and community sector agencies.

The main aims of the Hertfordshire Compact are to build on existing partnerships, develop a range of shared principles and undertakings and develop the relationship between the sectors through mutual respect and trust, so that better public services can be provided across Hertfordshire. This agreement reflects the Hertfordshire Voluntary Sector Commissioning strategy and will operate in conjunction with the Procurement regulations of all the statutory organisations involved. Although this Compact is not legally binding, the intention is that it should be followed to promote good quality working relationships between voluntary and community sector organisations and statutory organisations across Hertfordshire.

An effective partnership between the statutory sector and voluntary and community sector will help achieve the following outcomes:

- A strong, diverse and independent voluntary and community sector
- 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 strong, diverse and independent voluntary and community sector

Undertakings by Statutory Organisations (SO):

1.1 Respect and uphold the independence of Voluntary and Community Sector organisations (VCS) to deliver their mission including their right to campaign regardless of any relationship financial or otherwise which may exist.

1.2 Ensure VCS are supported and resourced in a reasonable and fair manner where they are commissioned or funded by SOs to fulfil their aims.

1.3 Ensure that SO's collectively recognise the need to resource, in a range of ways, local support and development organisations in order to assist VCS with their capacity to deliver positive outcomes.

An example:

In order to carry out Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks as an organisation registered directly there needs to be a minimum of 100 checks per year; this precludes the overwhelming majority of voluntary sector organisations. The ability to access this service as part of the County Council at cost is very helpful, more so as it is backed up with access to telephone advice about checks.

1.4 Ensure greater transparency by making data and information more accessible; helping VCS to make appropriate challenges and allowing them to access new and existing markets of service provision.

An example:

Hertfordshire Community Foundation, who make grants to local charities and voluntary groups, are collaborating with Hertfordshire County Council's Public Health Evidence & Intelligence Team and Community Information & Intelligence Unit to produce an evidence base for their work. Drawing on advice and support from HCC intelligence specialists, their 'Hertfordshire Matters' report will bring together key data on local needs to inform the allocation of grants and provide an evidence-based rationale for setting funding priorities. By working together to ensure that their own data report reflects the information sources in Hertfordshire's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, HCF's potential donors can also be assured that their money will be spent in ways which will have the greatest impact on improving people's lives within the county.

1.5 Consider ways to facilitate greater VCS access to SO premises and resources where this will produce public benefits.

1.6 Create a transparent and open commissioning environment to foster good relations, encourage co-operation and partnership.

Undertakings by Voluntary and Community Sector:

1.7 When campaigning or advocating ensure that robust evidence is provided including information about the source and range of people and communities represented.

1.8 Ensure independence is upheld focusing on the cause represented regardless of any relationship they have with the SO financial or otherwise.

1.9 Monitor and evaluate activities that are undertaken to ensure they achieve the organisations mission.

Joint Undertakings:

1.10 Encourage, facilitate and support volunteer engagement in the development and delivery of public services

1.11 When working jointly with another organisation, respect each other's organisational processes and use established procedures to address any concerns or queries that arise.

1.12 Prior to initiating contact with the press, using social media, or making public announcements, adopt a "no surprises" approach so that no organisation is unfairly or unnecessarily deprived of information or reasonable notice.

1.13 Take advantage of opportunities to promote the COMPACT as the agreed basis for effective partnership working.

Effective and transparent design and development of policies, programmes and public services

Undertakings by Statutory Organisations:

2.1 Ensure that social, environmental and economic value forms a standard part of designing, developing and delivering policies programmes and services. All policy decisions are subject to the Equalities Impact Assessment process.

2.2 Consider the social impact that may result from policy and programme development and in particular consider how these would impact local efforts to inspire and encourage social action and to empower communities.

2.3 Work with VCS from the earliest possible stage to design policies, programmes and services. Ensure those likely to have a view are involved and remove barriers that may prevent organisations contributing.

2.4 Give notice of forthcoming consultations relevant to the VCS, allowing where possible enough time for VCS to involve their service users, beneficiaries, members, volunteers and trustees in preparing responses. Where it is appropriate, and enables meaningful engagement, conduct 12-week formal written consultations, with clear explanations and rationale for shorter time frames or a more informal approach.

2.5 Provide feedback, where appropriate, to explain how respondents including those who felt there may be barriers, have influenced the design and development of

policies programmes and public services including where respondents' views have not been acted upon.

Undertakings by Voluntary and Community Sector:

2.6 Engage with SOs as they develop policies, programmes and services that affect local communities and VCS services.

2.7 Be clear, when making representation, who is being represented in what capacity and on what basis that representation is being made.

2.8 When putting forward ideas, focus on evidence based solutions, with clear proposals for positive outcomes.

Joint Undertakings:

2.9 Encourage and facilitate engagement in both development and delivery of services.

2.10 Seek, and take on board, the views of service users, clients, beneficiaries and wider members of the public in the design and development of programmes and services, including the use of data that is available. Aim to find solutions that are evidence-based and clearly able to demonstrate positive outcomes.

2.11 Work in partnership to assess implications of new policies, legislation and guidance aiming to reduce the bureaucratic burden particularly on small organisations.

Responsive and high-quality programmes and services

Undertakings by Statutory Organisations:

3.1 Enable the VCS to have a greater role and more opportunities in delivering public services in line with the Hertfordshire statutory organisations commissioning strategies. Comply with the requirement in the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 to consider the economic, environmental and social benefits of all procurement practice.

