

3. Working with others

3.4 Compacts

What is a compact?

A compact is a protocol, or code of practice, that sets out the principles which statutory agencies (local authorities, the health service and the police) and their voluntary and community partners (like the county voluntary council, citizens advice bureau, community transport, and volunteer centre) will follow in their dealings with each other. Its purpose is to clarify, develop and embed good relations between the public and voluntary sectors in a specific geographical area.

So why have a local compact?

Generally there are already excellent relationships between the voluntary and community sector and the statutory sector. Local successes are usually based on building good relationships between individuals. But as people leave and new people join, organisations need to make sure this successful engagement continues. Having some principles written down and agreed is helpful for new people coming along.

Every local council in Wales has been given a responsibility to help promote the economic, social and environmental well being of their area by preparing a Community Strategy.

This means that each local council must articulate a vision for the long-term development of its city, town or district. But in order to construct this strategy, the law states that they must consult and work with local people.

Most councils have set up a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) which represents all the statutory and voluntary partners in the two districts. Most LSPs sign up to their respective area's compact, which covers funding, consultation, policy development, and other areas of good practice. It includes commitments for both the public sector partners and the voluntary and community partners. Although normally it is a countywide document, partners usually develop a local compact action plan so that it can be made to work best for their local area.

Typically what will a local compact action plan do?

1. Communication: raise awareness of the compact and develop a 'communications protocol' for all participants, so that we all talk to each other.

- 2. Sign-up:** encourage more voluntary and community sector organisations to sign up to the compact, so that all key players locally are part of the partnership family.
- 3. Representation:** rationalise partnerships and theme groups, so that voluntary and community organisations are able to send appropriate representatives.
- 4. Engagement:** utilise the potential of the voluntary and community sector to engage with the LSP, so that the partnership continues to reflect all its stakeholders.

What does it mean?

Signing up to the compact shows your organisation is committed to working positively with partners. If you are involved in a voluntary or community group, the local compact can help you. In most counties it has already led to joint working between the County voluntary council and local authorities on a wide range of issues.

If you are a statutory organisation, the local compact can help you too. It means that your relationship with the voluntary and community sector is recognised and celebrated, and you can access the 'knowledge network' which the sector offers.

For example, in most counties the county voluntary council has set up workshops with voluntary groups so that the respective local authorities can involve more people in developing their policies. In some areas, work shadowing between the voluntary sector and Primary Health Trusts is bringing new learning for all parties.

Further information

Voluntary Sector Compact
www.gov.wales

Compact between the Arts Council of Wales and the voluntary cultural sector in Wales.
www.voluntaryarts.org

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