

The General Compact



An agreement between public agencies and the voluntary and community sector in the Bradford District



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Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I introduce the General Compact for Bradford and District.

Compacts are being developed across England at District level as joint agreements which describe the principles of a good relationship between voluntary and community sector organisations and large public bodies and agencies, including the local authority.

The General Compact has been developed in Bradford District as a part of the Building Communities Strategy. It is the culmination of many months of preparation and consultation between November 2003 to mid March 2004 - but it is only the starting point!.

The aim is that it forms an accepted template that can then be developed and used in more specific versions that address particular needs.

So I hope this valuable groundwork demonstrates the significance and mutual benefit of these relationships and will stimulate further commitment for the future.

Caroline Schwaller
Chair of the
Building Communities Partnership

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the Building Communities Partnership
Bradford Vision
Primary Care Trusts
and the Community Network

Introduction

The aim of a compact is to set out in clear terms a framework that will govern relationships between the voluntary and community sector and large public sector organisations.

Through Bradford Vision, we hope the General Compact will become the template for relationships between the voluntary and community sector and the major statutory agencies in the Bradford District.

The draft General Compact was developed through the process of consultation involving:

- Voluntary and community groups through the Community Network.
- The Building Communities Partnership.
- Agencies and key partnerships.
- City of Bradford MDC.
- Communities of interest.

The intention is that this basic template can then be adapted and targeted to the needs of particular settings, agencies and organisations. This version is consequently called the General Compact. It is expected that, in future, further more specific versions would be drawn up, based for example, around issues such as funding.

The General Compact consists of two elements.

- Part One is a Statement of Principles and Values.
- Part Two focuses on key issues including equalities and cohesion, resources, consultation and participation, information and partnership working.

Promoting the use of compacts in the District is a part of the Building Communities Strategy. The General Compact has been produced under the umbrella of Bradford Vision, the Local Strategic Partnership. The working group has involved representatives of Bradford Council, health agencies and the voluntary and community sector.

The voluntary and community sector has great potential and a legitimate role in contributing to effective service planning and delivery across the District

Explaining Terms

Some terms used in this draft:

Agency - the term 'agency' is used in the General Compact as a term to include a range of large public and statutory organisations. In practice it may be that an individual agency, such as a Primary Care Trust, may wish to adapt and adopt the General Compact or that a number of agencies within a particular sector may work jointly to produce a 'localised' shared version. In either case, it will require community and voluntary organisations working closely and negotiating with appropriate agencies to creatively produce a version suited to the particular setting.

Cohesion - in the Bradford District community cohesion is seen as having four key elements:

- Equal access to services and jobs.
- Developing civic pride and participation.
- Building positive interaction between communities and
- Creating a safe district for individuals, communities and organisations.

Voluntary and Community Sector

- in Bradford District this includes at least three thousand groups and organisations, ranging from small self-help groups to branches of national charities. Generally speaking, community groups are smaller in scale than voluntary organisations and are usually run directly by their individual members or users.

Social Enterprise - trading organisations that are community controlled and that provide social or financial benefits to the local community or community of interest.

Communities of Interest - communities who share an identity (e.g. African Caribbean people) or communities who share an experience (e.g. homeless people, carers) and

- They experience discrimination because of who they are, and
- They face barriers to influencing decision making and accessing services, across all of the key areas of policy and activity that impact on peoples lives.

Communities of Interest are not single issue lobby groups.

Good communications and dialogue are essential to all partners

Part One: Principles and Values

The voluntary and community sector and the agency together recognise that:

1. There is a healthy range and diversity of groups, interests and views within the voluntary and community sector.
2. There must be a joint commitment by all partners to actively challenge discrimination and achieve equality of opportunity for all the people of the Bradford District.
3. The voluntary and community sector and the agency (i.e. the partners) must work together to deliver effective services and the vision for the future of Bradford.
4. The partners have distinct but complementary roles in the development and delivery of public policy and services. Agencies will respect and support the voluntary and community sector as an equal partner.
5. Good communications and dialogue are essential to all partners; their relationship will be based on integrity, accountability, respect and honesty.
6. Overall, the voluntary and community sector brings a great resource to the development of the district, including external funding, volunteering, social relationships and a wealth of ideas, talent, experience and expertise.

The agency recognises that:

7. An independent and diverse voluntary and community sector is fundamental to the social and economic well-being and development of the whole of Bradford District.
8. Voluntary and community organisations and the contribution of individual volunteers are of immense economic and social value to the District.

9. Voluntary and community organisations are entitled to act as independent advocates and campaigners to advance their aims.
10. As a provider of funding and resources, the agency has a significant role in supporting the development of the voluntary and community sector.
11. Social enterprise has a key role to play in the district providing both community and economic benefits.

The voluntary and community sector recognises that:

12. Every voluntary and community organisation has a responsibility to deliver effective services and organise activities that are appropriate and accountable especially where public money has financed these activities.
13. The agency has obligations and responsibilities linked to the use of public resources, including ensuring appropriate systems for accountability for resources made available to the voluntary and community sector.
14. National targets and statutory obligations may limit the flexibility the agency has to set priorities and allocate resources in some areas of work.

