The Rotherham Compact

The Compact on relations between Public Services and Voluntary and Community Organisations in Rotherham

The Rotherham Compact

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1 About the Rotherham Compact

What is the Compact?
The Rotherham Compact is an agreement between public sector organisations (public services) who are members of the Rotherham Together Partnership (RTP) and voluntary and community organisations in Rotherham (referred to collectively as the voluntary and community sector: VCS). It sets out commitments on both sides to improve the way in which public organisations and the VCS work together for the benefit of communities and citizens.

What is meant by the 'voluntary and community sector'?
In this document the term 'voluntary and community sector' is used to describe voluntary and community organisations, charities, faith groups, social enterprises, cooperatives and mutuals, both large and small that are not for profit. This term, abbreviated to VCS, is used throughout the document to reflect the wide group of organisations potentially included in the Compact. However, it is understood that each term comes with values attached, and that no term is acceptable to all.

What the Compact can do for you
A genuine partnership allows each partner to achieve more. In Rotherham the public sector and the VCS use the Compact as a framework for partnership working because it recognises and supports the contribution they can each make to improving the lives of individuals and communities. Working together in this way also brings wider benefits, such as the creation of stronger working relationships across the public sector and the VCS, underpinned by mutual understanding, trust and respect.

The Rotherham Compact sets out how the public sector and the VCS can get the most out of partnership working by meeting their respective commitments.

Implementing the Rotherham Compact can help partners achieve:

- Equity in relationships
- Informed policy decisions, based on the expert knowledge of groups working directly with local people
- More appropriate funding that more closely reflects the needs of users
- Progress towards a more equal society, by identifying and tackling inequality and discrimination
- Value for money.

2 To whom does the Compact apply?

The public sector

The Government has signed up to the (national) Compact, making it applicable to all central government bodies in England.

However, the majority of relationships between VCS organisations and public bodies exist at a local level. The Rotherham Compact applies directly to:

- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
- Rotherham Clinical Commissioning Group
- The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust
- Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber (RDaSH) NHS Foundation Trust
- Rotherham North Notts College
- South Yorkshire Police
- South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue

Voluntary and community groups are involved in a wide range of partnerships with local statutory bodies. Research shows that the way in which local relationships are developed has a strong impact on communities.[1] In short, Compact principles are fundamental to robust and productive local partnerships.

[1] Office of the Third Sector, *National survey of third sector organisations: analytical report*, 2009.

The voluntary and community sector in Rotherham

Rotherham has an estimated 1382 independent voluntary and community organisations[2] in the borough. They come in all shapes and sizes and perform a huge range of different roles; collectively this gives the sector its unique strengths and qualities.

Of those 1,382 organisations, about 79% of them are micro, community-based groups with incomes of less than £10,000 a year which raise their own funds locally. In addition to these more informal groups, there are 430 registered charities in the borough, including Community Interest Companies, Companies Limited by Guarantee and Industrial and Provident Societies. Total income for the sector is estimated to be an annual £61 million. Collectively they employ almost 3,600 people. Volunteers give over 85,000 hours of their time each week; equating to a value of £88m per year.

The Compact's relevance extends beyond registered charities and more formal organisations to include organisations and groups active at a local or community level. These are usually small, unfunded or modestly funded, and largely dependent on volunteers. These make up the largest part of the sector.

Community groups organise around their own local issues, working together on areas of concern and learning through active participation. These groups also develop knowledge and experience which is locally specific, often developing and delivering services based on direct knowledge of community needs.

There are many organisations within the VCS which give a voice to the most marginalised groups and individuals in society. They identify and provide services that might otherwise be unavailable, and campaign in the interests of the community they represent.

