

Working better
together



**IMPLEMENTATION
GUIDE**

for community groups
and local public bodies

What is the Compact?

The Compact is a voluntary agreement between the Government and the voluntary sector in England. It recognises shared values, principles and commitments, and sets out guidelines for how both parties should work together to ensure that better outcomes are delivered for local people. Central government signed up to the Compact collectively so it applies to all central government bodies.

From 1998, local authorities were encouraged by the Government to agree Local Compacts for partnership working with third sector organisations in their areas. All top-tier authorities now have Local Compacts. These reflect the principles of the national Compact but vary from area to area, to reflect local issues and partnership arrangements.

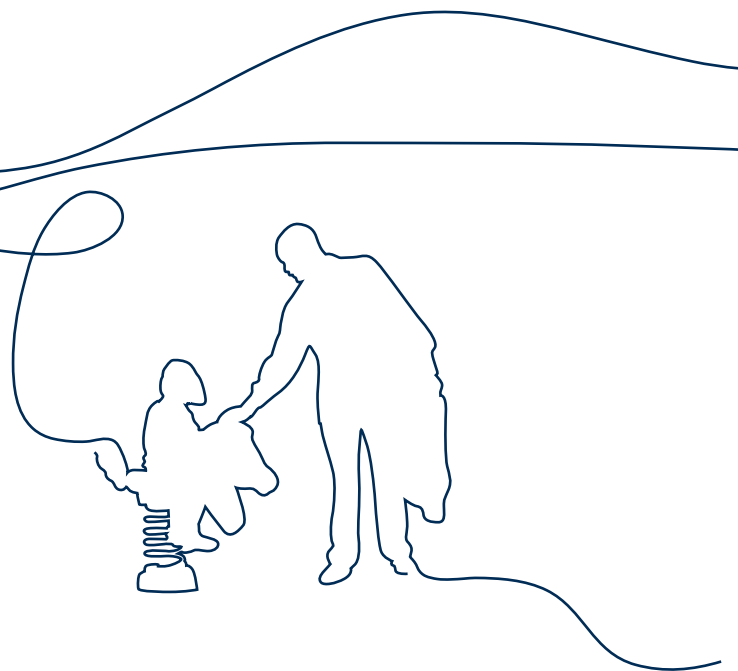
For more information, please visit:
www.thecompact.org.uk

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Working better together

Part of a series of
Compact implementation guidance,
produced by the Commission for the Compact



Contents

Introduction	4
When and how to use the Compact	6
Community groups	8
Local public bodies	10
Local organisations that support the voluntary sector	11
Benefits of working together	12
What to do in common situations:	13
1. Having a say on an issue	13
2. Influencing and making changes	16
3. Using and renting space	18
4. Grant funding	20
5. When something goes wrong	24
Resources	25
Further information	26

Introduction

What does this guide do?

This guide looks at how community groups and local public bodies can improve the way they work together. The main part of this guide presents examples of common situations where community groups and local public bodies come into contact with each other. For each situation, it offers tailored guidance on how each party can get the most out of this relationship, and it also looks at what local support organisations can do to help. The guidance is based on the Compact.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for anyone who is interested in how local public bodies and community groups can work better together. This includes:

- **Community groups:** this guide can help you to have a better relationship with local public bodies, so that you are involved in any decisions that will affect you, and are treated fairly if you apply for access to space and resources.
- **Local public bodies:** this guide can help you to engage with and support community groups, so that you can have a better understanding of local needs, act fairly, and ensure you meet your obligations under the Compact.
- **Local organisations that support the voluntary sector:** this guide can help you to improve the way you represent and support your local voluntary sector.



What is the Compact?

The Compact is an agreement between government and the third sector (often known as the voluntary sector, see the note on the right). It sets out how both parties should treat each other, in order for them to work better together. There is a national Compact agreement, and nearly all local areas have their own Local Compacts as well.

All local public bodies should follow the ways of working set out in the Compact whenever they engage with community groups. Community groups are free to decide whether or not to use the Compact, but they need to be aware that it is a two-way agreement. If they want to have better relationships with public bodies, they need to follow the simple ways of working set out in the Compact.

Everything in this guide is based on the Compact. It has been designed to help both local public bodies and community groups to understand how to use and follow the Compact in practice.

