

Dorset Compact

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| Ref. No. | PE/CP/1 |
| Category (Y/N) | |
| People | Yes |
| Place | |
| Corporate | |
| In Constitution | |

Policy Details

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|---|---|
| What is this policy for? | <p>The Dorset Compact is a commitment to positive partnership working between the public sector and the voluntary & community (or 'third') sector. It is an expression of the desire of third sector organisations and public bodies to work better together for mutual advantage and community gain.</p> <p>The Compact sets out a number of shared principles, and provides specific guidance on the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation • Funding • Volunteering • Support for third sector organisations ('infrastructure') • Equality and diversity |
| Who does this policy affect? | <p>Dorset Compact affects a number of public sector bodies who signed up to it: All Dorset District Councils and Dorset County Council Dorset Fire & Rescue (now Dorset and Wiltshire Fire & Rescue) Dorset Police NHS Dorset and All Dorset 3rd sector organisations</p> |
| Keywords | Dorset Public Sector, third sector, multi-agency working, partnership working |
| Author | West Dorset District Council. |
| Dorset Council policy adopted from | Partnership policy, involving all Dorset Council's sovereign authorities. This policy applies across the Dorset Council area. |
| Does this policy relate to any laws? | Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, which places a 'duty to involve' on local authorities. |
| Is this policy linked to any other Dorset Council policies? | Equality and Diversity Policy |
| Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) | An EqIA will be completed when the policy is reviewed for Dorset Council. |
| Other Impact Assessments | None |

Status and Approvals

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|------|------------------|--|
| Status | Live | Version | |
| Last review date | | Next review date | |
| Approved by (Director) | | Date approved | |
| Member/ Partnership Board Approval | | Date approved | |



The Dorset Compact

Working together for Dorset

The Dorset Compact **is a commitment to positive partnership working between the public sector and the voluntary & community (or 'third') sector.** It is an expression of the desire of third sector organisations and public bodies to work better together for mutual advantage and community gain.

In 1999 Dorset became the first county in the country to adopt a joint Compact agreement between public bodies and the third sector. It was updated four years later, in 2003. This revised version has been written to reflect policy developments at local and national level, to strengthen the links with the Dorset Strategic Partnership and to improve implementation of the agreement. For information about the Dorset Strategic Partnership, go to www.dorsetforyou.com/dsp.

Effective partnerships are essential to the achievement of our long-term strategic aims for Dorset, including the development and delivery of the Community Strategy and the Local Area Agreement. The Compact provides a framework in which to develop and maintain these effective partnerships.

The Compact sets out a number of shared principles, and provides specific guidance on the following issues:

- **Consultation**
- **Funding**
- **Volunteering**
- **Support for third sector organisations ('infrastructure')**
- **Equality and diversity**

The following public bodies have agreed to support the principles of the Dorset Compact:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| • Dorset County Council | • West Dorset District Council |
| • Christchurch Borough Council | • Weymouth & Portland Borough Council |
| • East Dorset District Council | • Dorset Fire and Rescue |
| • North Dorset District Council | • Dorset Police |
| • Purbeck District Council | • NHS Dorset |





Background

What is a Compact?

A **Compact** is a **statement of best practice**, drawn up by third sector organisations and public bodies, setting out guidelines for how they should behave towards each other in order to deliver the best services possible for local people. It is a manual of best practice.

Why have one?

The public sector has a community leadership role and works with other organisations to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of residents. It often relies on the third sector to deliver services where the third sector can be more flexible, has more contact with groups and communities that are 'harder to provide for' and can give them a voice.

The third sector makes a huge contribution to Dorset's communities through the activities of volunteers, service provision, and support for individuals. The public sector often provides funding and support for such activities. It makes sense to have a set of principles and commitments which both agree to, in order to improve the way the two sectors work together.

Who is the Dorset Compact for?

All public bodies and third sector organisations in Dorset.

What are the benefits of a Compact?

- It gives **consistency to relationships**, making them less dependent on individuals.
- It provides an **opportunity to change the way things are done** by working together to solve problems and tackle the priorities of the local community.
- It can help deliver **clearer and fairer funding processes**.
- It can make sure third sector organisations are given the **chance to express their views** and to see how these are taken into account.
- It helps partners **understand each other's priorities and constraints**.
- It provides a framework to **discuss differences** and sort out disagreements.
- It creates a common understanding of **shared aims and priorities**, leading to efficiencies.