The public and voluntary and community sectors are committed to improving the quality of life for all citizens across the District

Part Two: Key issues

Equalities and Cohesion

The partners agree that :

1. Communities in the District have distinct perspectives and needs which require appropriate responses as they can affect, for example, access to resources and opportunities for involvement and decision-making.
2. Many of Bradford District's communities experience social exclusion, where groups, for a variety of reasons, cannot fully participate in or contribute to society and experience barriers to equal access to services and resources.
3. A pro-active approach is fundamental to addressing equal rights and needs to be demonstrated by the agency and the voluntary and community sector. This requires specific policies and practices to be put in place with a long term commitment.
4. Voluntary and community groups, communities of interest and faith groups are a rich potential resource to strengthen community cohesion across the District, having key roles to play in tackling discrimination and building bridges.

In response to the above :

5. The agency will seek to understand the needs and value the strengths of communities of interest, acknowledging that many such groups need particular support and funding to build up stronger networks and infrastructure.
6. The particular development needs of smaller community sector groups and faith groups, compared to larger voluntary organisations, will be considered.

7. The specific needs of community groups based in the rural parts of the District will also be considered.
8. The agency will actively engage with voluntary and community groups at all levels as it develops its community cohesion plans, providing appropriate support to enable effective involvement.

Resources

The partners agree that :

9. Large public agencies own and control resources on a large scale, including funding and practical facilities. These resources should be made more accessible to the community and voluntary sector.
10. The voluntary and community sector contributes particular added value to service delivery through, for example, the provision of specialist services, greater flexibility and innovation, informed perspectives and expertise, advocacy and access to the wider community.
11. A range of support structures, both generalist and specialist, is crucial for a flourishing voluntary and community sector.
12. To be effective, access to funding and resources needs to be co-ordinated and strategic yet still flexible enough to respond to particular needs.

The agency will support the inclusion of voluntary and community sector representation in all the District's key partnerships

Part Two: Key issues

In response to the above :

13. The agency will make provision for dedicated funding for the voluntary and community sector. This may take the form of grant aid, commissioning, loans and other means.
14. Clear, simple and transparent processes for accessing, allocating and managing funding budgets will be developed.
15. Wherever possible, the application and planning cycle for accessing funding will reflect the operational needs of the voluntary and community sector, e.g. through appropriate deadlines and decision timetables.
16. The agency will initiate early and meaningful consultation on any change or development that may affect access to resources by the voluntary and community sector.
17. The agency recognises that multi-year funding, rather than just for a one-year period, is essential for service planning and development in the voluntary and community sector.
18. The agency will commit towards building an effective infrastructure that can provide support to the voluntary and community sector in a way that responds to the diversity of communities across the district.
19. Flexible and specialist forms of funding will be developed for smaller community groups and communities of interest, as well as offering them access to the mainstream sources.
20. Funding criteria will support the full cost of activity, including proportionate contributions to core costs of organisations, such as management and financial administration.
21. Monitoring and evaluation of the agency's funding programmes will be appropriate to the nature of the project funded and proportionate to the level of funding provided.
22. The agency will develop clear policies on providing 'support in kind' to the voluntary and community sector. This could include access to premises, training and secondments.
23. The agency accepts the role and value of training for both operational staff and management committees in the voluntary and community sector. It will contribute to resourcing that training either through commissioning or, for example, by allowing adequate training expenditure within the funding criteria.
24. The agency notes that smaller community groups and particular communities of interest may have specific training needs and will work with other partners to address them.

Part Two: Key issues

Consultation and Participation

The partners agree that :

25. The voluntary and community sector has great potential and a legitimate role in contributing to effective service planning and delivery across the District.
26. Consultation needs to be proactive in reaching out to excluded or more isolated communities, such as in rural areas or people with disabilities, while acknowledging that different communities and networks need different timescales and techniques. For instance, consultation events may need to use more time or specific community languages or signers in order to properly meet the needs of particular hard to reach groups.
27. Whatever the consultation process used, it must be designed to give maximum access to those who might otherwise be excluded by physical, cultural, social, intellectual or any other constraints.
28. Any consultation exercise needs to be explicit early on about the process employed, the timescale applied and the possible impact of the consultation. It should include a specific commitment to feedback the results to those consulted.
29. The growing demand for participation and involvement can put a great strain on voluntary and community organisations and public sector organisations alike. This can be reduced by co-ordinating participation activity with other partners and networks of service users.

30. In addition, in order to develop properly, the participation of the voluntary and community sector will require an effective infrastructure to be in place as well as support for individual organisations, e.g. through 'partnership payments'.

In response to the above :

31. The agency will ensure adequate internal budgets are available for effective consultation and participation with groups and communities.
32. The agency will collaborate with other agencies and the voluntary and community sector to improve the planning and co-ordination of participation and consultation.
33. Relevant training and support will be provided for staff and managers in the agency to work more effectively with communities. Where appropriate, this will be provided by the voluntary and community sector.

