

Consultation on the refresh of the Compact

Response to the Sector, November 2009

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Introduction

The Compact on Relations between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in England is currently being “refreshed”, and a draft of the document was circulated widely for comment in July 2009. This consultation process ended in October 2009. Compact Voice collated responses from the Third Sector (the “Sector”) following this consultation period.

Compact Voice received 79 responses from organisations, and 3 from individuals working in the Sector, to the ‘Refreshing the Compact’ consultation. Many of these responses were sent by umbrella organisations representing regional and local groups, considerably broadening the range of opinions we received.

Compact Voice was delighted that so many organisations and individuals took time to respond, and in particular that these views represented the whole spectrum of organisations, from small to large, established to tackle so many important issues, and represent so many important groups.

The responses were read and considered carefully, and offer a wide range of opinion from across the sector both on how the Compact is currently used, and what a refreshed Compact should deliver.

The vast majority of the responses both welcomed the consultation, and were considerably positive about the Compact, about what it has achieved, and what it will be able to achieve in the future. Support was given to the way the consultation had been undertaken. Over 60 per cent (61%) of those that expressed an opinion on the document as a whole (rather than specific themes or passages) thought the refreshed document a clear improvement.

“Reducing the previous six documents into one shorter Compact is an achievement. This makes the Compact more accessible and the commitments in it more visible, which in turn may improve understanding and compliance.”

- Home Group Limited

The views also highlighted some key challenges which the Compact has faced, and also those which might impact a refreshed Compact. Since the Compact was launched in 1998, the sector has changed considerably, and new challenges have appeared which will impact on the voluntary sector and the future of the Compact.

The questions asked by the consultation arguably reflect these changes, and issues such as the increased emphasis on personalisation of services, the impact of changes to Equality legislation, concerns about the independence of the Sector – amongst others – prompted many interesting responses, and highlighted many relevant concerns. Other topical issues such as the recession and its impact on the voluntary sector, the forthcoming general election, and the changing nature of service delivery also featured in the responses we received.

“We believe that the Compact could usefully make reference to the specific challenges presented by the recession, when public funding is in short supply and the need to safeguard the interests of the disadvantaged is at its most acute. Clearly the third sector itself is also under threat in times like these.”

- English Region’s Equality Network

Overwhelmingly, the responses highlighted that the Compact not only retains its relevance in this context, but even more so than before, needs to remain an essential tool in enabling the best possible relationship between Government and the Third Sector.

This response to the Sector cannot hope to capture all of the content submitted to Compact Voice during the consultation process, and the summary below is by no means exhaustive. It highlights some of the main emerging themes, and considers those which express not just support but concern as well.

Inevitably, it will be impossible to accommodate all of these views when the final Compact is launched later this year – many organisations provided conflicting views or opinions to others who also contributed. However, they will all have been carefully considered.

Compact Voice, the Office of the Third Sector and the Commission for the Compact will take these themes forward, working together to deliver the most effective and meaningful Compact possible.

Specific themes which were addressed:

1. Scope of the Sector

This section represented a significant amount of the content in the responses that Compact Voice received, with a number of different issues highlighted. Some of the themes which came through strongly are:

Applicability of the Compact to the wider Sector

Many responses supported the Compact's extended reach, arguing that it enabled more effective partnerships at national, regional and local level. There was little support for restricting its use.

"RAISE welcomes the acknowledgement that the term 'Third Sector' used throughout reflects the wider groups of organisations potentially included in the Compact"

Regional Action and Involvement South East Compact

Smaller Organisations

Some responses expressed concern that many organisations, particularly smaller groups, did not find the Compact to be particularly meaningful for them, or a useful mechanism for enabling stronger partnerships.

"The smaller the organization, the more distant Compact feels. For many of the smaller projects in our network (with income of £100k and under) the Compact is perceived as irrelevant."

- Church Urban Fund

Many suggested that the Compact should strongly emphasise that it is relevant and valid for *all* organisations.

"As it currently stands, the draft refreshed Compact is more relevant for established VCS organisations working directly with public agencies. We feel the refreshed Compact needs to be made more relevant for smaller community-based organisations which have no financial relationship with public sector agencies, or which receive small grant funding."

- Race on the Agenda

Public Bodies

Some respondents expressed concern that the list of public bodies mentioned in the consultation did not adequately cover all of those which should be using the Compact, and recommended a clear statement highlighting that *all* public sector bodies are signed up to the Compact.

