Compact

working together | better together

THE DARLINGTON COMPACT
WORKING TOGETHER IN DARLINGTON

The preparation of this document has been led by eVOLution (the Council for Voluntary Service in Darlington) with the involvement of Darlington Borough Council and public and third sector partner organisations.

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An inclusive approach

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Contents

Section 1: Introduction to the Darlington Compact

Relationships between organisations in the voluntary and community sector and in the public sector are important in the ongoing work to improve quality of life in Darlington. Better outcomes can often be achieved through co-operating and working together than by working in isolation.

The voluntary and community sector is now commonly referred to as the third sector. This term embraces voluntary, community and faith organisations and social enterprises, and is used in this document. The Compact does not formally include the private sector, but it is hoped that businesses will act within the spirit of the Compact when working in partnership with the other sectors.

The Darlington Compact is an agreement between the sectors about how to work together on the basis of understanding and equality whilst respecting the differing rights, responsibilities and ways of working of each sector. It is a framework of shared principles and sector commitments designed to help the sectors to work together. A key factor driving the development of the Compact, nationally and locally, is to make sure that policies, procedures and prevailing values empower the third sector to play to its full potential alongside the public sector in contributing to better local outcomes, rather than putting institutional barriers in the way of effective partnerships.

The Compact has the following key characteristics:

- This is a new Compact, developed during 2009, and replacing the first Compact adopted in 2004.

- It is not intended to be prescriptive or legally binding, but to guide relationships and provide the basis for detailed partnership agreements about specific projects, programmes and services.

- It applies across the whole of the Borough of Darlington.

- This new Compact has been adopted by all public sector agencies working in Darlington, as well as the third sector, to provide a common basis of agreement and understanding for working together in the borough.

This document is, effectively, a 'handbook' for relationship management, providing guidance for working together across the sectors and procedures for resolving problems and difficulties if and when the need arises.

Section 2: The Context for Working Together in Darlington

The Compact's focus on promoting effective working relationships and partnerships between the third and public sectors will contribute to making the best possible use of all the assets and resources available to the borough, and to delivering better outcomes and value for money.

Partnership working is directed towards the delivery of agreed and shared outcomes. In Darlington, the sustainable community strategy, 'One Darlington : Perfectly Placed', is the overall plan for the borough. It sets out a long-term vision for the future, and is the context within which outcomes will be determined and delivered for the foreseeable future.

'One Darlington' is about people, and focuses on narrowing the gaps in well-being and quality of life across the borough, as well as ensuring that values of caring, support and respect are reinforced across the community. 'Perfectly Placed' is about making the most of the borough's assets of location, accessibility and quality of life to attract investment and jobs, securing economic and environmental sustainability, and building the platform of prosperity and well-being that will underpin our 'One Darlington' aspirations.

All the sectors have been involved in developing the vision, and the distinctive roles of the different sectors in helping to translate it into reality is recognised in the vision document published in 2008. A vibrant and thriving third sector has a unique contribution to make to the achievement of the vision, rooted in its independence, responsiveness and closeness to the community. And the strength of the third sector will also be a powerful indicator of future success in achieving the vision - the idea of 'One Darlington' is weakened if the social capital of voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations is not as strong and active as it is capable of being.

This context reinforces the vital role of the Compact in assisting the sectors to work together effectively and to make their respective contributions as fully as possible to creating 'One Darlington : Perfectly Placed'.

The Compact Vision

The Darlington Compact is a commitment to open, transparent and equitable working practices between partner organisations in the public and third sectors. It recognises that the third sector plays a vital role alongside the public sector in developing and sustaining a democratic, socially inclusive Darlington. The Compact expresses the commitment of the public and third sectors to work together for the benefit of people and communities across the borough.

Our Shared Principles

The Darlington Compact Partners agree to uphold the following shared principles:

- *Building a Sustainable Community –* all the sectors have distinct and complementary roles to bring to the challenge of creating a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable future for Darlington.

- *Equality and Diversity –* the Compact recognises that tackling inequality and celebrating diversity are at the core of the One Darlington vision; the signatories are committed to promoting equality and valuing diversity for all Darlington people, and will expect their partners to share that commitment.

- *Partnership –* building and maintaining effective relationships through consultation, co-operation and joint initiatives, to improve policy development and service delivery, and encouraging partners across all sectors to work within the spirit of the Compact principles and the supporting codes of practice.

- *Creativity and Added Value –* working together towards common goals and objectives generates added value for the benefit of the community; the Compact is not a straitjacket – it encourages creative solutions that make the most of the available resources and the diverse contributions of partners to maximise added value.

- *Mutual Value and Respect -* the differing responsibilities and accountabilities of public and third sector organisations are recognised and respected; common to all is the need to act with integrity, honesty,

openness and objectivity, and in a spirit of leadership and accountability within the wider community.

- **Cross-Sector Support –** relationships between the sectors are often built around the provision of funding, or other forms of support such as expertise and local knowledge; the Compact encourages creative approaches to such provision, tailored to the needs of partner organisations and the purpose for which support is given, within the Compact framework.

Public Sector Commitments

The public sector signatories to the Compact will:

- Respect the independence and diversity of the third sector, including the right of organisations to campaign within the law and challenge policies in order to advance their constitutional aims

- Engage and work with the diverse range of bodies within the third sector, including voluntary, community and faith organisations and social enterprises

- Respect and acknowledge the diverse organisational cultures, practices and accountabilities of third sector organisations

- Involve third sector organisations, widely and early enough to make a difference, on all decisions of interest to them, to improve policy development and service design and delivery

- Implement a 'mixed funding economy' of grants and contracted funding linked to outcome delivery, with multi-year funding, prompt payment (in advance of expenditure where appropriate), the sharing of risks fairly between funder and provider, and the inclusion of overhead costs in line with the principle of full cost recovery

- Minimise the administrative burden associated with funding application, monitoring and reporting procedures

- Champion and promote the role of the volunteer, including recognising the value to public sector staff and organisations of Employer Supported Volunteering, and maintain good practice in the involvement and management of volunteers.

- Seek to resolve differences of opinion when they arise in cross sector working relationships as quickly as possible and in a constructive and

respectful manner, resorting if necessary to the framework for resolving disagreements and disputes set out in this Compact

Third Sector Commitments

Third sector signatories to the Compact will:

- Maintain transparency and accountability in business practices, in accordance with each signatory organisation's constitutional requirements

- Engage and work as appropriate with the diverse range of bodies within the third sector, including voluntary, community and faith organisations and social enterprises, and work to improve community cohesion and reduce inequalities

- Ensure that the views of stakeholders and service users are reflected in policy development, engagement and campaigning

- Implement and adhere to agreed funding arrangements, whether grant support or contracted funding linked to outcome delivery, including agreed responsibilities for sharing and management of risks and application of the principles of full cost recovery

- Utilise robust monitoring, evaluation and financial management systems to provide accurate and timely information for funding bodies, and be accountable for public funds

- Champion and promote the role of the active citizen in voluntarily committing their time, energy and passion in service to the community and maintain good practice in the involvement and management of volunteers.

