

THE ACTIVE COMMUNITY UNIT
(Home Office - Voluntary and Community Research Section)

THE COMPACT
- the Challenge of Implementation

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THE COMPACT – the Challenge of Implementation

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THE COMPACT – THE CHALLENGE OF IMPLEMENTATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Section 1: BACKGROUND (*pages 9-12*)

This section:

- Sets out the aims of the Compact: “the creation of a new approach to partnership between the statutory and voluntary and community sectors – an approach which is of mutual advantage based on shared values and mutual respect”
 - Summarises the work to date of the Compact Working Group (CWG) including the production of five *Codes of Good Practice* and other guidance
 - Describes the purpose of the Annual Meetings between government ministers and representatives of the voluntary and community sectors
 - Explains the background, scope and methodology of this study
- and emphasises the author’s view that the key test of the successful implementation of the Compact will be the creation at all levels of partnerships incorporating the Compact principles and recommended practice – whether or not these partnerships are called Compacts is of minor significance.

Section 2: COMPACT IMPLEMENTATION: THE TIMING – AND URGENCY (*pages 13-17*)

This section acknowledges that much of the framework of the Compact is in place but that its implementation is patchy at all levels; and identifies several factors – some positive, some less so – which combine to make the present time a critical stage for the implementation of the Compact principles and codes:

- The gap between Compact enthusiasts and sceptics
 - A loss of momentum – “yesterday’s initiative”
 - The recommendations of the *Cross Cutting Review of the Role of the Voluntary Sector in Service Delivery*
 - New leadership of the ACU
- and argues that an injection of short-term resources (new and/or temporarily reallocated) – at several levels in/by the statutory sector as well within/by the voluntary and community sectors – is needed urgently or the prospects for the successful implementation of the Compact principles and codes of good practice are likely to be fatally undermined.

Section 3: THE COMPACT – PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION (*pages 18-22*)

This section summarises the formidable amount of work carried out over the last three years by the CWG and its partners in government and the positive impact and mutual benefits derived from the partnerships that have been developed.

A number of concerns are then set out about the speed and quality of Compact implementation and various issues are identified which could inhibit effective implementation.

Central Government:

- The status, authority and capacity of Voluntary Sector Liaison Officers within government departments
- Breaches of Compact principles – undermining the credibility of the government’s commitment to the Compact
- The low status of grant-making and grant-management functions
- The scope of the Compact – and the need for clarification, especially about the lottery fund distributors.

Local/Regional:

- ‘Off the shelf’ implementation – local authority prescribed and lacking adequate investment in the development process
- Patchy health service involvement
- Lack of engagement with or commitment to Compact principles or codes by ACU funded Regional Forums and Networks
- A decline in support from the LGA and other statutory ‘umbrella’ organisations.

Voluntary and Community Sectors:

- A variable quality of commitment by national organisations
- A lack of collaboration within and between the sectors
- Insufficient involvement of trustees and committee members.

Section 4: IMPLEMENTING THE COMPACT – THE CORE OF THE STRATEGY *(pages 23-24)*

As most statutory – voluntary/community sector interactions take place locally, the key test of the Compact principles having become fully established will be that they are a ‘normal’ part of the local infrastructure and day to day activity – and are recognised by all sectors as being to their mutual advantage. Support for local development has, therefore, to be the central objective of all Compact related activity over the next three years – but full adherence to the Compact principles and action at central and regional levels of government and within the leading national voluntary and community ‘infrastructure’ organisations and networks will be a vital ingredient of successful local implementation.

This section sets out six core elements of a possible implementation strategy and six requirements that would have to be met if the strategy is to be successful.

The aims of the strategy:

1. Effective and inclusive Compacts (or partnership structures that incorporate explicitly the Compact principles) within all localities and regions.
2. Compact principles and codes to be standard features of Best Value and Beacon Authority type quality initiatives.
3. The adoption of Compact principles and codes and the appointment of “Departmental Champions” to be standard features of the spending settlement agreements between government departments and the Treasury.

4. Leading organisations within the voluntary and community sectors working in collaboration at the heart of the Compact implementation strategy.
5. Representative/coordinating organisations within the local and regional statutory sectors fully engaged in Compact implementation.
6. Trustees and committee members within the voluntary and community sectors and councillors and board members in the statutory sector fully engaged in Compact implementation.

The requirements:

1. Institutional commitment at the centre of all sectors – driving the strategy forward and working with and within an enlarged CWG to implement the principles and codes at all levels.
2. An effective working partnership between leaders and leading organisations at a national level within the voluntary and community sectors.
3. A recognition within central government of the central role of the ACU in Compact implementation – and a single minded focus on Compact implementation across all aspects of the ACU's work.
4. Adequate resources (financial and skills) at all levels and in all sectors dedicated to promoting and implementing Compact principles and the codes.
5. A standardised format for setting outcomes and measuring qualitative achievements within each component part of Compact implementation.
6. A mediation system which is seen to be independent and the use of which does not threaten continued funding of the complainant.

There is also a case for an additional Funding Code of Good Practice on contracts.

Section 5: IMPLEMENTING THE COMPACT *(pages 25-32)*

This section set out a series of inter-linked recommendations directed at each of the key players in Compact implementation:

1. Ministers *(page 25)*

Continued joint ministerial support for the Compact plus the addition of a ministerial commitment of cabinet status.

2. The Cross Cutting Review of the Role of the Voluntary Sector in Service Delivery – recommendations to central government departments *(page 25)*

Endorsement of the anticipated recommendations that:

- 'Departmental Champions' should be appointed
- a strategic plan for full Compact implementation should be drawn up by each department
- effective Compact implementation to be a condition of each department's allocation of resources in the Spending Review.

3. The Home Office *(page 25)*

The Home Office needs to demonstrate visible and enthusiastic engagement with the implementation of the Compact – as the 'home' of the ACU, for the Home

Office to do less would have a disproportionately negative impact on the prospects of a successful implementation of the Compact principles. The growing involvement of the Home Office in regional government structures provides an additional opportunity for it to demonstrate positive and practical support for Compact implementation.

4. The Active Community Unit (ACU) (pages 26-29)

Existing ACU practice

A 'positive contribution to Compact implementation' criteria should be applied to all programmes and initiatives undertaken by the Unit.

ACU strategy

3-5 year plans need to be agreed and published which will then underpin the Unit's work on Compact implementation with the rest of the Home Office, with other Departments and with the national and other organisations it funds.

Coordination across government

The ACU should set up inter-departmental groups of the 'Departmental Champions' and the Voluntary Sector Liaison Officers to consider recommendations from the CWG, share and publicise good practice, identify and meet information gaps, lead cross-departmental initiatives and ensure that Compact principles and the codes are integrated within other departmental partnership, service development and regeneration initiatives.

