

Croydon Compact

“The Compact is not just another document to be followed, but a way of working which enables those using it to better carry out their existing roles.”

Simon Blake, Chair of Compact Voice

Foreword

Cllr Mike Fisher
Chair of the Croydon Strategic Partnership

What is a Compact?

Compacts are partnership agreements between public bodies and the voluntary and community sector (VCS)¹ to improve their relationships and provide a framework within which the sectors can understand what to expect from each other, thereby enhancing their contribution to the local community.

The Croydon Compact

When its first Compact was launched in 2003, Croydon's became one of the first tripartite deals struck in the country, with the Primary Care Trust joining the Council and VCS as co-signatories. Having coterminous local and health authorities was a contributing factor, but the strength and tradition of partnership working in the borough provided the real foundations for this three-way sign-up to a Compact way of working. Between 2003 and 2010 Croydon made a strategic decision to integrate the Compact within its well established partnership structures and to align implementation with existing performance management systems such as the Local Area Agreement. This strategy paid off with Croydon becoming a consistent winner of Beacon awards between 2005 (*Getting Closer to Communities*) and 2010 (*Local Strategic Partnerships*).

Revitalising partnership working

The impact of the prolonged economic downturn and the reductions in statutory funding have tested relationships and the durability of Croydon's approach to partnership working. Reductions in some voluntary and community sector grant programmes have had an impact on some parts of the sector. In 2011, the August riots exposed underlying social problems demanding a joined-up cross sectoral response. Together, these events challenged partnership working in Croydon and invited the borough to discover new ways of bringing local agencies and communities together around shared goals.

The relaunch of Croydon's Compact forms part of a concerted effort to revitalise partnership working and to redefine its scope in the period of austerity. The remodelled Croydon Congress is pointing the way with its focus on the big issues, its emphasis on action and its flexible approach to bringing the appropriate people together. Without disturbing the bedrock of partnership working found in the thematic partnerships and their shadow community forums, the Congress is taking a dynamic approach to problem solving, as shown in its support for the post-riots investment programmes.

Compact Wins

Practical examples like this of how a Compact way of working is reasserting itself need capturing and presenting as 'Compact Wins'. Enough progress has been maintained on cross-sector involvement in policy development and on

¹ Note that for brevity, the term 'voluntary and community sector (VCS)' has been used throughout this document to refer to the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sectors.

accessing external funding to make the strong prospect of further Compact Wins realistic. To take some examples:

- The VCS has been involved in a wide range of service and strategy development, as reflected in the Partnership's *Stronger Communities Strategy*
- The Council's new *Commissioning Strategy* and its companion piece the *Social Value Toolkit for Commissioners* have acknowledged that "the third sector can play a powerful role in transforming the service landscape bringing innovation, value for money and inherent social benefits" and can "deliver better services and achieve better outcomes for the community, sometimes referred to as 'added value', than the statutory sector can achieve on its own".
- Solid partnership working was also at the heart of Croydon's successful Big Lottery bid that resulted in the new Family Power project – a good example of how the Compact way of working can lever in additional external funds. Funded through the Improving Futures programme at £899,991 for 3 years, Croydon Family Power combines evidence-based approaches to building child-empathy, enhancing parental capabilities and strengthening family resilience, with innovative community development work utilising the natural assets in our communities.

We could go on to give further examples – in relation to community involvement and volunteering - of how much there is to build on in Croydon when it comes to a Compact way of working. This relaunch will provide the Croydon Strategic Partnership with a fresh opportunity to re-establish Croydon's partnership credentials and to innovate new models of good practice.

