

WORKING TOGETHER

A Compact between:

84 Voluntary and Community Organisations

3 Local Authorities:

Sevenoaks District Council

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

&

3 Primary Care Trusts:

South West Kent Primary Care Trust

Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley Primary Care Trust

Maidstone Weald Primary Care Trust

**covering the Sevenoaks District, Tonbridge & Malling
and Tunbridge Wells Borough areas**

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Part 1

1.1 Background to the Compact

In 1998 the Government adopted a national Compact called *Getting it Right Together*, which provided a framework for improved relationships between the Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in England.

The Government has encouraged the development of local compacts. Kent County Council is producing a compact to work with the Voluntary and Community Sector throughout the county. In addition each district or borough council and NHS trust is expected to have a compact in place by April 2004.

Recognising that many voluntary and community groups work across borough boundaries in West Kent, Sevenoaks District Council, Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils together with South West Kent Primary Care Trust decided to work in partnership to consult the Voluntary and Community Sector and agree a Compact. Subsequently Dartford, Gravesham & Swanley Primary Care Trust and Maidstone Weald Primary Care Trust joined the consultation process and became partners in this exercise. Throughout this document references to “Statutory Partners” means these six statutory agencies.

We hope that this document will form the basis of working relationships between a number of statutory organisations and voluntary and community groups in the area and that new partners will want to sign up to the document in the future.

To this end a steering group has been established to work on a Compact that reflects the local perspective. This group is made up of representatives of the Voluntary and Community Sector in the three districts along with representatives of each of the three councils and South West Kent Primary Care Trust.

1.2 What is a Local Compact?

A local compact is an agreement between the Statutory Sector and the Voluntary and Community Sector. It provides the framework to develop existing relationships. It is not a legally binding contract but a formal document that aims to define and strengthen relationships between the sectors by establishing some principles and actions to which all parties will sign up. This initial document marks the start of an ongoing process and will build on the good relationships already established.

1.3 Aims of the Compact

Our local Compact aims to:

- Improve mutual understanding, trust and communication between the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Statutory Partners.
- Facilitate effective partnership working between the two sectors.
- Set a framework for effective consultation, representation and partnership working including an agreement on definitions, shared values and joint and distinct undertakings.
- Improve outcomes for local people through effective partnership working
- Act as a reference document, the regular review of which will provide a process for monitoring and evaluating the quality of relationships and partnership working at all levels.

1.4 The process used to develop the Compact

The process has involved consultations with both the Statutory Partners and the Voluntary and Community Sector. A Voluntary Sector Project Officer with experience of working in the Voluntary and Community Sector was recruited to develop the process. Consultations took place with the Sevenoaks Voluntary Sector Working Group and the West Kent Voluntary Sector Forum to ascertain the main issues voluntary and community organisations wish to see included in the Compact.

A questionnaire was produced and this was sent to approximately 300 voluntary and community groups through West Kent Council for Voluntary Service (CVS), Swanley Volunteer Bureau and organisations identified by each of the local authorities. There was a response rate of around 15%. In addition the Voluntary Sector Project Officer conducted face to face interviews with the Managers of the Volunteer Development Agencies in West Kent and with 14 other organisations chosen at random. The purpose of the questionnaires and interviews was to identify the important issues to be included in the Compact. These points were incorporated into a draft document which was then circulated to the voluntary and community sector for further comment.

The issues raised during the consultation have formed the basis of this document. The main issues related to:

Consultation

Funding

Volunteering

Communication and information sharing

Black and minority ethnic groups and other hard to reach groups

Training

Specific results of this consultation can be found at the back of this document under appendix A.

Part 2

Shared Principles and Values

The consultation process produced agreement on shared principles and values.

These principles and values underpin the development and operation of the Compact. They provide the context for partnership working between the two sectors:

Access for all

Both sectors acknowledge the importance of providing fair and equal access to good quality services for all people regardless of, for example, ethnicity, age, disability, gender, sexuality or faith. However it is recognised that some organisations provide a specialist service for certain sections of the community.

Accountability

The two sectors have different forms of accountability and it should be recognised that both have a different range of stakeholders to whom they are responsible.

Diversity

Society consists of a wide range of organisations and people from many different backgrounds. It is important that diversity is encouraged as it enhances the community in which we live. This necessitates the involvement of the widest range of individuals and organisations possible.

Integrity

All relationships must be conducted with integrity, openness, honesty and transparency.