- Champion the needs of members, stakeholders and service users

- Seek to resolve differences of opinion when they arise in cross sector working relationships as quickly as possible and in a constructive and respectful manner, resorting if necessary to the framework for resolving disagreements and disputes set out in this Compact.

Section 4: Introducing the Codes of Practice

Introducing the Codes of Practice

The Codes of Practice expand on the main Compact principles and commitments set out in Section 3 of this document to provide guidance on conducting specific aspects of the relationships between public and third sector organisations. The five codes in the Darlington Compact are:

- Equalities and Diversity

- Resources and Procurement

- Involvement and Influence

- Volunteering

- Partnerships

The codes set out the principles for guiding and supporting effective relationships and do not over-ride or supersede the strategies and policies of partner organisations. Partners' commissioning and procurement strategies, for example, set the technical processes and requirements for conducting procurement exercises, whilst the code of practice simply establishes principles for working together effectively around issues of resources and procurement.

The five codes of practice are set out in Appendix 1, starting on Page 19.

The National Compact is, as this document is being prepared, subject to consultation on proposals for extensive revisions. These include reducing the five national codes of practice to three, and incorporating these into the main compact document (the five codes were previously published as separate documents). This changed was considered by the partners involved in preparing the Darlington Compact, coming to the conclusion that the five codes set out in Appendix 1 are appropriate to circumstances in Darlington and should therefore be retained.

Section 5: Implementing the Compact

Darlington Compact is 'owned' by all of the signatories, public and third sector organisations that are committed to achieving the benefits for themselves and for Darlington of working within the Compact framework.

Darlington Partnership provides the forum for promoting and monitoring the Compact. A Compact Steering Group linked into the Partnership structure will seek to ensure that the Compact is observed in all joint working between the sectors carried out through the Partnership and linked to the delivery of 'One Darlington : Perfectly Placed'.

The Compact Steering Group is chaired by the Executive Director of eVOLution, the lead body for the third sector in Darlington. Its membership will be the 'Compact Champions' nominated by each of the signatory organisations. The group will meet quarterly. The Chair will report its proceedings and represent the group on the Partnership Executive and advise the Executive on the embedding of the Compact within the work of the five Partnership Theme Groups – Aspiring Darlington, Greener Darlington, Healthy Darlington, Prosperous Darlington and Safer Darlington.

The Compact Steering Group will oversee the implementation and annual review of the Compact Action Plan. All partners will identify and schedule the actions they need to take to support the implementation of the Compact and its codes of practice. The Steering Group will commission time-limited working groups to progress areas of work within the action plan.

An annual event, staged as part of National Compact Week, will review progress and plan for the year ahead, feeding into the business and service planning cycles of the Compact partners. Review will include making amendments to the Darlington Compact agreement in the light of learning from using the Compact, and to reflect local and national policy developments.

The Compact Steering Group will have the lead responsibility for promoting and expanding the influence of the Compact through Darlington Partnership, but Compact Partners are also committed to promoting the Compact within and beyond their organisations.

Public sector partners will encourage other public bodies working in Darlington to adopt the Compact. They will publicise progress made on the Compact and work to mainstream it within their own organisations. And they will, jointly and with third sector partners, resource the Annual Review and Action Plan.

Similarly, third sector partners will promote the adoption of the Compact by other voluntary and community organisations. They will participate in the Annual Review and Action Plan within available resources. And they will publish and disseminate progress throughout the sector.

The role of Compact Champions is to promote the Compact way of working within their organisations, networks and partnerships, and to provide advice and support to their colleagues on implementing the Compact. Champions also provide the first point of contact for resolving disagreements and disputes, as outlined in Section 5.

The Disputes Resolution Panel will deliberate on any disagreements and disputes that cannot be resolved informally by the partner organisations involved in the issue. The disputes process is outlined in Section 6.
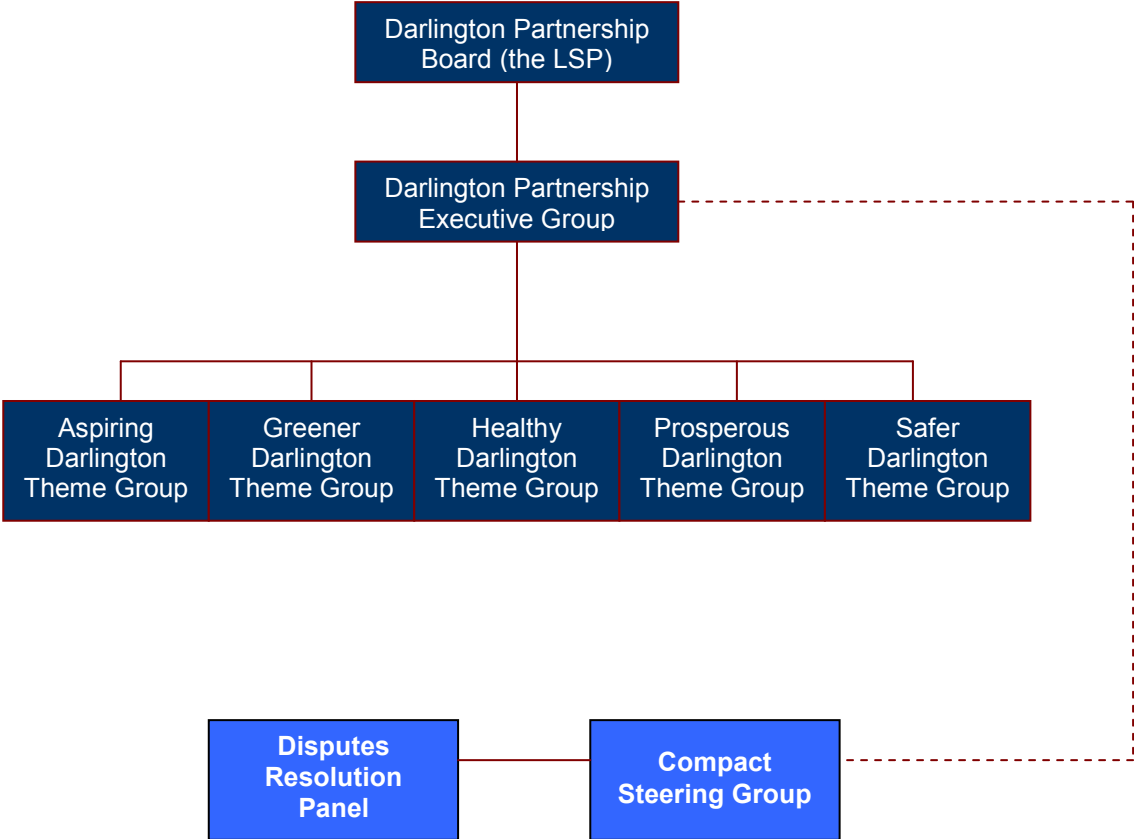
Section 6: Resolving Disagreements

The Darlington Compact partners are committed to resolving disagreements, conflicts and complaints by maintaining positive and open relationships. If difficulties occur in any working relationship, the Compact will be used as a framework of good practice for resolving issues and guiding the ongoing conduct of the relationship.

