



Worcestershire Compact

'Let's Do It Smarter'

**An agreement on relationships between the Statutory
Sector and the Voluntary and Community Sectors in
Worcestershire**

April 2006

Foreword

This Compact is an agreement between partners: those of us in Worcestershire's statutory sector and those of us in Worcestershire's voluntary and community sectors. It is an agreement to 'do it smarter': to improve the way we work together to provide the best service we can for the people of Worcestershire. The Compact, and its associated Codes of Practice, are formal documents that commit us to an approach that is already in existence between many partners across the County. They have been written to recognise the great contribution the Voluntary and Community Sectors make to Worcestershire, and the great diversity that exists in both individual organisations and the relationships between them. Our aim is to use this Compact to ensure that all of us get the most out of every relationship we have.

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Please note:

- *Text in Italics is commentary*
- Definitions for Underlined Text can be found in the Glossary (Appendix 2).

Executive Summary

This Worcestershire Compact is a set of guidelines and commitments that local organisations in the statutory (public) sector and voluntary and community sectors (VCS) can sign up to. It aims to guide and develop relationships between these organisations (referred to as 'partners') so that they can 'do it smarter' and achieve the following:

- Development between partners of a mutually agreed framework for improved working which results in higher quality, good value services and support for the people of Worcestershire.
- Clear and open communication, consultation, respect, trust and equality between partners.
- Helping to deliver the vision of the Worcestershire Partnership:

'A County with safe cohesive, healthy and inclusive communities, a strong and diverse economy and a valued and cherished environment'

This central Compact document has five main sections:

- 1) An introduction to the Compact and explanation of why it's needed.
- 2) Some basic principles and commitments that all partners must adhere to.
- 3) Introduction to 4 supporting 'Codes of Practice' - separate documents that further develop relationships that involve:
 - Consultation
 - Funding and Procurement
 - Volunteering
 - Community GroupsAnd the key themes that must underpin such relationships – diversity, partnership working and monitoring & review.
- 4) Initiatives to ensure the Compact remains relevant and up-to-date for all partners.
- 5) Appendices with useful information, including a glossary and contact details.

This Compact document is owned by all partners and is maintained by the Engaging Worcestershire Steering Group, who also organise an annual Compact event and review process.

1. Introduction

1.1 What Is The Worcestershire Compact?

This Compact is an agreement between organisations in the statutory (or public) sector and those in the voluntary and community sectors (VCS). It follows the 1998 agreement of a National Compact between the Government and the voluntary and community sectors in England as a whole.

Subsequently, each county and district in the country has been encouraged to develop its own Local Compact for local organisations. This Worcestershire Compact is designed to apply to all relevant organisations throughout the county in both the statutory and voluntary and community sectors, who are invited to sign-up to the Compact as partners. Organisations from the private sector are not specifically referred to in this Compact but any effort they could make towards achieving the aims of the Compact will of course be welcome.

Partner organisations are asked to make a number of commitments (See Section 2) that will help realise the following aims:

- Development between partners of a mutually agreed framework for improved working which results in higher quality, good value services and support for the people of Worcestershire.
- Clear and open communication, consultation, respect, trust and equality between partners.
- Helping to deliver the vision of the Worcestershire Partnership:

‘A County with safe cohesive, healthy and inclusive communities, a strong and diverse economy and a valued and cherished environment’

These commitments are underpinned by a number of Codes of Practice that are currently in development (See Section 3). These contain more specific guidelines for partners on the key issues of consultation, funding and procurement, volunteering and community groups. Each Code of Practice is in turn built around the key themes of:

- equality and diversity
- partnership working
- monitoring and review.

1.2 Why is the Compact Needed?

We as partners are committed to working for a better Worcestershire, and believe that a local Compact will help us achieve this by improving our interaction and relationships. There is a growing recognition nationally of the importance and value of the voluntary and community sectors and in particular the instances where they:

- Provide services which reach local people and communities that statutory bodies don't

- Mobilise significant numbers of volunteers
- Play an important advocacy role in policy and decision making

Previously, relationships between statutory and voluntary and community sector organisations across the County have varied greatly, from excellent to hostile or simply non-existent. As partners we will use this Compact and its supporting Codes of Practice to ensure that **every** relationship is as good as it can be. By this we mean that:

- The relationship is beneficial to all partners.
- Communication and negotiation is open and honest.
- There is respect and understanding of each partner's needs, priorities and contributions to Worcestershire.
- The people of Worcestershire get the best possible outcome.