A few things to note:

- Although the Compact uses the term ‘third sector’, this guide uses the term ‘voluntary sector’ instead as it is more widely known.
- Although working together is important, it is worth making it clear that community groups do not need to work directly with local public bodies and many will choose not to if it is not relevant to their objectives.
- This guide concentrates on how community groups can work together with public bodies. Sometimes, it will be useful for community groups to work with each other, but this isn’t covered in this guide, because this isn’t what the Compact is about.
- This guide does not introduce any new Compact commitments.
- This guide presents five of the most common situations where community groups and local public bodies come into contact with each other, but they aren’t the only ones.

When and how to use the Compact

For community groups

If you have any sort of contact with local public bodies, you can use the Compact. There are two reasons why you might want to do this:

1. The Compact helps you to get the most out of your relationships with public bodies. This guide outlines some specific things from the Compact that you might want to do, which should help you to have a good relationship with local public bodies and avoid misunderstandings. Doing these things will also show that you have met your side of the Compact.
2. If you feel you are not being treated fairly by a local public body, the Compact can help you to get things changed. This guide outlines the things that public bodies should do to follow the Compact and to treat you fairly: if they do not do these things, you can talk to the public body and remind them of their responsibility to follow the Compact. Remember that you need to make sure that you have met your side of the Compact first, before you raise an issue (see page 24).

You can use the Compact in the following ways:

1. Use this guide to find out the simple things that your group can do to meet the Compact.
2. Show this guide to local public bodies if you need to remind them of the way they should be working.
3. Get involved in your Local Compact. All Local Compacts are different but in most local areas there will be a regular Compact meeting that you can attend, or a group you can join. Being involved in your Local Compact helps you to get support and advice if you think you are being treated unfairly, and may mean you have better relationships with local public bodies as well.

To find out about how to get involved in the Compact in your local area you can talk to the organisation in your area that supports voluntary organisations (see page 11) or ask at your local community centre or local council. You can also go to this website and search for the contact details of your Local Compact: www.thecomact.org.uk

For local public bodies

Nearly all local areas have their own Local Compact. If your job involves doing anything that might affect the voluntary sector, you should make sure you have read your Local Compact document and follow the ways of working it sets out.

It's worth remembering that community groups are very different from other sorts of voluntary organisation (see page 8). So if you work particularly closely with community groups, you may find this guide relevant on a day to day basis. This guide pulls out the parts of the Compact that are most relevant for working with community groups, and explains exactly how to follow them in practice.

The language of this guide may be different to that used in your Local Compact (and the national Compact). This is because this guide translates the meaning of the formal Compact commitments and undertakings to make them more relevant for people working with community groups.

If you need any support in implementing the Compact, you can contact the Commission for the Compact who can offer you impartial and independent advice (see page 25 for the contact details).

For local organisations that support the voluntary sector

If you provide general support to community groups, you may also want to offer them help in using the Compact. To do this, you can make sure you have read your Local Compact and understand how it works in your area. You might particularly want to make sure that you are able to advise community groups on the best way for them to get involved in the Local Compact, for example, whether there is a group or meeting they could attend.

You also may be able to help community groups to have good relationships with local public bodies, by following the Compact yourself. This guide shows you how you can do this, explaining how you can support community groups in having a say and helping them to access space and funding.

If you need any support, you can contact Compact Voice, who is the voice of the voluntary and community sector on the Compact and can provide training and resources (see page 25 for the contact details).

Community Groups

In every neighbourhood in England, people come together to form groups. Whether they want to clean up their local street, provide support for local people with health problems, set up a football team, or celebrate a community festival, these groups are at the heart of our communities.