The Compact principles

The following principles have been agreed as a basis for a Compact way of working:

- *Partnership* - the public and third sectors have distinct but complementary roles and there is added value in working together towards common aims and objectives.
- *Mutual value and respect* - the public and third sectors have different forms of accountability and are answerable to a different range of stakeholders, but common to both is the need for integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.
- *Interdependence* – both sectors are interdependent, in that the contributions of both sectors are necessary to the achievement of our shared goals. This does not conflict with the principle that the public sector should respect the legal independence of voluntary and community organisations. Similarly, the third sector should respect the statutory obligations of the public sector.
- *Equality of opportunity* - both sectors recognise the importance of promoting equality of opportunity for all people, challenging and reducing inequalities, and celebrating diversity.
- *Building sustainable, cohesive communities* – both sectors are committed to empowering communities and developing sustainable community cohesion.
- *Shared responsibility* – both sectors have a shared and equal responsibility for implementing the Compact principles and ensuring it is regularly promoted and reviewed

These principles should underpin partnership working between the two sectors at all times.





Consultation and engagement

Consultation is an important channel of communication between public bodies and the third sector, and helps shape and influence the way decisions are made. Recent years have seen a step change in the way in which local public bodies are expected to engage with local people and organisations in the design and delivery of services¹. Effective consultation with third sector organisations is an important part of this wider engagement.

It is important that consultation:

- Is **meaningful**, so takes place before decisions have been made, on issues likely to affect the third sector.
- Is **open and honest**, making it clear what can be changed.
- **Provides feedback** and monitoring to show how it is used to influence debates, including those involving service planning and delivery.
- Is **inclusive** and uses a variety of ways to collect views.
- Has **realistic timescales**, particularly 12 weeks for a standard written consultation and eight weeks as a minimum. This will allow partners time to talk to and represent the views of their organisations.
- Uses **simple and clear language**, and alternative formats where required.
- Is seen as an **important part of engagement and empowerment** - but is not the same thing.

When possible, consideration should be given to providing opportunities for joint consultation.

¹ Particularly through the Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, which places a 'duty to involve' on local authorities, with effect from 2009



Commitments

All partners are committed to:

- Developing and improving ways of consulting.
- Considering together new policies and procedures that affect them.
- Using views and information received to make a difference to the planning and delivery of local services.
- Ensuring policy positions genuinely reflect the views of stakeholders and service users.

However, all partners intend that by following a Compact way of working, there will be more ongoing dialogue between the two sectors and this may mean there will be less need for formal consultation (though as a matter of best practice, a minimum of eight weeks for a written consultation should always apply).

Funding and support

The aims of funding are to deliver the objectives of the funder and the organisation that is receiving the funding. All partners want the best possible outcomes for local communities, whilst at the same time delivering value for money. In order to do this all partners need a process that is fair and effective with a mix of funding and support on offer that reflects the diverse needs of third sector organisations.

Third sector organisations understand that public bodies are accountable for the way public money is used. They recognise that public bodies must comply with legislation and best practice in the administration of funds, and must take account of European directives and legislation and their own contract procedure rules when purchasing goods and services. Public bodies recognise that many organisations are bound by the requirements of the Charity Commission, for example in relation to reserves.





Public bodies are committed to:

- Systematically asking how public services ought to be delivered in order to provide the best possible outcome for local people with value for money (i.e. whether to deliver services directly or commission them from other providers).
- Ensuring third sector organisations have an opportunity to bid for contracts and services, by allowing adequate time for the completion of tender documents.
- Implementing multi-year funding models (where funding allows).
- Making clear and publicising their priorities and conditions for funding.
- Allocating resources and funding in an open and consistent manner.
- Being clear about how various funding mechanisms, such as grants and contracts, will be used to support different activities.
- Establishing an agreed approach to Full Cost Recovery.
- Supporting voluntary & community organisations in obtaining funding from other sources.
- Providing 'in kind' support where possible.
- Giving as much notice as possible when funding is to be withdrawn (and as a matter of best practice, no less than three months).

The third sector is committed to:

- Operating timely and robust control, accountability, management and auditing of finances.
- Providing information about how money has been used and what has been achieved as a result of the funding.



Volunteering

Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of the community and society and can take many forms. It is freely undertaken and not for financial gain. Although the UK does not have one common national definition of volunteering, it is generally described as “an unpaid activity where someone gives their time to help an organisation or an individual who they are not related to” (Volunteering England).

Individual volunteers make a huge contribution to local organisations and the quality of life for local people in Dorset.

Volunteering is not a cheap option. The recruitment, training, reimbursement, support and management of volunteers costs money. All partners recognise the need to invest in volunteering, and volunteering infrastructure, and to follow best practice in order to ensure that there are sufficient resources to make volunteering a positive, safe experience.

Public bodies will seek to create opportunities to promote employee volunteering and create opportunities for volunteering within their own organisations. Third sector organisations will implement good practice in the involvement and management of volunteers.





Equality and Diversity

Dorset has a rich diversity of people, all of whom have a right to be treated fairly, without prejudice, and be provided with equal access to opportunities. The intention of all signatories must be to recognise, respect and value the diversity that exists in society generally and particularly in Dorset.