1.3 Who owns the Compact?

The Compact is jointly owned by all partners who sign up to it. The maintenance of this Compact document is the responsibility of the Worcestershire Partnership - this work, including the development of the Codes of Practice, is currently delegated to the Engaging Worcestershire Steering Group.

2. The Compact Agreement

2.1 Key Principles of the Compact

This Compact is underpinned by a number of beliefs and principles held by us as partners:

- **Partnership:** Organisations and groups from all sectors will benefit more from working together to achieve their aims and objectives as opposed to working alone.
- **Diversity:** The great diversity of groups in the voluntary and community sectors needs to be respected and partners must work to improve community cohesion and reduce inequality.
- **Respect:** Respect is needed for the differing responsibilities and pressures faced by individual partner organisations.
- **Independence:** Independent and diverse voluntary and community sectors are vital to the social, economic, health and environmental wellbeing of the people and communities of Worcestershire.
- **Contribution:** Organisations from both the statutory sector and voluntary and community sectors must contribute to the planning and delivery of public services, with clear roles and responsibilities.
- **Funding and Procurement:** Comprehensive planning and clear processes are needed to ensure money is well-managed i.e. that funding is correctly applied for, that it is distributed wisely on a needs-basis, and that goods and services are procured in the most cost-effective manner.
- **Consultation:** The people of Worcestershire must be involved in decisions affecting the services they receive.
- **Commitment:** Agreements and joint working, including this Compact, need to be committed to, properly resourced and assessed to ensure continuing effectiveness and impact.

2.2 Aims of the Compact

The aims of this Compact are:

- To assist partners in developing a mutually agreed framework for improved working which results in higher quality, good value services and support for the people of Worcestershire.
- To ensure clear and open communication, consultation, respect, trust and equality between partners.
- To help to deliver the vision of the Worcestershire Partnership:

‘A County with safe cohesive, healthy and inclusive communities, a strong and diverse economy and a valued and cherished environment’

2.3 Commitment by Statutory Sector Partners

In response to these Key Principles and Aims, we as partners in the statutory sector commit to:

- Recognising the right of the voluntary and community sectors to determine and manage their own affairs.
- Recognising and respecting the independence of the voluntary and community sectors, including their right within the law to campaign, to lobby and to comment on public policy.
- Working towards greater transparency, equity and consistency in all funding allocated to the voluntary and community sectors.
- Supporting and encouraging the voluntary and community sectors in taking full advantage of appropriate external funding opportunities.
- Appraising any policies and procedures which could affect local communities in Worcestershire in order to identify and aim to address any implications for the voluntary and community sectors.
- Consulting the voluntary and community sectors on issues that are likely to affect them in a timely and appropriate way, taking account of the specific needs of those parts of these sectors that represent groups who are at risk of being excluded.
- Adhering to the principles of open government, which seeks to ensure that wherever possible decisions and findings are made public and explained.
- Rationalising wherever possible the appointment of our representatives on management committees and make sure that those fulfilling such roles are appropriately trained.

2.4 Commitment by Partners in the Voluntary and Community Sectors

In response to these Key Principles and Aims, we as partners in the voluntary and community sectors commit to:

- Recognising the pressures that statutory sector organisations face in complying with the mandatory requirements placed on them by government and other bodies.
- Maintaining and promoting high standards of governance, accountability and conduct to meet our obligations to our funders, beneficiaries, staff and volunteers.
- Developing quality standards appropriate to the organisation, over time, in order to ensure best practice and equality of opportunity in activities, employment, involvement of volunteers and service provision.

- Seeking to ensure that beneficiaries, members, volunteers and supporters are informed and consulted as widely as possible before presenting a case to the statutory sector, or responding to consultations, and to represent their views accurately.
- Where appropriate, seeking to actively involve beneficiaries, employees and volunteers in the development and management of activities and services.