ACU grants

- implementation of the Compact in their own work to become a standard grant conditions of ACU national and regional grants
- additional weighting to be given to organisations able to demonstrate a sustained practical contribution to local Compact implementation
- introduce long term grants to part-fund 'Compact Champions' at a senior level within national organisations
- introduce project grants for promotional or pilot projects which aim to enhance or extend local compacts.

ACU support for the Compact Working Group (CWG)

The ACU should immediately respond to the CWG outline funding application and:

- affirm its continuing support for the current definition of the role and informally constituted status of the CWG
- indicate that it accepts that the Secretariat needs more capacity to assist the further promotion of local compacts and the Codes of Good Practice
- ask the CWG to develop their outline funding application in more depth – in effect to produce a 3 year business plan with a budget that includes full overheads and support costs; ask the CWG to include in their response plans to extend and strengthen further the membership of the Group and sub-groups and for the future management and governance of an enlarged Secretariat.

The ACU should also:

- agree a tight timetable with the CWG for processing this funding application – the further strengthening of the Secretariat is an urgent necessity if the pace of Compact implementation is to be maintained
- endorse the proposal that the Secretariat should continue to be based within NCVO – but emphasise the need for the CWG Secretariat to be clearly and independently ‘branded’ – and not perceived as a department of NCVO.

Local government and the health service

The ACU should join with the CWG and other departments in seeking the active and sustained involvement of the Local Government Association and the NHS Confederation (and any other relevant ‘umbrella’ organisations within the statutory sector) in Compact implementation.

External Social Audit

The ACU could set an example to other departmental funders by commissioning an external ‘social audit’ of the implementation in its own work and grant programmes of the Compact and the Codes of Good Practice.

5. National Voluntary and Community Sector organisations funded by ACU *(pages 29-30)*

National organisations funded by the ACU should:

- agree to an amendment of their current terms of grant to include an obligation to promote and support implementation of Compact principles and codes within their own parts of the sector;
- and should be encouraged by the ACU to:
- nominate a senior staff member to become a Compact ‘ambassador’
 - co-brand promotional and dissemination material with the CWG
 - publish annual plans for the promotion of the Compact principles and codes within their own membership and part of the sectors
 - participate in annual joint meetings – involving Chairs as well as Chief Executives – with CWG and the ACU;
- and should expect the ACU to include in the criteria used when grant renewal applications are being considered an assessment of how positive a contribution to Compact implementation an organisation has made.

6. The Compact Working Group (CWG) *(pages 30-32)*

Status and membership

The CWG’s unconstituted status seems likely to continue to be an advantage during the Compact implementation phase. The CWG should move forward quickly with its plans to enlarge and broaden its membership and to create the National Forum on Local Compacts.

Funding proposal

The detailed bid and three year business plan should be prepared as a matter of urgency – with graded priorities and qualitative as well as quantitative measures of success; the CWG should confirm that the role of the Secretariat is to provide administrative and coordinating support to the CWG and its sub-groups and associated networks and forums: an enabler and resource to others – not a development agency directly engaged in detailed and sustained work on individual local compacts.

Detailed justifications for each new proposed staff post should be included in the plan along with proposals for a continuing series of detailed ‘warts and all’ case studies of effective implementation of the Compact principles and codes.

Other recommendations to the CWG

That it consider:

- preparing bids for project grants from the ACU which aim to enhance or extend local compacts
- branding its work clearly to emphasise its independence
- introducing periodic meetings with the Generalist and BME Voluntary and Community Regional Networks
- holding at least 33% of its meetings outside London, each combined with open events designed to reach regional and local players within the statutory, voluntary and community sectors
- introducing additional information flows within the CWG and sub-groups between meetings.

Section 1: BACKGROUND

Introduction

The *Compact on Relations between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in England* was published in 1998. It aims to create a new approach to partnership between the statutory and voluntary and community sectors – an approach which is of mutual advantage “based on shared values and mutual respect”¹. As the Prime Minister stated in his contribution to the launch of the Compact, it is intended to provide “a framework which will help guide our relationship at every level”.

In 1999, with the financial assistance of the Active Community Unit (ACU) within the Home Office, a Secretariat of one full time post was established, based within NCVO, to support the work of the Compact Working group (CWG) – the group is informally constituted; together with its specialist sub-groups, it brings together individuals and organisations from across the voluntary and community sectors. It has been charged with the task of promoting the Compact and taking it forward into practice.

Led by the CWG, a series of Codes of Good Practice has been published covering specific aspects of the implementation of the principles and the partnership framework set out in the Compact:

- Consultation and Policy Appraisal
- Funding
- Volunteering
- Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) voluntary and community organisations.

A further Code of Good Practice, on Community Groups, is due for publication soon. The CWG has also been involved in the preparation of other guidance material on implementation, such as *Local Compact Guidelines – getting local relationships right together*, produced jointly with the Local Government Association.

The CWG is also working currently with the ACU on the development of a mediation scheme – to implement the section of the Compact on *Resolution of Disagreements*.

Within Government, the ACU has responsibility for leading the implementation of the Compact, working with Voluntary Sector Liaison Officers in each department.

The Compact represents a voluntary commitment on both sides. The benefits of its successful implementation to the voluntary and community sectors include:

- clarity in what can be expected of government
- greater transparency and consistency in all aspects of the relationship with government

¹ From Joint Foreword to *Compact – Getting it Right Together* by the Home Secretary and Chair of the English Voluntary and Community Sector’s Working Group on Government Relations November 1998

- a commitment by government to consult on policy development and procedural changes
- a recognition of – and commitment to protect – the sectors’ independence.

For government, the benefits include:

- an agreed set of standards for guiding the way officials across government work with the sectors
- a standardised consultation process for engaging in policy debate with the voluntary and community sectors
- a funding code which officials who manage grant programmes can utilise, confident that they are working to agreed standards and principles
- codes of good practice relating specifically to the BME sectors and to volunteers (and, soon, to community groups) which set out clear ways that officials and statutory organisations can engage with them.

The Annual Meeting

One key commitment made in the original Compact was that “there will be an annual meeting between the Government and representatives of the voluntary and community sector to review the operation of the Compact and its development. The report of that meeting will be published and placed in the Library of the Houses of parliament”.

The second of these meetings took place in October 2001. In their joint foreword to the report of the meeting, the Minister for Voluntary and Community Matters and the Chair of the Compact Working Group wrote: “The challenge we face is that of translating the Compact’s principles into a truly workable guide, which will advance successful, sustainable and innovative ways of working”. They also emphasised the “paramount importance” of securing “Local Authority involvement in implementing Local Compacts” and of “extending the scope and impact of the Compact beyond and below central and local government to reach individual communities”.

An eighteen point Compact implementation action plan was agreed at the second annual meeting. One of these was for the ACU to “make resources available to the voluntary and community sector for Compact and Code implementation”. The CWG subsequently prepared outline proposals for the additional resources it judged are needed to enable it to play an effective part in the further implementation of the Compact.

Another of the action points agreed at the second annual meeting led to the commissioning of this study – that a project should be undertaken “to consult and provide consistency across implementation of Compact Codes of Practice”.

