

## **REFRESHED COMPACT IS PUBLISHED**

A new chapter in partnership working between government and the third sector opened today with the publication of a refreshed national Compact.

The Compact is the longstanding agreement that sets out shared commitments and guidelines for effective partnership working between government and the third sector in England. The original Compact was agreed in November 1998 and this new version has developed following extensive debate and consultation.

This Compact highlights the shared principles which Compact partners should follow when engaging in partnership working, and records all the Compact commitments. These commitments cover three key areas:

- Involvement in policy development
- Allocating resources
- Advancing equality

The Compact has been agreed by representatives of government and the third sector with Compact Voice and the Office of the Third Sector confirming the policy and the 'commitments' content. It was signed by Simon Blake, Chair of Compact Voice, on behalf of the third sector and the Rt. Hon Gordon Brown, the Prime Minister, on behalf of government. The Commission for the Compact's role has been to manage the process and to make sure that the commitments by government and the third sector are able to be fully implemented in practice.

The agreement is accompanied by a smaller publication entitled 'An introduction to the Compact'. This contains general information about the Compact, explaining who it applies to, how to implement the Compact and resolve differences.

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Simon Blake, Chair of Compact Voice, the independent body which represents the voluntary and community sector on taking forward the Compact, said:

“The refreshed Compact is clearer, more effective and had the support of the majority of consultation responses. With so many different perspectives across sectors, there have been inevitable challenges getting to launch stage and some important issues still need addressing through implementation. Effective use of the Compact by both the third and public sectors will be vital in the coming period and success will depend on both commitment and resource. Refreshed Compact, renewed commitment, real opportunity - let's grasp it.”

Angela Smith MP, Minister for the Third Sector, said:

“More than ever, a strong relationship based on trust between the third and public sector is crucial for supporting communities and delivering strong public services. The refreshed Compact builds on the lessons of the last 10 years and sets out a clear agenda for future partnership.”

Sir Bert Massie CBE, Commissioner for the Compact, said:

“It was never going to be easy to refresh and update a document that is 10 years old and is highly valued by both national and local government and by the third sector. However, the original principles are as important today as they ever were and remain an integral part of the refreshed Compact.

“The process of refreshing the Compact has been challenging - the process of reconciling often diverse points of view is never easy - but it demonstrates to me the importance of this agreement because it is the result of so much animated and positive discussion. This Compact places a greater emphasis on government and public bodies to explain and justify the decisions they make. It reaffirms the independence of third sector organisations and their right to campaign and comment on government policy.”

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To download a pdf of the Compact, please visit: [www.thecompact.org.uk](http://www.thecompact.org.uk)

Hard copies of the Compact may be ordered from the Commission for the Compact by telephoning **0121 237 5905**

### Notes for Editors

- The Compact was established in England in November 1998 and was inspired by the Deakin Commission report on the Future of the Voluntary Sector. It is an agreement that provides an overall framework for promoting effective partnership working between the Government and the third sector.
- In March 2009, a formal request from the Minister for the Third Sector was sent to Sir Bert Massie CBE, the Commissioner for the Commission asking the Commission to take *“what is best from the existing documents rather than start from scratch, and ensure that the new version takes into account recent developments in law, policy and practice.”* In addition, it asked that the new Compact *“takes account of the implications for Local Compacts, and the new local performance framework, Local Strategic Partnerships, Local Area Agreements and the Comprehensive Area Assessment.”*
- The refreshed Compact retains all the key points of the original but takes into account recent developments in law, policy and practice. It is divided into three key areas covering involvement in policy development, allocating resources and advancing equality. It consists of 95 commitments: 62 for government and 33 for the third sector.

Previously, the original agreement was accompanied by five Codes of Practice. However, these Codes combined both overall principle and detail on implementation with no clear differentiation, which was often confusing and hard to monitor. The new structure in the Compact is based on an overall set of commitments and this will be backed up by a series of implementation guidance for specific sectors or types of relationship. Therefore, the Compact will set the overall “rules of engagement” between the public sector and third sector while the implementation guidance will give them specific pointers on how to make these a reality in particular situations.

This agreement reaffirms the Government’s and the third sector’s commitments to 12-week consultation and three-year funding. In addition, it recognises that volunteering is a defining characteristic of the third sector and this cross-cutting theme is acknowledged throughout the shared principles and commitments. The shared principles encompass: respect, honesty, independence, diversity, equality, citizen empowerment and volunteering.

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- **Key changes reflected in the refreshed national Compact**

Involvement in policy development

This section focuses more on the wide ranging process of involving the third sector in policy development rather than just on consultation exercises. It also includes references to the Compact's consistency with other codes of practice and guidance in this area (for example, the Government Code of Practice on Consultation), as well as to the consulting organisations' obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. In addition, there are clearer commitments governing how people who represent and speak for the third sector should undertake this role.

Allocating resources

This section includes new commitments for government to:

- Extend the scope of the Compact to ensure that prime and sub-contractors and all other public and private bodies work within Compact principles when distributing money.
- Engage early with third sector organisations in the design of services and programmes.
- Allow enough time for consortia and partnership bids.
- Apply Compact commitments when distributing EU funding.
- Make payments within 10 days of invoices being received.
- Consider how service users can be involved in monitoring and reporting.

Advancing equality

This section has an equality rather than a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) focus, applying across all equality strands, and has been expanded to include:

- Equality impact assessment, which relates more closely to equality law.
- A renewed emphasis on support for equality infrastructure organisations.
- A clear commitment to "fair and equal access to funding".
- Clarification that "single group funding" can promote cohesion.

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