[2] *Rotherham State of the Voluntary and Community Sector 2015 Research carried out by Sheffield Hallam University, Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research*

VCS organisations are an essential part of local assets as can be seen in the diagram below.
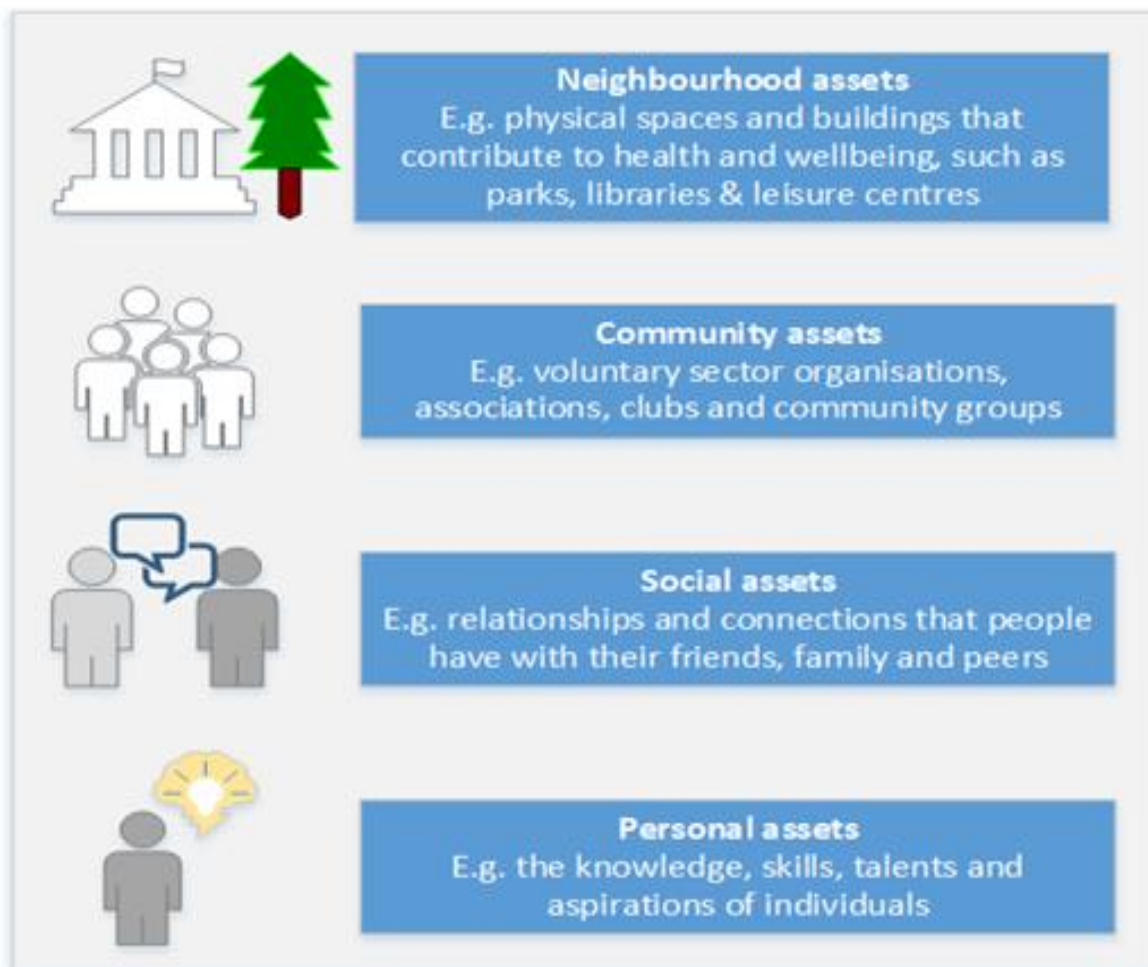
The role of volunteers
The contribution of volunteers is one of the special characteristics of the VCS. Volunteers commit their time and energy to benefit society and communities by providing services and activities in many different ways, from acting as trustees through to getting involved in practical tasks. The Compact ensures that the value of volunteers is recognised.

Volunteering is defined as an activity that involves spending unpaid time doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups (other than, or in addition to, close relatives). There are five principles that are fundamental to volunteering:

- **Choice**
  Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual.
- **Diversity**
  Volunteering should be open to all.
- **Mutual benefit**
  Both the volunteer and the organisation that the volunteer works with should benefit from the relationship.
- **Recognition**
  The contribution of volunteers should be recognised.
- **Resourced**
  Understanding there is a cost involved with recruiting, managing and retaining volunteers.