The Scope of the Study

The title of the Scope of Work/Specification of this study is *Consultancy on the Evaluation of the Implementation Activities Arising from the Compact between Government*

and the Voluntary and Community Sector 2002/3. The methodology set out in the brief was that I should:

- “review Compact Working Group, Volunteering, Black and Minority Ethnic implementation proposals with a view to identifying duplication, gaps and opportunities for collaboration across proposals
- “seek the views of the ACU, CWG and sub-groups (LGA) about effective implementation mechanisms, particularly in relation to centralisation and devolution within the sector
- “investigate links with other ACU activities, particularly in relation to the role of regional networks and strategic organisations
- “take account of the emerging findings of the CCR2002, specifically the Cross-Cutting Review of the Voluntary Sector in Service Delivery and the PIU Review of the Legal and Regulatory Framework for Charities and the Voluntary Sector”.

The reference to the Cross Cutting Review is particularly significant. Though not completed by the time this report had to be prepared, it is known that the Review will include a section on the Compact and a number of proposals that are likely to have considerable impact on its implementation within government.

Methodology – and acknowledgements

In carrying out this study, I was able to draw on what is a substantial amount of documentation about the Compact – including not only material generated by the CWG and the ACU but also a number of research studies such as those produced jointly by researchers at the Universities of Hull and Brighton². I also met or had telephone consultations with most members of the CWG, the Compact Development Officer (CWG Secretariat), several officials within ACU, the Voluntary Sector Liaison Officers in the Department for Education and Skills and the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions³, a small number of people working in various parts of the voluntary and community sectors and two researchers who have studied aspects of the development of the Compact. These meetings and consultations were immensely valuable to my understanding; I am very grateful for all the help that I have been given – though also conscious that it has not proved possible within the time available to consult all who have relevant experience and who could have made useful suggestions.

The structure of this report

This study has been carried out for and is addressed to people within government and in the voluntary and community sectors who are already familiar with much of the material that I have considered. I have not, therefore, set out to provide a comprehensive account of the development to date of the Compact and its

² for example *Contract or trust? The role of Compacts in Local Governance* and the related Findings: *Black and minority ethnic organisations' experience of local compacts* Joseph Rowntree Foundation January 2002

³ it was not possible to interview any official within the Department of Health – this was especially unfortunate as that Department was the one most frequently criticised in my other consultations for non-observance of the Compact principles or codes.

implementation nationally and locally. Rather, I have identified why I believe that this is a critical time for the implementation of the Compact principles and codes – a time when concerted and adequately resourced action must be taken or the opportunity will be lost to establish those principles at the heart of the partnership between government at all levels and the voluntary and community sectors. I have then listed what seem to me to be a number of key achievements and critical concerns about the Compact; I then set out the core components of the strategy that I think is needed in order for the Compact principles and codes to be implemented successfully, prior to making a series of recommendations directed at each of the main ‘players’ in the Compact implementation process.

A concluding observation

I end this introduction with a personal observation: the Compact is a remarkable construct, the product of determined and sustained joint effort by a diverse group of individuals who have worked hard to consult widely and to engage with many others throughout the initial development stage.

My impression is that they have exceeded their own expectations of what could be achieved – let alone the predictions of many onlookers and commentators. It is also my view, however, that the Compact principles are far from fully embedded institutionally, nationally, regionally or locally. I am also concerned that some regard the quantity of Local Compacts as a key measure of success – I believe that it is the quality and mutuality of local partnership, incorporating the Compact principles and recommended practice, that are the key outcomes, not a structure with a specific name.

If the aspirations of those who have brought the Compact into being are to be realised, substantial and coordinated action is urgently required at all levels and in all sectors. If further and sustainable progress is not made quickly, momentum will be lost and confidence that the rhetoric of partnership can work in practice will ebb away.

David Carrington
April 2002

Section 2: COMPACT IMPLEMENTATION: THE TIMING – AND URGENCY: A COMMENT

Several factors – some positive, some less so – combine to make the present time a critical stage for the implementation of the Compact principles and codes. The ACU and CWG will have to move quickly and to a common strategy if the opportunities presented by the positive factors are to be seized (and the impact of the negative factors is to be minimised). Almost everyone to whom I spoke while preparing this report referred to ‘the architecture’ of the Compact being in place but that implementation was proving slow and patchy. It is my impression that some key parts of the ‘architecture’ are brittle and not yet sufficiently robust; and that, with some notable exceptions, the scale of implementation masks a generally disappointing quality of outcome.

Among the key factors are:

The gap between Compact enthusiasts and sceptics

The absence of a ‘middle way’ among the prevailing attitudes towards the Compact surprised me. Almost all of the people whom I consulted were in one of two groups:

- Spirited and enthusiastic advocates of the Compact as a key and positive driver towards not only a more ordered partnership at all levels between the statutory, voluntary and community sectors but also towards a substantial improvement in the quality of the outcomes of the work of each; without exception, these people had been directly involved in aspects of Compact implementation.
- Sceptics who consider the Compact to be invisible in their work or as ‘no more than background music’, lacking sufficient authority to overcome traditional ‘silo’ cultures (in all sectors) either nationally or locally. All the sceptics (and many of the enthusiasts) reported examples of recent practice by a government department or agency that clearly breached Compact principles and the Funding Code in particular. Some sceptics were more actively hostile, arguing that the implementation to date of the Compact confirmed their fears that significant parts of the voluntary or community sectors were being harmfully excluded.

For most people in both groups, the evidence upon which their views were based was largely anecdotal or drawn from a very small number of cases. This is inevitable, perhaps, given the pace of implementation to date, but it is an indication of how important it will be that successful implementation and the dissemination of practical lessons learnt receive a high profile if the advocates of the Compact principles are to realise their aspirations.

Divisions or acrimony about Compact implementation within the leadership of the voluntary and community sectors and the national ‘infra structure’ organisations – especially those that are funded in part by the ACU – are likely to be disproportionately counter-productive; and especially so for the volunteers and

local organisations trying to persuade local statutory organisations to take the Compact principles seriously. The CWG will need to demonstrate that it can bring together a diversity of views within the voluntary and community sectors and drive forward a shared strategy.

A loss of momentum – “yesterday’s initiative”

Incorporating the Compact principles takes time – it is not an easy prescription that can be applied; a thorough ‘hearts and minds’ exercise has to be carried out if lasting partnerships are to be built and if work practice and operational cultures within all sectors are to be changed. It is easy for people working in all sectors to default back to previous practice if put under pressure – or to put Compact development on one side when faced with another of the plethora of new initiatives and demands that have impacted on the work of the voluntary and community sectors and their statutory partners locally, regionally and nationally in recent years. The priorities and current policy imperatives of individual central government departments can lead to the work on Compact implementation being marginalized. Funding pressures – and the necessity to follow up new funding opportunities – can easily divert the leadership of voluntary and community organisations away from longer term planning and the hard grind of building the infrastructure of organisational partnerships.