Independence

Both sectors support the impartiality and independence of the Voluntary and Community Sector who must retain the right to challenge statutory sector policies irrespective of any grants received.

Partnership

There is value in working in partnership with others towards common aims. Effective consultation helps to build relationships, improve policy development and enhance the design and delivery of services. There is much that can only be achieved through close co-operation.

Quality of service

It is important that both sectors strive to improve services continuously within the resources available.

Sustainability

For organisations to succeed, they need to be funded and managed in such a way that helps to achieve their long term viability.

Voluntary action

Both sectors recognise the intrinsic value of volunteering which enables the development of both individuals and the community.

Part 3

Joint Undertakings by the Voluntary and Community Sector and Statutory Partners

The Voluntary and Community Sector and Statutory Partners agree the following:

- We will be respectful, honest and supportive in our working relationships.
- We will work together for the benefit of local people and communities.
- We will consult each other regularly to develop common aims and objectives.
- We recognise we have distinct but complementary roles in the development and delivery of services.
- We will promote equality of opportunity and value diversity.
- We will ensure that communication between the sectors can be easily understood without using jargon.
- We will aim to respond to each others correspondence within two weeks.
- We recognise the value of volunteers. Although unpaid, volunteers should be able to receive benefits in return such as a sense of achievement, skills, experience and fun.
- We will acknowledge that it is the responsibility of organisers to ensure that venues are accessible to people with disabilities when arranging public meetings and consultations.
- We will seek to develop cross-sector training opportunities where appropriate.
- We will appoint a named person from both sectors to act as a point of contact on general matters that concern the Compact.
- We will make staff, members and volunteers aware of their responsibilities under the Compact.

- We will work towards all organisations accepting and participating in the Compact.
- We will review the Compact after the first year.

Part 4

Undertakings by the Statutory Partners

The Statutory Partners recognise the breadth of knowledge and ideas within the Voluntary and Community Sector and value the contribution the sector makes to achieving their key priorities and community objectives. The Voluntary and Community Sector is acknowledged as an equal and professional partner that is crucial to the development of the area.

We recognise and support the independence of the Voluntary and Community Sector.

5.1 Consultation

- We will ensure the Voluntary and Community Sector is consulted on issues such as policies, programmes and procedures that are likely to affect them.
- We will consult in a planned, consistent and timely manner to ensure that comments are taken into account early in the process.
- We will, wherever possible, allow a total of 12 weeks for consultation with the Voluntary and Community Sector and a minimum of 6 weeks in any single formal consultation period. In the unlikely event that we cannot meet the minimum period we will explain why.
- We will take account of specific needs, interests and contributions of those parts of the sector which represent minority, disability and socially excluded groups.

5.2 Funding

- We are aware of, and are concerned about, the problems faced by the sector which can result from short-term funding and uncertainty. We further recognise the difficulties the sector has in securing core funding. We will work with the sector to help achieve sustainability.
- We will strive for consistency in the funding processes across the three councils and the Primary Care Trusts and across departments.

- We acknowledge the importance of supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector infrastructure and will reflect this in grant guidelines and objectives.
- We will ensure there is fair access to funding and resources by providing clear criteria, objectives and information about how to obtain resources and decision-making processes. The needs of new and emerging services will be considered.
- We will take into account the Charity Commission's guidelines about the need for organisations to maintain reserves, when considering funding applications.
- We will strive to ensure monitoring of grants will be appropriate to the level of the grant. We recognise that monitoring will need to take account of client confidentiality.

5.3 Volunteering

- We will actively promote volunteering by encouraging our staff to contribute their skills by volunteering in local voluntary and community organisations and by providing support to enable them to do this.
- We will support the Voluntary and Community Sector in its search for volunteers through internal and external publications and other networking opportunities.

5.4 Communication and information sharing

- We will set up effective channels of communication between the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Statutory Partners to ensure that regular input into policy and mutual understanding is achieved, for example, the SDC & Voluntary Sector Working Group, the West Kent Voluntary Sector Forum and other themed groups as appropriate.
- We will maintain an organisational structure and contact list for each of the Statutory Partners.
- We will disseminate information in a form that is accessible to people with disabilities and other specific needs.
- We will use and develop existing newsletters and websites to disseminate information to the Voluntary and Community Sector.

5.5 Black and minority ethnic and other hard to reach groups

- We will work with the Voluntary and Community Sector to ensure there are networks in place to support people from black and minority ethnic groups.

5.6 Training

- We acknowledge that training is essential to the development of staff within both sectors. Where it is appropriate we will offer places on Statutory Partner's training courses to staff from the Voluntary and Community sector.