"We endorse the statement in Part 3 of the proposals that the Compact applies to NHS strategic health authorities, primary care trusts; this is something we specifically asked for in our response to the Compact Debate in November 2008... However, we think that the Compact should apply to all public bodies and not just those listed in Part 3."

- Yorkshire and Humber Regional Forum

Implementation

A key theme emerged about the most effective way to implement the Compact, with a number of helpful suggestions about how to deliver guidance and toolkits which could assist with this.

"The key to success is in implementing the Compact. It is crucial that resources are allocated to ensure implementation."

Short summary documents targeted at specific groups (Councillors, Non exec. Members, PS staff, VCS staff) would help explain Compact and their role within it.

Other areas which could improve Compact implementation are, training, toolkits, raising the profile and sharing good practice.”

- Herefordshire Local Compact Working Group

The Compact's statutory standing

Many people stated that the Compact needed strengthening in order to increase its use as a tool, in many instances saying that it needed ‘teeth’. Some stated that the Commission for the Compact should be given statutory powers, others that the Compact needs a statutory footing.

“A move towards making the Compact statutory is, Unite feels, essential to realising its full potential. The status-quo, where it has no teeth, is unsustainable. Large sums of money are being injected into a bureaucracy, without evidence of real ongoing outcomes being achieved.”

- Unite

Many agreed that there needed to be greater commitment to the Compact from public sector bodies.

“Clearly the Local Strategic Partnership is a good place to seek collective sign up of these bodies and should become a more explicit expectation. However given the Compact lacks teeth or resources, there is neither carrot nor stick, and it attracts little interest from public bodies – in terms of immediate self interest it is not clear why they would or should move on it.”

- Community Sector Coalition

Some submissions stated breaches of the Compact needed greater attention and investigation.

“For the Compact to be a tool to achieve real change it needs more definite commitment, and proactive action against breaches. We would welcome further consideration of this issue.”

- COVER

Focus of the Compact

A number of responses indicated concerns that the Refreshed Compact had too much focus on funding, public services and consultation, arguing that it can be a powerful tool in other areas as well:

“The Compact must be explicit about how it can support relations between independent organisations and government bodies, beyond commissioning of public services more clearly. For example, extensive campaigning, advocacy and community empowerment activities. Without this the relevance of the Compact to the majority of community-based organisations will undoubtedly reduce.”

- BASSAC

2. Independence of the Sector

The responses to the consultation indicated that there was near-universal consensus that independence is essential for voluntary sector organisations, and many agreed that the Compact was a powerful tool in ensuring this independence was protected.

“The Compact can ensure the independence of the VCS especially when this involves funding, be it grants or procurement.”

- West Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership

However, some responses indicated concerns about whether the nature of relationships between local organisations and public sector bodies allowed for this.

“The independence of the third sector is vulnerable in an environment of competitive tendering. The national Compact supports the independence of the third sector but only if all its principles are adhered to including full cost recovery.”

- Sitra

A significant majority of the responses argued that the refreshed Compact should strongly and explicitly emphasise the importance of maintaining an independent third sector in all of its dealings.

“The paragraph on independence in part 2 should include a clear and strong statement that third sector organisations exercising their independence on behalf of themselves or their service users must be able to do so without fear of negative repercussions for future engagement or opportunities.”

- Children England

Some responses placed more emphasis on the Sector being responsible for its own independence.

“It is up to the Third Sector to safeguard its independence, not the Compact per se”

- Carl Allen

3. Accountability of the Sector

"...the third sector's unique accountability is to the users of its services."

- English Regions' Equality Network

Opinions on the accountability of the Sector differed considerably in many of the responses. Many thought that the Compact enabled sufficient accountability for the Sector. Some argued that partnerships which emphasised an expectation of accountability from both sides would ensure better relationships, and agreed that the Compact was an important tool in achieving this:

"Using the Local Compact would not only ensure a level of transparency and accountability, it would provide guidance which would help minimise risks and avoid serious mistakes."

- Foyer Federation

Other responses suggested that to encourage shared partnerships, the Sector needed to be *more* accountable:

"The third sector must understand fully the need to be accountable and this accountability is crucial to encouraging the public sector to see the value of third sector involvement... If the sector is to be seen as providing value added to services it must be seen to be responsible and to accept the need for monitoring, reporting and providing the agreed services on time and on target."

- Nacro

Some organisations felt that it was important that third sector organisations did not have unfair processes imposed onto them to ensure their accountability.