The inclusion in the assessment criteria⁴ used in the accreditation of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) of –

“Levels of participation of the community and voluntary sectors in the LSP within the context of the Compact; and

“Evidence of continuing and effective Local Compact development, explicitly linked to the Local Strategic Partnership”

– was an indication that new statutory initiatives can be influenced to incorporate Compact principles and codes; however, there is widespread concern about how rigorously the accreditation has been applied in the first round of accreditation – if a token or limited and local authority dominated structure is accepted as meeting the criteria, it is argued, the prospects for building a partnership that meets Compact principles will have been diluted.

Given the pace of change and of new initiatives, it is not surprising that the Compact is described by some as ‘yesterday’s news’ – but this makes it all the more important that, if the Compact principles are to remain at the centre of government strategy, adequate resources have now to be devoted to implementation.

Loss of other income streams and grant programmes

This study was carried out during the last month of the financial year. Every member of the CWG who works within the voluntary or community sectors was able to identify organisations, services or groups whose survival into the new financial year was threatened by a cut in funding from a statutory organisation or

⁴ *Accreditation Guidance for Local Strategic Partnerships, Section 3: The Criteria for Accreditation* Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (DTLR) October 2001

the end of a grant programme. Local Development Agencies – regarded by most as key players in the development of effective local Compacts – appeared to be especially at risk. It also seems that, in many cases, the information provided to the threatened organisations or services by the statutory funder or the consultations about the possibility of a loss of funding seldom came near the standards set out in the Compact and the relevant Codes of Good Practice.

It is understandably difficult for voluntary and community organisations facing such problems to have great faith in the commitments made to the Compact principles by Government. This makes it all the more important not only for an effective mediation system to be put in place quickly so that poor practice can be challenged but for the CWG and ACU to work closely with any government departments that are the ultimate source of threatened funding to ensure that Compact principles are applied to the consultative and decision making processes – and to publicise that this is being done.

The Cross Cutting Review of the Role of the Voluntary Sector in Service Delivery

It seems likely that the impact of the recommendations of the Cross Cutting Review on the implementation of the Compact principles and codes within government could be considerable. It is anticipated that the Review will conclude that, if the Compact is to be implemented effectively, further action is needed to ‘mainstream’ the Compact principles and codes – and that recommendations will be made for action to address:

- a lack of awareness of the Compact across government
- a poor quality of implementation
- the limited scope of the application of the Compact.

If the recommendations of the Review are as is anticipated, the CWG and ACU need to be prepared quickly and purposefully to grasp the opportunities that will result for raising the status of the Compact across all departments⁵.

Leadership of the ACU

How well the ACU itself implements the Compact within its own work is of particular importance to the successful implementation of the principles and codes – a lack of commitment or consistency within the specialist unit that has been charged with leading the work is easily seized upon by sceptical or reluctant officials elsewhere in government and by staff and trustees in the voluntary and community sectors.

The appointment of a new Director of the ACU who is not only well known within the voluntary and community sectors but has a strong professional commitment to the importance of creating mutually valued partnerships between

⁵ In preparing this report, I was also asked to take account of the emerging findings of the Performance and Innovation Unit’s current review *Modernising The Legal and Regulatory Framework for Charities and the Voluntary Sector*. It has not proved possible to do this because of the timing of the PIU’s work.

statutory and the voluntary/community sectors at all levels provides a new stimulus to the further implementation of the Compact principles and codes. A clear and determined signal from the ACU of the centrality of the Compact to its current strategy and work programme will have an especially resonant impact at present.

Resources

The paucity of resources devoted to the implementation nationally, regionally and locally of the Compact principles and codes of practice – whether of new funds or the redirection within established organisations of the time and priorities of existing staff – was a recurring theme of my consultations:

- Within government departments the time allocated to Compact activity within the workloads of the VSLO was clearly insufficient for them to be fully effective.
- The capacity within the ACU that is dedicated to Compact implementation is clearly overstretched.
- The CWG Secretariat resources may have been sufficient three years ago but can no longer keep up with the growth in Compact related work and promotional activity.
- As the authors of *Contract or Trust? The role of compacts in local governance*⁶ comment:

“Many of those charged with compact negotiations already have a full workload. Local intermediary bodies in many areas are already struggling to survive. Local Compacts are expected to encompass all the issues that affect the relationship between the local public sector and the voluntary and community sector – and it is not surprising if the process of development becomes complicated and difficult.

“The study’s interim findings suggest that, if the key to compacts is to have an impact beyond a few key players, time is required to allow those at the margins to become involved, and dedicated resources (human and financial) are needed to ensure that key negotiators on both sides can take account of views across their sector, give an account to all who need to be informed and be held to account by all potential participants.”

The implementation phase of the Compact principles and codes, then, needs an injection of short-term resources (new and/or temporarily reallocated) – at several levels and in the statutory sector as well within the voluntary and community sectors. If the resources are unavailable, inadequate or delayed the foundations laid over the last three years will not lead to the scale or quality of partnership envisaged by the government and the leadership of the voluntary and community sectors when the Compact was first drawn up.

The ACU has a particularly significant role, I believe, to demonstrate that it can adjust other priorities in order to focus new and reallocated resources on this

⁶ Joseph Rowntree Foundation January 2002

phase of Compact implementation. The leading national voluntary organisations could also signal the importance they attach to the further development in practice of the Compact principles and codes by reviewing their own plans and budgets to ascertain what additional or reallocated resources can be focused on this work over the next couple of years.

Section 3: THE COMPACT – PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION

Achievements

In a paper prepared on behalf of the Compact Working Group (CWG) for the third annual meeting between Ministers and representatives of the voluntary and community sectors (to be held in April 2002), the scale of activity undertaken by the Secretariat since 1999 is vividly illustrated:

- 4 codes and local guidelines completed and agreed with Government
- Community Groups Code and Partnership Guidance submitted to Government for negotiation and joint signing off
- 230,000 items of Compact materials distributed or downloaded from website
- 2,000+ organisations involved in national post-Compact development through consultation or membership of sub-groups
- 3,000+ organisations reached through presentations
- 70 meetings and events organised, presentations delivered to 50 Local Compact events and 25 international/UK exchange visits made
- Support and advice to Local Compact developers including many of the 63 areas now on the National Register.

This ‘snapshot’ of achievement, however, does not do full justice to the impact of the work of the CWG and of Compact advocates in government departments, local government and other statutory organisations and the voluntary and community sectors – or to the challenges that they now face.

