



Working Together

A Compact for the
communities of Chelmsford



Index

What is a Compact?	2
What a Compact is not	2
Compact history	3
What it could mean for you	3
Shared Values	4
Topics of Common Interest	4
<i>Diversity and Equality of Access</i>	4
<i>Consultation</i>	5
<i>Funding</i>	6
<i>Volunteering</i>	6
Mediation	7
How we put Working Together into practice – the Action Plan	8
How will we know the Compact has helped?	8
Definitions	9
Contacts	10
Resources	10
Signing Up form	11
Compact signatories to date	13

Produced January 2004

What is a Compact?

'A Compact is a formal agreement between two or more people, organisations or countries' Cambridge Dictionary

This Compact, Working Together, is a written agreement setting out guidelines for working relations between the Voluntary, Community and Statutory Sector organisations working within Chelmsford borough.

By making clear statements about expected standards for organisations to work to, Working Together is designed to improve the relationship for mutual advantage.

In practice, Working Together is about:

- Raising mutual awareness between the sectors
- Changing attitudes and building positive commitment to working in partnership
- Engaging the wider community in decisions

This agreement is centred around four Topics of Common Interest – Consultation, Diversity and Equality of Access, Funding and Volunteering. A section has been included on Mediation and the Action Plan gives practical ways to develop Working Together.

What a Compact is not:

- Legally binding
- A Service Level Agreement
- A guarantee of funding
- A contract
- A replacement for existing partnership working agreements
- Committing your voluntary or community organisation to extra work by signing up

Compact History

The drive for local compacts stems from the National Compact launched in 1998 between the Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector. The Government has since set a target that all Local Authorities are included in a published compact by April 2004.

This Compact is designed to benefit all organisations that work within Chelmsford borough, and the Steering Group membership is to be expanded to be representative of the organisations that have signed up to it. The current members are:

- Chelmsford Agency for Volunteering
- Chelmsford Borough Council
- Chelmsford Community Transport
- Chelmsford Council for Voluntary Service
- Chelmsford Primary Care Trust
- Essex County Council
- InterAct
- Moat Care & Repair
- South Woodham Ferrers Community Safety Forum

Working Together will be reviewed annually from launch, with the first review anticipated in Spring 2005. All signatories will be invited to take part in this process.

What it could mean for you

- Clearer roles and responsibilities of the different sectors
- Shared definitions
- Recognising shared goals
- Getting to know peoples names
- Easier communication
- Finding out more about how other sectors work

Shared Values

(taken from 'Our Future' – the Borough of Chelmsford Community Plan developed by the Local Strategic Partnership
www.futurechelmsford.co.uk)

These shared values in the Community Plan also will underpin Working Together:

- Working in partnership
- Engaging the local community
- Delivering quality services which meet local needs
- Making efficient use of resources
- Working to provide equality of opportunity in access to service

Topics of Common Interest

The following four topics were selected as key elements of working together that affect us all.

Diversity and Equality of Access

- We will encourage awareness on processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through deliberate or unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness or stereotyping which disadvantage minority, ethnic or faith groups.
- We will actively combat bad practice and promote equality for all.
- We will use clear English, without jargon, in language appropriate to the intended reader/listener.
- We will produce written and printed material in an easily readable format, and will make key documents available in alternative formats where appropriate.

- We will work to accepted models of good practice towards disability with all people, regardless of their impairment.
- We will adopt processes that are not discriminatory to small community groups.
- We will be guided by the Black & Minority Ethnic Voluntary and Community Organisations National Code of Practice as it applies at local level.(See Resources)

Consultation

- We recognise the value of a local Council for Voluntary Service in enabling consultation within Chelmsford borough, as the local infrastructure organisation representing the voluntary and community sector.
- We will build early consultation into plans for statutory policy and strategy development, ideally allowing 12 weeks but a minimum of 8 weeks, for written consultation where possible. Where this is not possible we will state why.
- We will ensure participation in consultation by the Voluntary and Community Sector and service users, and use a range of consultation methods in order to be as accessible as possible and reach the hard-to-reach groups.
- We will respond honestly and realistically to requests for consultation fairly representing the views of our members.
- We will encourage voluntary organisations to include service users on the committee/board of trustees where appropriate.
- We will recognise the constraints of time and regulations placed on the Statutory Sector to deliver policies and we will recognise the resource implications for voluntary & community organisations that regularly take part in consultations.
- We will respect the confidentiality of information supplied including at draft consultation stage and will offer anonymised feedback as appropriate.

- We acknowledge that the Voluntary & Community Sector have a campaigning role which may conflict with Statutory policies, plans & decisions.
- We will be guided by the Consultation National Code of Practice as it applies at local level. (See Resources)

Funding

- We will develop an open, transparent and timely funding process.
- We will avoid the need for protective Redundancy Notices to be issued within the Voluntary & Community Sector and to allow an adequate recruitment period.
- We will recognise the importance of funding core costs.
- We acknowledge the difficulty in the grant making process, and therefore recognise a need for voluntary & community groups to have an appropriate reserves policy.
- We recognise the benefits of offering multi-year, roll-forward funding where possible to allow for longer term planning.
- We will agree effective and proportionate systems for the management, control, accountability, propriety and audit of Statutory funding.
- We recognise the benefits of written agreements setting out the objectives being funded, the payment arrangements and the monitoring conditions.
- We will adopt processes that are not discriminatory to small community groups.
- We will be guided by the Funding National Code of Practice as it applies at local level. (See Resources)

Volunteering

- We recognise the value of Chelmsford Agency for Volunteering as an infrastructure body assisting potential volunteers in finding volunteering opportunities that fit their needs, interests and abilities by working in partnership with other agencies.