Part 5

Undertakings by the Voluntary and Community Sector

The Voluntary and Community Sector recognises the constraints under which the Statutory Partners operate and that they have a duty to deliver statutory services. We are committed to working in partnership with the Statutory Partners for the benefit of the local community.

6.1 Consultation

- we welcome the opportunity to be consulted over decisions that affect the work of the Voluntary and Community Sector.
- we will ensure that staff, volunteers, clients and service users are informed and consulted about policy positions when presenting a case to the Statutory Partners.
- we will consult in such a way that the response fairly reflects the view of the whole organisation and not just of any one individual.
- where a voluntary or community organisation is funded by any one of the Statutory Partners we will consult the funder in advance of proposed major changes to service delivery or funding needs.

6.2 Funding

- we recognise that accountability is essential when receiving public money. We will ensure that appropriate financial systems and quality standards are in place to meet appropriate reporting and accountability obligations.
- we acknowledge the need to ensure that all available funding opportunities are fully explored.
- we agree to return monitoring and evaluation forms promptly when in receipt of Statutory Partner grants.

6.3 Volunteering

- we undertake to re-imburse volunteers for their expenses wherever possible and appropriate.

- we will ensure that the views of volunteers are taken into account in decisions about the organisation and will involve them in the development of the organisation.
- we will provide training and support for volunteers appropriate to the size of the organisation and nature of the service provided.
- we will endeavour to promote our volunteering opportunities to people who do not traditionally see themselves as volunteers.

6.4 Communication and Information sharing

- We will ensure that the views of our users are sought on a regular basis about the way in which we deliver our services and support their needs.
- We will ensure that the Statutory Partners are made aware of any Voluntary and Community Sector events that may have an impact on statutory service delivery.
- Through established and developing partnerships and networks we will ensure there are effective channels of communication with the Statutory Partners.

6.5 Black and minority ethnic and other hard to reach groups

- We are committed to setting up a network to support black and minority ethnic groups in the three districts.

Part 6

7.1 Implementation of the Compact

All voluntary and community organisations will be encouraged to sign up to the Compact.

Each voluntary and community organisation will be asked to sign a Statement of Intent indicating that they are prepared to sign the Compact. Those organisations that sign the statement will be invited to attend a launch event when they will formally accept the Compact.

Each Statutory Partner will nominate a representative to sign the Compact on behalf of their agency.

Implementation of the Compact will be reviewed by the Compact Steering Group who will meet twice a year. The Steering Group will:

- Agree an action plan to implement the Compact in the year ahead.
- Act as a point of reference for the Compact.
- Ensure there is a co-ordinated and effective approach to implementing the Compact within and between sectors.
- Attempt to resolve disputes that arise between parties in connection with the Compact.
- Facilitate a bi-yearly review event to which all signatories are invited.
- Make recommendations regarding amendments to the Compact.
- Provide a review report to all signatories.
- Report to the West Kent Partnership, which is attended by representatives from the Voluntary and Community sector, the PCT and elected Members from the 3 authorities.

7.2 Resolving disputes

It is recognised that disputes may arise in implementing the Compact. In these circumstances the following should occur:

Partners should agree to honour each other's right to raise concerns, to listen to what is being expressed and to respond positively.

If an organisation believes that others are not acting within the spirit of the Compact they should first seek to resolve the issue through discussion.

Where this fails details of the dispute should be referred to the Compact Steering Group who will establish a procedure by which organisations dissatisfied with the implementation of the Compact are able to raise concerns and procedures for addressing these concerns.

7.3 Glossary of terms used in this Compact

Voluntary organisations: these are groups that have a voluntary management structure (committee, board, trustees) whether it employs staff or not and where it provides a service to others.

Community groups: these are any group of people who come together for a common cause or interest.

Infrastructure: refers to a network of services, groups, organisations and facilities that support the capacity of local areas to respond effectively to community needs and initiatives.

Statutory sector: are organisations, which are either Government departments or agencies, to commission and / or deliver services, co-ordinate and develop initiatives or deliver statutory obligations.

Statutory partners: refers to Sevenoaks District Council, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, South West Kent Primary Care Trust, Dartford, Gravesham & Swanley Primary Care Trust, Maidstone Weald Primary Care Trust.

West Kent Council for Voluntary Service: is an organisation that provides support, advice, training and networking opportunities for voluntary organisations and community groups throughout the areas of Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells.