"It is appropriate that a lighter tone has been used when addressing the accountability of the VCS and placing requirements on its conduct. Government and public bodies have much greater power than VCOs: in view of this imbalance in the relationship it would be inappropriate for the Compact to place excessively onerous commitments on VCOs."

- NCVO

Other responses questioned whether accountability was compatible with independence, or whether it was the role of the Compact to deliver it:

"A specific explicit Compact accountability of the third sector to government potentially compromises independence and weakens accountability to others, especially members. Many of the third sector commitments already reflect good governance and accountability."

-Community Links Bromley

4. Relationship between the National and Local Compacts

The relationship between National and Local Compacts was presented in many responses as central both to the successful delivery of good partnerships, and to the ethos of the Compact itself.

While most responses supported the current relationship between local and national Compacts, some disagreed.

"... there is no real explanation of why there is a need for both local and national Compacts. It would be helpful for this to be explained in more detail"

- CASE Kent

Some responses argued that the relationship between the two needs to be clearer and more obvious. Others have stated that more needs to be done to strengthen their interaction.

"Our local Compact main document is based exactly on the National Compact, interchanging 'government' with 'local public sector'. We have found, however, that the main document is currently very weak and only works when it is underpinned by the local Codes of Good Practice, which do well from being developed locally and in partnership. It is these that support the ethos of Compact."

- Suffolk Association of Voluntary Organisations

Some responses stated that the National Compact should provide a standard "template" which can be modified to meet local needs, and that the Compact should be linked to other appropriate local mechanisms.

"Organisations locally should be required to adopt a local Compact that meets minimum national standards. Whilst we are not in favour of legalising what should be voluntary arrangements based on trust and effective partnership, we would support adherence to Compact principles being included in both Comprehensive Area Assessments and LAA national indicator surveys."

- Burnley Community Network Consultation

There were many recommendations about how to strengthen the link between local and national Compacts beyond embedding it in local processes, such as linking it to local authorities achieving Beacon status.

"It is essential that the national Compact provides clear guidance for local Compacts. NAVCA believes this can best be achieved through the planned implementation documents. To achieve this, these documents must include advice on what key commitments all local Compacts would be expected to include and who should be expected to sign up to a local Compact."

The implementation documents should also explain how national and local Compacts complement each other and when each is most relevant.... We believe the national Compact should include a statement that local Compacts must respect key commitments contained in the national Compact."

The implementation guidance should identify these key commitments, which we believe should include: 12 week consultation periods, three year funding agreements, a minimum three month notice period for ending a financial relationship, payment in advance where there is a clear need and payment within ten days of receipt of an invoice."

- NAVCA

Recommendations such as these will of course be considered as part of the process of refreshing the Compact.

5. Prime/subcontractor relationship

The majority of responses to the consultation agreed that Compact principles should be adhered to at all stages of the supply chain, with all partners recognising their importance.

Some responses argued that Compact compliance should be part of the design of contracts. Others warned that the Compact should be careful not to stray into areas covered by existing legal mechanisms.

“Many local Compact case enquiries are around contracts and tenders, which are influenced by Contract Law, not Public Law -and there should be clear differences made within the Compact as to where these boundaries are.”

- Suffolk Association of Voluntary Organisations

Some raised the concern that non-monetary relationships were not considered by the consultation.

“... little or no reference is made to the protection of non-monetary transactions. In-kind support plays a crucial role in the third sector and the Compact should make reference to this and apply the same protections as to grants and contracts e.g. an organisation which has received a free venue for meetings or back office support would be significantly disadvantaged if this were to stop suddenly.”

- One Voice Network

Other responses questioned whether subcontractors were disadvantaged when competing against larger contractors.

“The focus should be on the subcontractors’ ability to deliver outcomes rather than an assumption that larger contracts are more cost effective. This would enable smaller Third Sector organisations to successfully bid for smaller contracts, as many do not have the capacity to take on larger contracts but have, however, a real ability to deliver on outcomes.”

- Community Development Foundation

A suggested solution made in a number of responses was to embed Compact principles during the tender process, including ensuring adequate monitoring and oversight functions were undertaken by the contractor.

“Public sector Compact partners need to consider how we might ...build in a mechanism to ensure prime contractors adhere and report back on tender criteria that are key to supporting Compact compliance”

- Voluntary Sector North West

6. Consultation

The majority of responses felt that there was no real reason why the 12-week consultation should be changed, nor that exemptions should be introduced to the current practice.

“... less than 12 week consultations should not be permitted in the Compact – it would be too easy to find a reason to apply the exemption.”

