



# THE COUNTY DURHAM COMPACT

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

June 2010

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## Introducing the County Durham Compact

What it is, how the document is laid out and what some of the terminology means.

The Compact is a partnership agreement between the **public sector** and the **third sector** in County Durham. The **public sector** (for example: the local authority, the NHS, the police and the fire service) and the **third sector** (for example: voluntary and community sector organisations no matter how large or small and other non government organisations like social enterprises) have the shared aim of making County Durham the best possible place to live and work. The **County Durham Compact** has been developed to offer guiding principles on how the two sectors can work together in partnership to meet this objective.

The Compact embraces the common set of principles that underpin our working practices. They are to agree to work together in ways that promote:

- **respect** for each other and our communities,
- operating in an open and **honest** manner,
- recognition and value of the **independence** of the third sector,
- the value of the **diverse** nature of communities in County Durham
- ensuring that everyone, no matter what their circumstances, is treated **equally** and fairly,
- the **empowerment** of people and communities to deliver change that meets their needs,
- the values of volunteering and the appreciation of the impact that **volunteering** activity has on our society,

The Compact is divided into three sections providing guidance on how to work together on:

<b>Policy development</b>	<b>pages 8 - 11</b>
<b>Allocating resources</b>	<b>pages 12 - 20</b>
<b>Advancing equality</b>	<b>pages 21 - 24</b>

Each section is divided into commitments for:

The public sector
The third sector

At the end of the document there is a section that offers advice to both sectors on how to make the Compact work and how to tackle problems or issues that may arise if organisations have failed to operate in a way that is compliant with the principles of the Compact.

### **Policy development**

By involving and consulting with community groups and organisations in County Durham the two sectors recognise that by working in partnership they are able to bring their combined knowledge together to develop policies and strategies to meet the needs of people and communities more effectively.

### **Allocating resources**

By working together the two sectors are able to identify and design services and initiatives that will address the needs of communities at all levels across the county

and as a result ensure that resources particularly financial ones are allocated in ways that are most beneficial, effective and accountable.

### **Advancing equality**

Recognising and valuing all people in our society regardless of their background, race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, culture or religious belief is a principle shared by all sectors in County Durham. The Compact identifies ways in which the public and third sectors can work more effectively together to ensure that we all promote treating people equally and fairly and celebrate the rich diversity of our communities.

Finally the Compact provides guidance on how to make the Compact work and how to resolve differences including providing the contact details of organisations that may be able to offer advice and guidance on Compact issues.

Please note that we expect this document to be an active working agreement and after the consultation period an appendix will be added to the end of the Compact. The appendix will act as a signpost to other relevant documents that are currently being developed and will be developed in the future.

## County Durham and the Compact

The Compact outlines the relationship between the public sector and the third sector in County Durham, enabling them to work together more effectively to strengthen communities and improve people's lives. While there are many differences between the public and third sector in County Durham, – which should be acknowledged and respected – the sectors have much in common; principally, their mutual desire to help enhance the quality of life for the people and communities that they serve.

County Durham is a diverse County the historic district areas of which were brought together under one Unitary Authority in April 2009. This Compact is not only a response to the National Compact Refresh but also a response to new mechanisms/mergers and partnerships that have developed including those within the NHS, Durham County Council, Area Action Partnerships and new collaborative and partnership arrangements within the third sector (the voluntary and community sector). Fresh ownership and commitment is needed at all levels for a new invigorated County Durham Compact.

The economic history of the county, its agricultural heritage and the development of coal mining in particular, have shaped and defined the cultural tradition of the county and its many communities. The county's people have a strong sense of identity with the county and with their town/village, and there are distinctive local cultures and senses of community, particularly in the smaller settlements. Due to the settlement patterns in the county there are many communities that experience problems associated with remoteness and isolation and as a result may have wide ranging problems and different needs. In many areas in County Durham the third sector has evolved by identifying those needs and works to address them wherever possible.