- We recognise that 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.
- We recognise the contribution that volunteers make to Chelmsford borough both socially and economically.
- We recognise the importance of good practice and effective management of volunteers, and the need for organisational support of this work.
- We will work to eliminate the barriers to volunteering and community action in existing policies and practices.
- We will accept auditable records of volunteer time donated as equal in status to money, where match funding is required.
- We will be guided by the Volunteering National Code of Practice as it applies at local level. (See Resources)

Mediation – resolving disagreements

- Each organisation has the right to raise concerns and be listened to positively.
- As far as possible, any disagreements should be resolved between the parties concerned using Working Together as a framework.
- Where this is not possible, an independent mediator should be sought.
- The Compact Steering Group should be made aware of any disagreements that require mediation so Working Together can be adapted as necessary.

How we put Working Together into practice – the Action Plan

- Spread the word! Publicise the Compact to other organisations & encourage them to sign up to Working Together. Member organisations of Chelmsford CVS are treated as signatories (unless they choose otherwise), but are also encouraged to sign up individually.
- Identify a person within each signed up organisation to make colleagues aware of its content and its role as a guidance document.
- Encourage signed up organisations to create a web link to Working Together on their websites.
- Undertake an awareness survey periodically, within organisations that are signed up and within the wider community.
- Ask signed up organisations to include details about Working Together in their Annual Review document to help embed it into day-to-day workings.
- As a minimum, one year after the launch there will be a full review of the Compact by the Steering Group and signatories.

How will we know the Compact has helped?

- Improved awareness of the Compact across a range of organisations.
- Perceived effectiveness and improved relations.
- Real examples of when the Compact steered the process.

Definitions:

A Statutory authority is an authority set up by statute.

The Collins Shorter English Dictionary defines 'statutory' as prescribed or authorised by statute, 'to prescribe' as to lay down as a rule or directive, and defines 'authority' in many ways, the most relevant being a public board or corporation exercising governmental authority.

So, a statutory authority is a body set up by a rule or directive by Parliament.

There is no absolute boundary between voluntary and community groups. However, the term voluntary organisation is often used to refer to groups with unpaid committees but with paid staff. They provide a service or meet a need that is of benefit to the public.

On the other hand, community groups usually consist of people meeting their own common interests and those of others around them. They are usually member-led (where the community controls direction and purpose).

Sources: The LSP Guide, published by Community Development Foundation and Urban Forum, and the Compact Code of Good Practice on Community Groups.

Contacts:

For additional copies of this document, to have it made available in large print or electronic format, translated into other languages or recorded onto audio tape, please contact:

Joan Hutchison, Director
Chelmsford Council for Voluntary Service
47 Broomfield Road, Chelmsford CM1 1SY
01245 351888 chelmsfordcvs@ukcharity.com

Or

Claire Branch, Community Partnership & Grants Officer
Strategic Housing Services, Chelmsford Borough Council
Civic Centre, Duke Street, Chelmsford CM1 1JE
01245 606276 claire.branch@chelmsfordbc.gov.uk

Resources:

National Codes of Practice

The five National Codes of Practice mentioned in this Compact can be obtained from:

Compact Working Group
C/o National Council for Voluntary Organisations
Regents Wharf, 8 All Saints Street, London N1 9RL

Telephone: 020 7520 2454
or downloaded from: www.thecompact.org.uk

Copies of the Codes can also be borrowed from the library at Chelmsford CVS.

Social Model of Disability

More information can be obtained from:
Essex Coalition of Disabled People
Whitelands, Terling Road, Hatfield Peveral, Nr Chelmsford CM3 2AQ

Telephone: 01245 382258

Please sign up!

We would like all voluntary, community and statutory organisations working in Chelmsford to join up to this agreement. Member organisations of Chelmsford CVS, treated as signatories (unless they choose otherwise), are also encouraged to sign up individually.

Yes, we would like to sign up to *Working Together – A Compact for the communities of Chelmsford*

We have read and understood the principles outlines in this Compact. We agree with these principles and commit ourselves to them by signing below and becoming an equal partner in this agreement.

My Name:

My organisation:

Address:

.....

.....

Telephone number:

Email address:

Signature: Date:

Please return this form either to:

Joan Hutchison, Director
Chelmsford CVS, 1st Floor, 47 Broomfield Road, Chelmsford CM1 1SY

or

Claire Branch, Community Partnership & Grants Officer,
Strategic Housing Services
Chelmsford Borough Council
Civic Centre, Duke Street, Chelmsford CM1 1JE

If you would prefer an electronic version of *Working Together – A Compact for the communities of Chelmsford*, please contact Claire Branch on 01245 606276 or e-mail claire.branch@chelmsfordbc.gov.uk