Voluntary and community groups, communities of interest and faith groups are a rich potential resource to strengthen community cohesion across the District

Part Two: Key issues

Information

The partners agree that :

34. Information exchange is key to enabling effective partnership working. In particular it is good practice for all partners to have access to information about developments affecting the voluntary and community sector's capacity to effectively participate in service planning and delivery.
35. Creative approaches are needed to spread information to have the maximum impact and cater for the different needs of communities. There is a variety of ways of providing information and all are valid in different contexts.

In response to the above :

36. The agency will specifically make information available through appropriate media including newsletters and publications as well as networks and forums which are identified as major channels within the voluntary and community sector.
37. The voluntary and community sector will make information available to the agency on its own service provision to help the agency better understand needs in particular service areas and co-ordinate the planning of services.
38. Voluntary and community organisations will make information about their services and their public funding more widely available.
39. The agency will encourage and support the development and use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) to improve communication and access to information.

40. The agency will take steps to safeguard confidential information provided by voluntary and community organisations and will take no action that will jeopardise the personal safety of any of their members.

Partnership Working

The partners agree that :

41. A partnership approach is a key way to ensure the development and delivery of services across the District.
42. Partnership Working needs resourcing and the agency recognises that the use of resource to support partnerships as well as service delivery is essential.
43. Partnerships need to be designed specifically with recognition of the power and resources imbalance between partners and set up in such a way as to minimise these.

In response to the above :

44. The agency will support the inclusion of voluntary and community sector representation in all the District's key partnerships, both by working with other partners to achieve this end and by providing appropriate resources and support to the sector.
45. The agency will assess the impact of its policies and practices to ensure that they do not have unforeseen negative consequences for voluntary and community sector organisations.

Part Two: Key issues

Compact Development

The partners agree that :

46. The development and adoption of the General Compact is only the starting point for an effective relationship between public bodies and the voluntary and community sector.
47. In order to have value in regulating the relationship between the agency and the voluntary and community sector, the provisions of the General Compact must be respected by the partners.

In response to the above :

48. The agency undertakes to develop more detailed compacts within its area of service in partnership with other relevant agencies and the appropriate parts of the voluntary and community sector.
49. The agency will work with the voluntary and community sector to monitor the effectiveness of its compacts and develop appropriate procedures to deal with complaints about alleged breaches of compact provisions.
50. A simple and clear appeal procedure will be developed to cater for disputes in relation to the General Compact.

Upholding the Compact is an essential aspect of partnership working

Acknowledgements

Documents used in the preparation of the General Compact

- The Building Communities Strategy, 2004-9
- The Community Strategy, 2002-7
- The Bradford District Outline Community Cohesion Plan, April 2002
- The Compact Code of Good Practice, Home Office, 2003
- Making Partnerships Work for Patients, Carers and Service Users, Department of Health, 2003
- Compact Guidelines, Home Office, 2002
- The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery, HM Treasury, 2002
- Well Connected - a self assessment tool on community involvement for organisations, Building Communities Partnership 2002
- The Bradford Vision and Community Network Compact
- Examples of compacts from other Districts

Organisations represented on the Compact Steering Group

- The Building Communities Partnership
- Bradford CVS
- Keighley Voluntary Services
- City of Bradford MDC: Departments of Social Services, Community Development and Lifelong Learning, Policy and Executive Support
- NHS: Bradford South and West Primary Care Trust
- NHS: Public Health Partnership and Health Development

The General Compact has the support of the Community Network.

The Building Communities Partnership

The Building Communities Partnership is a broad based partnership with a membership of over 160 organisations, including over 140 voluntary and community sector organisations.

The main roles of the Building Communities Partnership are to:

- Oversee and drive the Building Communities Strategy.
- Act as a significant partnership with a leading role in district-wide strategies. promote and stimulate community development across the District

The Building Communities Executive include representatives from:

- Bradford Vision
- Bradford Council
- West Yorkshire Police
- The voluntary and community sector members of the Building Communities Forum
- The Community Network
- The Strategic Health Improvement Partnership

The majority of places on the Building Communities Executive are representatives from the voluntary and community sector, elected from the Building Communities Forum.

The Executive meets at least 8 times a year, is supported by active working groups and holds large events each year open to all Forum members and interested parties.


The Building Communities Partnership has a place on the board of Bradford Vision.

The Building Communities Strategy 2004-9

This strategy aims to strengthen the voluntary and community sector, achieve more effective consultation and participation and strengthen community activity across the district. It has the support and backing of a large number of groups, voluntary organisations and agencies.

The Building Communities Action Plan covers the period 2004-6 and involves a range of practical initiatives, one of which is to produce and promote the General Compact.

Every voluntary and community organisation has a responsibility to deliver effective services



For more information on the
General Compact and how to use it and
copies of the Building Communities Strategy
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