The principles underpinning this Compact recognise that the development of strong, sustainable communities cannot take place if residents are not given the opportunity to participate in decision-making and make a positive contribution to improve the places in which they live and work. Because of its knowledge and engagement with the wide variety and differing needs of communities in County Durham the third sector has an essential role to play in bringing community voices into partnership and agency working, building social capital in communities and delivering accessible services.

## Compact principles

The public sector and the third sector share a common set of principles, which are at the heart of what they are trying to achieve. These principles make it clear that the Compact is neither a set of rules nor a bureaucratic burden, but a way of working that can help deliver real outcomes and improvements for people and communities. These principles have been created to help the public sector and the third sector in County Durham build relationships and work together effectively in partnership.

The Compact's commitments put these shared principles into practice. They provide the framework to reflect distinctive local issues and partnership agreements

### **The shared principles of the Compact are:**

•**Respect:** The public sector and the third sector are accountable in different ways, but both need to act with transparency and integrity. Effective partnerships are built on mutual understanding and an appreciation of the differences between partners of the Compact.

•**Honesty:** It is only through open communication that strong partnerships can be built and maintained. Full and frank discussions should be the basis for resolving difficulties.

•**Independence:** The independence of the third sector in County Durham is recognised and supported. This includes its right within the law to campaign, to comment on and to challenge public sector policy (whatever funding or other relationship may exist with public sector) and to determine and manage its own affairs.

•**Diversity:** The public sector and the third sector in County Durham value a thriving civil society, which brings innovation and choice through a multitude of voices.

•**Equality:** Fairness for everyone, regardless of their background, is a fundamental goal, and the public sector and the third sector in County Durham will work together to achieve this.

•**Citizen empowerment:** By working together, the public sector and the third sector can deliver change that is built around communities and people, meeting their needs and reflecting their choices.

•**Volunteering:** The energy and commitment of people giving their time for the public good contributes to a vibrant society, and should be recognised and appreciated.

## The Compact commitments

### Involvement in policy development

The third sector organisations in County Durham have expertise in many areas, often because they work directly with people and groups on the ground. This allows them to understand the needs of their beneficiaries and provide new and effective answers to problems. Involving and consulting the third sector in County Durham can help the public sector develop policies that meet the needs of people and communities.

Involving the third sector in County Durham in policy development is a continuous process and includes a range of methods – from informal engagement to full-scale public consultation.

The success of the Compact depends on the commitment of the public sector and the third sector to promote it, agree to it and develop it further. It needs to be the foundation for a process and should be used to make a real and positive difference to joint working and partnership relationships so that any strategies or policies are developed in line with Compact principles.

The Compact is consistent with the Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Government's Code of practice on consultation and the Cabinet Office's handbook *Better together: improving consultation with the third sector* and should be used together with these documents.

#### References:

*HM public sector, Code of practice on consultation, July 2008*

*Cabinet Office, Better together: improving consultation with the third sector, 2008*

## Involvement in policy development

### Commitments for public sector

#### 1 When to involve?

Involving the third sector in County Durham in policy development at the earliest stage possible will allow the public sector to get the most out of the process. This will lead to more effective policies, programmes and services being developed.

#### The public sector undertakes to:

- 1.1 Involve the third sector from the earliest stages of policy development on issues that are likely to affect it. This can include empowering the third sector in County Durham to start discussions with beneficiaries and within affected communities themselves.
- 1.2 Inform the sector of progress in developing policy.
- 1.3 Identify implications for the third sector in County Durham when assessing the impact of new policies, legislation and guidance.

#### 2 Who to involve?

Spending time and resources helping third sector organisations make their voices heard helps ensure that their knowledge can contribute to policy development.