All partners are committed to:

- Recognising the importance of equality, diversity and human rights.
- Developing effective ways of working so all groups can get involved.
- Supporting groups who are at risk of being marginalised.
- Developing and review an Equality and Diversity policy or statement appropriate to the size and activities of their organisation.
- Ensuring trustees, employees and volunteers are trained to work in accordance with good equality and diversity practice and adhere to relevant legislation.
- Acting in line with the law (both UK and European) and require partners, funders and providers to do so.

The Compact is complemented by Dorset's joint participation strategy for 2009-2012 called *Involving You*, which is available at www.dorsetforyou.com.





Supporting organisations (‘infrastructure’)

Third sector organisations, whatever their size, need access to information, advice and training to help them achieve their aims. Generalist infrastructure organisations, sometimes called umbrella bodies, meet this need and also help with the sharing of information and news between the sectors, and between voluntary and community organisations themselves. Examples of generalist infrastructure bodies are councils for voluntary service, rural community councils and volunteer bureaux. Specialist infrastructure organisations exist to support groups operating in certain sub-sectors, such as youth work, the environment, the faith sector and black and minority ethnic communities.

Public bodies are committed to the long term development of general and specialist infrastructure support.

Dorset’s infrastructure bodies are committed to working together to build the capacity of the voluntary & community sector by providing high quality information, advice and training and to working together to ensure infrastructure services are configured in the most efficient and effective way.

Dealing with disagreements

If difficulties occur in the relationship between partners, the Compact will be used as a framework and reference document of good practice for how the relationship should be conducted. In the event of a disagreement in which the ‘Compact way of working’ is at issue, it is important for all partners to have access to a process set up to deal with disagreements about whether the Compact is being put into practice.

If you think the Compact has not been followed, and would like to discuss this, you should contact the relevant person listed in appendix 1. These individuals will act as Compact Champions and will be responsible for promoting the Compact within their organisations, networks and partnerships. They can be contacted for information and support on Compact issues and can be called upon by public sector officers and third sector organisations to play a mediating role in dispute resolution.





Public law

Public law governs the exercise of power by public bodies. If a public body makes a decision based on an incorrect interpretation of the law or if the decision-making process is unfair or biased, it may be challenged by a person or organisation that is directly affected by it. A decision may be challenged by means of referral to a complaints procedure, ombudsman scheme or judicial review. Further information is available about public law from The Public Law Project at www.publiclawproject.org.uk.

Ownership and implementation of the Dorset Compact

Although public bodies and third sector organisations are *collectively* committed to promoting the benefits of a Compact way of working, partners recognise that a named individual – or organisation – needs to be **accountable for progress**. As such, for the purposes of implementation and promotion, the Compact will be ‘owned’ by the Thriving Communities Theme Group of the Dorset Strategic Partnership² and the Compact Champions listed below.

Public sector partners are also *individually* committed to promoting the Compact internally and with other public bodies in Dorset, publicising progress made on the Compact within their own organisations, for example, using briefing sessions, newsletters or bulletins and will work to mainstream the Compact across their organisations.

Infrastructure organisations agree to promote the Compact internally and with their members’ organisations, publicise progress made on the Compact, work to mainstream the Compact across their own organisations and with their membership.

Third sector organisations will work to implement Compact principles across their own organisations.

² More information about the Thriving Communities Theme Group is available at www.dorsetforyou/dsp/thriving





Monitoring and reviewing progress

The Thriving Communities Theme Group will work with the Compact Champions and other partners to produce an annual Work Plan. This will be reported on every year, and an Annual Compact Report will be submitted to the Dorset Strategic Partnership Board that details evidence of Compact working between partners. This will highlight successes and weaknesses and will help inform future revisions of the agreement.

Date for refresh

Amendments to the Compact agreement will be made every three years to reflect local and national policy developments, unless partners agree otherwise. The next review is scheduled for 2013.

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Appendix 1: Compact contacts

Christchurch BC

[Insert details]

Dorset Community Action:

Steve Place

Chief Executive

01305 250921

Steve.Place@dorsetcommunityaction.org.uk

Dorset County Council and Dorset Strategic Partnership

Third Sector Development Officer

Partnerships and Communities Team

01305 224821

name.surname@dorsetcc.gov.uk

Dorset Fire and Rescue

[Insert details]

Dorset Police

[Insert details]

East Dorset District Council

[Insert details]

NHS Dorset

[Insert details]

North Dorset District Council

[Insert details]

Purbeck District Council

[Insert details]

West Dorset District Council

[Insert details]

Weymouth and Portland Borough Council

[Insert details]





FOR COPIES OF THIS DOCUMENT IN ALTERNATIVE FORMATS, PLEASE CONTACT THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE, DORSET COUNTY COUNCIL, 01305 224814

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