- Community Links Bromley

In some cases, it was felt that matters of national significance may have an impact on consultations, but there were only a few arguments made in support of any reduction in the standard consultation period.

“It is felt that we have now moved on from needing 12 weeks of consultation on all things. For a large national survey such as this, 12 weeks is probably required to filter through the documents, but is this the case locally? Why, however, in this new age of technology haven't the VCS evolved in being able to respond much more quickly to consultation, particularly if it is available online – much cheaper and easier for all involved to take part in for example.”

- Suffolk Association of Voluntary Organisations

Many responses expressed concern that the 12-week consultation period still might not offer smaller organisations enough time to respond, especially if those organisations are representing the views of local groups.

“Consideration should be given within the commitments of the impact of the policy area as to how long it is consulted upon.”

- BME Alliance for the East Midlands

What many responses highlighted was that the process is often more important than the time scale – and some criticised where consultations have been launched at inappropriate times.

“There is an additional caveat which anecdotal evidence suggests is shared in other VCS sectors -that government departments offload consultations just before the summer and Christmas holiday periods invalidating a large part of the twelve week consultation period.”

- HeritageLink

The majority of the respondents agreed that consultations should always seek to be as inclusive and well promoted as possible.

“We, the umbrella body, meet on a quarterly basis. Our constituent groups (one per London borough) generally meet every two or three months. Thus, for us, the natural consultative cycle on a major topic would entail presentation and initial debate at a first meeting, referral for local borough-level discussion (thereby engaging as many people as possible in the topic), and formulation of a corporate response at a second meeting, three months on. Given the necessary lead-in time at the start for issue analysis and presentation, and a short time at the end to process a formal response, it is clear that three months is far from sufficient for such a procedure.”

-London Communities Policing Partnership

7. Europe

This section prompted some divided opinions about whether the Compact should make reference to the European funding, or go further. Many of the organisations stated that they had little interaction with the European Union, and did not see how the Compact was relevant.

Some responses called for further clarification about the relationship between the Compact and the EU.

“There is concern that the Compact is not adhered to, and unnecessarily so, by public sector agencies when distributing European funding and we await the findings of the Commission for the Compact’s research in this area. It is clear that there can be confusion and consideration should be given to working with the EU to clarify matters and develop guidance.”

- Voluntary Sector North West

Many of those who did respond indicated support for funding arrangements to follow Compact principles.

“The Compact should ensure that European funding is made available on the same terms as other funding sources, especially as regards risk, following the best practice codes established in the Compact. The best use of European funding can be ensured by the introduction of three-month notice periods before the project start date if a bid has been accepted, three-year commitments and three-month notice periods if a funding source is likely to be withdrawn -CEMVO

The general consensus indicated that wider interaction with the European Union may not be relevant or appropriate for the Compact to address, though some specific examples were given about where it should be relevant.

“We very much believe that ESF [European Social Fund] should be included within the scope of the Compact.”

- Moving Image Training Alliance

When funding arrangements were made, it was suggested that the Compact recognise some of the administrative issues imposed.

“Citizens Advice welcomes the specific commitment on European funding in the refreshed Compact. However, we feel the Commission for the Compact should work with the European Union on the proportionality of its monitoring requirements as this can be a barrier for both prime and sub-contractor engagement with the Fund.”-Citizens Advice

Some responses provided advice about how the Compact could be used:

“The implementation guides should include analysis of EU procurement rules – which is more of a commissioning issue than strictly an EU funding issue. Examining some case studies around State Aid and the different ‘schedules’ would be really valuable.”

- Directory of Social Change

“... a Compact way of working should go beyond the distribution of funding. ENNA, the European Network of National Associations, is working on a range of other issues affecting voluntary organisations across the European Union, with the aim of strengthening the frameworks that structure the relationship between EU institutions and civil society organisations from the national to the European level.”

-NCVO

8. Personalised/independent budgeting

Similar to the above comments on the EU, questions about personalised/independent budgeting prompted some divided opinion about the Compact's role, with some stating that the Compact had no role in the relationship between service providers and individuals.

"The Compact is about relationships between the public and third sectors, not between individuals and the organisations they buy services from. In the case of personal budgets, it would not be right for individuals who control their personal budget for care to be obligated to buy from suppliers that are Compact compliant, as it would undermine the whole notion of personal choice on which the concept of personalisation is based."

- RAISE

Other organisations felt that the Compact should recognise the increasing emphasis on individual budgeting.