#### The public sector undertakes to:

- 2.1 Identify and remove barriers, such as language barriers, which may prevent third sector organisations from contributing to policy development.
- 2.2 Endeavour to remove jargon from policy documents and recognise the need for resources that some third sector organisations may require in order to contribute to policy development.
- 2.3 Encourage and facilitate responses from the full range of third sector organisations in County Durham that are likely to have a view.
- 2.4 Support the development of third sector infrastructure. Infrastructure bodies enable third sector organisations to help people and communities more effectively, through services such as capacity building, representation and other forms of support.
- 2.5 Identify where there are costs to third sector organisations as a result of partnership work with the public sector and offer support and/or resources on a clear and consistent basis. This can be especially important for infrastructure bodies that are helping to organise or run consultations.

## Involvement in policy development

### Commitments for public sector

#### 3 How to involve?

Third Sector organisations can provide stronger and better-informed responses if the consultation methods used are consistent and suited to the purpose and audience, and if enough time is given for people to respond. Either formal or informal consultation methods may be appropriate depending on the circumstances and on the type and sizes of the organisation.

#### The Public Sector undertakes to:

3.1 Avoid compromising or undermining the independence of the third sector in County Durham (whatever financial or other relationship may exist between them).

3.2 Give appropriate and timely notice of forthcoming consultations where possible and practical so that organisations can plan ahead.

3.3 Publicise consultation exercises widely and make sure they are accessible to the people they are intended to reach.

3.4 Use a variety of different consultation methods and explain the reasons for selecting them.

3.5 Explain which matters are open to change as a result of the consultation and which are not. Provide feedback to explain how respondents have influenced policy decisions, including where respondents' views have not been acted upon.

3.6 Agree reasonable time, and where appropriate, provide resources for third sector organisations to involve their service users, beneficiaries, members, volunteers and trustees in preparing responses.

3.7 Conduct formal 12-week written consultations as the norm, and in the rare cases where this is not possible, provide a justifiable explanation for shorter time-frames. e.g. if the Third sector has already been involved in strategy development prior to consultation.

3.8 Make third sector organisations aware of the consulting organisation's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Where appropriate, protect the confidentiality of information that has been supplied by a third sector organisation for the consultation.

#### Reference:

*For guidance on different methods, please see Cabinet Office, Better together: improving consultation with the third sector, 2008.*

## Involvement in policy development

### Commitments for the third sector in County Durham

#### 4 Effective involvement

When the third sector in County Durham engages actively in policy development, it helps build public sector trust in the sector, establishing valuable links between the two sectors and encouraging the public sector to commit actively to listening to third sector views.

#### **Third sector organisations undertake to:**

4.1 Involve and include a wide range and diversity of service users, beneficiaries, members, volunteers and trustees when preparing responses to consultations.

4.2 Provide feed back to third sector members/organisations involved in consultations on information presented to the public sector and on any outcomes agreed.

4.3 Be clear about whose views are being represented and what those views are. This includes explaining whether views have been gathered directly (and from what audience), or whether the response is based on the organisation's knowledge and experience of the issues.

4.4 Make sure all research and information that is presented to public sector is accurate and credible. Explain where the information comes from and if there is conflicting evidence.

4.5 Be aware of the consulting organisation's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Where appropriate, respect the confidentiality of information that has been supplied by the public sector for the consultation.

4.6 Promote public sector consultations across the third sector, where appropriate.

4.7 Accept that, in rare cases, consultations may need to take place in shorter time-frames than 12 weeks.

# The Compact commitments

## Allocating resources

Third sector organisations (including those that receive no public funding) are often in a good position to understand what people want and how their needs can be met. By working together and co-designing programmes and services, the public sector and the third sector in County Durham can deliver policies and programmes and services that are built around communities and individuals, meeting their needs and reflecting their choices.