On the one hand, joint ministerial leadership, supported by the endeavours of the CWG and its sub-groups and the often formidable efforts of many officials in the ACU and other government departments and the LGA, have produced a set of principles together with detailed *Codes of Good Practice* that provide a practical template that is relevant to partnership development within individual departments and organisations, national and regional networks and local areas. The effort put in by the CWG to extensive consultation throughout this process has been especially valued. As the *Cross Cutting Review of the Role of the Voluntary Sector in Service Delivery* is expected to comment:

“There is a remarkable consensus of opinion...that the Compact is ‘a good thing’. The concept of the Compact as a transparent voluntary agreement on how Government and the sector should work together is universally supported (barring a few outlying voices) and well understood. There has been no support for radical changes to the Compact, its abolition or the view that its provisions should have a new statutory basis.”

Notable among the achievements is the consensus built around the work of the BME sub group and the production of the *Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Organisations: Code of Practice* – the foundation for genuine partnerships at all levels with parts of the voluntary and community sectors that are often marginalised.

A number of the partnerships that have been developed locally are of exceptional quality. The Improvement and Development Agency (IdeA), for example, is quoted in the Report of the Second Annual Meeting as asserting: “The Compact enshrines effective partnership principles. Rapid spread of Local Compacts reflecting these is seen to be providing the foundations for mutually beneficial future partnerships.”

The recently published research study of the development of Local Compacts⁷ reports that “the importance of the compact to key players has been demonstrated by the perseverance shown in a number of sites, and respondents in many of the sites felt that the compact – both in the process of development and the finished product – had had a positive impact...the profile of the voluntary and community sectors had increased significantly...was being taken more seriously.” The study also found that successful compact development led to the statutory agencies (including local authority councillors) becoming much better informed about the voluntary and community sectors and more willing to involve them in consultations and service reviews; moreover, the study found that the voluntary and community sectors in the Compact areas were becoming more confident and working better together.

Concerns

On the other hand, there does seem to be a brittleness about the depth of the implementation of the Compact principles in many areas – and, in many of the established partnerships, a vulnerable dependence on the efforts and commitment of a small number of individuals, for many of whom their work on Compact development is an addition to an already full time work load and not a formally recognised part of their job description. Despite some remarkable successes – and while acknowledging that partnership development must be done slowly if it is to put down firm and sustainable roots – Compact implementation is far from comprehensively embedded institutionally at any level or within any sector.

Three years after the publication of the Compact:

- one third of the respondents to a CWG survey from within the voluntary and community sectors report that the Government departments with which they deal have little or no awareness of the Compact – and three quarters of those organisations relate to the ‘big four’ departments: the DoH, DTLR, DfES and the Home Office
- progress at regional level (a key outcome in the CWG action plan of May 2000) has been minimal – though the publication of the Compact for London, currently out for consultation, may stimulate new action in other regions
- at local level just 10% have a Compact with an implementation plan and review procedures; and 23% have made no progress at all towards Compact development; and in many areas where Compact development is taking place, the engagement of small community organisations or self help groups does not seem to have been a priority for the statutory agencies or the formal, service

⁷ *Contract or trust? The role of Compacts in Local Governance* Joseph Rowntree Foundation January 2002

providing voluntary sector; in other areas, the scope of the Compact within the statutory sector is only partial

- “few BME voluntary and community organisations were aware of local compact development; only one” (of 20 established organisations) “had heard of the national BME code of practice and...they did not feel engaged as full partners in local compact development work.”⁸

The impressive level of active participation in the work of the CWG of a number of individuals with direct current experience of work within local voluntary and community organisations is dependent on the good will of their employing organisations, few of which have the financial strength or organisational health to be able to afford for long the absence of their sole or leading worker. Moreover, the success of the CWG and its Secretariat has been significantly buttressed by overheads support provided by NCVO, well beyond the grant provided by the ACU.

Implementation issues and obstacles

During the consultations upon which this report is based a number of issues were highlighted that will have to be addressed if the further implementation of the Compact principles and codes is to move forward quickly and sustainably; these include:

Central Government

1. Departmental Voluntary Sector Liaison Officers (VSLO): the status within their departments and the time that they are able to commit to Compact development makes it very difficult for VSLOs to influence departmental practice beyond that of their immediate colleagues. Without a high profile lead from the top of each department no VSLO can hope to challenge the ‘silo’ culture which is still so firmly rooted within some departments. There is also some duplication of effort, for example VSLOs in different departments investigating the same funding ‘rules’ in order to advise colleagues with grant-making functions.

2. Breaches of Compact principles: these were so commonly reported to me that they were viewed with a shrug of the shoulders as inevitable. The *Progress Report on the Development of the Compact and Codes of Good Practice* in the report of the Second Annual Meeting to Review the Compact states that “Departments report that they have received very few complaints about the operation of the Compact from the voluntary and community sector. As a result there is no real desire to see the development of a Compact Mediation Service.” The inference that there was no cause for complaints about consultative procedures or funding decisions because complaints were not expressed as being about the operation of the Compact was greeted with incredulity in almost every discussion I have had with people working in the voluntary and community sectors – breaches of Compact principles and codes may not be described as

⁸ *Black and minority ethnic organisations’ experience of local compacts* Joseph Rowntree Foundation Findings January 2002

such but they seem to be the daily experience of many organisations. The Department of Health seems to attract particular criticism – “why should we expect anything of Compact when the department cannot put its own house in order” was typical of the comments made to me by Chief Executives of organisations involved in grant negotiations with the department.

- 3. *Status of grant-making and grant-management functions:*** officials within government departments do not seem to perceive these functions as a career enhancing addition to their professional CVs. Within government, little attention seems to have been given to identifying a specific skill set and related training for these tasks. These leads to the tasks being perceived as of low value and/or to inconsistent standards of practice.
- 4. *Scope of the Compact:*** there continues to be uncertainty within central government about which agencies and NDPBs are covered by the Compact. The position of the lottery funds distributors which are major providers of grants to the voluntary and community sectors warrants clarification.

Local/regional

- 1. *‘Off the Shelf’ implementation:*** despite growing evidence of the vital importance of the development phase of Compact implementation being one of extensive consultation and debate focussed on securing ‘hearts and minds’ local ownership of the resulting partnership, there remains a tendency for local authorities to adopt a prescribing approach to the structure, scope and timetable for setting up a Local Compact. Investment in development time and resources is often inadequate. Not only can this lead to substantial sections of the voluntary and community sectors being excluded from the process but the mutuality that is so central to the Compact principles is undermined. A failure to realise the full potential of the Compact is an inevitable consequence of such a formulaic approach.
- 2. *Health Service involvement:*** the last year has seen further and radical reorganisation of local and regional health services. This has not made it easy for those working on the development of Local Compacts to engage with health services. Despite this, NHS organisations and the new PCTs are playing a central role in a number of Local Compacts – more encouragement of this is required, however, if these critically important⁹ participants in any local partnership are to play a fully effective part.
- 3. *Regional Forums and Networks:*** even when they are funded by the ACU, these seem to have a variable record of promoting Compact principles or codes or of active participation in consultations – they are not, however, resourced so to do and no commitment to Compact development has been required of them as a condition of ACU grant aid.