"The Compact should give guidance to LA's and public sector organisations about what support they should give to budget holding families to ensure they can access the range of providers in a particular section of the marketplace." -Gloucestershire Assembly Team

Many recognised the difficulties in the Compact considering the personalisation agenda, and in a number of responses, it was suggested that implementation guidance should address this issue.

"In theory personal budgets are about trying to create a marketplace for the recipient of services to buy what they need. They are about the relationship between the recipient of services and the service provider – not about a partnership between the voluntary organisation and a public body. In personal budgets this partnership is almost circumvented; the state has a direct relationship with the recipient of services (providing the money), as does the voluntary organisation (providing them the service). This would seem to make the Compact irrelevant in this case."

-Directory of Social Change

9. Content and length

The overwhelming majority of the respondents welcomed a shorter, more focused Compact, recognising that to be meaningful, the Compact needs to be easier to use, clearer to understand, and offer clear benefits.

Some responses argued that the Compact should focus on meaningful content rather than trying to achieve a shorter document.

"We feel that the document should be as long as it needs to have any meaningful impact. Either it is a literal framework which could be reduced down to 10 pages or is the blueprint for the detailed contents of Local Compacts? It is not clear from the document which this is."

- BME Alliance for the East Midlands

Other responses stated that even the revised document was too long.

"While it is important to provide a comprehensive document there is a balance to be struck between detail and length. The current document is too long and is less likely to be read because of it."

- Nacro

Other responses indicated a concern about the wording of the Compact:

"We feel that it is not the length of the documentation that makes it inaccessible to all; it is the nature of the language that is used."

- Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum and East Cornwall CVS

However, many agreed that the new document in its tone and approach, and drive to offer a more coherent and shorter document, was ultimately of benefit to the Compact.

10. Equalities strands

“This revised Compact recognises the great diversity of the third sector and it is right to do so. It is therefore inevitable that the Compact itself will be more relevant and applicable to some organisations than to others.”
- Yorkshire and Humber Regional Forum

The section on equalities prompted some detailed responses, with many different opinions suggesting ways to strengthen how the Compact can be used to address equalities issues.

Many of the responses discussed the Equality Bill, currently undergoing passage through parliament, which introduces new legislative mechanisms to tackle discrimination and improve equality across the different equality strands.

“We agree that a new emphasis on equalities is needed to replace the previous BME code and existing network of good practice provisions concerning other marginalised or minority groups. In line with the legislative framework (and specifically the single Equality Bill) Government should aim to create a more clear and unified approach to anti-discrimination issues.”
- NCVO

Despite many responses welcoming the focus on the wider equality strands, some questioned the value of having specific descriptions within this section of the document.

“Do the different individual equalities strands actually need to be highlighted within the document? Most of the principles are covered by statutory legislation and the Compact could be in danger of duplicating this.”
- Suffolk Association of Voluntary Organisations

Some responses expressed concern that the commitments proposed in the consultation may compromise the activities of equality groups.

“Commitment on the equality groups to ‘build representative infrastructure organisations that can promote the broad range of interests of equality groups’ (23.3) is far too prescriptive and infringes the independence of BME and other equality groups in maintaining their identity and independence.”
- Voice4Change England

The decision to include aspects of the specific BME Code within the consolidated document rather than as a distinct Code generated some strong opinions. Some responses indicated that it was right to consider the wider equalities context, and others felt that this integration would have a significantly detrimental impact on the Compact.

“Whilst acknowledging there are still specific issues to address for and with the BME community I believe we continue to treat BME people as a separate group by such actions and undermine work to integrate everyone into society.”
- Bury Third Sector Development Agency

“The refreshed Compact does not refer to the persistent inequality and institutional racism that BME communities and groups face and fails to recognise the need behind the specific BME Code.”
- Voice4Change England

A number of responses questioned which aspects of the Sector’s work should be considered as mechanisms to promote equality, and suggested that equality principles should underpin the whole of the Compact, rather than having a specific focus.

“It goes without saying that the third sector and government must work together to ensure equality and fairness. However in the context of the Compact, issues of equality are either concerning the advocacy relationship with government agencies or a funding relationship with government agencies. It may therefore be more productive to include equality issues in those respective sections rather than in their own section.”

- ACEVO

However, many agreed that a key way in promoting equality was through the activities of volunteers, and it was proposed that the Compact needed to do more to recognise the role of volunteers in promoting and addressing equality issues.

“We support the recruitment and involvement of volunteers from diverse communities. Third sector organisations need to work on positive measures, and their ability to take necessary steps is, to a large extent, dependent on the constraints and opportunities in funding provision.”