This section reflects good practice in commissioning, and is relevant to the entire commissioning cycle. It is consistent with, and reflected in, the following publications:

Reference:

- *HM Treasury, Improving financial relationships with the third sector: guidance to funders and purchasers, May 2006*
- *National Audit Office, Financial relationships with third sector organisations, a decision support tool for public bodies, May 2006*
- *HM Treasury, Managing public money, October 2007*
- *National Audit Office, Intelligent monitoring, June 2009*
- *Cabinet Office, Principles of proportionate monitoring and reporting*
- *Commission for the Compact, Commissioning Guidance, February 2009*

## Allocating resources

### Commitments for the public sector

#### Planning

In County Durham third sector organisations are often in a good position to understand the needs of people and communities and provide innovative solutions to those meet needs. Involving third sector organisations in designing new programmes and services, and focusing on results, can help the public sector provide the right resources, identify risks and solutions, and achieve better outcomes.

#### **The public sector undertakes to:**

5.1 Plan new programmes and services with a focus on outcomes, providing scope for innovation wherever possible e.g. involve the third sector to identify needs.

5.2 Assess the impact that third sector activity has on communities, and be clear about the outcomes that need to be delivered.

5.3 Work with third sector organisations to understand public service reform and support the sector in responding to changes.

5.4 Begin planning programmes and services in consultation with the third sector in County Durham to identify needs.

5.5 Ensure that third sector organisations that are likely to have a view on the programme or service are involved from the beginning.

## 6 Choosing finance and funding options

A clear understanding of the impact of funding decisions and the important role that grants can have on local supply and service provision will enable commissioners to choose the most suitable funding mechanism to secure the most appropriate organisation to deliver outcomes.

### **The Public Sector undertakes to:**

6.1 Consider different ways of funding for organisations working with the public sector. These methods could include grants, procurement, loan finance, training, use of premises, or other support. A clear rationale should be provided for the decision where this is needed.

6.2 Ensure that the size and scale of funding arrangements reflects the project's objectives and attracts organisations best placed to deliver the required outcomes.

6.3 Avoid being over prescriptive and disproportionate with risk as this may act as a barrier for third sector providers.

6.4 Advocate that prime and sub-contractors and all other public and private bodies distributing public money, work within the Compact by making it a requirement of funding arrangements.

6.5 Take into account the time it takes for organisations to form appropriate partnerships, to develop accountable working arrangements, and submit bids.

6.6 Apply the Compact when distributing European funding. Where conflicts arise with European regulations, discuss the potential effects and possible solutions with the third sector in County Durham.

#### Reference:

*Office of public sector Commerce (OGC), Buy and make a difference - how to address social issues in public procurement, 2008*

## Allocating resources

### Commitments for public sector

#### 7 Application and bidding processes

A well-managed application process that is proportionate to the desired objectives will encourage a diverse range of organisations to apply, helping to ensure that the most appropriate organisations are found for the role.

Robust consideration should be given to how services will be secured and the impact of the chosen approach on the supplier market. Each stage (funding options, specification, pre-qualification, invitation to tender and tender evaluation) should be fair, proportionate, transparent, well communicated, clear accessible and appropriately supported. Processes should not create unnecessary bureaucratic barriers that disadvantage potentially competent providers from applying.

#### The Public Sector undertakes to:

7.1 Ensure that application documents are:

- Publicised widely
- Proportionate to the nature of the risk and the amount of funding being allocated
- Contain enough information to allow organisations to make informed decisions.

7.2 Require that application and bidding processes across funding bodies are consistent with overarching Office of public sector Commerce (OGC) guidance on public procurement.

7.3 Allow enough time and additional and appropriate support for organisations of all sizes to apply, as well as for consortia and partnership working bids.

7.4 Be clear and communicate effectively what outcomes will be required and how bids will be scored and assessed.

7.5 When making decisions that are most economically advantageous take into account the wider community benefits at the award stage or when identifying procurement needs.

7.6 Choose the most suitable provider to deliver the required outcomes so that individuals and local communities receive the most appropriate services and enjoy the greatest impact.

#### 8 Understanding costs

Funding bodies have an interest in ensuring that organisations can manage and administer their activities effectively. Support functions are vital to achieving this

#### The public sector undertakes to:

8.1 Recognise that it is appropriate for third sector providers to include relevant management, overhead and administrative costs in applications.

