

AGENDA ITEM 8

REPORT TO: Halton Strategic Partnership Board

DATE: 15th March 2006

SUBJECT: **HALTON'S COMPACT**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Board Members on issues concerning the adopted Local Compact for Halton.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Board Members consider the issues set out in the paper and provide direction on how "Compact Principles" are best taken forward in Halton.

3. BACKGROUND

Halton already has a local compact – "Getting it Right Together" – that has been in place since May 2003 (attached as annexe A). It provides general principles, values and guidelines that provide a consistent framework for partnership working across and within all sectors in Halton. Its specific aims are as follows:

- To develop & define better relationships.
- To develop understanding and joint working between all sectors at all levels.
- To encourage the flow of information and communication between sectors
- To support the whole range of community participation, from consultation to empowerment.
- To provide extra encouragement for voluntary and community activity

In Halton the compact process has been steered by a Working Group made up of representatives of the borough council, LSP, PCT, LSC, Police and Voluntary and Community sector. The Group developed an Action Plan based on the principle that the Compact must add value by actively developing guidance on good practice. It envisaged eight areas of activity, of which work has been completed on four.

4. ISSUES

Last year Government issued guidelines on how the compact approach could be strengthened and relaunched as "Compact Plus". Whilst recognising that 94% of districts had agreed compacts, most had codes that were too lengthy, are not being actively enacted, and lack mechanisms to recognise good practice or highlight non-compliant behaviours by partners. The Governments consultation document proposes a model for strengthening the compact. This proposes:

- A simpler and more succinct tool which would establish to organisations if their behaviour is compliant or not.

- All bodies would have to decide if they wished to opt onto 'Compact Plus'.
- A compact champion would be responsible for assisting organisations in understanding compact plus and be available to draw on for support. The compact champion should ensure both peer and thematic review are regular occurrences under compact plus.
- Members would have to renew their membership. The compact champion would monitor membership and only permit renewal where appropriate.

Halton's Compact Working Group has started to consider how best to move forward. Serious concerns have been raised by the Voluntary and Community sector (VCS) about the effectiveness of the compact approach. In particular the following issues have been highlighted:

- Apart from the VCS and Borough Council attendance at meetings has been patchy and could be construed as a lack of commitment;
- No resources in terms of money or dedicated officer support have been directed to compact activity which has hampered progress;
- Examples of behaviour allegedly non-compliant with compact principles have been cited from both central Government and local partners which lead to a perception that the compact has little real value.

Given that "Compact Plus" demands a commitment to mainstream and champion compact principles, some members of the working Group have questioned whether much further effort will be worthwhile.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The Working Group has asked that the Board consider the future of the Compact in Halton. The base option is for the current compact to remain as a valid statement of principles and expected behaviours, but as a passive document. The other end of the spectrum would be for partners to commit to "Compact Plus" principles and actively use the Compact as a tool for re-engineering relationships and mainstreaming delivery.

The Board is asked to consider how it wishes to proceed, recognising that individual partner organisations themselves will need to determine their own approach to relationship management and compact approaches.

ATTACHED DOCUMENTS

Halton Local Compact



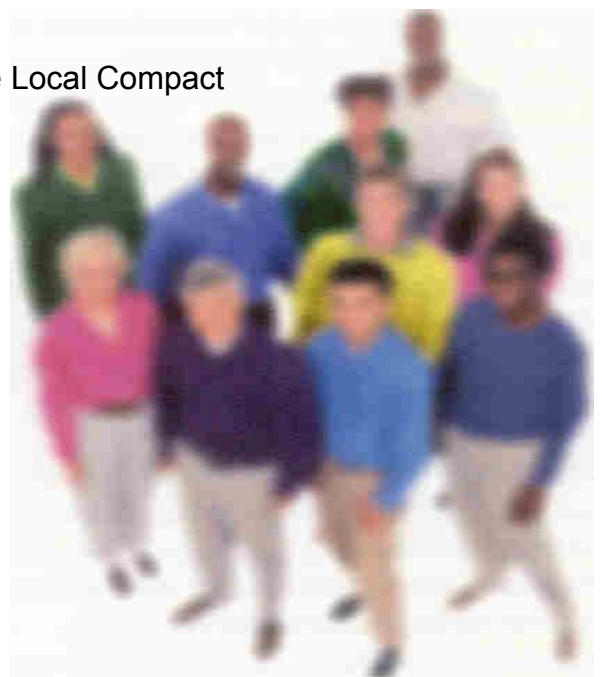
A Local Compact for Halton

Getting it Right Together

A Strategic framework for partnership working between the voluntary, community and public sectors in Halton