As there are so many types of community group involved in countless different activities, it is difficult to classify or label them. So this guide doesn't attempt to be too prescriptive about exactly what community groups are. Instead below is a list of some of the characteristics of community groups, which can help you to identify them and understand how they are different from other types of voluntary organisation:

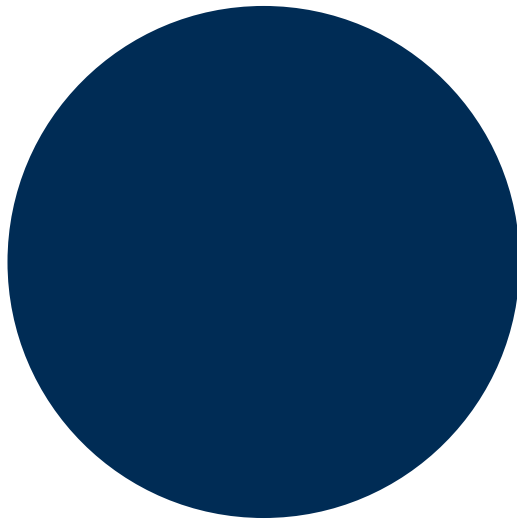
Community groups tend to:

- Be a group of people who come together because of a shared interest or aspiration
- Have little or no financial income
- Have an informal structure
- Be led by members and volunteers rather than paid staff
- Be based in a neighbourhood or community rather than a wider area
- Provide informal services to communities.

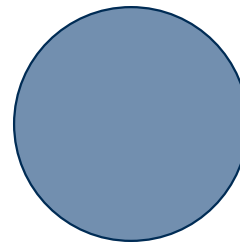
Some examples of types of community group are:

- Self-help groups, networks and forums that bring together people who have something in common, and offer advice and peer support
- Residents' associations and other groups of people who come together to improve their street or neighbourhood
- Faith groups that organise religious activities and community and social events
- Sports clubs and music groups
- Committees that organise local community events and festivals
- Groups of people who meet regularly to socialise and enjoy shared activities, such as youth and retirement clubs, lunch clubs and mother and toddler groups
- Groups that form for a short period to campaign on a local issue like traffic problems or stopping a fire station being shut down
- Groups of people who use a local health clinic or social care services, and get together to try to improve the services offered.

There are far more community groups in existence than other types of voluntary organisations, as illustrated by this diagram:



Number of informal community organisations in the UK (600,000)



Number of general charities in the UK (170,900)

N.B. Data from the UK Civil Society Almanac 2009. As most community groups operate informally it can be challenging to keep accurate records of their numbers, so this diagram is an indication only.

Local public bodies

Local public bodies make decisions about how money should be spent in a local area, and on what kind of public services. Important local public bodies to be aware of are:

Local councils

Councils are responsible for providing a range of services such as emptying bins, maintaining highways, running education, social services, parks and gardens. All councils are assessed on their performance by a national body called the Audit Commission. The structure of local councils varies from area to area:

- In some areas there are two layers or tiers: a district council and a county council
- In some areas there is just one layer: called a unitary authority, a city council, or a borough council
- In some areas there are also town or parish councils, covering a much smaller area.

Local partnerships

Local partnerships bring together all local public bodies in an area, as well as local businesses and voluntary organisations. They help to coordinate major public services like education, health, housing, police, and social services, and they tend to have a number of committees (or partnership boards) which deal with different issues. Sometimes these bodies will be called Local Strategic Partnership, or they may be called 'Anytown Partnership'.

Other bodies

Other local public bodies to be aware of are:

- **Primary Care Trusts:** they manage local health care services including making decisions about the type of services that hospitals provide
- **Fire Authorities:** they promote fire safety and deal with fire emergencies
- **Police Authorities:** they set the direction of local police forces
- **Transport Authorities:** they are responsible for public transport within their area
- **Other agencies:** such as Job Centre Plus and the Environment Agency.

To find out more about local public bodies and to contact those nearest to you, go to this website: www.direct.gov.uk

Local organisations that support the voluntary sector

In most local areas there are organisations set up with the aim of supporting community groups and the voluntary sector. They offer all kinds of support, including free advice on how to find funding and run a group.

There are a few main types of organisations:

Organisations that provide general support to all local charities, voluntary organisations, and community groups

There is an organisation like this in nearly every local area, and they act as the voice of the local voluntary sector. The technical term for them is 'local support and development organisations' but they have different names in different parts of the country. Often they are known locally as:

- Council for Voluntary Service (often abbreviated to CVS)
- Voluntary Action.

To find out more about local support and development organisations, go to this website: www.navca.org.uk You can also use the website to search for the organisation nearest to you, by clicking on 'member directory'.