The principles and commitments set out in Section 2 of this document provide the framework of good practice guidance to which disputing parties should refer. This section sets out a three stage process for resolving issues. The process is illustrated overleaf.

The key players in dealing with disagreements, conflicts and complaints are:

- The 'Compact Champions' within the organisations in dispute

- The Local Disputes Panel, referenced in Section 4.
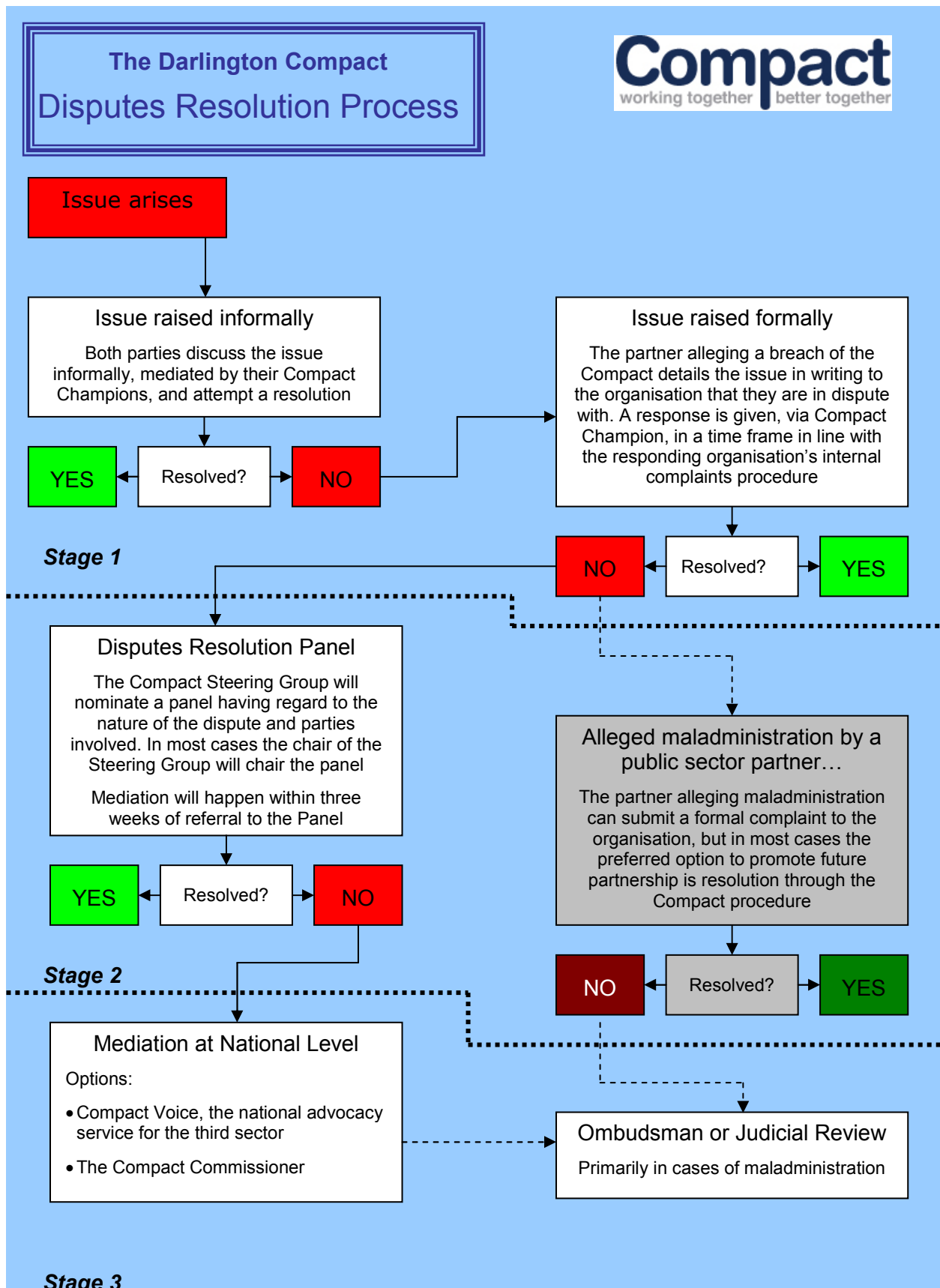
- The Commission for the Compact

The three stages of the process for resolving disagreements, conflicts and complaints are as follows:

Stage 1: the Compact Champions of the organisations in dispute seek to resolve the issue informally, within the framework of the Compact. If the issue cannot be resolved informally, it should be raised in writing, with a formal response provided using the responding organisation's Complaints Procedure as a guiding framework

Stage 2: if the issue cannot be resolved at Stage 1, it is referred to the Disputes Resolution Panel for arbitration. The membership of the panel will be determined by Compact Steering Group for each dispute referred to it, having regard to the nature of the dispute and the organisations involved. The panel will be chaired by the Steering Group chair, unless eVOLution is one of the parties in dispute, in which case the Steering Group will nominate an independent chair.

Stage 3: if the issue cannot be resolved by the Disputes Resolution Panel to the satisfaction of all the partners involved, it will be referred to the national Commission for the Compact for final arbitration.

Where the issue is a complaint of maladministration by a public sector body it may be appropriate to make a complaint through that body's Complaints Procedure. However, the Disputes Resolution Process is the preferred option wherever possible, as this is more likely to resolve the issue with relationships intact for the future.