3. Implementing the Compact

To implement the Compact effectively in Rotherham, public sector and VCS organisations will each take steps to ensure that their personnel:

- Are aware of the Compact and its implications on their work
- Incorporate the principles of the Compact into their policies and procedures

4. Resolving differences

The Compact plays a crucial role in improving the partnership between the Public Sector and the local VCS. It is neither a set of rules nor a bureaucratic burden. Whilst the Compact is not a legally binding document; the public sector and the VCS are committed to complying with the Compact for the benefit of our local communities. When partners fail to comply with the Compact, those involved should explain why.

Disagreements over meeting the Compact commitments should be resolved, amicably and informally, between partners through open dialogue and negotiation before they escalate. The Compact principles form the basis of the relationship. Where issues are not covered in the commitments, compromise and discussion should be based on these principles.

When things go wrong (as they sometimes do) there should be an open admission of the fact and an honest discussion to resolve the situation. The Rotherham Compact is there to help build effective partnerships, and this includes dealing with difficult issues. It should be used as a tool for dispute resolution and working towards better partnerships. Where disputes do arise they should be monitored as any repeated disputes on similar issues may indicate the need for further dialogue. Appendix 1 of the Rotherham Compact sets out a clear process for dispute resolution.

5. Compact principles

While there are many differences between the public and voluntary and community sectors, – which must be acknowledged and respected – the sectors have much in common. In particular, the public sector and the voluntary and community sector share a common set of principles. These principles make it clear that the Compact is neither a set of rules nor a bureaucratic burden, but that it is a way of working that can make real improvements for people and communities. These principles have been created to help the public sector and the voluntary and community sector and work together effectively in partnership.
The Compact's commitments put these shared principles into practice.

The shared principles of the Compact are:

- **Respect:** public and VCS organisations are accountable in different ways, but both need to be open and honest. Effective partnerships are built on mutual understanding and an appreciation of the differences between partners of the Compact.
- **Honesty:** It is only through open communication that strong partnerships can be built and maintained. Full and frank discussions should be the basis for resolving difficulties.
- **Independence:** The independence of the VCS is recognised and supported. This includes the right for voluntary and community organisations to campaign, to comment on and to challenge policy such as a 'critical friend' (whatever funding or other relationship may exist) and to determine and manage their own affairs.
- **Diversity:** The public sector and the VCS value a thriving civil society, which allows different groups to have a voice and bring forward new ideas.
- **Equality:** Fairness for everyone, regardless of their background, is a fundamental goal, and public sector and the VCS will work together to achieve this.
- **Citizen empowerment:** By working together, the public sector and the VCS can help to improve conditions for communities and people, meeting their needs and reflecting their choices.
- **Volunteering:** The energy and commitment of people giving their time for the public good contributes to a vibrant society, and should be recognised and appreciated.

The public sector and the VCS are committed to these principles.

6. The Compact commitments

Involvement in policy development

Voluntary and community organisations often work directly with people and groups on the ground, giving them expertise in many areas, an understanding of the needs of the people they help[3] and an ability to find new and effective answers to problems. Involving and consulting the VCS can help public sector organisations develop policies that meet the needs of people and communities.

Involving the VCS in policy development should start at the earliest stages and carry on throughout. It includes a range of methods – from informal engagement to full-scale public consultation, co-design and delivery.

[3]*The people an organisation's aims are intended to benefit.*

Involvement in policy development
Commitments for the Public Sector

1 When to involve?
Involving the VCS in policy development at the earliest stage possible will allow local public sector organisations to get the most out of the process. This will lead to more effective policies and programmes being developed.

Public sector organisations undertake to:

1.1   Involve the VCS from the earliest stages of policy development, on all relevant issues likely to affect it. This can include enabling VCS organisations to start discussions within affected communities themselves.
1.2   Inform the sector of progress in developing policy.
1.3   Identify implications for the VCS when assessing the impact of new policies, legislation and guidance.

Involvement in policy development
Commitments for the Public Sector

2 Who to involve?
Spending time and money helping VCS organisations make their voices heard helps ensure that their knowledge is applied to policy development.