Contents

1. Why have a Local Compact?
2. Purpose
3. Status
4. Shared Principles
5. Broader aims
6. Success Criteria
7. Recognising Diversity
8. Undertakings by organisations adopting the Local Compact
9. Codes of Good Practice
10. Resolution of Disputes
11. Implementation, Monitoring & Evaluation
12. Working Group Membership
13. Definitions
14. Glossary of terms



1. Why have a Local Compact?

- 1.1 Following the publication of the National Compact, in 1998, Local Compact Guidelines were published in 2000 by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations – NCVO and the Local Government Association – LGA. Since then, many Local Compacts have been developed and are being implemented and reviewed, across England, Scotland & Wales. The National Compact has also produced several Codes of Good Practice. The Government has given a deadline of March 2004, for Local Compacts to be in place.
- 1.2 There are many voluntary organisations and community groups in Halton. Their objectives and activities are linked to those of public bodies in the borough: Halton Borough Council (HBC), National Health Service (NHS) bodies, the Police and community safety agencies, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Connexions, etc.
- 1.3 In 1998, “Compact – getting it right together” was presented to Parliament. “This Compact between Government and the voluntary & community Sector provides a framework which will help guide our relationship at every level. It recognises that Government and the sector fulfil complementary roles in the development and delivery of public policy and services, and that the Government has a role in promoting voluntary and community activity in all areas of our national life. ... Compact will strengthen the relationship between Government and the voluntary & community sector and is a document of both practical and symbolic significance. “

(The Rt. Hon. Tony Blair Mp, the Prime Minister)

- 1.4 There is a particular need for a consistent framework for partnership working across and within all sectors. This will provide a basis to help the Halton Partnership (Halton’s Local Strategic Partnership – LSP) to simplify and streamline mainstream and special programme funding and service provision, with the maximum inclusion of the community & voluntary sectors. This will produce the best value for the community and is what the Local Compact for Halton seeks to secure.

2. Purpose of the Local Compact for Halton

- 2.1 Acknowledging the diversity and independent status of the community, voluntary & public sectors, the Local Compact for Halton’s purpose is to:
 - Be a fundamental reference document setting out processes for improving, monitoring and evaluating the quality of relationships, partnerships and cross-sectoral working, at all levels.
 - Establish key principles, shared vision and undertakings and develop Codes of Good Practice.
 - Promote understanding between the sectors, and work together to develop a culture of mutual trust and empowerment.

3. Status of the Local Compact for Halton

The Local Compact for Halton is a framework for the way in which organisations from the community voluntary & public sectors work together.

The Local Compact for Halton is a voluntary commitment, freely entered into, by these organisations to work to agreed standards, together. It is not a legally binding document, but its authority derives from its endorsement by central government and the local partners. Its success and worth will result from the quality of commitment to its implementation by all sectors.

4. Shared Principles

1. Voluntary action is an essential part of a democratic society.
2. If society is to thrive and work well, it needs to have an independent and diverse community and voluntary sector.
3. All partners to this agreement are committed to working in partnership towards common aims, whilst recognising that each contributes in different ways.
4. It is recognised that policies and services will be much closer to peoples real needs and wishes if they are asked what they need/want, if they are involved in putting their ideas and policies together and can take part in the design and delivery of the services and programmes.
5. By consulting people in the community and voluntary sector involving them in decisions and helping them take part in the delivery of services, long-term relationships with the partners are built.
6. The partners to this agreement will have different ways of working and have different parties to whom they report but all share the principles of:
 - openness
 - honesty
 - objectivity
 - consistency
 - Integrity
 - leadership
 - equality
 - accountability
7. It is recognised that public community and voluntary organisations sometimes have different viewpoints and that organisations are free to campaign for change.
8. All partners to this agreement recognise the need to allocate resources to community and voluntary sector organisations. These resources include funding, advice and other support and are an important part of their relationship.
9. All partners recognise and respect equality and diversity and will work to enhance and encourage the implementation of these principles.

5. Broader Aims of the Local Compact for Halton

5.1 To be successful, the Local Compact for Halton aims to:

- Widen access for communities to be involved in or influence the decision-making process.
- Develop the relationship between all sectors and at all levels.
- Improve the flow of information and communication channels between and in, all sectors and the community.

- Develop the network and networking, between and across, all sectors.

5.2 Everyone recognises that to be successful with the Local compact there is a need to change cultures and move into a 'new era' of partnership and joint working.

6. Success Criteria

6.1 To measure if the Local Compact for Halton works, a number of indicators will need to be developed.

6.2 An event will be held annually to discuss and develop ways of gauging the usefulness and impact of the Local Compact, to which all sectors will be invited.

6.3 During each annual review of the Local Compact for Halton, consideration will be given to whether a dispute prevention and resolution procedure, for the Local Compact for Halton itself, should be adopted.