⁹ the source of 20% of the income of the voluntary and community sectors (excluding Housing Associations/Registered Social Landlords): *Cross Cutting Review working papers*

- 4. *Statutory infrastructure support:*** the Local Government Association (LGA) – and other statutory ‘umbrella’ organisations such as The NHS Confederation – have not been as prominent in the promotion and celebration of Local Compact as might have been expected. The LGA was a partner to the publication in July 2000 of *Local Compact Guidelines: getting local relationships right together*, but this high level of engagement does not seem to have been sustained – there are, for example, no links to the Compact *Codes of Practice* on the LGA web site and the LGA’s current ‘Six Commitments Initiative’ (*Local Solutions Better Services*) makes no reference to Local Compacts, notwithstanding that part of the context of the initiative is the importance of promoting community cohesion. (The CWG has high hopes, however that the LGA will, along with others, participate actively in the proposed Local Compact Developers Forum. The CWG will need to give a similar level of attention to involving other statutory associations and networks in this – or parallel – initiatives).

Voluntary and Community Sectors

- 1. *Commitment to Compact implementation:*** some national voluntary and community organisations and networks (even those involved directly in the CWG and/or funded by the ACU) seem to have done little actively to promote the implementation of the Compact principles and codes throughout their work or of seeking to consult or reach out beyond their own membership or immediate network. This must be frustrating to advocates of the Compact (within government and the voluntary and community sectors) not least when some national organisations tend to be quick to criticise government inaction on – or lack of observance of – Compact principles and codes but to be less self-critical on opportunities they have themselves missed to help implement the Compact within their own work and networks.
- 2. *Lack of collaboration:*** to some extent and in some settings, nationally and locally, the process of Compact development seems to have provided another stage for old antagonisms, suspicions and negative expectations to surface within and between the voluntary and community sectors – and to consume an inordinate amount of time and energy that might otherwise have been committed to the development of positive partnerships. Though it is important that any partnership is based on a recognition and respect for different views and aspirations, this lack of collaboration between some key national organisations and networks must have been a source of despair to colleagues nationally – and to people working to build local partnerships – and has certainly slowed the pace of progress.
- 3. *An executive interest:*** the engagement of trustees of voluntary organisations and of committee members of community organisations and self-help groups seems to be a low priority for many of the employees of such organisations who are participating in Compact implementation. Their absence from the

development process must be a threat to the lasting sustainability of whatever partnerships emerge.

Section 4: IMPLEMENTING THE COMPACT – THE CORE OF THE STRATEGY

The key test of the Compact principles having become fully established will be that they are a ‘normal’ part of the local infrastructure and that the practice commended in the Codes is integrated within local day to day activity throughout the country – and is recognised by the statutory, voluntary and community sectors as being to their mutual advantage. Most statutory – voluntary/community sector interactions take place locally. Support for local development has, therefore, to be the central objective of all Compact related activity over the next three years – but full adherence to the Compact principles and action at central and regional levels of government and within the leading national voluntary and community ‘infrastructure’ organisations and networks will be a vital ingredient of successful local implementation.

Combining the proposals in the Compact Working Group (CWG)’s paper on *Taking the Compact Project Forward*, the conclusions of relevant research studies and the anticipated recommendations of the *Cross Cutting Review of the Role of the Voluntary Sector in Service Delivery* it seems possible to set out six core elements which should be at the heart of the implementation strategies over the next three years of both the CWG and, as the leading player within government, the Active Community Unit (ACU).

The CWG and ACU joint strategy

The joint strategy should aim to:

1. Introduce effective and inclusive Compacts (or partnership structures that incorporate explicitly the Compact principles) within all localities and regions.
2. Make the implementation of the Compact principles and codes standard features of Best Value and Beacon Authority type quality initiatives.
3. Make the implementation of the Compact principles and codes and the nomination of a “Departmental Champion” standard features of the spending settlement agreements between central government departments and the Treasury.
4. Ensure that the organisations which lead each part of voluntary and community sectors take on an obligation to work in collaboration at the heart of the Compact implementation strategy.
5. Engage representative/coordinating organisations within the local and regional statutory sectors (for example the Local Government Association and the NHS Confederation) fully in the active development of the Compact implementation strategy.
6. Go beyond the engagement of executive staff – targeting Trustees and committee members within the voluntary and community sectors and councillors and board members within the local and regional statutory sectors.

Requirements

For these strategic aims to be achieved, at least six requirements will have to be met (some are already being addressed). There will need to be:

1. Institutional commitment at the centre of all sectors – driving the strategy forward and working with and within an enlarged CWG to implement the principles and codes at all levels.
2. An effective working partnership between leaders and leading organisations at a national level within the voluntary and community sectors – the unevenness of some of the existing relationships has been a significant inhibitor to progress in some key areas to date.
3. A recognition within central government of the central role of the ACU in the implementation in practice of the Compact principles and codes across all departments – and a single minded focus on Compact implementation across all aspects of the ACU's work.
4. Adequate resources (financial and skills) at all levels and in all sectors dedicated to promoting and implementing Compact principles and codes – together with vigorous celebration of successful implementation and high quality practice.
5. A standardised format for setting outcomes and measuring qualitative achievements within each component part of Compact implementation and of the work of the CWG; and for periodic joint reviews of the implementation of each code.
6. A mediation system which is seen to be independent and the use of which does not threaten continued funding of the complainant.

There is also a case for an additional Funding Code of Good Practice on contracts which builds on the outcome of the *Cross Cutting Review of the Role of the Voluntary Sector in Service Delivery*.

Section 5: IMPLEMENTING THE COMPACT – PROPOSALS FOR THE NEXT STAGE

For the strategy outlined in the previous section to be realised, action is needed across government and also within all parts of the voluntary and community sectors. The proposals set out in this section reflect this and are inter-linked.

1. Ministerial status

The level of ministerial engagement in the development and promotion of the Compact and in the annual review meetings has been significant and a positive demonstration of the government's commitment to the status of the Compact. It will continue to be important that Ministers from all the key departments work alongside each other on the Compact. To ensure that the high profile that was given to the Compact at its launch by the Prime Minister (and that is anticipated will be central to the conclusions of the *Cross Cutting Review of the Role of the Voluntary Sector in Service Delivery*) is maintained, existing arrangements for political support could benefit by the addition of a ministerial commitment of cabinet status.

2. The Cross Cutting Review of the Role of the Voluntary Sector in Service Delivery – recommendations to central government departments

The final recommendations of the Review were not known when this report was prepared. It is anticipated, however, that the Review will conclude that the Compact has the potential to be a powerful support to the development of high quality partnerships at all levels between government and the voluntary and community sectors. It is also likely that the review will record concern about progress on the implementation of the Compact principles and will include among its recommendations that:

- a senior level official is nominated within each department to take personal responsibility for ensuring that there is full adherence to the Compact throughout his or her department – the “Departmental Champion”
- having set a baseline of current adherence (or lack of it) to the Compact, each department, led by its “Champion”, should prepare a strategic plan designed to achieve full awareness and implementation across the department
- effective implementation should be a condition of each department's allocation of resources in the Spending Review.

