

The Darlington Compact: Appendix 1



SUPPORTING PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUCCESS

The preparation of this document has been led by eVOLution (Darlington CVS) with the involvement of:-

Darlington Borough Council
Co Durham & Darlington NHS
Durham Constabulary
Durham & Darlington Fire and Rescue Service
HSE
Highways Agency
Sport England
Tees, Esk & Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust
700 Club
Age Concern Darlington
Darlington LINK
Darlington Housing Action
Family Help
First Stop Darlington
Gay Advice Durham & Darlington
Morrison Trust
Tees Valley YMCA
Tees Valley Rural Community Council

We would also like to thank all the organisations, too numerous to mention who have taken part in the consultation and their valuable contribution to this process.

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The principles and commitments at the heart of the Compact are reinforced by Codes of Practice providing more detailed guidance in the areas of Equality and Diversity; Involvement and Influence; Partnerships; Resources and Procurement; and Volunteering. The codes are available separately from eVOLution.

Section 1: Introduction to the 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 the Borough of 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 Borough of Darlington Compact is an agreement between the sectors about how to work together on the basis of common understanding of values & actions 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 prescriptive or legally binding, but is designed 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 the Third Sector and public sector agencies working in the Borough of Darlington, 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 the Borough of 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 the Borough of 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.

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.

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 Borough of 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*** – recognising that all the sectors have distinct and complementary roles to bring to the challenge of creating a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable future for the Borough of Darlington.
- ***Equality and Diversity*** – the Compact recognises that tackling all forms of inequality is fundamental to our shared vision for Darlington; the signatories are committed to promoting equality and valuing diversity, 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, commitments and 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
- Maintain transparency and accountability in business practices, in accordance with each signatory organisation's constitutional requirements
- 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
- The Public Sector will be mindful of the benefits of having local providers

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.

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
- Involvement and Influence
- Partnerships
- Resources and Procurement
- Volunteering

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. For example, Partners' commissioning and procurement strategies 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 available separately on request from eVOLution.

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 the Borough of Darlington, from working within the Compact framework.

A Compact Steering Group will seek to ensure that the Compact is observed in all joint working between the sectors carried out through the Partnerships. The Compact Steering Group is chaired by the Executive Director of eVOLution, the lead body for the third sector within the Borough of Darlington. Its membership will be the 'Compact Champions' nominated by each of the signatory organisations. The group will meet quarterly. The Chair will report to partners, and to the LSP (Darlington Partnership), to advise on the embedding of the Compact. 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 may 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 the partners. Public sector partners will encourage other public bodies working in the Borough of 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.

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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

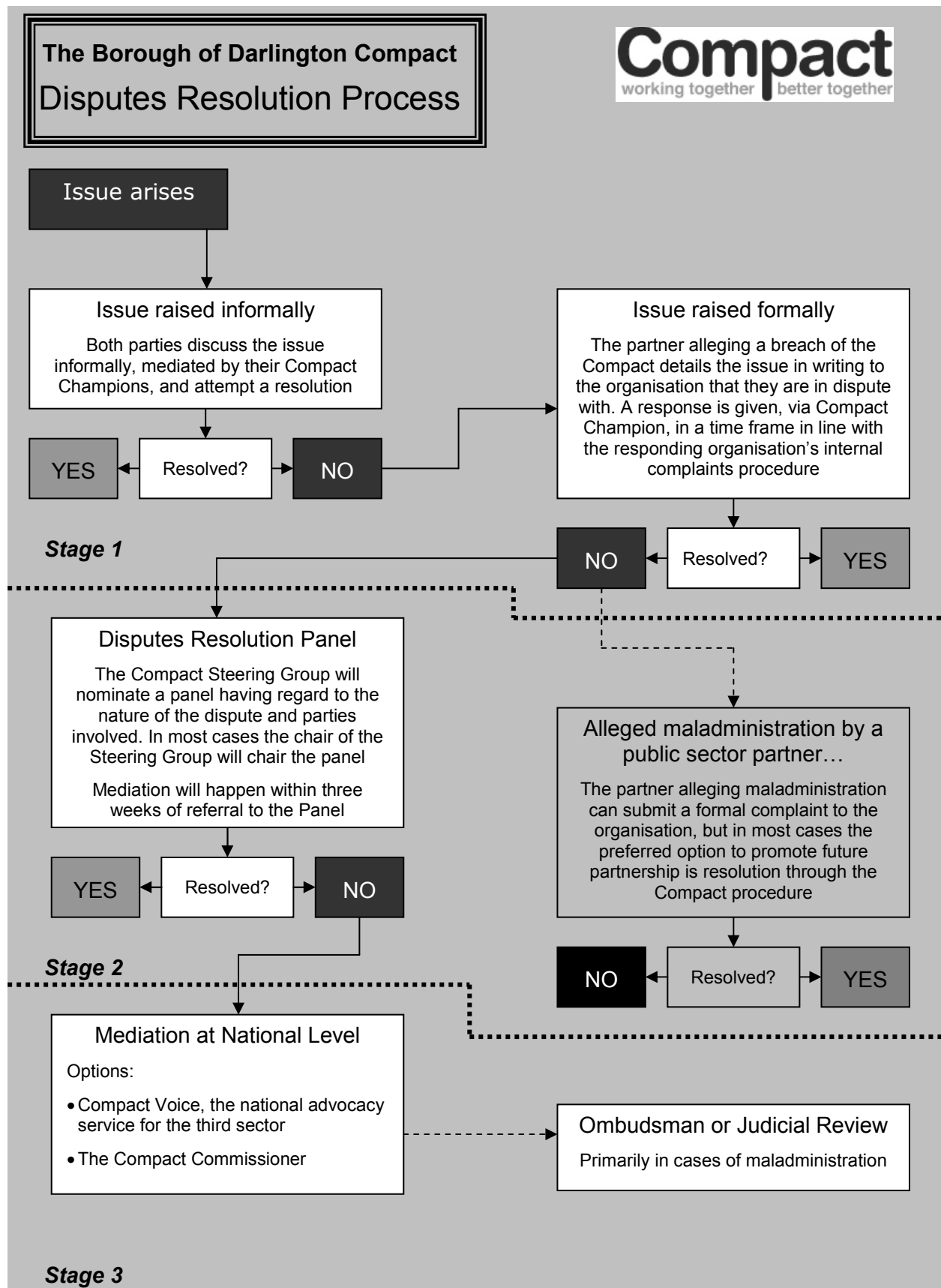
The three stages of the process for resolving disagreements, conflicts and complaints are as follows:

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.



Appendix 1: 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 the Borough of 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 now 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

The Borough of 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; this is likely to increase in future and public sector funding constraints drive innovative approaches to service delivery
- The Improvement & Development Agency (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 the Borough of 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

eVOLution (Darlington CVS) has led the development of the Compact, with the involvement of public and third sector stakeholder organisations. A stakeholder workshop established the concerns, issues and aspirations for working together in the Borough of 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 the Borough of 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 the Borough of 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 the Borough of 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.

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Appendix 2: Case Study Examples

These case studies show how the Disputes Resolution Procedure would operate in two hypothetical cases. They are intended to provide added guidance in the application of the procedure.

Review of Services

1. Voluntary Sector organisation A is unhappy with the decision of the local authority in relation to the review of services for looked after children. In this scenario an organisation that supports Young People discovered that there had been a review of services that did not include any third sector involvement.). Discussion between the two parties had already taken place and there had been a failure to agree a way forward in terms of the current or future review processes. Organisation A then decided that it needed to raise the issue formally in writing alleging a breach of the Compact.
2. As Stage 1 of the dispute resolution procedure the officers concerned plus the two Compact Champions from the voluntary sector organisation and local authority would meet and try to resolve the issue. Both sides would have an opportunity to put their viewpoint and highlight any evidence of the process that had been followed and discuss why the compact had been breached. Normally this would address the issues but failing that the process would move to Stage 2.
3. At Stage 2 of the process the Chair of the Disputes resolution panel (the Executive Director of eVOLution) will call a dispute panel meeting to agree who will sit on a panel to mediate. The results of this panel will then take place within three weeks. The role of this dispute panel is to find out the facts and perceptions and to look at solutions. These solutions could be to extend the review period to include organisations not currently involved, and working with officers to ensure that any future reviews will include the sector at all stages.

4. This will in most cases solve the issue but if necessary it could go to national mediation, if people were not willing or able to accept the findings.

Grant Funding

1. The local hospital has a series of grants for distribution to befriending services in Darlington. It became clear that these had been reduced by 50% with no warning or consultation taking place. Discussion between the groups and officers of the hospital were unsuccessful in addressing the situation either in relation to the existing grants or in terms of improving processes for the future. This being the case, the two internal Compact Champions were asked to investigate further. No solution was agreed however and the matter was referred up to the dispute resolution panel.
2. The dispute panel chair was contacted and she agreed two external compact champions to work with the organisations to address the issues. It was agreed that the dispute would be reviewed within three weeks. Following this discussion it was acknowledged that the budget had already been agreed by the board prior to the dispute being raised and that the cut would stand. However, it was further agreed that work should take place with the groups themselves to see what the impact would be and to help to seek to reduce these. Also it was agreed that in future consultation should take place prior to changes to grant allowing at least three months planning for the change.