2.5 Commitment by All Partners

In response to these Key Principles and Aims, we as partners commit to:

- Taking steps to ensure common purpose and vision, now and in the future.
- Working together to consult and involve the people of Worcestershire in the work that we do.
- Building mutual understanding and respect of each others' organisations and sectors.
- Ensuring that there is a balance of undertakings between the statutory and the voluntary and community sectors, and that all partners understand what is expected of them.
- Communicating in a clear way, including agreeing at the outset of any relationship the frequency and methods of communication.
- Ensuring transparency in terms of access to information and clarity of processes
- Taking decisions that affect relationships together wherever possible.
- Taking into account the wider context including links to policy and local strategies for social inclusion, community regeneration and health safe and sustainable communities.
- Fully implementing the Worcestershire Compact at all levels within our organisations, including appointing a Compact Champion and ensuring that our employees/members are fully aware of its aims and implications.
- Promoting the adoption of the Worcestershire Compact to other local public bodies and voluntary and community organisations that are not yet signed up to the Compact.
- Reviewing the content and the usefulness of the Compact regularly.

3. Principles of the Codes of Practice

3.1 Introduction to Codes of Practice

The Codes of Practice are separate supporting documents to this Compact that are currently in development by relevant partners. They will each cover one of four specific subjects: Consultation, Funding, Volunteering & Community Groups. They will contain further definition, explanation and agreement to ensure that partners are fully able to agree on conditions of their relationships in these complex areas and abide by their commitments in this Compact. Each of these Codes will be underpinned by 3 key themes:

Diversity and Equal Opportunities

The overarching principles of diversity and equal opportunities are key to any relationship, especially in relation to working with Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Groups. Partners need to work together to respect differences, improve community cohesion and reduce inequality. We as partners believe that commitment to diversity involves:

- The statutory sector engaging with the BME sector and other diverse groups to ensure a positive relationship and gaining mutual benefit
- Recognition by the statutory sector of the important role of the BME voluntary and community sectors and the diverse communities they seek to represent and provide for, including faith groups and refugee and asylum seeker organisations.
- A Commitment by all partners to taking forward Race Equality together.

Partnership Working

The ultimate value of this Compact depends on the effectiveness of the partnership working that underpins formal written agreements. Successful relationships cannot be assumed by the mere existence of a written agreement, and require time and effort to become established. We as partners believe that successful partnerships contain:

- Mutual understanding and respect.
- Common purpose and vision.
- Shared expectations and commitment.
- Transparency in access to information and processes.
- Joint decision making wherever possible.

Monitoring and Evaluation

It is essential to have a robust appraisal process in order to demonstrate whether the Compact and the Codes of Practice are functioning properly. An effective Compact will result in fewer initial problems on projects and in partnership working and will produce better outcomes. We as partners believe that any relationship covered in this Compact will benefit from:

- A robust appraisal process.
- Evaluation of outcomes and potential improvements.
- Agreement of and adherence to a clear disputes resolution process.

3.2 Code of Practice 1: Consultation

The Consultation Code of Practice will aim to make a positive impact on the way in which the statutory sector partners consult and appraise their policies in respect of the voluntary and community sectors. In so doing, it should enable voluntary and community organisations to bring their knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on influencing policies of public and private sector bodies.

We as partners believe that effective consultation:

- Enables key people to contribute to the policy making process.
- Symbolises the statutory sector's commitment to be open and accountable.
- Leads to more realistic and robust policy that better reflects the people of Worcestershire's needs and wishes.
- Helps in planning, prioritising and delivering better services.
- Can create a working partnership and mutual understanding with those consulted.
- Identifies problems quickly enabling matters to be put right before they escalate.

The Consultation Code of Practice will ensure that consultation:

- Is carried out in meaningful, inclusive and appropriate ways to add value.
- Is built into decision-making process.
- Is allowed adequate time and resources.
- Enables a wide range of groups to contribute to the policy making planning, prioritising and delivering improved services.
- Produces results that are fed back to participants and the wider community.
- Is carried out in a co-ordinated way to reduce duplication and consultation fatigue.