7. Recognising Diversity

7.1 Public or statutory bodies often have big budgets (but with spending constraints imposed by central government), a lot of staff, are answerable to the national government as well as local people and perform a very wide range of statutory duties/activities.

7.2 Voluntary groups and organisations often have small budgets, with short term funding, a small staff team (if any), answer to a 'board' or committee of voluntary 'trustees' or 'directors', funders and follow charity and/or company law. They often rely upon the commitment or enthusiasm of their volunteers and members.

7.3 It is a big commitment to get involved in consultation and partnership work. It takes up a lot of time and resources and this may limit the level of engagement. To be successful the Local Compact for Halton will need to be flexible and supportive in helping groups and organisations to be involved.

8. Undertakings by organisations adopting the Local Compact

8.1 Shared Undertakings

It is only through working together that true mutual understanding and co-operation will develop. To develop a Compact in Halton, public sector and community and voluntary sector organisations have to undertake certain activities and approaches together.

Context

We all operate within a regulatory and statutory framework with legal, financial and contractual obligations. We all recognise the need to follow government guidance and work in line with national policy. It is important that we work alongside our partners to gain an awareness of the obligations and constraints placed upon them.

Relationship

We recognise that we all need to develop our practice to reach agreement/compromises that will foster and promote good working relationships at strategic and operational levels.

Respect

Individuals' views and ideas will be treated with respect and dignity by all sectors.

Trust

Honesty and openness is vital. Frank discussions and clear exchange of views and information must take place. We must always take the opportunity to talk through issues and develop shared and agreed understanding.

Promoting Diversity and Equality

We need to work closely and co-operatively to promote diversity and equality. Learning from each other's experiences, we must continuously strive to make our activities and services more inclusive.

Commitment

All organisations and groups will commit time, thought and resources to support the Local Compact process. Plans and Strategies should make reference to and adequate provision for fulfilling Local Compact requirements. Representatives must commit to attending regular meetings and communicating the spirit, intent and aims of the Local Compact to those they represent.

8.2 Community and Voluntary Sector Undertakings

To be effective and valued, the Community and Voluntary Sector in Halton recognises that it has certain responsibilities. Groups and organisations must commit to undertakings that are challenging and meaningful in order to fulfil the sectors obligations as partners in the Compact.

Accountability

Community and Voluntary Sector organisations and groups will keep adequate records and provide full and frank reports on activities and finances. Information will be made available to members, funders, stakeholders and the wider public.

Time

Community and Voluntary Sector organisations and groups will try, wherever possible to respond to the timescales of public sector organisations. This recognises that sometimes timescales will be short, due to central government demands and sometimes processes will be slow due to internal procedures and statutory requirements.

Recognition and Value

Community and Voluntary Sector organisations and groups must recognise and value the support and funding that they received from statutory sources. Joint working will be recognised and positive activity and achievements will be acknowledged and promoted.

Dissemination

Community and Voluntary Sector organisations and groups who sign up to the Local Compact will promote its spirit, intent and aims in all of their activities and will make sure that their members and other groups are aware of its content and what this means to them.



8.3 Public Sector Undertakings

The Public Sector Organisations have a major role to play to ensure that the Compact is a real and working agreement, because they often hold the decision-making powers and resources. The following are undertakings that are demanding but achievable.

Accountability

Public sector organisations will develop clear and accountable systems to identify the most appropriate groups and organisations to deliver services or develop a project. Public sector organisations will also encourage voluntary and community sector participation in partnership structures, scrutiny and strategic activity.

Time

Public sector organisations will endeavour to allocate as much time as possible to consultation and participation work, involving community and voluntary sector representatives in the planning process to ensure maximum inclusion of staff, volunteers and users/members.

Recognition and Value

Public sector organisations recognise the importance of a strong and vibrant voluntary and community sector and will support its independence. This will include developing an awareness of levels of need and capacity and accepting the different roles and aims of groups/organisations, upholding their right to comment, challenge and campaign. This will

include an awareness of practical needs and an ongoing dialogue to ensure members from the voluntary and community sector feel included and valued.

Dissemination

Public Sector organisations who sign up to the Local Compact will promote its spirit, intent and aims and will make sure that good practise is shared between different departments and organisations. The aim will be to influence future activity that relates to and involves the Community and Voluntary Sector.



9. Codes of Good Practice

9.1 In line with the National Compact it is intended that codes of good practice will be developed which may include:

1. Information & Consultation
2. Participation & Engagement
3. Funding
4. Partnerships
5. Volunteering
6. Community Groups
7. Communication
8. Black & Minority Ethnic Groups

9.2 Others will follow, responding to local needs, during the development of the Local Compact for Halton. The Local Compact will be a living document, regularly reviewed, amended when appropriate and added to, after a similar of discussion (see section 11. below).