3.2 Consider a range of ways to fund and support VCS where they are delivering SO aims and objectives including grants, contracts, sub-contracting and use of resources and premises. Work to remove barriers that may prevent VCS accessing SO funding thereby enabling smaller organisations to become involved in delivering services where they are best placed to achieve the desired outcomes.

3.3 Ensure transparency by providing a clear rationale for relevant funding decisions.

3.4 Commit to multi-year funding, where appropriate, and where it adds value for money. The funding term should reflect the time it will take to deliver the outcome. If multi-year funding is not considered to be the best way of delivering the objective, explain the reasons for the decision.

3.5 Ensure well managed and transparent application and tendering processes which are proportionate to the desired objectives and outcomes of programmes.

3.6 Agree with VCSs how outcomes, including those of social, environmental or economic value, will be monitored before a contract or funding agreement is made. Ensure that monitoring and reporting is relevant and proportionate to the nature and size of the opportunity. Be clear about what information is being asked for and why and how it will be used.

3.7 Ensure equal treatment across sectors including reporting and monitoring arrangements when tendering for contracts.

3.8 Recognise that when VCS apply for funding they can include appropriate and relevant overheads including the costs associated with items such as collaboration with other organisations and training and volunteer involvement.

3.9 Discuss and allocate risks to the organisation(s) best equipped to manage them. Where prime contractors are used ensure they adhere to the principles of this COMPACT in allocating risk. Ensure delivery terms and risks are proportionate to the nature and value of the opportunity.

3.10 Ensure that the widest possible range of organisations can be involved in the provision of services through appropriate funding and financing models, for example outcome based payments and payment in advance of expenditure. Payment in advance of expenditure should be considered on a case-by-case basis where this represents value for money.

3.11 Ensure all bodies distributing funds on the SO's behalf adhere to the commitments in this COMPACT. This includes the relationship between prime contractors and their supply chains. Demonstrate how funding arrangements and financial support can allow smaller and specialist providers to play a greater part.

Undertakings by Voluntary and Community Sector:

3.12 Ensure eligibility for funding before applying and be explicit about how outcomes will be achieved.

3.13 Ensure robust governance arrangements so that organisations can best manage any risk associated with service delivery and financing models including giving funders early notice of significant changes in circumstances.

3.14 Be open and transparent about reporting, recognising that monitoring (whether internal or external) is an aspect of good management practice.

3.15 Demonstrate the social, environmental or economic value of the programmes and services provided, where appropriate.

3.16 Help facilitate feedback from users and communities to the SO to help improve delivery of programmes and services.

3.17 Recognise that SO can legitimately expect VCS to give public recognition of its funding.

Joint Undertakings:

3.18 In order to apply COMPACT principles in the distribution of European funding we will work together to engage managing authorities, opt in partners and successful bidders with the undertakings of Hertfordshire COMPACT. Where conflicts arise we will discuss the potential effects and agree solutions together.

3.19 Encourage feedback through an annual survey from a range of sources on the effectiveness of the SO/ VCS partnership and how successful it has been in delivering shared objectives. Place this feedback in the public domain.

Clear arrangements for managing changes to programmes and services

Undertakings by Statutory Organisations:

4.1 If a programme or service is encountering problems agree with the VCS a timetable of actions to improve performance before making a decision to end a financial relationship.

4.2 Assess the impact on beneficiaries, service users and volunteers before deciding to reduce or end funding. Assess the need to re-allocate funds to another organisation serving the same group.

4.3 Where there are restrictions or changes to future resources discuss with VCSs the potential implications as early as possible, give organisations the opportunity to respond and consider the response, fully respecting sector expertise before making a final decision.

4.4 Give a minimum of three months' notice in writing when changing or ending a funding relationship or other support apart from in exceptional circumstances and provide a clear rationale for why the decision has been taken.

Undertakings by Voluntary and Community Sector:

4.5 Plan for the end of funding to reduce any potential negative impact on beneficiaries and the organisation.

4.6 Contribute positively to reviews of programmes and funding practice.

4.7 Advise SOs on the social, environmental or economic impact of funding changes and on ways to minimise their effects on people in vulnerable situations.

Joint Undertaking:

4.8 Jointly plan for the end of contracts and funding to minimise negative impacts on beneficiaries and services.

Undertakings by Statutory Organisations:

5.1 Work with VCS that represent, support or provide services to people specifically protected by legislation and other under-represented and disadvantaged groups. Understand the specific needs of these groups by actively seeking the views of service users and clients. Take these views into account, including assessing impact, when designing and implementing policies, programmes and services.

5.2 Acknowledge that organisations representing specific disadvantaged or under-represented group(s) can help promote social and community cohesion and should have fair access to state funding.

Undertakings by Voluntary and Community Sector:

5.3 If receiving funding from a SO, show how the value of the work can help that body deliver its public sector duties on promoting equality and tackling discrimination.

5.4 Take practical action, such as through funding bids, to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and build stronger communities.

Joint Undertaking:

5.5 Take practical action to foster good relations, eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality and to ensure a voice for under-represented and disadvantaged groups.

Contact details

To contact the Hertfordshire Compact steering group please email corporate.policyteam@hertfordshire.gov.uk