All partners in this Compact agree to abide by the requirements of the Consultation Code of Practice.

3.3 Code of Practice 2: Funding and Procurement

We as partners recognise that many voluntary and community organisations enter into a financial relationship with statutory sector bodies to deliver outcomes on their behalf, either through grant funding or by supplying services purchased through public procurement.

The Funding and Procurement Code of Practice will aim to ensure that these financial relationships deliver the best outcome for the people of Worcestershire with the minimum amount of problems for the partners concerned. It will achieve this by setting a framework for

the financial relationships and also setting out undertakings for both sides, based on what each can expect from the other. The Code will cover **how** funding agreements should be designed and delivered to achieve the vision above in the best possible way. It will not cover **what** is funded, **who** should be funded or **what** will be procured.

We as partners believe that the following principles should apply at all stages of a funding relationship:

- **Focus on outcomes** – the achievement of outcomes should be used as a key indicator of the success of funding.
- **Simplicity and proportionality** – processes should be as simple as possible and in proportion to the amount of money involved.
- **Consistency and co-ordination** – funders and purchasers should endeavour to join-up or standardise parts of the funding or procurement chain to minimise burdens on organisations and ensure a focus on delivery.
- **Timeliness** – allowing time for planning, decision making and action so they have real effect.
- **Transparency and accountability** – allowing informed decisions about spending priorities to be made and for both Government and the sector to learn from previous work.
- **Discussion and dialogue** – this helps build trust and can identify and overcome problems before they impact on the delivery of outcomes.
- **Empathy** – understanding each other's needs and requirements should help avoid problems and help achieve outcomes.

The Funding and Procurement Code of Practice will ensure:

- Shared clarity on the definition of financial terms e.g. core costs.
- Shared clarity on the basis for when and why contracts, service agreements and grants are used.
- Work is done towards taking account of issues surrounding full cost recovery.
- Multi-year funding agreements that are used to enable strategic planning and foster sustainability whenever appropriate.
- Improved awareness of and access to funding opportunities, allocation and applications procedures.
- Clear unbureaucratic systems and processes for administering payments and monitoring arrangements.
- Support and encouragement for innovation to meet changing and emerging needs.
- The streamlining partnership based funding arrangements wherever possible.

All partners in this Compact agree to abide by the requirements of the Funding and Procurement Code of Practice.

3.4 Code of Practice 3: Volunteering

Volunteers are a valuable resource and partners have a responsibility to act so as to stimulate and safeguard proper use and recognition of volunteering and volunteers.

Volunteering can be described as an important expression of citizenship and an essential ingredient of active community life throughout the County. Around one third of the adult population volunteer at least once a month, over 80% of volunteering is with voluntary and community organisations and that, on average, people who volunteer do so for around two hours each week¹. Anecdotal evidence from local communities and organisations indicates the national picture is reflected across Worcestershire.

The commitment of time and energy for the benefit of people and organisations within local communities can take many forms. Recognition needs to be given to the diverse nature of volunteering, to the role of volunteers working complementary to the provision of public services and to the 'hidden' volunteering undertaken by people serving on management committees and boards of trustees.

Volunteering is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for personal gain. It can also be the means by which people, including those who are socially excluded, contribute to their personal development, to the acquisition of new skills and to the wellbeing of others. The giving of time is recognised as establishing a reciprocal relationship between volunteers, funders and users of their services - a relationship in which the giver also receives.

We as partners recognise that the following principles are fundamental to volunteering:

- **Choice** - Whether to volunteer with a particular organisation should be a choice freely made by each individual. Encouragement should not result in any form of coercion or compulsion.
- **Diversity** - Volunteering should be open to as many people in Worcestershire as possible. Much can be learned and gained within an organisation from having a diverse volunteer base, in particular overcoming social exclusion issues.
- **Mutual Benefit** - Volunteers offer their contribution and skills unwaged but should benefit in other ways in return for their contribution. Benefits should include not only a sense of achievement, sociability and fun, but also experience, skills and training.
- **Recognition** - Partner organisations making use of volunteers should recognise the value of what volunteers can and do offer - not just to their organisation but to the community as a whole.