8.2 Accept the recovery of costs associated with volunteering, such as managing volunteers and reimbursing expenses.

8.3 Be consistent across sectors when requesting cost breakdowns from organisations.

## **9 Making decisions**

Award criteria should be designed to allow the funder to select the provider that is best placed to achieve the most economically advantageous outcomes.

### **The public sector undertakes to:**

9.1 Commit to providing long term funding for sustainability, ideally three years as the norm, where this is not possible explain clearly what alternative funding arrangements could deliver the same outcomes for communities.

9.2 Make funding decisions and agree with the relevant organisations well in advance of the expected start date, (ideally three months). Where shorter time scales are required, explanations should be provided.

9.3 Provide timely and constructive feedback to unsuccessful organisations.

### **Allocating resources**

### **Commitments for public sector**

## **10 Agreeing delivery terms**

Agreeing terms in advance ensures a clear and shared understanding of respective responsibilities and allows the organisations involved to focus on delivery.

### **The public sector undertakes to:**

10.1 Discuss the risks to the project and agree delivery terms before a financial agreement is signed.

10.2 Allocate risks to the organisation(s) best equipped to manage them. Ensure that terms of delivery and risks are proportionate to the nature and value of the opportunity.

10.3 Agree to the process for managing performance and respond to changes in circumstances before signing a financial agreement.

10.4 Agree how under spends in grants will be managed.

## **11 Making payments**

Payment terms which suit the type of service and the organisation involved will increase the likelihood of the desired outcomes being achieved.

### **The public sector undertakes to:**

11.1 Agree payment terms linked to the size and nature of the service and organisation. This may be particularly relevant in regard to grants and for smaller organisations where payments may need to be made in advance of expenditure.

11.2 To make payments within 28 working days of invoices being received.

### Commitments for public sector

#### 12 Monitoring and reporting

Appropriate monitoring reduces costs, time and resources for both sides, and means that time and effort can be focused on delivering results.

##### **The public sector undertakes to:**

12.1 Discuss and agree how outcomes will be monitored before a contract or funding agreement is signed.

12.2 Be clear about what information is being requested, why, and how it will be used.

12.3 Recognise that although some funding streams have standardised monitoring arrangements, wherever possible monitoring and reporting should be proportionate to the nature and value of the opportunity. Focus on evidence that is meaningful to the beneficiaries of organisations, as well as to funders.

12.4 Ensure that service users and third sector organisations are involved by getting their perspective of performance.

12.5 Aim to standardise monitoring and reporting arrangements between public sector agencies.

12.6 Ensure that agreed monitoring is consistently and regularly applied to organisations in all sectors.

12.7 If the project is encountering problems, discuss and agree a timetable of actions to improve performance before making a decision to end a financial relationship.

#### 13 Concluding a financial relationship

It is important to plan ahead for the end of funding, in order to reduce its negative impact on the people involved, the stability of the third sector organisation and future partnerships.

##### **The public sector undertakes to:**

13.1 Consult with the third sector in order to assess the impact on beneficiaries, service users and volunteers before deciding to reduce or end funding.

13.2 Where there are restrictions on future resources, discuss as early as possible the potential implications with third sector organisations in County Durham.

13.3 Give a minimum of three months' notice in writing when ending a funding relationship or other support, and provide a clear accountable rationale for the decision.

13.4 Give organisations an opportunity to respond to the ending of funding and consider the response before making a final decision.

13.5 Review with relevant third sector organisations in County Durham programmes and services to inform future practice.

13.6 Involve relevant organisations in the discussion when planning to renew funding and give advance notice of continuation of funding.

## Allocating resources

### Commitments for the third sector in County Durham

#### 14 Contributing to planning

When third sector organisations in County Durham contribute to the planning and design of programmes and services, it helps ensure that they reflect the needs of beneficiaries.