Organisations that run community buildings:

There are many organisations like this around the country. Some of the technical terms used to describe them are: 'development trusts' or 'community anchors', but often they are simply known as 'community centres'. They use their buildings and facilities to run services that meet the needs of communities and solve local problems.

To find out more about these organisations, go to this website: www.comm-alliance.org

Specialist organisations

In some local areas there are specialist organisations that provide support to groups involved in particular types of activities, or groups who work with certain types of people. For example, there might be an organisation that supports sports clubs or groups campaigning on disability issues.

Benefits of working together

Benefits for community groups

Community groups are independent and respond to local needs. This means they do not necessarily need to have relationships with the public sector. However, you may find that working with a public body can help you to achieve some of your objectives:

- **Using and renting space:** Local public bodies tend to own buildings and outdoor facilities that you may be able to use or hire for meetings and events.
- **Grant funding:** You may be able to apply to local public bodies for small grants that you can use to buy equipment or run activities.
- **Having a say and influencing:** If you want to be involved in local decisions that will affect you, being in touch with local public bodies means you can tell them what you think about new proposals for your neighbourhood.
- **When something goes wrong:** You may also be able to ask professional officers in public bodies for advice on how to run your group or how to tackle a problem issue. Often these people are called 'community development workers'.

Benefits for local public bodies

Local public bodies are responsible for improving local areas: making them good places to live and ensuring residents are happy, healthy, and safe. However, you cannot do this on your own:

- Community groups can often be funded to deliver activities which address community needs and provide good value for money.
- Talking to community groups allows you to understand the needs of particular sections of society that you might be unable to reach otherwise.
- Having lots of active community groups in your area can also contribute towards building strong local communities that get on well with each other and enjoy participating in improving their own neighbourhoods (this is sometimes called 'social capital').

What to do in common situations

1. Having a say on an issue

Sometimes public bodies consider making changes to the way things are done in a local area which may affect community groups. For example, a change in the council's meals on wheels service could impact a local lunch club for older people.

Guidance for community groups

- **Look out for consultations and updates from local public bodies.** Local public bodies should consult community groups before they make decisions. They might do this by publishing a written consultation document, or they might run meetings where they ask people for their views. These are your chance to have your say, so try to keep an eye out for these opportunities. They should be advertised on your local council website, in community newspapers or at community centres.
- **If a public body asks your group what it thinks, talk to all the people involved in the group before you respond.** Try to talk to all the group's members and all the people involved in its activities, as this is in the Compact. This is important as it means your response will represent the views of everyone involved in the group and not just one individual. Remember to tell the public body that you have done this, as this sort of response will carry more weight.
- **Speak out if you feel you haven't been consulted properly about a change that affects you.** If a change is made and you aren't consulted, or if a consultation is difficult for you to respond to, don't be afraid to tell the public body responsible. You can tell them that the Compact requires them to consult you in an accessible way. If you are worried about speaking up, you might want to join or contact the Local Compact group in your area, as they will be able to support and advise you in doing this (see page 6).
- **Talk to other voluntary organisations in your area and try to join networks and forums.** Talking to other organisations can help you to stay up-to-date with what is happening in your area, and you may be able to respond to consultations jointly. Often larger organisations sit on the committees where decisions are made, so if you have links with them it can help your voice to be heard. You might particularly want to link up with your 'local support and development organisation' who will be able to offer you support in responding to consultations (see page 11).

Guidance for local public bodies

- **Remember to keep community groups informed about what's going on and any possible changes that might happen in the future.** The Compact requires you to make sure that community groups are kept informed about any changes that might affect them. Including short items in community newsletters and websites is a good way of keeping groups updated on upcoming decisions and proposals. This regular dialogue enables groups to plan ahead so they can input their views when the time comes. This in turn helps to build stronger local communities, which can contribute to improving the quality of life and services in your area.
- **Be aware that larger voluntary organisations do not always represent the views of community groups.** As well as engaging with organisations that support the voluntary sector, you also need to ensure that individual community groups are made aware of any potential changes and consultations that will affect them. The Compact is clear that public bodies should engage with all types of voluntary organisation, not just the larger ones.
- **If you are running a consultation or making a decision about a particular issue, make sure that community groups are able to feed in their views.** Making sure consultations are accessible to community groups is an important part of the Compact. Some ideas for how to do this are:
 - » As well as advertising the consultation on your website, also use other methods such as putting up posters in community centres, sending out emails to your contact lists and putting adverts in local newspapers and community newsletters. Sending out press releases can help with this as well.
 - » Make sure any documents you publish are easy to read and are available in different formats, such as in community languages. If proposals are very complicated, consider producing a summary for people who don't have time to read the entire document.
 - » Use different methods of asking for people's views and make the most of new technology. For example, you could run a short poll or survey on a few different websites, or make use of interactive features such as forums. You could also ask to attend existing community events and meetings and use them as an opportunity to ask groups for their views.
 - » Ask any community development workers in your area for their advice on how to reach small groups.
 - » Offer to pay any expenses that community groups incur in responding to consultations (e.g. travel or childcare costs).