Such a forceful reinforcement of the Compact as ‘mainstream government business’ would go a long way to addressing the scepticism (within and out with government) about the status of the Compact as ‘central to the Government's mission’. If the anticipated recommendations of the Review are implemented a new energy and determination will inform Compact implementation within government. No additional proposals are needed here – other than in relation to the Home Office and, within it, the Active Community Unit.

3. The Home Office

As the department at the centre of the government's relations with the voluntary and community sectors, it is self-evident that the extent and quality of the

implementation of the Compact within the practice of the Home Office will be seen as setting a standard to others. The Home Office has already led the way in some parts of its work (for example within the Prisons Service and with the Refugee Council). The principles and standards of the Compact are not yet, however, embedded in Home Office practice or the public presentation of its role.¹⁰ In its support of the ACU, the Home Office will need to give prominent attention and profile to the way it promotes and takes forward the Compact – for example in the ways it responds to the recommendations of the Cross Cutting Review. The growing involvement of the Home Office in regional government structures provides an additional opportunity to generate positive and practical support for Compact implementation – for example by inviting the ACU to coordinate a Compact implementation forum of Home Office regionally based staff.

The Home Office needs to demonstrate visible and enthusiastic engagement with the implementation of the Compact – as the ‘home’ of the ACU, for the Home Office to do less would have a disproportionately negative impact on the prospects of a successful implementation of the Compact principles.

4. The Active Community Unit (ACU)

The ACU has the key leadership role for the implementation in practice of the Compact across all levels of government. Despite the best efforts of some very committed officials, the Compact does not seem to have been at the top of the agenda for all parts of the Unit’s work – and this inconsistency (even ambivalence) about the strategic importance of the Compact communicates all too easily to other departments and to the voluntary and community sectors.

Existing ACU practice

The Compact does not seem, for example, to be a central or ever-present theme of all ACU activities or grant decisions – this must undermine the prospects for successful implementation. At the very least, a clear ‘positive contribution to Compact implementation’ criteria should be applied to all programmes and initiatives undertaken by the Unit. Existing policy statements and grant programmes should be reviewed to ascertain how far each contributes to Compact implementation – and revisions made to strengthen and emphasise their direct relevance to that outcome.

ACU strategy

The ACU strategy for the Compact needs to have long term aspirations as well as an immediate action plan. 3-5 year plans need to be agreed and published which will then underpin the Unit’s work with the rest of the Home Office and with other Departments and with the national and other organisations that it supports.

¹⁰ The status given to the Compact in the Home Office web-site is one indication of this: at present details of the Compact are to be found as a sub-section of the ACU which itself is classified as Volunteering, one of several issues within Community Policy (alongside Family, Civic Renewal, Coroners and Animal Procedures); the section on the Compact has no explanation, an incomplete list of Compact documents and Codes and no links to other organisations or Compact related development: an opportunity missed.

The consultations and process adopted to prepare the strategy should provide an exemplar model of Compact implementation – and be well publicised as such. The strategy’s anticipated milestones and outcomes should also be publicly declared and their achievement reported on.

Coordination across government

The ACU should be the coordinating heart of two inter-departmental groups (one made up of the ‘Departmental Champions’ and one bringing together Voluntary Sector Liaison Officers). These groups should:

- share details of good practice and publicise the lessons learnt across government
- identify and meet information gaps – for example information for officials in all departments running grant programmes about what ‘treasury rules’ actually permit – or other issues which are of common concern
- take the lead in developing and promoting new cross-departmental initiatives – for example on the development of accredited training for officials who are engaged in grant-making and grant management functions (this would also be an opportunity for joint work with lottery fund distributors and other funders of the voluntary and community sectors)
- help ensure that Compact principles and the codes are integrated within other departmental partnership, service development and regeneration initiatives – for example an initiative with other departments to coordinate the provision and terms of funding of central government grant programmes that are intended to support and strengthen Local Development Agency activity and organisations (an initiative that could usefully follow the example set by the work done by the Regional Coordination Unit on making regeneration funding more accessible to community groups)
- consider recommendations and progress reports from the CWG and related sub-groups and forums.

ACU grants

The implementation of the Compact principles would be further encouraged if the ACU made changes to some aspects of their grant-making practice; for example the ACU could:

- make the implementation of the Compact in their own work one of the standard grant conditions of ACU strategic grants to national and regional organisations and networks – again with publicly declared milestones and outcomes
- when allocating funds between the organisations it supports, give additional weighting to those which are able to demonstrate that they can make a sustained practical contribution to the development of local compacts
- make available a limited number of long term (at least 5 years) grants to part-fund senior posts within national organisations who would be ‘Compact Champions’ within their parts of the voluntary or community sectors
- allocate a proportion (a publicly stated minimum) of its project grants to support specific and clearly targeted promotional or pilot projects which aim

to enhance or extend local compacts or to regional initiatives that could do so indirectly.

The ACU could also commission the preparation of a local compact 'why bother and how to' guide aimed in its language and content explicitly at community group members and trustees of local and self-help groups.

ACU support for the Compact Working Group (CWG)

The CWG's request for increased resources from the ACU awaits a response. The CWG acknowledge that the current proposal on *'Taking the Compact Project Forward'* is in outline form and that "it is intended to develop this outline into a 3-year project bid to the ACU to secure funding for supporting the Sector's side of the work on the delivery phase of the Compact".

The ACU has already agreed to maintain its existing level of support for the current Secretariat while the longer term bid is developed and considered.

In responding to the CWG outline request, the ACU should immediately:

- affirm its continuing support for the current definition of the role¹¹ and informally constituted status of the CWG and indicate that it accepts that the central Secretariat will have to be enlarged if it is to have sufficient capacity to provide specialised assistance to the further promotion of local compacts and the BME, Community and Volunteering Codes of Good Practice
- ask the CWG to develop their outline funding application in more depth – in effect to produce a 3 year business plan with firmed up, prioritised and justified objectives, milestones and planned outcomes and a budget that includes full overheads and CWG and sub-group support costs; the CWG should also be asked to include details of how it proposes to extend and strengthen further the membership of the Group and sub-groups; detailed plans should also be required for the future management and governance of the enlarged Secretariat. The ACU should agree a tight timetable for this task with the CWG so that a decision on the funding application can be made without too much further delay – the further strengthening of the Secretariat is an urgent necessity if the pace of Compact implementation is to be maintained
- encourage the CWG to concentrate its work on strengthening and extending the Secretariat, networking and promotional functions – and not setting out to become directly engaged in detailed or sustained development work on individual local compacts
- endorse the proposal that the Secretariat should continue to be based within one organisation that is itself represented on the CWG¹²; within the 'host'

¹¹ "to take forward *the Compact on Improving Relations between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in England* for mutual advantage, focusing especially on the present functions: continuing development; implementation (including dissemination); monitoring (especially on the *Codes of Good Practice*); and the Annual Meeting process (representation following consultation)".