- Volunteering England

Some responses felt that equality issues should be considered as integral to the whole sector, feeling that distinguishing between larger and smaller organisations was not appropriate.

“It is misleading to reiterate the polarisation of small and ‘informal’ groups with larger ‘professional’ groups. This only seeks to undermine the fact that much of the voluntary sector is run by skilled people with specialist expertise in local and equalities issues. While equality groups are often small, this does not necessarily translate into ‘informal.’”

- National Equality Partnership

Many of the responses recognised the complexity of these (and other) issues, and many of the suggested ways to help address this will be carefully considered.

“Tackling poor public sector practice and driving up the level of compliance with the Compact cannot be left to self-assessment and monitoring. Minimum, enforced standards need to be applied to public bodies, making them accountable to the diverse needs of different sections of the voluntary sector, and especially the needs of the most marginalised, including BME and women’s organisations, with particular attention to limited funding of these groups.”

Women’s Resource Centre

11. Monitoring and analysis of funding arrangements

Many responses recognised the difficulty in implementing standard monitoring arrangements, recognising that commissioners tended to maintain their own processes to do so.

However, most recognised that monitoring was an important part of delivering the Compact. Some suggested that the Compact should do more to provide clear guidance about how to monitor funding arrangements.

“The Compact establishes that third sector organisations should be clear that they can manage and account for funds while providing the expected service before agreeing to undertake any project work. Delivery terms should be agreed before any contract is signed. Third sector organisations should be open and honest as regards any changes to the agreed contract and aware that it is legitimate for funders to request the acknowledgement of funds received.”

- CEMVO

Some responses highlighted the importance of equality assessments when changing funding arrangements, and in particular welcomed the Compact ensuring monitoring of the impact of decisions to change or end funding agreements.

“We support the requirement on funders to assess the impact on beneficiaries, service users and volunteers before deciding to reduce or end funding.”

- Sheffield Joint Compact Board

12. Further comments

There were many additional useful comments and suggested amendments to the text which were provided, many adding to the themes which were discussed throughout this document.

Some provided clear suggestions, such as the inclusion of a glossary of terms, calls for specific implementation guidance on expectations for local Compacts and the development of accessible documents, both in different languages and easy-read formats.

We include here those areas which were highlighted in several responses. A number of these indicated that the Compact should make reference to applicable law in related areas, enabling users of the Compact to understand the relevant legislative framework. Public Law was the most often cited. Others made suggestions that some areas are arguably better served by considering existing legislative mechanisms, rather than being included in the Compact.

A number of responses highlighted how the Compact is central to delivery of National Indicator 7.

“The way in which we have incorporated work on the Local Area Agreement target NI 7 – “creating an environment for a thriving third sector” has brought an extra dimension to the Compact way of working. We have spent much time determining new dispute resolution processes and revising the terms of reference for our Compact Implementation Group, and have placed particular emphasis on a model for the right representative structures to bring about the development of partnerships at both the Countywide and at borough and district levels.”

- West Sussex Compact NI7 Implementation Group

Many responses suggested that the Compact should form an integral part in the induction and training of commissioners and others working in the public sector, and again highlighted the importance of proper implementation and dissemination of Compact documents and principles.

“There needs to be better resource at local level to support the Compact, including:

- *An externally identifiable person or contact point in each local authority, PCT, etc who is responsible for the Compact.*
- *Getting the Compact fully integrated into the workings of each LSP, and part of the LAA and CAA evaluation process.”*

- Directory of Social Change

A number of responses highlighted that for the Compact to be meaningful, it has to reflect the current climate, both in terms of the interactions between the Sector and public bodies, and also recognising the wider challenges presented by the threat of public sector spending cuts and the changing nature of service delivery.

A number of responses stated that they thought the Compact document should be looked at again following the introduction of the Single Equality Act (UK).

There were a number of calls for extending the dispute resolution section, both with more information to help organisations, and stronger statements about recourse to action when a public body or Third Sector Organisation acts in a non-Compact compliant fashion.

Calls to put the Compact or the Commission for the Compact on a statutory footing also featured in several of the responses Compact Voice received.

Conclusion

What was highlighted and supported by the majority of these consultation responses was that to finish this process with a usable Compact, it must be clear, well-supported, and championed. For it to have the impact which most recognised it should have, it needs to be taken seriously by all public bodies (however achieved), properly resourced, with clear links between national and local Compacts and with all partners working together in the spirit of its principles.

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