- » Allow lots of time for responses – 12 weeks should be the minimum for formal consultations.
- » When you have made your decision, take the time to explain to groups whether you have been able to act on their suggestions or not, and why.
- **Make sure that local partnership boards and committees appoint representatives from the voluntary sector who can put across the views of a wide range of community groups.** The Compact talks about the need for all the different types of voluntary organisations to be involved in decisions that will affect them. It is often hard to ensure that all local community groups are heard, simply because there are so many of them. However, if you think carefully about how the voluntary sector selects its representatives for committees, this will help to make sure that the voice of a good number of groups is heard at these decision-making meetings.

Guidance for organisations that support the local voluntary sector

- **Publicise relevant consultations to community groups and offer to feed their views in.** The Compact says that voluntary organisations should try to promote consultations where they can. You may be able to use your contact lists to promote relevant consultations to community groups in your area. If you are planning to respond to a consultation as representatives of the local voluntary sector, make sure that you invite the views of any community groups that you are aware of, and indicate in your response that you have done so.
- **Tell community groups about any local networks and forums that they might want to join.** You can help community groups to find out whether there are any relevant networks in their area. You could promote them in your newsletters or bulletins, or mention them to any community groups who come to you for support.
- **If lots of community groups are affected by a particular issue, think about working with some of them to write a joint consultation response.** Helping community groups to work together in responding to a consultation can be a really valuable way of supporting small groups. A joint response like this will also have more weight.
- **Be aware that community groups often have very different views and priorities to other types of voluntary organisation.** Inviting community groups to tell you about their opinions can help you to ensure you are representing the whole of the local voluntary sector.

2. Influencing and making changes

Often community groups want to influence the way things are going in their neighbourhood – perhaps a group has ideas for how a local park should be managed better or knows about a certain local street where crime is a problem.

Or sometimes community groups would like to influence or complain about what a local public body does. For example a group might like a local hospital to consult them more regularly.

Guidance for community groups

- **Try to find out which public body or committee deals with the issue you are concerned about and talk to them about it.** Don't be afraid to take the initiative and raise an issue with a public body yourself. You may find that this website helps you to identify some of the public bodies in your area: www.direct.gov.uk
- **When you are talking to public bodies, give them as much information as you can.** This is included in the Compact as it helps public bodies to listen to you and make good decisions. Try to be clear about exactly how many people you have spoken to in your neighbourhood about a particular issue and how and why you know that it is a problem. Or try to explain what a difference it would make if a public body changed the way it did something.
- **Think about working with other voluntary organisations.** Larger voluntary organisations may have more regular contact with local public bodies and may be able to pass on your ideas to the right places. Or you could form a network of other groups interested in the same issues, to help you gather more information.
- **Be aware of the way public bodies are required to act, and if they do not meet these requirements, challenge them about it.** The Compact requires public bodies to make sure that they involve community groups when making decisions. If you find that you are unable to feed your views into a public body, you can mention the Compact to them, and remind them of their responsibilities. Your Local Compact group will be able to help you to do this (see page 6) and you might also want to look at the 'When something goes wrong' section on page 23.