10. Resolution of Disputes

All organisations signing-up to and adopting the Local Compact for Halton have agreed to work to the above guidelines. If problems or disputes happen, the Local Compact for good practice as far as possible, disputes should be resolved between parties. However, if this does not solve

the problem, the parties should consider using the complaints procedures of the public body involved, or agree upon a neutral partner to provide mediation or arbitration.

11. Implementation, Monitoring & Evaluation

The Local Compact for Halton will be accompanied by an Action Plan to translate the above into SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timetabled) objectives, with milestones and performance criteria for evaluation.

The public partners and Halton Voluntary Action will circulate the Compact and Action Plan widely; promoting its importance and requesting further adoptions and compliance.

The Working Group will then become a Monitoring & Evaluation Group, which will:

- Seek to resolve disputes
- Monitor promotion and Implementation
- Evaluate the results
- Benchmark against other Local Compacts, nationally
- Consider any developments in the nation Compact
- Produce an Annual Report, making suggestions for improvements
- Hold an Annual Meeting, at which recommended changes will be discussed
- Launch an amended Local Compact and begin the process again.

The M&E Group will meet every quarter and receive reports from the public and community & voluntary sectors facilitators, on the progress of implementation and information of relevance to the above points.



12. Local Compact for Halton – Working Group membership

Facilitators:

Halton Borough Council (HBC – representing the public sector)

Halton Voluntary Action (representing the community & voluntary sectors)

Membership:

Chair – Chair of HBC’s Social Inclusion Policy & Performance Board

Vice Chair – Chief Executive Officer, Halton Voluntary Action

Statutory Sector

Halton Borough Council – Councillors (5)

Halton Primary Care Trust – (1)

Halton Strategic Partnership Board – (1)

Learning and Skills Council – (1)

North Cheshire Hospitals Trust – (1)

Voluntary and Community Sectors

Voluntary and Community Sectors – (9)

(To be elected by the Community Network reflecting the geographical boundaries of Halton)

13. Definitions

It is important to distinguish between five terms:

The community: the whole population, which may include people who work in an area, but do not actually live there.

Community Groups: local groups or organisations which have a large amount of activity and control by residents (or people who have a common interest, but who may not live in the same neighbourhood, e.g. People with a disability – sometimes referred to as “communities of interest”) in a voluntary capacity.

The Community Sector: all the community groups as a whole.

Voluntary Organisations: groups whose activities are carried out on a ‘not for profit’ basis (usually investing any ‘profit’ back into developing new or existing activities, or extending a service) which are not public or Local Authorities.

These organisations are formally constituted (e.g. Company Limited by Guarantee and/or Registered Charity, with a voluntary Board of Directors or Trustees) and they may or may not work with volunteers.

The Voluntary Sector: All the voluntary organisations as a whole, sometimes called ‘Non-Profit Sector’ or the ‘3rd Sector’ (the other two being the Public or Statutory and Private or Corporate Sectors).

Often reference is made to the **Voluntary & Community Sector**. This includes both the above sectors and covers such a broad spread – from loose and informal groups and networks to highly professional organisations. Often with no volunteers apart from their board. This may range from having none or substantial funding and staffing – that this Local Compact for Halton refers to the

Voluntary & Community Sectors.

[The Definitions above have been adapted from the Community Development Foundation’s “Regeneration and Community – Guidelines to the community involvement aspect of the SRB Challenge Fund, 1995”]

The Public Sector (in the context of a Local Compact): all statutory organisations, including the local authority / government; the health service; the police service; branches of national statutory agencies, such as the Probation Service, the Learning & Skills Council, Connexions, etc. These are some of the agencies that reflect the nature of the public sector.

Glossary

National Council for Voluntary Organisations			-
	NCVO		
Local Government Association			-
	LGA		
Halton Borough Council			
	-	HBC	
Learning and Skills Council			-
	LSC		
Halton Strategic Partnership Board			-
	HSPB		
Local Strategic Partnership			-
	LSP		
Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timetabled. Monitoring and Evaluation		-	SMART
	-	M & E	
Right Honourable			
		-	Rt. Hon
Working Group on Government Relations			-
	WGGR		
Community & Voluntary Sector Network			-
	CVSN		
Local Compact			
		-	LC

On behalf of all Partners and Participants

Official Signing of Affirmation Date 27th May 2003

Sign

Sign
Sign

Cllr. Tony McDermott
Chair Halton Strategic
Partnership Board

Cllr. Eddie Jones
Chair Halton Compact
Working Group

Melissa Critchley
Chair Halton Voluntary
Action

Logos of NHS
Learning Skills

Halton Partnership
Halton Voluntary Action Halton Primary Care Trust

HBC

Getting it
Right Together