Our shared Compact principles

The Croydon Strategic Partnership's aim is to ensure that quality services are provided to the people of Croydon. We recognise that there is added value in working in partnership towards common aims and objectives. The following principles underpin these aims:

- Community involvement and voluntary action are essential to the quality of life in Croydon. It is recognised that the VCS makes a valuable contribution to the economic, environmental and social development of Croydon
- The differences and diversity between the public sector and the VCS should be respected and valued
- In the development and delivery of services, the public sector and the VCS have distinct but complementary roles
- Each sector has its own set of responsibilities and constraints
- The independence of the VCS should be respected
- To maximise the effectiveness of the VCS, investment in its infrastructure is essential

- The relationship between the sectors should be open and respectful and demonstrate trust
- Each sector should strive for excellence and equality of access
- When working together contributions from each sector should be given equal consideration and respect
- Organisations in each sector have the right to contribute to and, if necessary, challenge matters that affect them

Compact outcomes

We believe that an effective partnership between the public sector and VCS organisations – the ‘Compact way of working’ – will help achieve the following outcomes:

1. A strong, diverse and independent VCS
2. An equal and fair society
3. Effective and transparent design and development of policies
4. Responsive and high-quality programmes and services
5. Clear arrangements for managing changes to programmes and services

In order to achieve these outcomes there are a number of undertakings required from both the VCS and the public sector.

Outcome 1: A strong, diverse and independent VCS

Undertakings for the public sector

- 1.1 Respect the independence of the VCS.
- 1.2 Recognise that volunteering adds value to public services and brings about positive benefits to local people and service users. Encourage volunteering to be undertaken by a high proportion of people across diverse backgrounds.
- 1.3 Ensure greater transparency by making data and information more accessible, helping the voluntary sector to challenge existing provision of services, access new markets and hold the public agencies to account.
- 1.4 Consider a range of ways to support voluntary sector organisations, such as enabling greater access to public sector premises and resources.
- 1.5 Ensure that where organisations are engaging volunteers requiring Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, the organisation covers the charge, not the volunteers, and work together to streamline processes for CRB checks to encourage volunteering.

Undertakings for the VCS

- 1.6 When campaigning or advocating, ensure that robust evidence is provided, including information about the source and range of people and communities represented.
- 1.7 Ensure independence is upheld, focusing on the cause represented, regardless of any relationship they have with the public sector, financial or otherwise.
- 1.8 Recognise that volunteering adds value to public services and brings about positive benefits to local people and service users. Encourage volunteering to be undertaken by a high proportion of people across diverse backgrounds.
- 1.9 Ensure that where organisations are engaging volunteers requiring Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks, the organisation covers the charge, not the volunteers, and work together to streamline processes for CRB checks to encourage volunteering.
- 1.10 Identify and nurture leadership within communities by emphasising its assets and positive strengths, as a base for building a network of caring people with the interests of their communities at heart

Outcome 2: An equal and fair society

Undertakings for the public sector

- 2.1 Work with voluntary sector organisations 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.
- 2.2 Acknowledge that organisations representing specific disadvantaged or under-represented groups can help promote social and community cohesion and should have equal access to funding.
- 2.3 Take practical action to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality and to ensure a voice for under-represented and disadvantaged groups.

Undertakings for the VCS

- 2.4 Show how the value of the work can help the public sector deliver its duties on promoting equality and tackling discrimination.
- 2.5 Take practical action to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and build stronger communities.

Outcome 3: Effective and transparent design and development of policies, programmes and public services

Undertakings for the public sector

- 3.1 Recognise that the VCS makes a valuable contribution to the economic, environmental and social development of Croydon.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 Work with the voluntary sector from the earliest possible stage to design policies, programmes and services. Ensure those likely to have a view are involved from the start and remove barriers that may prevent organisations contributing.
- 3.4 Give early notice of forthcoming consultations, where possible, allowing enough time for VCS organisations 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.
- 3.5 Consider providing feedback to explain how respondents have influenced the design and development of policies, programmes and public services, including where respondents' views have not been acted upon.
- 3.6 Assess the implications for the sector of new policies and guidance, aiming to reduce the bureaucratic burden, particularly on small organisations.

Undertakings for the VCS

- 3.7 Promote and respond to public sector consultations where appropriate.
- 3.8 Seek the views of service users, clients, beneficiaries, members, volunteers and trustees when making representation to the public sector. Be clear on who is being represented, in what capacity, and on what basis that representation is being made.
- 3.9 When putting forward ideas, focus on evidence-based solutions, with clear proposals for positive outcomes.