#### Third sector organisations in County Durham undertake to:

14.1 Involve users, beneficiaries, members, volunteers and trustees when designing or reviewing programmes and services.

14.2 Provide feedback to contributors on information that is presented to the public sector and on what the outcomes are.

14.3 Be clear about who they are representing, in what capacity, and on what basis they are making that representation.

14.4 Be more pro-active in investigating funding opportunities and take more action to be “tender ready”.

#### 15 Making applications and bids

Organisations should ensure that they are eligible to apply for funding and should check that the objectives of the funding programme or service are in line with the organisation’s mission before applying.

#### Third sector organisations in County Durham undertake to:

15.1 Be clear about their reasons for bidding or applying to deliver programmes or services.

15.2 Be clear that they can deliver the required outcomes.

15.3 Show that they understand how new funding will impact on their organisation, relate to its mission, and contribute to its income mix.

15.4 Ensure they have a robust and clear understanding of the relevant overhead and associated costs to include when applying for resources.

15.5 Ensure that they have in place robust and appropriate good practice policies and procedures.

15.6 Be clear about which organisation is the accountable body in partnership or consortia working arrangements.

15.7 Apply Compact principles when sub-contracting to other third sector organisations.

15.8 Recognise the need to develop approaches that enable third sector organisations to compete in the European arena.

## Allocating resources

### Commitments for the third sector in County Durham

#### 16 Agreeing delivery terms

Delivery and payment terms should be proportionate, in order to ensure that the project can run smoothly and focus on maximising outcomes for beneficiaries.

#### Third sector organisations in County Durham undertake to:

16.1 Review and identify any risks associated with delivering programmes and services, and agree delivery terms before a contract or funding agreement is signed.

16.2 Have appropriate governance arrangements in place and ensure that everyone involved understands and agrees to delivery terms.

16.3 Be clear about payment terms and, if appropriate, demonstrate why payment in advance is required.

16.4 Recognise that it is a requirement for funders to ask for public recognition of their funding.

16.5 Have appropriate systems in place to manage and account for finances.

#### 17 Monitoring and reporting

Managing funding effectively requires good monitoring. It promotes better working relationships with funders and ensures that performance is managed properly.

#### Third sector organisations in County Durham undertake to:

17.1 Understand monitoring and reporting requirements before a financial agreement is accepted.

17.2 Recognise that monitoring, both internally and externally, is an element of good management practice.

17.3 Ensure that systems are in place to deliver the reporting required.

17.4 Give early notice to funders of significant changes in management, or financial or other risks.

17.5 Be open and transparent in reporting.

### Commitments for the third sector in County Durham

#### **18 When a financial relationship ends**

Contingency planning for the end of a contract or grant helps minimise the impact on beneficiaries. Planning in this way can help with long-term sustainability.

#### **Third sector organisations in County Durham undertake to:**

18.1 Plan for the end of funding to reduce any potential impact on beneficiaries and the organisation.

18.2 Contribute positively to reviews of programmes or services to inform future practice.

# The Compact commitments

## Advancing equality

### Working together for equality

Equality for everyone, regardless of their background, is a core value of our society, shared by the public and third sectors. Over the last four decades, discrimination legislation and related policy have played an important role in helping to make Britain a more equal society. As both society itself and equality legislation continue to evolve, it is crucial that the public and third sectors work well together to achieve equality and fairness for everyone.

This section of the Compact recognises that all partners in County Durham have a vital role to play in helping to create a more equal society and sets out commitments that will help both sectors work together to achieve their equality goals.

The law protects people from discrimination on the basis of a number of different characteristics, including race, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, disability and gender reassignment. **These are referred to in this document as ‘protected characteristics’.**

The histories and issues facing people who share these characteristics are complex and often unique. This diversity should be understood and respected.

### The role of all partners in County Durham in promoting equality

In order to work towards its equality objectives, the public sector needs insight and knowledge of third sector organisations in County Durham that work at the front line with people who have protected characteristics. These groups have unique experiences and different issues around access to services and involvement in civil society, which should be taken into account in policy making.