The Darlington Compact
Disputes Resolution Process

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Issue arises

Issue raised informally

Both parties discuss the issue informally, mediated by their Compact Champions, and attempt a resolution

Issue raised formally

The partner alleging a breach of the Compact details the issue in writing to the organisation that they are in dispute with. A response is given, via Compact Champion, in a time frame in line with the responding organisation's internal complaints procedure

YES | Resolved? | NO

Stage 1

NO | Resolved? | YES

Disputes Resolution Panel

The Compact Steering Group will nominate a panel having regard to the nature of the dispute and parties involved. In most cases the chair of the Steering Group will chair the panel

Mediation will happen within three weeks of referral to the Panel

Alleged maladministration by a public sector partner...

The partner alleging maladministration can submit a formal complaint to the organisation, but in most cases the preferred option to promote future partnership is resolution through the Compact procedure

YES | Resolved? | NO

Stage 2

NO | Resolved? | YES

Mediation at National Level

Options:

- Compact Voice, the national advocacy service for the third sector
- The Compact Commissioner

Ombudsman or Judicial Review

Primarily in cases of maladministration

Stage 3

THE DARLINGTON COMPACT
CODES OF PRACTICE
EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY CODE

Contents

1.1 Equalities and Diversity Code

1. The scope of this code

This code acknowledges that the pursuit of equalities and championing of diversity on many different fronts are at the heart of our partnership working in Darlington, and sets out a framework to ensure that the Compact promotes ways of working that help to build equality and diversity.

The national compact focuses specifically on promoting the inclusion of the BME sector to ensure that the third sector is more representative of society in support of government efforts to promote cohesion and inclusion.

This focus is, of course, vitally important, but this code of practice is much broader in scope, reflecting the 'One Darlington' priority of the sustainable community strategy. 'One Darlington' seeks to address all forms of disadvantage, discrimination and deprivation. This includes reducing deprivation and narrowing the gaps in prosperity, attainment, opportunity and well-being between different neighbourhoods or groups of people; tackling all forms of discrimination and promoting inclusion; protecting vulnerable people; valuing the diverse backgrounds, interests, needs and aspirations of people in the borough-wide community; and enabling everyone to pursue their diverse aspirations. The Compact, and this code, seeks to reflect this broad scope.

'One Darlington' is concerned with delivery of outcomes, but the Compact approach must also establish principles that promote inclusion and equality in the ways that the public and third sectors work together. There must be equality between partners (the Partnerships Code of Practice addresses this) and all parts of the third sector should be able to contribute their particular skills and perspectives as appropriate.

2. Partners' equalities policies

As with the other codes of practice, this code recognises that partner organisations have their own policies and strategies for promoting inclusion, equalities and diversity, and will continue to develop their programmes and improvement action plans within these in-house frameworks. This code is designed to support rather than override such frameworks.

Darlington's Social Inclusion Strategy, 'All Together Now', established the broad approach to equalities and diversity outlined above even before 'One Darlington : Perfectly Placed' was developed. All the sectors and agencies have worked to deliver 'All Together Now', which identifies 13 groups of people at risk of disadvantage, discrimination and deprivation. The implementation of the strategy is now largely complete, and a renewed approach is under consideration. Nevertheless, the comprehensive embrace of 'All Together Now' in promoting social inclusion continues to be relevant in the context of 'One Darlington', and is reflected in the Compact. This broad scope is now being given statutory force in the Equality Bill (2009)

3. Background to this code

The Equality Bill (2009) brings together previously separate legislation relating to race, gender and disability into a single equality duty for the public sector. The new duty covers all six equalities strands – race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief – and requires all public sector bodies to take action to consider and take action to address equalities issues in all their functions, across the six strands.

Significantly, and in line with the 'One Darlington' perspective on equalities, the new duty includes a requirement to address socio-economic issues that cause people to be treated unfairly, and require local government to remove barriers to services for people living in deprived areas.

Darlington Borough Council is developing a Single Equalities Scheme (SES) in response to the new duty. The SES will incorporate and supersede the current race, gender and disability equalities schemes and equalities impact assessment frameworks. The SES will reflect and carry forward the analysis of equalities issues and needs that forms the basis of the Social Inclusion Strategy, 'All Together Now'.

4. The Equalities and Diversity Framework

The following should be upheld in all joint working within the Compact:

- Champion and promote Darlington's diversity and the development of a cohesive and inclusive community that represents all its citizens in its partnerships and programmes, and ensure that local diversity is fully reflected in policy, programme and project development

- Ensure that the contribution of organisations and groups representing people and communities at risk of disadvantage, discrimination and deprivation (referred to below as equalities representative groups and organisations) is recognised and supported

- Recognise that lack of time and resources may limit the participation of such groups, and respond appropriately to ensure representation

- Ensure that, where representative groups do not exist, the interests and needs of particular groups of people are included and not overlooked

- Respect the autonomy of representative groups and organisations and their right to work as they choose within their own boundaries

- Recognise and respond to the ever-changing diversity of Darlington and the emergence of new groups and organisations

- Whilst developing appropriate policies and programmes within individual organisations to respond to the new equalities duty, maintain and strengthen the harmonised approach developed through 'All Together Now' across Darlington Partnership

- Encourage and support volunteering across Darlington's diverse communities and groups

- Ensure that the Compact principles and the commitments of the other codes of practice are applied fairly and appropriately across all community and representative organisations and groups

5. Third sector partners' commitments

- Support and enable equalities representative organisations and groups to play a full and active part within the wider sector and across Darlington Partnership to promote equalities and to tackle social exclusion

- Contribute to maintaining a responsive and accountable local structure for progressing work to achieve equality and promote diversity

- Encourage joint working by diverse groups across the equalities strands

- Represent the concerns and interests of equalities representative organisations and groups within Darlington Partnership and within policy and programme development

- Support equalities representative organisations and groups to maintain proper governance and effective management if and when necessary

- Develop quality standards and best practice measures and offer effective training to staff and trustees

- Work to support equalities representative organisations and groups to be open, dynamic and effective

6. Public sector partners' commitments

- Recognise the independence of the representative organisations and groups across the six equalities strands and their right to challenge institutions, policy and practice as part of their goal of achieving equality and promoting diversity

- Consult with equalities representative organisations and groups as appropriate throughout policy development and implementation

- Establish equalities strategies, objectives and targets across the public sector, as appropriate to each organisation

- Facilitate and support fair and equal access for equalities representative organisations and groups to funding programmes, and ensure that the commitments in the Resources and Procurement code of practice are applied equally and fairly across all third sector organisations and groups

- Ensure that equalities representative organisations and groups are actively involved in local service planning and review and the development of strategies and programmes within local communities

- Require that all partnership bids to Government programmes demonstrate real consultation with and involvement of equalities representative organisations and groups