Outcome 4: Responsive and high-quality programmes and services

Undertakings for the public sector

- 4.1 Ensure that VCS organisations have a greater role and more opportunities in delivering public services by opening up new markets in accordance with wider public service reform measures and reforming the commissioning environment in existing markets.
- 4.2 Consider a wide range of ways to fund or resource VCS organisations, including grants, contracts, loan finance, the use of premises and so on. Work to remove barriers that may prevent VCS organisations accessing government funding, thereby enabling smaller organisations to become involved in delivering services where they are best placed to achieve the desired outcomes.
- 4.3 Ensure transparency by providing a clear rationale for all funding decisions.
- 4.4 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.
- 4.5 Ensure well managed and transparent application and tendering processes, which are proportionate to the desired objectives and outcomes of the programmes. Ensure that notification of funding decisions and that transfer of funds to successful organisations are within agreed timescales.
- 4.6 Agree with VCS organisations how outcomes 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.
- 4.7 Ensure equal treatment across sectors, including reporting and monitoring arrangements, when tendering for contracts.
- 4.8 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.
- 4.9 Ensure delivery terms and risks are proportionate to the nature and value of the service.
- 4.10 Ensure that the widest possible range of organisations can be involved in the provision of services through appropriate funding and financing models.
- 4.11 Ensure all bodies distributing funds on behalf of the public sector adhere to the commitments in this Compact.
- 4.12 Encourage feedback from a wide range of sources on the effectiveness of the partnership between the public sector and VCS organisations and how successful it has been in delivering their objectives.

- 4.13 Seek out opportunities to explore joint funding bids with the VCS to maximise investment into the borough.

Undertakings for the VCS

- 4.14 Ensure eligibility for funding before applying and be explicit about how outcomes will be achieved.
- 4.15 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.
- 4.16 Be open and transparent about reporting, recognising that monitoring, whether internal or external, is an aspect of good management practice.
- 4.17 Demonstrate the social, environmental or economic value of the programmes and services provided, where appropriate.
- 4.18 Help facilitate feedback from users and communities to the public sector to help improve delivery of programmes and services.
- 4.19 Recognise that the public sector can legitimately expect VCS organisations to give public recognition of its funding.
- 4.20 Seek out opportunities to explore joint funding bids with the VCS to maximise investment into the borough.
- 4.21 Taking responsibility for remodelling services to achieve preventative solutions to underlying social problems

Outcome 5: Clear arrangements for managing changes to programmes and services

Undertakings for the public sector

- 5.1 If a programme or service being delivered by a VCS organisation is encountering problems, agree with the organisation a timetable of actions to improve performance before making a decision to end a financial relationship.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 Where there are restrictions or changes to future resources, discuss with VCS organisations 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.
- 5.4 Give a minimum of three months notice in writing when changing or ending a funding relationships or other support, apart from in exceptional circumstances, and provide a clear rationale for why the decisions has been taken.

Undertakings for the VCS

- 5.5 Plan for the end of funding to reduce any potential negative impact on beneficiaries and the organisation.
- 5.6 Contribute positively to reviews of programmes and funding practice.
- 5.7 Advise funders on the social, environmental or economic impact(s) of funding changes, particularly to minimise their effects on people in vulnerable situations
- 5.8 Advise funders if voluntary sector organisations are facing funding difficulties.
- 5.9 Contribute to the achievement of efficiency savings by maximising resources, cutting costs and collaborating more effectively

How do we implement the Compact?

The Compact is relaunched by the Croydon Strategic Partnership to provide a standard against which the actions of signatory organisations can be judged. Implementation of the Croydon Compact is monitored by the Chief Executives Group which brings together key agencies from the Croydon Strategic Partnership to ensure the people of Croydon have a sense of belonging and opportunity by fostering good relations, improving community empowerment and community cohesion, providing an environment for a thriving third sector, tackling disadvantage and promoting equality.

This monitoring will include highlighting good practice demonstrating the 'Compact way of working' – Compact Wins – and also problem-solving, providing opportunities for partners to flag up examples of where Compact principles have not been applied.