Whether or not third sector organisations in County Durham focus their activities on people with a protected characteristic, they can provide a vital role in delivering programmes and services. They also promote community cohesion by giving people the tailored support they need to play a full part in the community.

A good working relationship between the third sector in County Durham and the public sector will help to meet the needs of the people they serve or represent and reduce inequality. The Compact plays a key role in helping this relationship to work, not just through the commitments within this section, but by ensuring that organisations which promote equality are allocated sufficient resources and benefit from effective and relevant policy development, as set out in the other sections of the Compact.

### Commitments for the public sector

#### 19 Promoting equality and diversity

Promoting equality and diversity is a shared goal of the public and third sectors in County Durham.

#### The public sector undertakes to:

19.1 Work with the third sector in County Durham towards eliminating unlawful discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity. Put strategies in place to help achieve these aims in line with existing public duties.

19.2 Where appropriate, work with organisations in the third sector in County Durham that represent people with protected characteristics, to understand their specific needs and design appropriate services.

19.3 Ensure that all third sector organisations in County Durham, including those that serve people with protected characteristics, have equal opportunities to access public sector funding programmes. This includes access to funds to build capacity, and to prepare and deliver projects.

19.4 Be clear about any actions on equality that third sector organisations in County Durham will be expected to undertake if they are funded to deliver programmes.

19.5 If a strategic grant is withdrawn from an organisation serving people with a specific protected characteristic, assess the need to reallocate the grant to another organisation serving the same group and ensure that there are no gaps in services.

19.6 Work with the third sector in County Durham to identify and remove any barriers that prevent volunteering by people with protected characteristics.

### Commitments for public sector

#### 20 Representation and infrastructure

Although the public sector already supports third sector organisations in County Durham that give a voice to diverse groups it can take some simple steps to improve the effectiveness of promoting equality and diversity and engaging these organisations.

#### The public sector undertakes to:

20.1 Acknowledge that funding for organisations that serve people with only one protected characteristic can promote cohesion.

20.2 Enable infrastructure organisations representing people with protected characteristics to participate in policy development, consultation or other activities, by supporting them appropriately.

20.3 Recognise that groups which involve people with protected characteristics at community level may be small or informal, and engage with these groups in a way that suits their working methods.

### Commitments for the third sector in County Durham

#### 21 Promoting equality and diversity

An important way in which the third sector in County Durham can promote equality effectively is by working with the public sector on equality and diversity issues.

##### **Third sector organisations in County Durham undertake to:**

21.1 Take practical action in partnership with the public sector to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and build community links.

21.2 Show committed leadership to promote equality and celebrate diversity at all levels within organisations and, where necessary, put strategies in place to achieve it.

#### 22 Representation and infrastructure

Third sector organisations in County Durham are ideally placed to represent the views of people with protected characteristics. However, it is important that these organisations carry out this role effectively and transparently, and that their activities serve all relevant groups.

##### **Third sector organisations in County Durham undertake to:**

22.1 Be clear on who is being represented and how their views have been gathered.

22.2 When selecting representatives from organisations and communities, be clear who they represent and with what legitimacy.

22.3 Where appropriate, support infrastructure organisations that can promote the interests of people with protected characteristics.

22.4 Identify groups that are in danger of being marginalised, excluded, or are currently underrepresented in voluntary activity, and put in place measures to promote their involvement.

## Making the Compact Work

The Compact should be viewed as an active agreement that sets out values and principles outlining a way of engaging and behaving between the public and third sectors. It is a policy tool that should underpin working together in partnership however there may be occasions when both the public and third sectors need to refer to the Compact to resolve a problem. Using the Compact is a two-way process that offers a way forward to tackle issues that may arise.

Ways in which third sector organisations can make use of the Compact to resolve problems with public sector agencies:

Identify the key decision makers and write to them in terms of the Compact, identifying where there may have been a breach of the Compact and requesting that they investigate and justify the decision.