THE DARLINGTON COMPACT
CODES OF PRACTICE

THE RESOURCES AND PROCUREMENT CODE

Contents

19

1.2 The Resources and Procurement Code

1. Scope of this code

Resources and procurement may include the following kinds of transactions or exchanges:

- Procurement – a public sector body contracting for the provision of services by a third sector partner following a commissioning and tendering process in which the third sector partner demonstrated the best combination of quality and price

- Grant aid – a public sector body provides a time limited sum of money to a third sector organisation to support its projects, services and/or facilities

- Investment – a public sector body may wish to invest in a third sector organisation through loans or other forms of funding to secure projects, services or facilities that support the public body's objectives

- Non-financial support – both the public and third sectors may provide support to their partners in the form of advice, expertise or access to non-financial resources, without a financial exchange

2. Partners' Procurement Strategies and Processes

This code sets out a framework for the management of relationships between partners involved in resource transactions and does not replace or over-ride the procurement policies, strategies and processes of partner organisations. These 'in-house' strategies and procedures must be adhered to in establishing how to progress commissioning and procurement exercises.

The Compact ethos, however, points to the need to simplify and move as far as possible towards a unified approach to commissioning across the public sector in Darlington. The long-term ideal would be a single commissioning and procurement strategy adopted across the Darlington Partnership, but the feasibility of progressing towards this needs further investigation outside the Compact project.

3. B**ackground to this code**

The Government recognises that the voluntary and community sector can make a significant contribution to achieving the vision of a fair society based on strong communities and opportunity for everyone. Many voluntary and community organisations enter into a financial relationship with national and local government organisations to deliver outcomes on their behalf.

It is important that the financial relationship is constructed in such a way that allows outcomes to be maximised. The national Compact Code of Good Practice on Funding and Procurement aims to influence behaviour in both the voluntary and community and public sectors. This local code for Darlington pursues similar aims by setting out a framework for those aspects of any relationship between the sectors focused on resources and procurement; and setting out commitments for both sides, based on what each side can expect from the other.

4. The Resources and Procurement Framework

The following should apply at all stages of the resources and procurement relationship:

- Focus on outcomes – the achievement of outcomes should be used as a key indicator of the success of funding.

- Simplicity and proportionality – processes are as simple as possible and in proportion to the amount of money involved.

- Consistency and co-ordination – funders and purchasers should endeavour to join-up or standardise parts of the funding or procurement chain to minimise burdens on organisations and ensure a focus on delivery.

- Timeliness – allowing time for planning, decision making and action so they have real effect.

- Transparency and accountability – allowing informed decisions about spending priorities to be made and for both the public body and the third sector organisation to learn from previous work.

- Discussion and dialogue – this helps build trust and can identify and overcome problems before they impact on the delivery of outcomes.

- Empathy – understanding each other's needs and requirements should help avoid problems and help achieve outcomes.

5. Third sector partners' commitments:

- Respect confidentiality and be clear about whom they represent and how they came to those views when consulted on programme design;

- make sure that they are eligible when applying for grants;

- have clear lines of accountability, especially with joint bids;

- agree terms of delivery at the outset and be aware of the risks for which they are responsible;

- have good systems in place to manage finances and funded projects and account for them;

- be honest and transparent in reporting; and

- plan in good time for different situations to reduce any potential negative impact on both beneficiaries and the organisation if funding ends.

6. Public sector partners' commitments

- provide whenever possible an opportunity for the voluntary and community sector to contribute to programme design;

- ask for information on application forms which is relevant to deciding who will receive funding or be awarded the contract;

- discuss risks up-front and place responsibility with the public sector body or voluntary and community organisation best able to manage them;

- respect the independence of the sector;

- recognise it is legitimate for voluntary and community organisations to include the relevant overhead costs in their estimates for providing a particular service, to support long-term financial sustainability;

- make payments in advance of expenditure (where appropriate and necessary) in order to achieve better value for money

- implement longer term funding arrangements when these represent good value for money;

- be proportionate in monitoring requirements and to focus on outcomes;

- consider joining-up or standardising monitoring requirements; and

- give enough notice of the end of grants or contracts and support the development of exit strategies or transitional agreements as appropriate.

THE DARLINGTON COMPACT
CODES OF PRACTICE
THE INVOLVEMENT AND INFLUENCE CODE

Contents

1.3 The Involvement and Influence Code

1. Scope of this Code

This code acknowledges the need for the third sector to be involved in decision making within Darlington, and to be able to contribute to both strategic and delivery based decisions. This need is fundamental to the ethos of the Compact and to the principle of achieving added value in the delivery of 'One Darlington : Perfectly Placed'.

Influence is the capacity or power of persons to be a compelling force on or produce effects on the actions, behaviour, opinions, etc., of others. In order for this to happen there often needs to be a relationship between the individuals or organisations concerned that is deeper than that normally generated by simple information sharing. This code sets out the ways that these relationships can be developed to enable all parties to gain from the experience and skills of the other.

2. Partners Engagement Strategies

This code focuses on the management of relationships between partners involved in policy making. In-house strategies may already be in place in certain organisations and this code will sit alongside these strategies initially. These strategies may cover a whole range of activity from information sharing, and consultation through engagement to strategic influence.

3. Background to this Code

Government have acknowledged the role of the third sector in giving a voice to the community and supporting improvements in the delivery of public services. This essential role is reflected in statutory guidance to public sector organisations and the "Principles of Representation" set out for local strategic partnerships.

4. The Involvement and Influence Framework

This framework sets out the principles for ensuring that the voluntary and community sectors are able to influence decision making in Darlington and are involved in the development of decisions from the evidence gathering stage right through to service commissioning and review processes. The framework aims to remove any barriers to engagement with the sector and an acknowledgement

that there are issues relating to the roles of representatives that require certain principles to be adhered to if they are to work effectively.

- There needs to be a clear reason for involvement with benefits for each partner

- People should feel empowered to be part of decision making

- Involvement should include feed back on how things have changed because of involvement of partners

- Information should be in accessible formats and venues used for meetings should also be accessible

- Information should be presented in a way that is understandable and avoids the use of jargon

- Involvement should be planned in advance where possible so that representatives have time to discuss issues within their organisations

- Ensure policy development and service planning includes a diverse group of people

5. Third Sector Commitments

- Play a full and active role in activities and forums as capacity allows and through the most appropriate means;

- Make it clear when they are acting as representatives of organisations, communities or partnerships;

- Ensure reporting back is undertaken in a fair and unbiased way;

- Consider implications for partners when developing and reviewing policies;

- Adhere to ground rules set together at the beginning of meetings and to remember to keep information confidential when asked to do so;

- Involve the partners in discussions about key changes within their organisations when agreed by trustee boards.