Public sector organisations undertake to:

2.1   Identify and address barriers, which may prevent VCS organisations from contributing to policy development.
2.2   Encourage responses from the full range of VCS organisations that are likely to have a view.
2.3   Support the development and sustainability of VCS infrastructure bodies which enable VCS organisations to help people and communities more effectively, by providing services such as advice, capacity building and representation.
2.4   Identify where there are costs to VCS organisations as a result of partnership work with public sector organisations and offer support on a clear and consistent basis. This can be especially important for VCS infrastructure bodies that are helping to organise or run consultations.

Involvement in policy development
Commitments for the Public Sector

3 How to involve?
Voluntary and community organisations can provide stronger and better-informed responses if the consultation methods used are suited to the purpose and audience, and if enough time is given for people to respond. Either formal or informal consultation methods may be appropriate depending on the circumstances and on the type and sizes of the organisation.

Public sector organisations undertake to:

3.1 Avoid compromising or undermining the independence of VCS organisations to deliver their mission (whatever financial or other relationship may exist between them).

3.2 Apply the principles of co-production with the VCS, where appropriate.

3.3 Publicise consultation exercises widely and make sure they are accessible to the people they are intended to reach.

3.4 Use appropriate consultation methods and explain the reasons for selecting them.

3.5 Explain which matters are open to change as a result of the consultation and which are not. Provide information to explain how respondents have influenced policy decisions, including where respondents' views have not been acted upon.

3.6 Allow enough time for VCS organisations to involve their service users, beneficiaries, members, volunteers and trustees in preparing responses.

3.7 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. It is recognised that the 12 week consultation may not always be possible or appropriate particularly where extensive engagement has occurred before or where activity is bound by statutory timescales which may be shorter.

3.8 Make VCS organisations aware of the consulting organisation's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and, where appropriate, protect the confidentiality of information that has been supplied by a VCS organisation for the consultation.

Involvement in policy development
Commitments for the VCS

4 Effective involvement
When the VCS is actively involved in policy development, it helps build trust in the sector, establishing valuable links between the public sector and the VCS and encouraging the public sector to commit actively to listening to VCS views.

Voluntary and community organisations undertake, where possible, to:

4.1 Involve service users, beneficiaries, members, volunteers and trustees when preparing responses to consultations.

4.2 Give feedback on what information is presented to the public sector and what the outcome is to everyone involved in responding to the consultation.

4.3 Be clear about whose views are being represented and what those views are. This includes explaining whether views have been gathered directly (and from what audience), or whether the response is based on the organisation's knowledge and experience of the issues.

4.4 Make sure all research and information that is presented to public sector organisations is accurate and credible. Explain where the information comes from and if there is conflicting evidence.

4.5 Be aware of the consulting organisation's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Where appropriate, respect the confidentiality of information that has been supplied by the public sector for the consultation.

4.6 Promote local public sector consultations across the VCS, where appropriate.

4.7 Accept that, some consultations may need to take place in a shorter time than 12 weeks.

Allocating resources

Voluntary and community organisations, including those that receive no public funding, are often in a good position to understand what people want and how their needs can be met. By working together to design programmes, the public sector and the VCS can deliver policies and programmes that are built around communities and individuals, meeting their needs and reflecting their choices.

Commitment to Co-production

An underlying principle of effective commissioning for outcomes should be the commitment to embed genuine co-production into all commissioning activity. People's energy, skills, interests, knowledge and life experiences should be harnessed to influence the support and services they receive. This includes active participation alongside commissioners of services in the shaping of, and design of new service delivery models. Co-production gives a collective sense of ownership and can connect residents to the statutory organisations and voluntary and community organisations with a common purpose.

The National Co-production Advisory Group[1] definition:

"Co-production is not just a word, it is not just a concept, it is a meeting of minds coming together to find shared solutions. In practice, co-production involves people who use services being consulted, included and working together from the start to the end of any project that affects them. When co-production works best, people who use services and carers are valued by organisations as equal partners, can share power and have influence over decisions made."

Supporting Economic Growth through Social Value

Service commissioning activity can support the strategic role of stakeholders in promoting economic growth. Work and skills should be embedded into all commissioning and contracting arrangements.