Guidance for local public bodies

- **If you are involved in making decisions about how services are run, make an effort to regularly talk to community groups.** Groups can spring up quickly, so to gain a good understanding of local issues it's important to talk to community groups on a regular basis. To find relevant community groups, you can ask local organisations that support the voluntary sector or use any local authority neighbourhood teams or community development workers that you have in your area. The Compact says that it's important to have this regular dialogue with community groups even if you already have community representatives on your formal committees, and if you are not currently running a consultation.
- **Make it easy for community groups to get in touch with you.** Sometimes it can be hard for groups to know who to contact in a large organisation, so try to publicise information about who does what and keep it up-to-date. When staff leave, try to ensure that any relationships they have with community groups are passed on to someone else. If public bodies cover different geographical areas (e.g. perhaps there are two Primary Care Trusts in one local authority area) try to coordinate between you to avoid making community groups do all the leg work.
- **Take the views of community groups seriously.** You may not always be able to act on the suggestions of community groups – when this is the case you should explain the reasons why to the groups themselves. The Compact specifically mentions the need to give feedback, a quick phone call or email will show groups that you take their views seriously and help to build trust.

Guidance for organisations that support the local voluntary sector

- **Build relationships with community groups in your area.** Some community groups may not understand the role of your organisation, or feel that you are not relevant to them. Making an effort to talk to all groups in your area and telling them about the services you can provide, will help you to make sure you are representing the whole of the voluntary sector in your area.
- **Helping a community group to find the right person to speak to can make a big difference.** Offering advice to community groups on who to contact in local public bodies can be really helpful.

3. Using and renting space

Some community groups hold their meetings or activities in spaces owned by local public bodies. For example, a music group may use a village hall to practice or a self-help group may have monthly meetings at a community centre.

Guidance for community groups

- **Find out whether the space you are using is owned by a local public body.** It is useful to know this, because if a space is owned by a local public body, the Compact offers you protection (see below).
- **If a local public body changes the arrangements for using their space, you can challenge this.** If you are not given enough notice to find a new venue for your group or are not consulted before rent agreements are changed, tell the public body. The Compact requires public bodies consult you and to give you enough notice of any important changes, so you can remind the public body of their responsibilities.
- **Find out about any conditions to using spaces and make sure you follow them.** There may be restrictions about the types of activities that are allowed and you may be responsible for health and safety issues. The Compact says that you should be aware of such restrictions, as using space responsibly can help to avoid problems in the future.

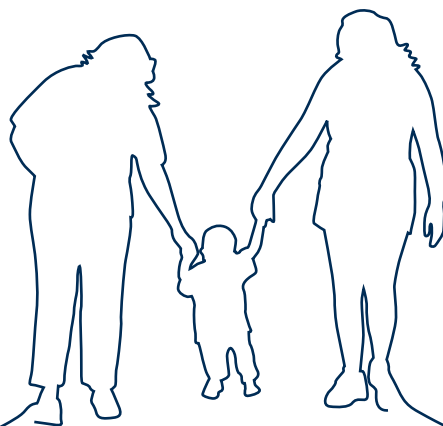
Guidance for local public bodies

- **Be clear about the arrangements for using your space.** The Compact says that it is important to be very clear about terms and conditions. This means you need to ensure community groups that use your space know what is expected from them, including what activities are allowed and who is responsible for any risks such as health and safety. Try to offer the same arrangements to all community groups who use the space, so that everyone is treated fairly. If there are good reasons to not do so (e.g. to charge less to groups who are struggling financially) make sure everyone knows about this and understands why you made the decision.
- **Consult community groups before you change arrangements for how spaces are used.** If you want to change rental agreements or decide that a certain building is no longer appropriate for use, consider the impact this may have on groups that use the space. The Compact suggests that you do this by consulting the groups that will be affected. You should also give enough notice of the decision once it has been made, so that groups have the opportunity to search for an alternative venue if they need to.

- **If you rent space to an external organisation, encourage them to treat any community groups that they allow to use it fairly.** The Compact says that you should pass down your responsibilities to other organisations you contract with. This means that if you own a building, you should expect anyone renting it to treat community groups in the same way that you would. This includes consulting them and giving them notice if the arrangements for using the building change.

Guidance for organisations that support the local voluntary sector

- **If you rent space from a local public body and allow community groups to use it, make sure you treat them fairly.** This is because the local public body's responsibilities under the Compact, are passed down to you. It includes making sure you consult groups if you are planning to make any changes to the arrangements for using the space, such as room hire costs.
- **If you are offering development support to community groups, remember that helping them to find space can make a big difference.** Offering advice on how groups can use or rent space owned by local public bodies can be really helpful.