- Follow agreed channels of communication

6. Public Sector Commitments

- Involve partners at the development stage of relevant policy, strategy and service development to identify implications for partners and volunteers;

- Involve partners where appropriate when reviewing policies strategies and devices;

- Be aware of additional resource implications for other partners when disseminating consultations;

- Make it clear when seeking representative views direct from service users or organisations in direct contact with them;

- Make it clear when seeking views that are representative of the sector or parts of the sector and allow time for this representation to be agreed and views to be sought;

- Be sensitive to the resource implications for organisations if they are expected to consult with members;

- Be alert to any potential conflict of interest that could arise from involving partners in policy and service development, particularly where partners represent potential policy/service beneficiaries or are involved in service delivery

- Be aware of any potential conflict of interest arising from the involvement in development of policy and those for whom the policy is being developed or those organisations who will have responsibility for delivery;

- Ensure that the views obtained through involvement of the sector are taken into account when making decisions;

- Feedback to those involved what changes have been made because of their involvement and why changes have not been made if it was not appropriate.

Compact
working together | better together

THE DARLINGTON COMPACT
CODES OF PRACTICE

VOLUNTEERING CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE

The Darlington Compact is a commitment to improve relationships between public sector organisations and the voluntary & community sector. This document sets out to make a positive impact on volunteering.

Contents

'Volunteering in Darlington is currently below the national
average. The Local Area Agreement (LAA) target for the 2010 survey is an increase of
3.5% in line with Government Office's requirement.'

NI6 Participation in regular volunteering ~ LAA stretch target 2008

1.4 Volunteering Code

1. Introduction

This Volunteering Code of Good Practice builds upon and underpins the principles of the Darlington Compact and should be read in conjunction with that document. The Compact recognises the "significant contribution made by volunteers and the role of voluntary and community organisations in supporting them".

The Volunteering Code sets out a series of undertakings on good practice in volunteering for the voluntary/community and statutory sectors in Darlington though intends to be a framework rather than a comprehensive guide. The aim is to increase the number of volunteers and ensure they are valued and supported by improving the quality of the volunteering experience.

Volunteering is good for us. It brings us together; it makes us healthier; it raises our self-esteem and sense of purpose; it improves our chances of employment; gets us out-and-about and makes for stronger communities.
Although Darlington as a whole has formal volunteering rates below the national average, that average figure hides a wide range of activity that is not accounted for.

What is undeniable is that volunteering contributes hugely to our wellbeing, our culture and our economy. It is the essence of social capital.

This code of Good Practice sets out principles and undertakings for both the public sector and voluntary & community sector (VCS) in Darlington on how to work together to **support and promote volunteering and voluntary action**.

Aim:

- to foster a good understanding of volunteering issues
- identify mechanisms which can take forward volunteering policy and practice issues
- to offer a practical guide which provides information to both the VCS and public sectors on:
  - ➢ points of contact for volunteering
  - ➢ highlights public sector organisations which make provision for their employees to volunteer

2. **The Importance of Volunteering**

Volunteering is a freely given commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community.

It is an important expression of citizenship and democracy and is a good demonstration of an active community.

Volunteering can be viewed as either formal or informal.

People volunteer for many different reasons.

3. **Principles of Volunteering**

There are four principles fundamental to volunteering: Choice, Diversity, Reciprocity and Recognition.

- Choice: volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. Any encouragement to become involved in volunteering should not take the form of coercion or compulsion. For example, it should not be a requirement, the refusal of which would affect an individual's right to benefits.
- Diversity: volunteering should be open and actively promoted to all, regardless of background, age, race, sexual orientation etc. Equal opportunities principles are fundamental to supporting diversity.
- Reciprocity: volunteers offer their time and skills for no financial gains, but should benefit in other ways in return. Potential benefits include a sense of worthwhile achievement, useful skills, experience, contacts, sociability, fun and inclusion in the life of the organisation.

- Recognition: explicit recognition of the value which volunteers contribute to the organisation, the community, the social economy and to wider social objectives, is fundamental to a fair relationship between volunteers, organisations and public policy and practice.

4. **eVOLution Volunteer Centre**

Within the borough of Darlington it is recognised that eVOLution Volunteer Centre operates as the local volunteering development agency. It has the following strategic objectives, which are common to volunteer centres throughout the borough:-

- **Brokerage**
  The primary function of Volunteer Centres is to match both individuals and groups interested in volunteering with appropriate opportunities in the local community. All the Volunteer Centres hold information on a comprehensive range of opportunities on the national volunteering database www.do-it.org.uk. They offer potential volunteers support and advice matching their motivation to volunteer with appropriate volunteering opportunities.
- **Marketing volunteering**
  Volunteer Centres stimulate and encourage local interest in volunteering and community activity. This may include promoting and marketing volunteering through local, regional and national events and campaigns.
- **Good practice development**
  Volunteer Centres in the County promote good practice in working with volunteers to all volunteer involving organisations. Volunteer Centres and their partner organisations deliver training and accreditation for potential volunteers, volunteers, volunteer managers and the volunteering infrastructure. All have localised good practice training DVD's and up to date case studies.

- **Develop volunteering opportunities**
  Volunteer Centres work in close partnership with statutory, voluntary and private sector agencies as well as community groups and faith groups to develop local volunteering opportunities. Volunteer Centres understand the potential offered by the local communities and work with them to realise this potential. Volunteer Centres will target specific groups which face barriers to volunteering.
- **Policy response and campaigning**
  Volunteer Centres identify proposals or legislation that may impact on volunteering. Volunteer Centres campaign proactively for a more volunteer-literate and volunteer-friendly climate.
- **Strategic development of volunteering**
  As the local experts on volunteering, Volunteer Centres inform strategic thinking and planning at a regional and national level such as the development of this Compact Code.

5. Statutory Sector Undertakings

In supporting this code the statutory sector undertakes to:
- Recognise the significant contribution made by volunteers and the role of voluntary and community organisations supporting them;
- Seek to ensure that all relevant legislation, guidance and practice are checked for impact on volunteer and community activity;
- Work towards limiting the barriers to volunteering and community action presented by existing policies and practices; Ensure that there is staff awareness of the valuable role of volunteering and working towards employer supported volunteering policies and monitoring;
- Acknowledge the professionalism of volunteers within their own areas of expertise;
- Recognise and support the independence of volunteering infrastructure bodies.
- Support the voluntary and community sectors in reviewing strengths and weaknesses of local volunteering information and infrastructures;
- Aim to adopt policies which ensure that volunteering infrastructure bodies can rely on realistic sustainable long-term funding;

- Where the public sector directly manages volunteers, it will act on relevant undertakings and advice from the voluntary and community sector; and work towards reimbursing expenses in line with Inland Revenue rates
- Ensure that volunteers are fully alert to the aims and principles of the organisation

6. Voluntary sector guidelines

Voluntary and community organisations carry out a number of roles in relation to volunteering.