For example, service providers should be encouraged to enable local people to access to their employment opportunities or to provide apprenticeships. They should also provide pathways to employment for people supported within the health and social care system, where appropriate by embedding requirements in service specifications.

Much of this can be attained through effective application of the Social Value Act 2012 enshrined in a Social Value Charter. Social value asks the question:

"If £1 is spent on the delivery of services, can that same £1 be used to also produce a wider benefit to the community?"

Social value looks beyond the price of each individual contract and instead focuses on the collective benefit to a community. Social value can demonstrate social, economic or environmental benefit.

There are a number of ways of measuring non-financial benefits, including social return on investment. Together we will seek to explore the impact and value of different models to build a clearer picture of social benefit.

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[1] http://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/Browse/Co-production/National_Co-production_Advisory_Group/

Allocating resources
Commitments for the Public Sector

5 Planning
Voluntary and community organisations are often in a good position to understand people's needs and to provide new and better solutions to those needs. Involving VCS organisations in designing new programmes and services, and focusing on results, can help local public sector organisations provide the right resources, identify risks and solutions, and achieve better outcomes. When done appropriately, this does not affect competitive neutrality.

The public sector undertakes to:

5.1 Plan programmes and services focusing on outcomes, allowing for innovation and promoting prevention and early intervention wherever possible.

5.2 Work with VCS organisations to understand public service reform and support the sector in responding to changes.

5.3 Plan programmes and services in advance of the expected start date, based on consultation with the VCS.

5.4 Ensure that those VCS organisations that are likely to have a view on the programme or service are involved from the beginning.

6 Choosing finance and funding options
Choosing the most appropriate funding mechanism will help to secure the most appropriate organisation to deliver outcomes.

The public sector undertakes to:

6.1 Consider different ways of supporting organisations working with the public sector. These methods could include grants, procurement, loan finance, training, use of premises or other support. A clear explanation should be provided for the decision made.

6.2 Ensure that the size and scale of the funding arrangements reflect the project's objectives and attracts those organisations best placed to deliver the required outcomes.

6.3 Advocate that prime and sub-contractors, and all other public and private bodies distributing public money, work within the Compact by making it a requirement of funding arrangements.

7 Application and bidding processes
A well-managed application process that is proportionate to the desired objectives will encourage a varied range of organisations to apply and help to ensure that the most appropriate organisation is found for the role.

The public sector undertakes to:

7.1 Ensure that application documents are:
– Publicised appropriately
– Proportionate to the nature of the risk and the amount of funding being allocated
– Contain enough information to allow organisations to make informed decisions.

7.2 Allow enough time for organisations of all sizes to apply, as well as for groups of organisations such as consortia and partnerships of VCS organisations.

7.3 Be clear about how bids will be assessed.

7.4 Make decisions on the basis of value for money. This may include taking into account the wider community benefits / social value at the award stage or when identifying what is needed.

8 Understanding costs

Funding bodies have an interest in ensuring that organisations can manage and administer their activities effectively. They need to recognise the need for support to achieve this.

The public sector undertakes to:

8.1   Recognise that when VCS organisations apply for a grant they can include appropriate and relevant overheads, including the costs associated with training and volunteer involvement.

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

9 Making decisions

Funders should set criteria to ensure that they are able to select the provider that is best placed to achieve best value for money.

The public sector undertakes to:

9.1   Commit to multi-year funding where appropriate and where it adds value for money. If multi-year funding is not considered to be the best way of delivering the objective explain the reasons for the decision.

9.2   Make funding decisions and inform organisations at least three months in advance of the expected start date. Any departure from that time-scale should be justified and explained.

9.3   Provide constructive feedback to unsuccessful organisations.

10 Agreeing delivery terms

Agreeing terms in advance ensures that all parties understand their respective responsibilities and allows the organisations involved to concentrate on delivering the service.

The public sector undertakes to:

10.1   Discuss the risks to the project and agree delivery terms before a financial agreement is signed.

10.2   Allocate risks to the organisation(s) best equipped to manage them. Ensure that delivery terms and risks are proportionate to the nature and value of the opportunity.

10.3   Agree a process for managing performance and responding to changing circumstances before signing a financial agreement.