Local Volunteer Development Agency (formerly Volunteer Bureau): is an organisation that promotes and develops volunteering in a local area offering advice and support on all aspects of volunteering. It acts as a central

recruitment agency for voluntary and statutory bodies recruiting and placing volunteers with organisations and individuals needing help.

West Kent Partnership: this is the Local Strategic Partnership in the district of Sevenoaks and the boroughs of Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells. A Local Strategic Partnership is an umbrella partnership that brings together organisations from the public, private and voluntary and community sectors. The key objective is to improve the quality of life in that area.

Primary Care Trust: part of the National Health Service which provides the link between the strategic health authority and GP practices and between the demand and supply of hospital services. They are responsible for the health of the people in their area, tackling health inequalities and bringing health and social care more closely together.

Appendix A

2.1 Results of the consultation

The consultation process identified the following broad themes:

- Funding is an important issue, particularly the need for longer term funding.
- There is an acknowledgement that both sectors need to be accountable for the funding they receive and spend.
- The Voluntary and Community Sector would like to be consulted on issues affecting them in a planned and consistent manner and at the beginning of the process.
- Volunteering is essential to all voluntary and community organisations and provides opportunities for personal enrichment and development.
- Statutory Partners recognise the significant contribution made by volunteers to the delivery of statutory services.
- Communication would be helped by clarity on contacts, roles and responsibilities within both sectors. It is important that there is up-to-date information about who the most appropriate person is to contact.
- It is acknowledged that black and minority ethnic groups are a small section of the population in West Kent and do not have strong support networks.

- Training is equally important to the Voluntary and Community Sector and to the Statutory Partners.

Appendix B

Voluntary Organisations Signing up to Compact

1st Tonbridge Girls' Brigade

3H Fund

Age Concern Malling

Age Concern Sevenoaks

Association of West Kent Tenants

Birchwood Playgroup

British Red Cross

Compaid Trust

Dunton Green Lunch Club

Dunton Green Pre-School

East Peckham Resident's Association

Eden Christian Trust

Edenbridge & District Mencap

Edenbridge & Westerham Citizens Advice Bureau

Edenbridge Holiday Activities Scheme

Family Matters

Fegans Child & Family Centre

Friends of Sevenoaks Hospital

Friends of the Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths

Goldenhar Syndrome Family Support Group

Greenfingers Training Scheme

Hadlow Historical Society

Hawkhurst Village Society

Health Information in the Weald

Kent Air Ambulance Trust

Kent Association for Spina Bifida Hydrocephalus

Kent Association for the Blind

Kent Industrial Mission

Kent Priority Care

Kent Supported Employment

Kent West Dyslexia Association
Kings Hill Centre
League of Friends of Edenbridge Hospital
League of Friends of Tonbridge Hospital
Malling Citizen's Advice Bureau
Mereworth & Kings Hill Scout Group
Moat Housing Group Care & Repair
Panda Playgroup
Parenthood
Parkinson's Disease Society Sevenoaks
Parkinson's Disease Society Tunbridge Wells
Remap West Kent
Royal Tunbridge Wells District Scouts
Rusthall Community & Youth Project
Scotts Project
Senior Citizens Pop in Club
Sevenoaks Christian Counselling Centre
Sevenoaks Citizen's Advice Bureau
Sevenoaks Division Guides
Sevenoaks Home Library Service
Sevenoaks Mencap
Sevenoaks Multiple Sclerosis Society
Sevenoaks Volunteer Development Agency
Shoreham over 60s Club
Shoreham Pre-School
Spadework
St Nicholas Church Mum & Co
Swanley & Darent Valley Division Guides
Swanley & Hextable Darby & Joan Club
Swanley Citizens Advice Bureau
Swanley Volunteer Bureau
The Bridge Trust
The Ember Trust
The Fox Project
The Open Door Kemsing
The Salvation Army Tunbridge Wells
The Stroke Association
The Winfield Trust
Tonbridge & District Mencap
Tonbridge & Malling Cricket Development Partnership

Tonbridge District Scouts
Tonbridge Volunteers
Tunbridge Wells Citizens Advice Bureau
Tunbridge Wells Mental Health Resource
Victim Support North Kent
VSU Youth in Action
Weald of Kent Crossroads
West Kent Council for Voluntary Service
West Kent Education Business Partnership
West Kent Extra
West Kent Independent Mediation Service
West Kent Neighbourhood Watch Association
West Kent Youth Association
YWCA West Kent Young Women's Project