- *Community organisations are those entirely or almost entirely made up of volunteers;*
- *Voluntary organisations may involve and manage volunteers, and may provide infrastructure support or funding to volunteers and voluntary groups; and*
- *Both can develop, promote and celebrate volunteering and community activity.*

Source: Government Guidance from the Home Office Active Community Unit - COMPACT getting it right together - Volunteering: A Code of Good Practice

In supporting this code, the sector undertakes to:

- Recognise the importance of high standards of effective management of volunteers, and that fulfilling this responsibility requires allocation of organisational resources. Staff who recruit, induct and manage volunteers should have this work recognised as part of their job description or work plans, and receive appropriate training and support;
- Allocate responsibility for volunteer involvement and management. To work towards adopting recognised quality standards for volunteering involving organisations. Ensure adequate broad volunteer representation at board level;
- Ensure monitoring records are kept of volunteers and how funding supports volunteering and the value this produces;
- Acknowledge that volunteers should be given thanks and recognition for their contribution and be given fair treatment, appropriate training and support;

- Assist in providing volunteering opportunities to fit needs, interests and abilities whilst recognising the importance of risk assessment and line responsibilities

7. Working in partnership

Both the public sector and voluntary sector recognise the importance of the role played by volunteers in cross-sector partnerships and agree to:

- Seek to identify the types of resources needed in supporting volunteering and community activity within the partnership;
- Define the volunteer's role and seek to ensure it is not a replacement for a paid position; and
- Work towards a set of consistent principles on reimbursement of expenses where it is agreed volunteers will be involved.
- To promote access to and the use of the National Volunteering Database www.do-it.org.uk
- To promote access to volunteering information.

8. Contact information

There are a number of VCS organisations across Darlington who support volunteering. Contact eVOLution Volunteer Centre as an initial point for information or signposting.

Contact Details:

eVOLution, Church Row, Darlington, DL1 5QD   Tel: 01325 266888

email:www.evolutiondarlington.com

Volunteering opportunities in the Borough of Darlington can be found online at www.doit.org.uk.

v-involved Team, YMCA Darlington, Middleton Court, Middleton Street, Darlington, DL1 1SL   Tel: 01325 462452

9. Useful definitions & information

Volunteering is defined as:

'Volunteering is an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives.'

(Volunteering Compact Code of Good Practice, Home Office 2005)

• **Informal volunteering** is defined as giving unpaid help as an individual to someone who is not a relative." e.g helping a neighbour.

• "**Formal volunteering** is defined as unpaid help given to groups, clubs or organisations to benefit others or the environment." e.g

- helping develop public policy through involvement in campaigning and consultation processes
- serving as trustee board or committee members of voluntary and community organisations

Some typical features of Community groups and Voluntary Organisation

The following list has been included to assist those who are unfamiliar with the Voluntary & Community Sector, and assume voluntary organisations do not employ anyone.

While there are no single characteristics for the community sector, many of the features on the left hand side of the table will be shared by most community groups and organisations. At the same time, individual organisations continue to change and some may move in either direction over time.[1]

<div align="center">RANGE</div>

←—————————————————————————————————→

Community groups	**Voluntary organisations**
Member-led (where the community controls direction and purpose)	Staff-led
Neighbourhood, village or community of interest	Wider area
Less formal structure	More formal structure
Lower or no income	Higher income
Membership-based	Client-based
Self-help and mutual support	Support and development
Providing informal and autonomous (independent) services	Providing specialist or contracted services
Representing community interests, residents and community members	Supporting client groups

[1] National Compact Code of Good Practice on Community Groups May 2008

THE DARLINGTON COMPACT
CODES OF PRACTICE

PARTNERSHIPS CODE

Contents

1.5   Partnerships Code

1. Scope of this code

This code acknowledges the role of partnerships in pursuing the strategic vision for Darlington and in the delivery of services to residents, and it establishes principles to strengthen and support partnership working in Darlington.

Partnerships come in a variety of forms and settings from formal partnerships such as Darlington Partnership, to collaborative working, joint funding partnerships and informal networks for information sharing. In all of these, different resources and skills are brought together to generate added value for the community.

2. Partnership Strategies

This code focuses on the management of relationships between partners and sets out principles for effective partnership working. Organisations may develop specific partnership agreements and governance arrangements but the principles set out here should support their delivery.

Protocols, terms of reference and constitutional documents can be useful in a partnership. They help all those involved to understand their shared objectives and have agreed ways of working. These documents clarify roles and responsibilities and help with the conduct of meetings. These need to be developed for each individual partnership and are not therefore part of this code.

3. Background to this Code

Partnerships come in a range of types including:

- Informal networks ;

- Funding partnerships brought together for bidding purposes;

- Commissioning groups and other formal partnerships with legal standing;

- Partnerships that are strategic and may commission services but are not legal entities and are underpinned by an 'accountable body' – usually the local authority.

The Government is increasingly looking at partnerships as a means of delivering strategic planning and joined up service delivery that meets the needs of local communities. From 2009 onwards, comprehensive area assessment (CAA) will

place a spotlight on the effectiveness of partnership working in individual localities. This will be a feature of the area-based assessment within CAA. The performance of Local Strategic Partnerships and their thematic groups in delivering the short-term targets of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) will also remain a concern of Regional Government Offices exercised through the annual review and refresh of the LAA. In this regard key partnerships include the Children's Trust and the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, as well as Darlington Partnership.

(The LAA is an agreement between Darlington Partnership (underpinned by Darlington Borough Council as the accountable body) built around a set of targets designed to make short-term progress towards the long-term vision of 'One Darlington : Perfectly Placed'; the LAA will be reviewed and refreshed annually and renewed every three years.)

Bringing different agencies and bodies round a table and labelling it a partnership does not, in itself, achieve collaboration and shared aims. Organisations and individuals may agree to join a partnership to safeguard their own interests, or protect their own 'patch', as much as to work together to some common goals. Partnership behaviours can prove complex and difficult to analyse and predict but the benefits of bringing organisations together to solve problems means that solutions to both symptoms and underlying causes can be developed

4. The Partnership Framework

Successful characteristics of partnerships will vary based upon the purpose of the partnership and the individual and organisational relations of participants in the partnership. However, for partnerships to be successful representation and equality are very important.