10.4   For grants, agree how underspend will be managed.

11 Making payments

Payment terms which suit the type of service and the organisation involved will increase the likelihood of the desired outcomes being achieved.

The public sector undertakes to:

11.1   Make payments in advance of expenditure where there is a clear need and where this represents value for money. This may be particularly relevant for grants.

11.2   Make payments within 10 working days of eligible and correctly submitted invoices being received by the appropriate department.

12 Monitoring and reporting

Appropriate monitoring reduces costs, time and resources for both sides, and means that time and effort can be focused on delivering results.

The public sector undertakes to:

12.1 Discuss and agree how outcomes will be monitored before a contract or funding agreement is signed.

12.2 Be clear about what information is being requested, why, and how it will be used.

12.3 Ensure that monitoring and reporting is proportionate to the amount of funding and the type of project and that it does not become a burden to the organisation. It should ask for evidence that is meaningful to the beneficiaries of organisations, as well as to funders.

12.4 Find out how service users can report on the service they have received.

12.5 Aim to standardise monitoring and reporting arrangements.

12.6 Ensure that monitoring is consistently applied to organisations in all sectors and not treat a contract as a grant.

12.7 If the project is encountering problems, discuss and agree a timetable of actions to improve performance before making a decision to end funding or a contract.

13 Concluding a financial relationship

It is important to plan ahead for the end of funding, in order to reduce potential negative consequences on the people involved, the stability of the VCS organisation and future partnerships.

The public sector undertakes to:

13.1 Assess the impact on beneficiaries, service users and volunteers before deciding to reduce or end funding.

13.2 Where there are restrictions on future resources, then potential implications should be discussed as early as possible with VCS organisations.

13.3 A minimum of three months' notice in writing should be given, with reasons for ending a funding relationship or other support.

13.4 Give organisations an opportunity to respond to the proposal to end funding and consider the response before making a final decision.

13.5 Review programmes and services with relevant VCS organisations to inform future practice.

Allocating resources
Commitments for the VCS

14 Contributing to planning

When VCS organisations contribute to the planning and design of programmes and services, it helps ensure that they reflect the needs of beneficiaries.

VCS organisations undertake to:

14.1 Involve users, beneficiaries, members, volunteers and trustees when designing or reviewing programmes and services.

14.2 Provide contributors with information on what they present to public sector organisations and what the outcomes are.

14.3 Be clear about who they are representing, in what capacity, and on what basis they are making that representation.

15 Making applications and bids

Organisations should ensure that they are eligible to apply for funding and should check that the objectives of the funding programme or service are in line with the organisation's objectives before applying.

VCS organisations undertake to:

15.1 Be clear why they are bidding or applying to deliver programmes or services, ensure eligibility for funding before applying and be explicit about how outcomes will be achieved.
15.2 Show that they understand how new funding will affect their organisation, relate to its mission, and contribute to its income mix.
15.3 Ensure they have a clear understanding of the relevant overheads and other costs to include when applying for resources.
15.4 Be clear which organisation is the financially 'accountable body' in partnership or consortia working arrangements.
15.5 Appreciate that community groups may be less confident and have less capacity than voluntary groups; and that there may be a mentoring and support role by voluntary groups to ensure effective consortia working.
15.6 Be open and transparent as to finances and make accounts available on request, where there is a financial or appropriate partnership relationship with the public sector organisation requesting the information.

16 Agreeing delivery terms

Delivery and payment terms should be appropriate to ensure that the project can run smoothly and focus on achieving its objectives.

VCS organisations undertake to:

16.1 Be clear about the risks associated with delivering programmes and services, and agree delivery terms before a contract or funding agreement is signed.
16.2 Have appropriate management arrangements in place and ensure that everyone involved understands and agrees to the terms of delivery.
16.3 Be clear about how payments will be made and, if appropriate, demonstrate why payment in advance is required.
16.4 Recognise that it is legitimate for funders to ask for public recognition of their funding.
16.5 Have appropriate systems in place to manage and account for finances and other management information as appropriate.

17 Monitoring and reporting

Managing funding effectively requires good monitoring. It promotes better working relationships with funders and ensures that performance is managed properly.

