

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Compact 2014 -2018

Vision of the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Compact

For the public, private and Voluntary and Community Sectors (VCS) to work together in partnership to better understand, support and meet the needs of individuals, families and communities in Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent.

What is the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Compact?

The Staffordshire Compact is a voluntary, written agreement to cross sector working to support our vision. It has no legal powers, but its signatories have pledged to adhere to its principles and to challenge each other to fulfil them. There is recognition by every partner that there are clear benefits to our communities across the county and city through all partners signing up to the agreement and that future strategic planning, decision making and commissioning/funding will improve as a result.

This Compact sets out how public, private and VCS organisations in the county and city will achieve more for local people by working better together. We will improve the relationships between ourselves by meeting the principles and commitments set out in this Compact and by following clear procedures to tackle the issues we face.

This Compact looks to the future. It gives us the opportunity to work together fairly, to bring about positive change in Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent. Within four years, we expect to have significantly improved relationships between the public, private and VCS sectors in the county and across the city, and in particular to see:

- better communication between sectors
- better consultation processes and procedures
- the sectors planning and developing policies together
- improved funding arrangements and procedures
- each sector sharing information more efficiently and
- services delivered in new ways

The partners to the Staffordshire Compact

The partners to this Compact are:

Staffordshire County Council
Stoke on Trent City Council

Cannock Chase District Councils
East Staffordshire Borough Council

Lichfield District Council
Newcastle Borough Council
South Staffordshire District Council
Stafford Borough Council
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Tamworth Borough Council
East Staffordshire CCG
North Staffordshire CCG
South East Staffs and Seisdon Peninsula
CCG
Stafford and Surrounds CCG
Cannock Chase CCG

Stoke on Trent CCG
Staffordshire Police and Crime
Commissioner
Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Local
Enterprise Partnership
Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local
Enterprise Partnership
Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce
Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Fire and
Rescue Authority
Staffordshire Parish Councils Association
VAST

The public sector includes local authorities such as the district and borough, city and county councils, as well as agencies such as the NHS and the police, the Fire and Rescue Service, etc.

The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) includes registered and unregistered charities, voluntary and community groups, social enterprises, faith organisations, community interest companies, housing associations and mutuals and co-operatives of all sizes.

The private sector is made up of private businesses predominantly concerned with economic growth and profit. One of the ways that businesses will be judged to be successful or not in the future is their connection to society whether that be through enacting Corporate Social Responsibility or, in a broader sense, by engaging with and being part of the communities in which the business trades and employs people. Signing this Compact is a commitment by the private sector to working together with the VCS and public sector to enhance local communities, engage their workforce and seek to increase the profitability of their business.

The changing policy context in which the Compact works

All partners to this Compact are facing significant financial pressure and demands to deliver more for less resource. Subsequently, all sectors have changed how they work, how they are structured and what their priorities will be. The signatories to the Compact believe that by working together, in partnership, sustainable solutions to the challenges can be found and implemented and that the needs of local communities can be better met. This includes better commissioning to meet local needs, better consultation and better planning. There is also an emphasis on enabling local communities to respond to local needs, as well as greater personal responsibility amongst individuals and families to do more for themselves.