¹² though a variety of views on this issue emerged within and out with the CWG during late 2001/early 2002, it does now seem to be generally agreed that the work of the CWG and its associated networks would be best served by the central secretariat being located in one place – and that NCVO would be an appropriate base for the next phase of the Secretariat's work.

organisation, the CWG Secretariat needs to be clearly and independently 'branded' – the credibility and effectiveness of the CWG's future work would not be enhanced if its Secretariat is perceived or presented as a department of the organisation within the offices of which it is located.

Local government and the health service

The ACU should join with the CWG and other departments in seeking the active and sustained involvement of the Local Government Association and the NHS Confederation (and any other relevant 'umbrella' organisations within the statutory sector) in Compact implementation – urging the appointment of 'Compact Champions' within each. It is especially important that the new PCTs are involved in the local implementation of Compact principles early in their development.

External Social Audit

The ACU could set an example to other departmental funders by commissioning an external 'social audit' of the implementation in its own work and grant programmes of the Compact and the Codes of Good Practice.

5. National Voluntary and Community Sector organisations funded by ACU

For the Compact principles and codes to be fully implemented locally they need to be no less embedded in the work of the national voluntary and community organisations than in that of central government and statutory authorities. This is not yet the case; indeed, and despite the spirited efforts of individuals who have been directly involved in the work of the CWG, the Compact is invisible in the publicity or work plans of some national voluntary and community organisations that are funded by the ACU or represented on the CWG.

To address this deficiency, national voluntary and community sector organisations that are funded by the ACU should:

- agree to an amendment of their current terms of grant to include an obligation to promote and support implementation of Compact principles and codes within their own parts of the sector;

–and should be encouraged by the ACU to:

- nominate a senior staff member to become a Compact 'ambassador' who would promote the Compact principles and codes within their own organisation – including, for example, work to enhance the quality and 'reach' of the systems and data they use to consult within their part of the sectors
- take on, in consultation with the CWG Secretariat and colleagues from other ACU funded organisations, some promotional work within different localities on behalf of the CWG
- incorporate (on their web site and in general information) promotional and dissemination material about the Compact that is co-branded with the CWG
- introduce and publish annual plans for the promotion and penetration within their own membership and part of sector of the Compact principles and codes

- for example through specially targeted information, sections of their web site, road-shows, conferences and consultations
 - participate in joint meetings (at least one annually) – involving Chairs as well as Chief Executives – with the chairs of the CWG and its sub-groups and the Head of the ACU to share information about achievements and problems and to liaise over plans for the further promotion and enhancement of the Compact;
- and should expect the ACU to include in the criteria used when grant renewal applications are being considered an assessment of how positive a contribution to the implementation of the Compact the organisation has made.

6. The Compact Working Group (CWG)

Status and Membership

The CWG has argued that its work is made easier and more productive by it having an unconstituted ‘ginger group’ status – avoiding the entanglements and procedural obligations that would be a consequence of becoming a formally constituted membership organisation. It seems to be generally agreed that this status would remain an advantage during the Compact implementation phase. This pragmatic approach depends on continued good will and the ability of enthusiastic individuals to persuade the organisations that they represent to engage with the work of the CWG – as has already been observed in this paper, the latter needs further attention if Compact principles are to become firmly embedded institutionally.

The CWG proposes to enlarge and broaden its membership and to maintain the BME and Community Groups sub-groups, with each participating in the proposed (and urgently needed) National Forum on Local Compacts; the CWG is likely also to benefit from establishing a formal link with the England Volunteering Forum (and, possibly, with other relevant groupings) and engage with them, if appropriate, as if they were CWG sub-groups or at least were a formal part of the CWG communications ‘loop’ and consultative process.

Funding proposal

If the ACU responds to the CWG outline proposal for additional resources for the Secretariat along the lines recommended on page 28, the detailed bid and business plan will need to be prepared as a matter of urgency.

This will involve the CWG in establishing a clear consensus that the role of the Secretariat is to provide administrative and coordinating support to the CWG and its sub-groups and associated networks and forums: an enabler and resource to others – not a development agency that is directly engaged in detailed and sustained work on establishing individual local compacts.

The CWG will also need to revise the current work programme to grade priorities and to ensure that qualitative as well as quantitative measures of success are identified – and recording systems put in place for assessing their achievement.

I suggest that the CWG also revisit the thinking behind the proposed form of the Secretariat (A Compact Team Leader, a Local Compact Development Officer, a BME Compact Development Officer and a Team Administrator). It is not self evident from the CWG paper that this size of team or break down of job specialisms is necessarily appropriate to the role the CWG has adopted or the tasks it proposes to undertake; given the importance of the dissemination of lessons learnt from successful examples of Compact implementation, for example, a promotional post might be a priority for the next phase of work.

Though it is described as setting out a three year programme of tasks, the CWG's present outline plan does not include specific timetabled targets – these need to be added if it is to be possible to evaluate the feasibility of the programme (and to assess the scale of the resources needed to complete it). The CWG has already done further work to develop its original outline proposal so these additional requirements should not be the cause of significant further delay in preparing or processing the application for additional funds.

I also suggest that the CWG include in its programme proposals for joint work with the ACU and others (for example the Improvement and Development Agency: IDeA) to prepare (and publicise heavily) a continuing series of detailed 'warts and all' case studies of effective implementation of the Compact principles and codes. The main focus of this series of studies should be local practice, but studies should also feature examples of work within government departments, regional structures and national networks.

It will be important to include among the studies of local practice examples of local partnerships that are not called Local Compacts but nonetheless have set out to incorporate Compact principles and to work to the standards set out in the *Compact Codes of Good Practice* – it is the quality and scope of the partnership and not its name which is the key outcome. It is also likely that it will be especially useful if all the case studies highlight achievements which recognise appropriately the different interests and capacities, respectively, of the formal voluntary sector and the less formal community and self-help sectors – and the value to local partnerships of engaging with them all.

Other recommendations to the CWG

The CWG may also want to prepare bids for project grants from the ACU that will help to support specific and clearly targeted promotional or pilot projects which aim to enhance or extend local compacts.

In all its forward planning and public activity, the CWG needs to ensure that its work is clearly and independently 'branded' and to ensure that all references to NCVO reinforce that independence.

To facilitate further the work and status of the CWG, it should also consider:

- introducing periodic (at least annual) meetings with the Generalist and BME Voluntary and Community Regional Networks
- holding at least 33% of its meetings outside London, each combined with open events designed to reach regional and local players within the statutory, voluntary and community sectors.

To ensure that all members of the CWG (and the organisations and networks from which they come) stay fully involved, the Secretariat should consider introducing additional information flows between meetings – if possible through email so that direct debate is facilitated – and ensure that pre-meeting consultation has alerted the Chair to the views of members that are not able to attend.