VCS organisations undertake to:

17.1 Negotiate monitoring and reporting requirements before a financial agreement is made.
17.2 Recognise that proportionate monitoring, both internally and externally, is an element of good management practice.
17.3 Ensure that reporting systems are in place to meet requirements and provide monitoring information on time and in the correct format.
17.4 Give early notice to funders of significant changes in management, or financial or other risks.
17.5 Be open and honest in reporting.

18 When a financial relationship ends
Contingency planning for the end of a contract or grant helps minimise the impact on beneficiaries. Planning in this way can help with long-term sustainability.

VCS organisations undertake to:

18.1 Plan for the end of funding to reduce any potential impact on beneficiaries and the organisation.
18.2 Make a positive contribution to reviews of programmes or services to inform future practice.

Advancing equality

Working together for equality

Equality for everyone, regardless of their background, is a core value shared by the public sector and the VCS. Over the last four decades, discrimination legislation and related policy have played an important role in helping to make Britain a more equal society. As both society itself and equality legislation continue to evolve, it is crucial that the public sector and the VCS work well together to achieve equality and fairness for everyone.

This section of the Compact recognises the vital role that the VCS plays in helping to create a more equal society and sets out commitments that will help both sectors work together to achieve their equality goals.

The law protects people from discrimination on the basis of a number of different characteristics - race, sex, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership and pregnancy & maternity. These are referred to in this document as 'protected characteristics'. The histories and issues facing people who share these characteristics are complex and often unique. This diversity should be understood and respected.

The role of the VCS in promoting equality

In order to work towards its equality objectives, the public sector needs the insight and knowledge of VCS organisations working at the front line with people who have 'protected characteristics'. These groups have a unique understanding of issues around access to services and involvement in civil society, which should be taken into account in policy making.

Whether or not VCS organisations focus their activities on people with a protected characteristic, they can provide a vital role in delivering programmes and services. They also promote community cohesion by giving people the support they need to play a full part in their community.

A good working relationship between the VCS and local public sector organisations will help to meet the needs of the people they serve or represent and will reduce inequality. The Rotherham Compact plays a key role in helping this relationship to work, not just through the commitments within this section, but by ensuring that organisations which promote equality are allocated sufficient resources and benefit from effective and relevant policy development, as set out in the other sections of the Compact.

Advancing equality
Commitments for the public sector

19 Promoting equality and diversity

Promoting equality and diversity is a shared goal of the public sector and the VCS.

The public sector undertakes to:

19.1 Work with the VCS towards eliminating unlawful discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity. Put strategies in place to help achieve these aims in line with existing public duties.

19.2 Where appropriate, work with VCS organisations that represent people with protected characteristics, to understand their specific needs and design appropriate services.

19.3 Ensure that all VCS organisations, including those that serve people with protected characteristics, have equal opportunities to access public sector funding programmes. This includes access to funds to build capacity, and to prepare and deliver projects.

19.4 Be clear about any actions on equality that VCS organisations will be expected to undertake if they are funded to deliver programmes.

19.5 If a strategic grant is withdrawn from an organisation serving people with a specific protected characteristic, assess the need to reallocate the grant to another organisation serving the same community.

19.6 Work with the VCS to identify and address any barriers that prevent volunteering by people with protected characteristics.

20 Representation and infrastructure

The public sector can take some simple steps to improve the effectiveness of engaging VCS organisations that give a voice to diverse groups.

The public sector undertakes to:

20.1 Acknowledge that organisations representing specific disadvantaged or under represented group(s) can help promote social and community cohesion.

20.2 Enable those organisations representing people with protected characteristics to be involved in policy development, consultation or other activities, by supporting them appropriately.

20.3 Recognise that groups which involve people with protected characteristics at community level may be small or informal, and engage with these groups in a way that suits their working methods.

Advancing equality
Commitments for the VCS

21 Promoting equality and diversity

An important way in which the VCS can promote equality effectively is by working with public sector organisations on equality issues.

VCS organisations undertake to:

21.1 Take practical action in partnership with the public sector to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and build community links.

21.2 Show committed leadership (especially at senior levels) to promote equality and, where necessary, put strategies in place to achieve it.