The Volunteering Code of Practice will ensure:

- The support and implementation of best practice in the management and recruitment of volunteers.
- That volunteering activity is properly resourced.
- That the role volunteers play in the provision of services to the community is valued.
- Partnerships work to overcome barriers to volunteering.

All partners in this Compact agree to abide by the requirements of the Volunteering Code of Practice.

3.5 Code of Practice 4: Community Groups

The Community Groups Code of Practice aims to promote a better understanding of the community sector within the realm of the voluntary and community sectors in Worcestershire as a whole. By doing so, it will have a positive effect on the way the statutory and voluntary sectors relate to community groups through their policies and practices.

We as partners believe it is important for statutory and voluntary sector organisations to understand community groups, what they do, how they operate and how they are different from voluntary organisations, and to create and maintain the conditions and support that overcome their particular problems and help community groups succeed.

Research² has shown that Local Compacts improve relationships between community groups and voluntary and statutory organisations, but that small community groups (including black and minority ethnic groups) are sometimes not included in the process and the content. This Code of Practice will ensure that these groups are involved as much as possible in the ongoing review and implementation of the Compact.

The Community Groups Code of Practice will:

- Provide a basis for mutual trust and acceptance of the roles and responsibilities of the statutory and community sectors
- Recognise the **diversity** and contribution of the community sector, and promote understanding of what community groups contribute as an important local resource in any community
- Set out the policies, consultative arrangements and support that the community sector needs so it can play an effective role in building successful local communities.

All partners in this Compact agree to abide by the requirements of the Community Groups Code of Practice.

4. Taking the Compact Forward

We as partners will ensure that this Compact is not simply a document, and our agreement to support this Compact is not a one-off action. We will use the Compact to influence decision-making within our organisations, and to guide our ongoing relationships with our partners. To assist in this we agree to participate in the following initiatives:

4.1 Developing and Implementing the Codes of Practice

The codes of practice will be developed by partners under the guidance of the Engaging Worcestershire Steering Group (see Section 3: Codes of Practice for more details).

4.2 Implementing a process for resolving disputes arising between partners

We as partners envisage that disputes may arise regarding compliance with the Worcestershire Compact and its Codes of Practice. We as partners undertake to implement a process by which such disputes can be resolved in a constructive way, to be coordinated by the EWSG. Where formal remedies are necessary partner organisations will be encouraged by the EWSG to use the National Compact Mediation Scheme or Local Ombudsman. However this will only be in cases where internal complaints/disputes resolution procedures have been exhausted.

In instances where a group feels it is in an unequal partnership and are unclear how to use an organisation's complaint procedures the EWSG will assist the group with practical advice.

4.3 Respecting Other Compacts/Agreements/Legislation

We as partners recognise that some of us may have remits wider than Worcestershire and that we may be governed by other District, Regional or national Compacts. We also cannot foresee how future agreements or legislation may affect us. Therefore, should conflict arise between the commitments made in this Worcestershire Compact and other commitments we will engage with our partners and with the EWSG to try and resolve any difficulties as quickly and simply as possible.

4.4 Jointly agreeing to the nature of partnership relationships

We as partners recognise that there is a great variation in the individual relationships we have with one another, and the resources we can devote to those relationships. Some partner organisations are small and lack resources to implement and monitor comprehensive partnership agreements. Some relationships may be very simple, or irregular, or inconsequential. Although we all support the principles of the Compact partners in each individual relationship will decide what the appropriate level of engagement will be, and the commitments that are made to each other. As long as both partners agree, then the level of engagement between partners can be altered to reflect the nature of the relationship.

4.5 Reviewing the operation of the Worcestershire Compact annually

We as partners believe that, to remain effective, the Worcestershire Compact needs to evolve to take account of developments in the relationship between the sectors and the changing partnership environment.