4. Grant funding

Some public bodies give small grants to community groups. These small amounts of money help groups to develop their activities or fund tasks such as sending out newsletters, buying equipment, or organising events.

Guidance for community groups

- **Tell the public body if you find that paperwork is too complicated or if you are unclear about anything.** The Compact requires public bodies to be clear about funding arrangements from the beginning and to ensure that small grants do not involve complicated application forms and paperwork. If you do not feel that this is the case, don't be afraid to remind the public body of their obligations under the Compact.
- **Make sure you are able to manage and account for the money that you are given.** You may be required to keep receipts for anything you buy, or keep records about your activities. The Compact says that it's important to make sure you are clear about any things you need to do at the beginning, and use the money for the purpose it was given. This will help to avoid any problems later on.

- **If you apply for a grant for a particular activity, make sure you are aware of any risks.** For example, if you apply for money to run an activity day for children, you may be responsible for meeting health and safety requirements and ensuring any volunteers have had Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks.

This guide is about what to do if you are already applying for a grant. However, it cannot offer any advice about how to find grant funding opportunities or how to ensure your grant application is successful, as this is not covered in the Compact. If you would like a grant and don't know where to go, a good first step is to contact the organisation in your area that provides support for voluntary groups (see page 11).

Guidance for local public bodies

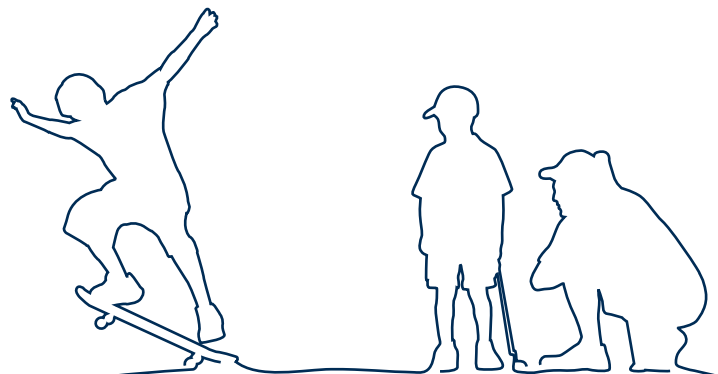
- **Ask community groups what they think before setting up or changing a small grants programme.** You could ask a number of groups for their views or take your proposals to an existing community meeting, community centre or forum. This is important as the Compact requires you to involve community groups in planning any funding programmes designed for them.
- **Make sure that you use simple paperwork for giving small grants.** The Compact says it's not appropriate to use the same applications forms and paperwork for small grants as those used for larger ones. It is possible to ensure accountability for very small amounts of public money, without the use of very long forms and complicated paperwork.
- **Design any application processes to be accessible for small groups.** Allow enough time for groups to write their applications and be clear about how applications will be assessed – these are requirements in the Compact. If possible, try to accept both online and paper based applications. It can also be a good idea to have support available for groups who may have queries about the application process, for example a phone number to call or a local 'meet the funder' event.
- **Remember that offering practical help and advice can sometimes be more helpful than grant funding.** Some community groups will benefit more from community development, access to space or training courses, rather than grant funding. The Compact says that it's always useful to consider which type of support is most appropriate.
- **If you are funding a group to deliver a particular activity, offer them support in managing any potential risks.** For example, if you are funding a group to put on a community festival, offer them advice about ensuring the event meets health and safety requirements.
- **Ensure everyone is clear about expectations at the beginning.** The Compact says that it is important to be very clear about terms and conditions. So you need to be clear about what groups will need to do in return for the funding. For example: do they need to keep receipts for things that they buy? Are there things they can't use the money for? Do they need to keep records about their activities?
- **Offer to make payments in advance.** Most community groups will need to receive all or part of a grant before they can start running the activities it is meant for. The Compact is clear that you should offer the possibility of payment in advance of expenditure, depending on the amounts of money involved.