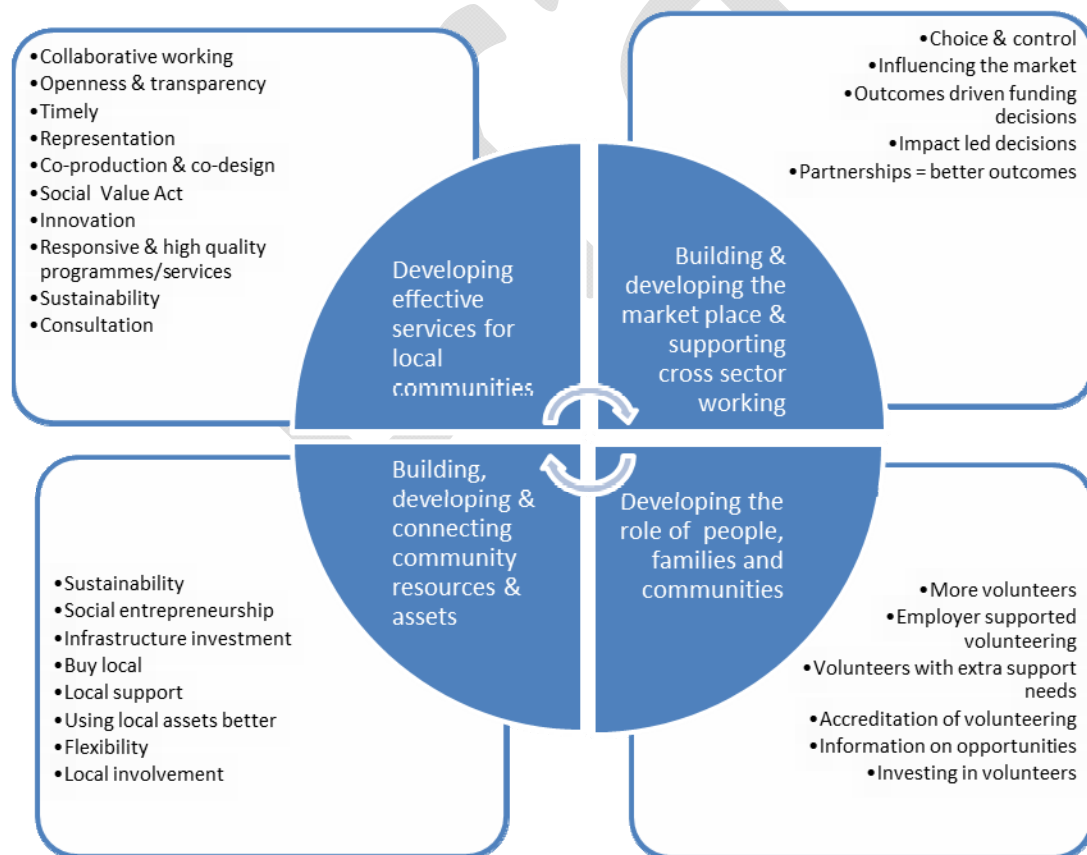
Within this changing policy landscape, the independence of the VCS is recognised by all partners to the Compact. All VCS organisations work to their own strategies and operational plans that are determined by their Boards and Management Committees. They raise income from a variety of statutory and non-statutory sources across the county, as well as from national and international sources; the vast majority of community organisations receive no

financial support from public bodies. Many VCS organisations are not service providers and do not want to be. Some play an important campaigning, influencing and advocacy role. Others provide infrastructure support to the voluntary and community sector. Others only provide support to their members. Compact partners acknowledge the right of these organisations to exist and commit not to deliberately take actions that undermine their viability.

To maintain its independence and meet the needs of its beneficiaries and users, the VCS will need to review its funding relationships with the public sector. This may mean diversifying, gaining funding from new sources, reviewing charging for services, working together in joint ventures and raising money from members or communities.

Compact objectives, principles and ways of working

We see this Compact as an effective way of creating a collaborative environment within which all partners understand how together we can meet these challenges. We agree to a set of principles including openness, transparency, independence, fairness and clarity of systems and processes to ensure good decision making including funding/commissioning decisions that underpin our objectives. This Compact recognises that the different perspectives, ideas, opinions, histories, knowledge and culture that partners bring adds strength in helping deliver our vision.



This revised Compact provides a foundation for the ongoing relationship between the VCS, private and public sectors whilst recognising the challenges faced by all partners. The new Compact will provide key principles and ways of working that all partners will use to underpin their partnership working. These principles and approaches fall under four objectives that will ensure that the relationship between partners is closely linked to support local strategic priorities. The objectives are:

1. Developing effective services for Staffordshire communities
2. Building and developing the market place and supporting greater cross sector collaboration
3. Building, developing and connecting community resources and assets
4. Developing the role of the individuals, families and communities

The principles and approaches are highlighted in bold and italicised.

1. Developing effective services for Staffordshire communities

All partners play a key role as a source of information to support commissioners in their commissioning decisions; many partners are also specialist providers of contracted services. To enable effective services to be developed and delivered, Compact partners agree the following ways of working and principles:

- ***Collaborative working and catalysts for change*** - the VCS and the private sector are recognised as key strategic partners working with the public sector to identify local needs that could be met by commissioned services. They are key partners in developing services to meet those needs and working with and developing communities to meet their needs locally together.

This could mean working in partnership across sectors and with communities to deliver new services or decommissioning services that are already being better provided by others. What matters is commissioning services that make a real difference to people locally. Whether commissioning or decommissioning services, the principles of ***openness and transparency*** should be used when making decisions.

De-commissioning decisions need to be made in a ***timely manner*** and shared with partners to ensure that any detrimental impact on service users, organisations and on delivery of other linked services, are kept to a minimum.

- ***Representation*** - The VCS and the private sector will have representatives involved in key, public decision making bodies e.g. the Local Enterprise Partnership, the Health & Well Being Board to ensure that their accumulated intelligence and knowledge is fully able to influence the agendas as well as ensuring that the voices of service users and communities can be heard.
- ***Co-production and co-design*** - Commissioners will support the principles of co-production and co-design wherever possible to ensure that services are best placed to meet the needs of the communities they support. Commissioning processes will have

VCS and private sector engagement built in at all stages to inform the process. Commissioning intentions will be shared in a timely manner to minimise the risk of service duplication and to ensure the efficient use of resources. Joint working will be enabled and encouraged.