We agree to support an annual event, which representatives of all Worcestershire Compact partners are invited to, which will have the following aims:

- To review the operation of the Worcestershire Compact and its Codes of Practice
- To ensure all partners are complying with the Compact undertakings
- To agree an annual action plan which sets milestones for the further development of the compact and its implementation

To help prepare for this event the EWSG will co-ordinate a self-assessment exercise involving all partners prior to the event. This exercise will request feedback on if, how and when partners have used the Compact, and their thoughts on how it can be improved. It will also attempt to resolve any disputes partners may have (See 4.2 above).

Following the event the EWSG will update the Compact as necessary and prepare an annual report and distribute it to all partners and as many other relevant County organisations as possible.

We as partners believe that it is important to measure the impact of the Compact to ensure it is achieving its aims. It is vital that individual partners drive forward the implementation and development of the principles of the Compact within their own organisations, and ensure there are robust systems in place to enable regular monitoring, evaluation and review.

Appendix 1: References and Useful Links

1. (Page 12) *The National Survey of Volunteering (1997)*. Institute for Volunteering Research.
2. (Page 13) *Community Groups Code of Good Practice (2003)*. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

A wealth of useful information and background on Compacts can be found at The National Compact website <http://www.thecompact.org.uk>

Appendix 2: Glossary

Districts – A regional division of a county that has a ‘two-tier’ system of local government, such as Worcestershire. There are six districts in Worcestershire – Malvern Hills, Wychavon, Worcester City, Wyre Forest, Redditch and Bromsgrove, each with their own district Councils and district LSPs. For more information see <http://worcestershire.whub.org.uk/home/wcc-cne-district.htm>

Engaging Worcestershire Steering Group – a subgroup of the Worcestershire Partnership that consists of representatives from the County’s voluntary sector infrastructure organisations and from the statutory sector. The Worcestershire Partnership has tasked the Engaging Worcestershire Steering Group to work with representatives from the wider voluntary, community and statutory sectors to develop this Compact document and to ensure a thorough and inclusive consultation process is developed and implemented.

Improved Working – A loose term to describe the result of a better relationship between partners. It could include such improvements as:

- a better understanding of a partner’s organisation, aims and needs.
- more trust between partners with more shared information and advice.
- a more efficient working relationship that leads to better results.

Local Compact – A Compact for an area of England covered by a particular local strategic partnership. This Worcestershire Compact is an example of a Local Compact. For more information see http://www.thecompact.org.uk/module_images/MG5%20Partnerships.pdf

Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) - An overall partnership of people that brings together organisations from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors within a local authority area, with the objective of improving people's quality of life. The LSP for Worcestershire is the Worcestershire Partnership.

National Compact - The National Compact is an agreement between national government and the voluntary and community sectors in England to improve their relationship for mutual advantage. It is the precursor to local Compacts, including this Worcestershire Compact. For more information see <http://www.thecompact.org.uk>

Private Sector - It is recognized that the private sector are key stakeholders in the Worcestershire Partnership. Although this document is intended to guide relations between the statutory and voluntary and community sectors, it is equally relevant for the development of relations between a wider range of organisations.

Statutory (Public) Sector - Agencies required by Government or other legal process to exist. This includes a wide range of organisations including Councils, the Police, health services, Registered Social Landlords, regional bodies, etc.

Voluntary and Community Sectors – An umbrella term for a whole range of not-for-profit organisations, ranging from formally constituted groups who employ staff, to small informal groups, who act to benefit the community. Their activities are extremely varied – examples include the provision of services, advice and advocacy work, campaigning, coordination and support of particular activities, and services for other voluntary organisations.

Worcestershire County Council – The County Council for Worcestershire, providing support for the Worcestershire Partnership and its subgroups, including the EWSG. Website: <http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk>

Worcestershire Partnership – The Local Strategic Partnership for Worcestershire. Website: <http://www.worcestershirepartnership.org.uk>

Appendix 3: Process of Compact Production

- June 2006 – Compact Version 1 launched at 'Improving voluntary & community involvement across Worcestershire' event
- April 2006 – Draft Compact Document endorsed to Worcestershire Partnership Board
- January – March 2006 – Draft Compact Document rewritten by EWSG
- 2005 – Worcestershire Partnership agree to utilize Wyre Forest Compact to develop Worcestershire Compact
- 2004 Compact document developed by Wyre Forest LSP