Work with voluntary sector contacts in the public sector and get assistance with cases in a way that complements their work.

Show how the Compact supports good working practice and policy development that all public sector agencies should abide by and demonstrate how the integration of the Compact into working practices by staff at all levels provides evidence of good practice to the Audit Commission.

Ways in which the public sector can make use of the Compact to resolve disputes with the third sector organisations:

Identify the key person in the organisation and write to them in terms of the Compact explaining what the problem is outlining a plan to come together to resolve the issue.

Work with third sector organisations in a spirit of co-operation to bring the dispute to an end.

Refer to policy lead from central government, seek to reinforce Compact principles and understand that a Compact way of working together can help enhance relationships with the third sector.

## **Resolving differences**

By signing up to the County Durham Compact the public and third sectors in County Durham have demonstrated their commitment to it. However, sometimes partners may fail to comply with the Compact and on these occasions those involved should explain why.

Disagreements over meeting the Compact commitments should be resolved, amicably and informally, between partners through open dialogue and negotiation before they escalate.

The Compact principles should form the basis of the relationship. Where issues are not covered in the commitments, compromise and discussion should be based on these principles.

When things do go wrong (as they sometimes do) there should be an open admission of the fact and an honest discussion to resolve the situation. The Compact is there to help build effective partnerships, and this includes navigating difficult times. Ignoring it would be both unacceptable and unhelpful. The Compact should be at the heart of dispute resolution as a constructive tool towards better partnerships.

For further advice on how to resolve disagreements please contact the Office of the Third Sector (for the public sector) and Compact Voice (for the third sector)

## **Office of the Third Sector**

Created in May 2006, the Office of the Third Sector leads work across government to support the environment for a thriving third sector (charities, voluntary and community groups, social enterprises, cooperatives and mutuals), enabling the sector to campaign for change, deliver public services, promote social enterprise and strengthen communities.

### **Office of the Third Sector**

2nd Floor, Admiralty Arch  
South Side

The Mall

London SW1A 2WH

Tel: 020 7276 6400

Email: [ots.info@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ots.info@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk)

Web address:

[www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/thirdsector](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/thirdsector)

### **Compact Voice**

Is the independent body representing the third sector in taking the Compact forward. Compact Voice is made up of an autonomous alliance of leading third sector organisations with national, regional and local reach, providing the voice of the sector on issues relating to the Compact.

### **Compact Voice**

Regent's Wharf

8 All Saints Street

London N1 9RL

Tel: 020 7520 2451

Email: [compact@compactvoice.org.uk](mailto:compact@compactvoice.org.uk)

Web address:

[www.compactvoice.org.uk](http://www.compactvoice.org.uk)

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## Other useful contact details

### Commission for the Compact

Established in April 2007, the Commission for the Compact is an independent public body responsible for overseeing and promoting use of the Compact. It is sponsored by the Office of the Third Sector and the Minister for the Third Sector. It was set up to support the Commissioner for the Compact, improve awareness of the Compact and address the barriers to its adoption and implementation.

For more information about the Compact, please visit: Commission for the Compact

77 Paradise Circus Queensway  
Birmingham B1 2DT  
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Email: [info@thecomcompact.org.uk](mailto:info@thecomcompact.org.uk)  
Web address: [www.thecomcompact.org.uk](http://www.thecomcompact.org.uk)

### Compact Advocacy

The Compact Advocacy Programme advocates on behalf of the third sector to ensure that public bodies treat the sector fairly. It handles cases for individual organisations when they have concerns with Compact practice at a national or local level. The programme is based at the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and is funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

Compact Advocacy  
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[www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/compactadvocacy](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/compactadvocacy)

### Local Government Association (LGA)

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Smith Square  
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Web address: [www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk)

One Voice Network  
Park House  
Station Road  
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Tel: 01207 529621  
Web address: [www.onevoice.co.uk](http://www.onevoice.co.uk)