- **Using the Social Value Act** – All partners will commit to ensuring that the principles of the [Social Value Act](#) are adopted and are implicit within all commissioning and procurement exercises used by public bodies.
- **Innovation** - Partners recognise the need to support innovation in order to develop the new ways of working that will be needed to ensure that services best meet the needs of communities and that they are sustainable over the medium to long term. Commissioners will undertake to focus on outcomes and will be less prescriptive on how the how the outcomes are achieved.
- **Responsive and high quality programmes and services** – Public sector partners recognise that their funds and commissioning processes will support work that delivers outcomes that clearly meet local priorities. Providers looking to secure public sector funding will need to ensure that they have developed clear and measurable outcomes for the services they provide.
- **Sustainability** - Commissioners will endeavour to move away from one year contracting to providing contracts of three years or more. This will encourage greater investment in and development of services by providers.
- **Consultation** – where a decision is likely to have a significant effect on the VCS or the private sector, the public sector will consult widely and early enough to make a difference, allowing at least 12 weeks consultation (where legally possible) and giving feedback on the outcomes.

2. Building and developing the market place and supporting greater cross sector collaboration

All partners recognise the need to facilitate an active market place in order to encourage innovation, choice and new ways of working in the delivery of public services to meet local needs.

- **Choice and control** - Individual choice and control are key drivers for market place development. Partners will seek to give service users greater choice and control through hearing their voices when designing and developing new services, when commissioning services and through working together to address gaps in the market.
- **Influencing the market** - Commissioners recognise their key role in influencing market development through tender specifications and will strive to ensure a plurality of providers to ensure choice and competition remain.

- **Outcomes driven funding decisions** - The funding relationship between the public sector and VCS is changing. Public contracts will be awarded to those organisations that can prove that they can meet strategic public outcomes through quality services.
- **Impact-led decisions** - Public sector partners will enter into dialogue with the VCS and private sector when looking to commission new / de-commission service provision in order to evaluate the impact on the market place.
- **Partnerships deliver better outcomes** - Partnership working and cross sector working will be facilitated and encouraged. Forums will be established which will seek to enable cross sector collaborative working to take place. Every partner will recognise what each brings to the partnership.

3. Building, developing and connecting community resources and assets

Future services, including to the most vulnerable members of our society, will be delivered by the VCS and private sector often commissioned by the public sector. However, many VCS organisations will not have and do not want to have contracts with public sector partners and are funded by a mix of other sources - grants, fundraising, donations, charging for services and volunteer contributions.

The following are principles and approaches that partners will adopt to support VCS organisations to continue to build communities and deliver services.

- **Sustainability** - In order to become sustainable over the medium to long term, the VCS will be supported to develop strategies and plans to secure alternative sources of income e.g. through fundraising, charging for services, donations, shared resources, funding from national and EU sources etc.
- **Social entrepreneurs** – The VCS increasingly includes social enterprises. Social enterprises are businesses that trade to tackle social problems, improve communities, people’s life chances, or the environment. They make their money from selling goods and services in the open market, but they reinvest their profits back into the business or the local community. Some charities run successful social enterprises alongside their traditional charitable work. Developing social enterprises and encouraging successful social entrepreneurship will be a part of the approaches used by partners to meet future need.
- **Infrastructure investment** - Partners will recognise the need to provide infrastructure support to local VCS organisations to enable the development and growth of local community groups. The capacity of local communities needs investment.
- **Buy local** - Partners will support the principle of “buy local” when sourcing and commissioning goods and services with and for local communities to increase local prosperity and economic growth.

- **Local support** – The public and private sector partners will use their influence to encourage local businesses to support local charitable and VCS organisations financially and through partnership working.
- **Using local assets better** - All partners will encourage the effective use of local physical assets i.e. community buildings, open spaces. Public sector partners will work proactively with the VCS to investigate opportunities for Community Asset Transfer, the Community Right to Buy or co-location.

Partners commit to not undermining the viability of small, community organisations i.e. to price meeting rooms at affordable rates for small groups. Partners will not deliberately set up directly competing activities/services to those provided well by local community groups.

- **Flexibility** - Charging policies for the use of community venues that host small community groups will be made more flexible, particularly when their activities are supporting and delivering local priorities.
- **Local involvement** - All partners will encourage and facilitate the greater involvement of communities in the development of solutions to local needs.

4. Developing the role of people, families and communities

Partners will work together to develop and enable local communities to deliver services using local resources as well as encourage people to take greater responsibility for their own decisions. This will include people being supported to play a greater role within their local community. The following principles and approaches will help support this.