Here are the key principles for successful partnership working:

- All partners can set agendas;

- Everyone can contribute to debate;

- Everyone can have an influence on policy;

- The partnership reflects the community it serves;

- The partnership includes the right organisations and people to achieve it's aims

There are a wide range of benefits in working in partnership although it must always be remembered that it takes time to be build trust and understanding. Relationships take time to develop and are not static, and require ongoing attention to ensure they continue to be effective.

Partnerships:

- Bring together partners with different interests, skills, resources and experiences;

- Share ideas and resources;

- Share skills and experiences;

- Draw together the knowledge and talents of everyone involved;

- Develop an understanding of how different partner organisations work;

- Take actions more likely to meet local community needs not simply single organisations;

The key principle in successful partnership working is that of being equal partners across the sectors. For this reason the commitments set out below would apply to all partners. This does not mean that the roles and responsibilities are the same for each partner, and this should be set out clearly from the beginning.

5. Partner Commitments

All partners will:

- Be committed to understanding what makes a partnership effective;

- Be committed to enabling full participation of all sectors;

- Be committed to open decision-making processes;

- Identify common goals and once agreed work together to deliver against these;

- Ensure that hard to reach groups are considered in the work of the partnership;

- Recognise and value the skills and knowledge of all partners;

- Provide an induction for new partners to ensure they understand the roles and responsibilities within the partnership;

- Ensure each partner is clear about their role and commitment within the partnership;

- Identify and support training within the partnership and agree administrative and secretarial arrangements as required;

- Agree clear communication and reporting mechanisms;

- Adopt performance and risk management processes that are understood and agreed by all partners;

- Ensure meetings are accessible to all irrespective of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, faith and religion.;

- Accept ownership for all decisions made by the partnership;

- Recognise that organisations may have a strategic role as well as a delivery role;

- Ensure that representatives consult and represent the wider networks;

- Understand and respect the statutory requirements of partners and the impact this may have on the partnership;

- To understand the internal constraints faced by individual partners and to support each other as appropriate.

Appendix 2:   Developing the Darlington Compact

The Compact is a national initiative, launched in 1998 as an agreement between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector. Three partner organisations now oversee the Compact at national level:

* The Office of the Third Sector is the body representing the interests of government in all matters related to the Compact

* The Commission for the Compact is an independent body that oversees the operation of the Compact

* Compact Voice is the body representing the interests of the third sector in all matters related to the Compact

The Compact is based on a shared conviction that partnership working leads to better outcomes for citizens.

A regional Compact for the north east was launched in 2006. It is a simple statement of shared understandings and public and third sector commitments signed by 13 key regional organisations, led by Government Office for the North East (GONE) and ONE North East.

The Compact was adopted locally in Darlington in 2004. 'Changing Practice' was a statement of shared principles and commitments between the Council, Primary Care Trust and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

However, the 2004 Darlington Compact was never fully embedded in the signatory organisations and is not regarded as an effective framework for partnership working. The world has also moved on since then, with a number of changes (outlined below) that impact on local partnerships and the time is right in 2009 to adopt a new Compact agreement.

Moving to Compact Plus

Darlington's experience of its first Compact was not unique, and in 2005 government produced further guidance for public sector organisations on developing 'Compact Plus' in partnership with their voluntary and community sectors. The guidelines encourage the establishment of formal relationships between the sectors to improve the way they work together.

The move to Compact Plus has been reinforced by several recent developments and trends, summarised below.

- Partners, including the third sector, increasingly have a role in the delivery of public sector services, with direct in-house delivery complemented by commissioning and procurement from partners

- The IDeA is leading on the development of 'A Better Return', a strategy for the commissioning of public services from the third sector

- Sustainable community strategies (SCS - 'One Darlington : Perfectly Placed', is the local SCS), and the 'Place Shaping' role of local authorities, demand the full and complementary involvement of all sectors and partners if the quality of life outcomes that citizens expect and deserve are to be fully delivered

- The move from Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) of Councils as organisations to the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) of local authority areas again requires full engagement of all sectors and partners ('the area is only as good as its weakest partner'); as part of the CAA areas will have to demonstrate that they have a 'Living Compact', demonstrating active and effective working relationships that are delivering outcomes rather than a 'good document'

- National Indicator 007 now measures the effectiveness of local partnerships and arrangements in creating an 'environment for a thriving third sector'.

All these factors, and more, have generated the need for a renewal of our Compact. And whilst the National Compact sets an expectation for local authorities and primary care trusts to make Compact with the third sector, the factors outlined above have caused us in Darlington to involve all the public sector partners in the development and adoption of this Compact. The aim is to ensure that all the local agencies and organisations work to common principles and boundaries to ensure clarity and effectiveness in all our working relationships.

Developing the Darlington Compact

Darlington Borough Council and eVOLution (the Council for Voluntary Service in Darlington, and the local third sector infrastructure organisation) have led the development of the Compact, with the involvement of public and third sector stakeholder organisations. A stakeholder workshop in November 2009

established the concerns, issues and aspirations for working together in Darlington, and the key priorities that need to be addressed to enable effective working relationships to be maintained and enhanced. These priorities are listed below. Following the workshop, a programme of stakeholder meetings developed the core content of the Compact – the principles, commitments and the codes of practice.

The Key Priorities

The key priorities, agreed by stakeholders, provide the main headings for the action plan that will be developed separately from this document and reviewed annually by the Compact Steering Group. The priorities were established by the stakeholder workshop held in November 2008 and further examined during the subsequent development of the Compact. The annual review of the action plan will include monitoring of progress against the priorities, and the identification of emerging issues and priorities.

The key priorities are:

- To recognise and champion the work of the third sector in Darlington

- To build effective relationships on the basis of mutual respect, support and learning

- To place equalities and diversity at the heart of the Compact, in terms of both the character of working relationships between the sectors promoted by the Compact, and the outcomes for Darlington to be delivered through those relationships

- To develop and maintain the Compact as a 'living' process of engagement and dialogue

- To ensure the Compact achieves the added value of effective partnership working to secure the best possible resources and outcomes for Darlington

- To seek to include all statutory organisations and partners in the Compact, and to reach all parts of the third sector

- To embed and mainstream the Compact as a way of working at all levels in the partner organisations

- To give the Compact authority and effectiveness in mediating relationships between partners

Whilst a wide range of issues, needs and aspirations were recorded at the workshop and stakeholder meetings, they all fall within the scope of these priorities, which now provide a comprehensive framework for a programme of improvement actions to be renewed annually.

Notes

(Back Page)

Partners' Logos to be added to this page

Prepared by:

Representing the Third Sector in Darlington

In partnership with

On behalf of the Public Sector in Darlington