- **Give as much notice as you can if you need to stop or change any grant funding.** It's important to be as clear as you can from the beginning whether a grant is likely to be offered again in the future. If things change, the Compact says that you should give at least three months notice before ending a grant, and make sure you explain the reasons for the decision to each group and offer an opportunity for them to respond.
- **Make sure that as far as possible all the community groups interested in a particular grant have an equal opportunity to access it.** Think about which groups are likely to be interested in the funding and then ensure they are aware of the opportunity. You can do this by publicising grant opportunities widely within the communities that you identify and ensuring application processes are simple. The Compact specifically mentions that you should be aware that giving funding to groups that work with one particular section of society (e.g. young people or people from a particular ethnic background) can help to build better relations between communities.
- **If you give a grant to a particular group, they should still feel able to criticise or campaign against you.** The Compact protects the independence of community groups, as well as all other voluntary organisations. Try to make sure that any groups receiving grants are aware that the funding does not restrict their independence.

All of the above guidance should also be followed if you are giving local residents a say in how you allocate your budget for community projects (often this approach is called 'participatory budgeting'). As local public bodies do not tend to offer contracts to community groups, contract processes are not covered in this guide, but you can read about them in the main Compact document.

Guidance for organisations that support the local voluntary sector

- **Consider offering support to community groups on how to manage grants.** If they accept grant funding from a public body, community groups need to be aware of any risks and account for the money responsibly as set out in the Compact. You may be able to offer practical help and advice in doing this.
- **Think about whether you can help community groups that don't have a bank account.** Some groups may only want to access small amounts of public money but find they cannot do this without a bank account. You may be able to 'bankroll' funding for them or act as an 'accountable body'. This way the community group can stay focused on its activities without having to deal with the administrative side.
- **If you are applying to a local public body for funding to work with community groups, make sure some of these groups have been involved in developing your proposal.** The Compact says that voluntary organisations should involve the people they work with when designing programmes or applying for money. Doing this will also help you to make sure you are offering the sort of support that community groups need.



5. When something goes wrong

Unfortunately, sometimes things go wrong in relationships between local public bodies and community groups. For example, a residents association might be annoyed if their local council didn't consult them on plans to change the bus routes in their neighbourhood. Or a council might be concerned if they gave a grant to a youth club to spend on new equipment, and the club didn't keep copies of the receipts.

Guidance for all parties

- **Try to avoid problems by making sure you look at the Compact at the beginning of relationships.** If everyone follows the Compact (or uses this guide) they will be aware of their responsibilities, and it should avoid any problems.
- **If things go wrong try to resolve them in an amicable way.** The best thing to do is for everyone to discuss the situation honestly and try to come up with a solution that works for everyone. You might want to use the specific commitments set out in the Compact to decide exactly what has gone wrong and negotiate a settlement. Above all, the Compact says it's really important for people to respect each other's different ways of working and to make sure they act with integrity.
- **Find out about any local dispute procedures.** Sometimes problems cannot be solved informally, and if this happens there are dispute schemes that can help. Most Local Compacts have special procedures for resolving disputes, such as panels of people who meet to investigate problems and make judgements. You may want to use one of these procedures if a problem needs to be resolved more formally.

Resources

For more information about the issues raised in this guide, you might find some of the following resources useful:

Websites

www.thecompact.org.uk where you can find:

- The national Compact agreement
- Compact Implementation Guide for the BME sector
- Your Local Compact agreement and details for how to get involved in it
- The Compact Knowledge Bank.

www.compactvoice.org.uk where you can find information and guidance on the Compact designed for voluntary organisations, and join an online network.

www.navca.org.uk where you can find out about organisations that support the voluntary sector and search for those local to you.

Guides

How your Council works: A handy guide for community groups
www.urbanforum.org.uk/files/ufpublic/how_your_council_works_handy_guide_2008_09.pdf

Advice and support

The Commission for the Compact is the independent body responsible for overseeing the Compact in England. Contact the Commission for impartial, independent, and expert advice on Compact implementation.

Email: advice@thecompact.org.uk

Tel: 0121 237 5900

Compact Voice is the voice of the voluntary and community sector on the Compact. It provides training and resources, and represents the voluntary sector's concerns to the government. Compact Voice has a network of over 2,000 members across the sector, including many community organisations, which you can join on its website.

Email: compact@compactvoice.org.uk

Tel: 020 7520 2451

Further information

This publication is available on
the Compact website at:
www.thecompact.org.uk/publications

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Web: www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk

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