22 Representation and infrastructure

VCS organisations are ideally placed to represent the views of people with protected characteristics. However, it is important that these organisations carry out this role effectively and transparently, and that their activities serve all relevant groups.

VCS organisations undertake to:

22.1 Be clear on who is being represented and how their views have been gathered.

22.2 When selecting representatives from organisations and communities, be clear who they represent and with what legitimacy.

22.3 Where appropriate, support those organisations that can promote the interests of people with protected characteristics.

22.4 Identify groups that are in danger of being marginalised, excluded, or are currently under-represented in voluntary activity, and put in place measures to promote their involvement.

7 Contact details

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Rotherham
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APPENDIX 1

ROTHERHAM COMPACT - GUIDELINES FOR RESOLVING ISSUES

INTRODUCTION

The Rotherham Compact plays a crucial role in improving the partnership between the public sector and the local VCS. It is neither a set of rules nor a bureaucratic burden. Whilst the Compact is not a legally binding document, the public sector and the VCS are committed to complying where possible with the Compact for the benefit of our local communities.

If the Rotherham Compact is to meet its aim of being a 'living process' which continuously improves the relationship between the Partner organisations, like all relationships it is inevitable that occasionally disagreements will arise.

A number of partners engaged in the Rotherham Together Partnership (RTP) are signed up to the Compact and are committed to ensure its principles are adhered to in partnership working.

The purpose of these guidelines is to:
- explain how concerns can be raised where there is a belief that the Compact or its commitments are not being followed correctly;
- establish a process through which Compact members can resolve differences;
- encourage positive resolution as part of a Compact way of working;
- review lessons learnt and identify best practice for all partners involved.

It is important to make clear that this process is only for Compact related issues.

The individual organisation's issues process should be used where the issue is **not** Compact related, for example:
- an issue about services provided by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council;
- an issue about individual Councillors, officers or employees of a Compact member organisation.

RESOLUTION OF DISAGREEMENTS

The Compact and its commitments make it clear that members have the right to raise concerns, be listened to positively and receive a response. Issues can be raised by any one, at any time. Where an issue arises the following process should be followed.

Initial advice should be sought from Voluntary Action Rotherham on telephone number 01709 829821 to confirm that the issue is Compact related.

STAGE 1: Informal Resolution

Before embarking on a formal resolution process, both parties should initially try to resolve the situation informally between themselves without the need to involve a third party.

Formal Resolution

This stage can only been invoked if both parties to the disagreement confirm that all attempts to resolve the situation informally have been explored and they have been unable to reach a mutually acceptable agreement.

Stage 2: Facilitated resolution through mediation

"Mediation is a flexible process conducted confidentially in which a neutral person actively assists parties in working towards a negotiated agreement of a dispute or difference, with the parties in ultimate control of the decision in order to agree the terms of resolution."

The Executive Group overseeing the operation of the Compact on behalf of the Rotherham Together Partnership (RTP) is the RTP's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Group. The RTP Manager or the CEO Group will appoint an Officer trained in mediation to mediate. Where appropriate this will be an officer of Voluntary Action Rotherham.

If facilitated resolution proves unsuccessful or if either organisation does not want to go to 'mediation' the next stage will become applicable.

This process should be completed within 20 working days.

Stage 3: Independent investigation and review

i)   Independent investigation

The CEO Group, a delegated Group (by the CEO Group) or the RTP Manager will appoint an independent officer to investigate the issues and to collate all the data and prepare a report for the CEO or delegated Group. The report will contain a summary of:

- the issues;
- detail of the compact breach;
- the process followed to date;
- recommendations made to date.

This process should be completed within 20 working days.

ii)   Review by CEO Group (or delegated Group)

The CEO or their delegated Group (not including member organisation(s) involved in the dispute) will review the evidence presented in the investigators report and decide:
- if the issue is a breach of the Compact;
- if both parties have received a fair hearing;
- if the recommendations made to date have been reasonable.

It will then recommend a final resolution to both parties.

This process should be completed within 10 working days or at the next scheduled meeting of the CEO Group.

Disputes should be monitored, where possible, as any repeated disputes on similar issues may indicate the need for further dialogue.