- **More volunteers** - Partners are committed to enabling the number of individuals that volunteer within their communities to increase.
- **Employer supported volunteering** - Partners understand the benefits that employer supporting volunteering can bring, enabling people who may not have volunteered before to volunteer.
- **Volunteers with extra support needs** - Partners will work together to support volunteers who have additional needs such as a disability, speaking a different language or mental ill-health issues so that they can fully take part in their communities.
- **Accreditation of volunteering** - Partners will encourage and work towards accreditation of skills developed through volunteering.
- **Information on volunteering opportunities** - Partners will ensure that they provide up to date and accurate information to enable individuals to make well informed decisions about where to volunteer and what to do. Partners will seek to reduce

bureaucracy to enable people to volunteer as easily as possible whilst protecting the people and organisations with whom the volunteer is placed.

- **Investing in volunteers** - Partners recognise that good volunteering takes an investment of time and funds so that everyone benefits. Resourcing good volunteering will be a priority by funding bodies.

Promotion of the Compact and Governance

All partners that have signed up to the Staffordshire Compact will identify a Compact Champion who will be responsible for ensuring that:

- A Compact Implementation Plan is produced which sets out activities that each partner will deliver to fulfil this Compact
- The Compact is promoted on partner web sites and staff intranets where applicable
- Reference to Compact principles is made when working across sectors
- Partners are represented at a quarterly Compact meeting to discuss and reflect on issues affecting the relationship. At the meetings the focus will be on what partners have done or can provide to evidence support of the Compact. The meeting will report into the Staffordshire Strategic Partnership which will hold ultimate responsibility for the success of the new Compact
- An annual report is produced on the state of the relationship between the VCS, private and public sector partners and the effectiveness of this relationship in supporting cross sector collaboration.

Working together to solve difficulties positively

This Compact procedure is concerned with issues arising when Compact working has failed in some way. This could be a consultation which was not thorough enough or a contract which has been ended without discussion or negotiation. All sectors have the right to raise concerns individually, collectively or through a representative body.

When a dispute arises, the best action is to try and resolve any issue or concern early and in as amicable a way as possible. Many such disputes can be settled by simply raising the issue honestly and openly with the other party and this should always be the first step.

This Resolution Procedure gives a framework for settling disputes that are more complex and may need mediation or an objective view to find a resolution. It aims to provide a way for lessons to be learnt and for similar disputes can be avoided in the future as well as ensuring positive working relationships are maintained. It is not intended to decide a winner or a loser, but instead to find a positive way forward which maintains and improves the working relationship. While we encourage disputes to be resolved through this process, it's also important to recognise that other means, including legal redress, are always an option to either party.

The process

Any complaints regarding Compact compliance are monitored and recorded, so partners know if the resolution process and our contribution have been useful. Furthermore, we can

use this information to help us review our effectiveness, and will ensure all personal details remain confidential.

- Stage One - Informal

If an organisation has any difficulty in its relationship with another, it should first try to resolve this through discussion. There is always support available for such discussions through designated Staffordshire Compact Champions. Please contact Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Compact Working Group for details (*is this right?*)

- Stage Two - Formal

If an organisation can't find a solution informally, they can contact the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Compact Working Group for further support. The issue should be put into writing stating what the problem is, how the issue has been dealt with by the parties so far, why the issue has not been resolved and what would be a good outcome. The statement will be logged and a panel drawn up from within the group, containing members who are objective, cross sector and have no links with either organisation. They will discuss the problem with both sides and attempt to find a solution. This should happen within six weeks of initial contact being made.

- Stage Three - Additional

If the formal process hasn't found a solution, the panel will support both organisations in seeking further mediation through alternative means. Organisations are free to follow other procedures and find support from elsewhere at any stage of the process.

If an organisation is unhappy about the result of a complaint made against a local authority, the independent Local Government Ombudsmen can be contacted. They can decide whether there are any grounds for investigation.

The Local Government Ombudsmen
PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH
Helpline 0300 061 0614
Website www.lgo.org.uk

You can also contact Compact Voice who cannot take on individual cases, but can offer information, advice and signposting.

Compact Voice
Society Building
8 All Saints Street
London
N1 9RL
Email compact@compactvoice.org.uk
Website www.compactvoice.org.uk
Telephone 0207 520 2451

The Compact Accountability and Transparency Guide is also available from the About Compact section of the Compact Voice website. It outlines steps to follow at a national level.

If your organisation is a member of NACVA, you can contact them on www.navca.org.uk

The Compact Resolution Procedure is distinct from any arrangements within contracts and has no relevance to contract breaches, as these will have their own procedure.

The Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Compact Agreement

My organisation

- Supports the principles and ways of working of the Compact and its supporting documents
- Will use them as a framework for reflecting on and adapting its practices and behaviours
- Aims to create a more open, equal and constructive working relationship between the public sector, the private sector and Voluntary and Community Sector in Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent
- Will promote Compact principles and develop better communication between the VCS, public and private sectors in the city and county

Signature

Name

Organisation

Position in organisation

Date

A list of signatories to the Compact

Draft