

Brentwood Compact

Working Together – Better Together

Foreword

The Compact plays a crucial part in improving the partnership between statutory and the voluntary and community sectors, for the benefit of residents and communities. Looking forward to more challenging times, the role of the voluntary and community sector has never been more important.

Voluntary and Community organisations make a major contribution to the social, cultural and economic life of Brentwood. They can also act as catalysts for community involvement in the design and delivery of services and will often act as advocates for those who otherwise have no voice.

Working together in partnership by adopting the principles of the Brentwood we can promote both equality and diversity within our communities. These principles will also foster a more open, transparent and trusting relationships between the statutory sector and the voluntary and community sectors. It will enable each sector to operate more effectively if they have a better understanding of, and can also support each other.

This Brentwood Compact will set out the principles of how the local statutory sector in Brentwood will work with the Voluntary and Community Sector. By working together we will be better together for the benefit of everyone in Brentwood.

Leader of Brentwood Council

Cllr. Louise McKinlay

What is a Compact?

The Brentwood Compact is a written agreement setting out guidelines for working relations between independent voluntary organisations, charities, community groups (known collectively as Civil Society) and Statutory Sector organisations working within Brentwood Borough.

The Brentwood Compact aims to promote partnerships between the Statutory Sector and the Voluntary Sector for the benefit of everyone in Brentwood. It provides a framework for collaborative working and, as a result, more effective and more co-ordinated services for the local community.

By making clear statements about expected standards for organisations to work to, the Brentwood Compact is designed to improve the relationship for mutual advantage, underpinning principles that we already share. In practice, The Brentwood Compact is about:

- Raising mutual awareness, respect and honesty between the sectors
- Changing attitudes and building positive commitments to working in partnership, equality and diversity
- Empowering the wider community to engage in decision making and volunteering

By working to these commitments, this agreement aims to achieve:

- A strong, diverse and independent civil society
- Effective and transparent design and development of policies, programmes and public services
- Responsive and high quality programmes and services
- Clear arrangements for managing changes to programmes and services
- An equal and fair society

A section has also been included on what to do if things go wrong and the next steps the Compact Steering Group will take in embedding the Brentwood Compact.

What a Compact is not

- Legally binding
- A Service Level Agreement
- A guarantee of funding
- A Contract
- A replacement for existing partnership working arrangements
- Committing your voluntary organisation to extra work by signing up.

The Compact in Context

The Compact, is the agreement between government and the voluntary and community sector. It sets out key principles to establish a way of working that improves their relationship for mutual advantage. It considers areas such as:

- Involvement in policy design and consultation
- Funding arrangements (including grants and contracts)
- Promoting equality
- Ensuring better involvement in delivering services
- Strengthening independence.

Initially launched in 1998, the National Compact was renewed in December 2010 at the formation of the coalition government.

As well as the National Compact, most areas in England also have a local Compact, which interprets the principles set out in the Compact to reflect local need and circumstances.

The National Compact focuses on five key outcomes. These are:

- A strong, diverse and independent civil society
- Effective and transparent design and development of policies, programmes and public services
- Responsive and high-quality programmes and services
- Clear arrangements for managing changes to programmes and services
- An equal and fair society

A local Compact is a mutually agreed document outlining an approach to partnership working and principles and commitments that are shared across sectors. Following these principles and commitments it has enabled communities to benefit from greater involvement in policy design, improved reach and understanding, better commissioning and procurement, and better support for the vital role of voluntary and community sector organisations.

Signatories can include representation from councils, voluntary sector infrastructure organisations, healthcare organisations, social care organisations, police, fire, housing associations and other. Increasingly new commissioners such as the Police and Crime Commissioners and Clinical Commissioning Groups are signing up to local Compacts. Additionally other areas have representation from the local Chamber of Commerce and encourage their local Compact to be inclusive of local businesses.

Central themes of the local Compacts are:

- Funding arrangements, including procurement
- Consultation and involvement in policy and service development
- Promoting and advancing equality
- Supporting the independence of the voluntary and community sector
- Good volunteering practice
- Working together to continually improve the relationship between sectors.

Key strengths of local Compacts include:

- Giving a clear sense of how to work together, and what to expect of each other
- Recognition that sectors working together brings more benefit to communities than working alone
- Clear links between national policy and local policy, accompanied by the understanding that each area is different and has its own approach to meeting needs
- Working together to develop, implement and embed a local Compact builds stronger partnerships
- Enabling both sectors to better manage any disputes or disagreements that may arise by clearly outlining expectations

This local Compact is designed to benefit all organisations that work within the Brentwood Borough. A Brentwood Compact Working Group has come together to ensure that the Brentwood Compact is publicised and understood across all sectors. Current members of the working Group, represented by Compact Champions from within their own organisations, are:

- Brentwood Borough Council
- Brentwood Council for Voluntary Services
- Essex County Council
- Basildon and Brentwood Clinical Commissioning Group
- Brentwood Community Safety Partnership
- Brentwood Health and Wellbeing Board
- Active Brentwood

The Brentwood Compact will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it continues to guide and strengthen relationships as well as align with changes in the political sphere. All signatories are invited to take part in this process.

What could it mean for you:

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

Compact Commitments

The following commitments, which are grouped under headlines taken from the National Compact, show how the compact principles can be put into practice through the daily operations of both the statutory organisations and the voluntary sector.

1. A strong, diverse and independent civil society

The Brentwood Compact is about recognising the strength and diversity across all sectors and identifying the unique and independent nature of the voluntary sector which enables it to work closely with and respond to, the needs of the local communities. The Compact recognises the need to resource local support and development organisations to assist Voluntary Sector Organisations (VSOs) with their capacity and capability to deliver positive outcomes.

Statutory organisations aim to...	VSOs aim to...
Respect the independence of VSOs to deliver their objectives, including their right to campaign, regardless of any relationship, financial or otherwise, which may exist.	Ensure independence is upheld, focussing on the cause represented regardless of any relationship, financial or otherwise, which may exist
Ensure VSOs are supported and resourced in a reasonable and fair manner where they are helping the statutory sector fulfil its aims.	Recognise that VSOs have a key role to play in helping statutory organisations to engage with communities.
Ensure transparency by making data and information more accessible, so that VSOs may challenge existing provision of services, access new markets and hold statutory organisations to account.	When campaigning or advocating, ensure that robust evidence is provided, including information about the source and range of people and communities represented.
Consider a range of ways to support VSOs, such as enabling greater access to premises and resources.	Work with statutory organisations to develop innovative and flexible approaches to support and resources.

Recognise that volunteers make an important contribution to Brentwood borough both socially and economically.	Raise awareness of the impact of volunteers and voluntary action have on individuals, VCOs and local communities.
Recognise the importance of good practice and effective management of volunteers, and the need for organisational support for their work.	Recognise the importance of good practice and effective management of volunteers, and the need for organisational support for their work.

2. Effective and transparent design and development of policies, programmes and public services

Working together on policy development is mutually beneficial for both the statutory and voluntary sector. Statutory organisations recognise that VSOs have expertise in many areas because they are often working directly with people and groups, enabling policies, programmes and services to be developed that better meet the needs of local people.

Statutory organisations aim to...	VSOs aim to...
Include social value as part of policy, programme and service design, development and delivery.	Help to identify the potential impact of new policies and services on communities.
Involve VSOs at the start of policy development, remove barriers that may prevent organisations from contributing, and empower the voluntary sector to start discussion within affected communities.	When possible, promote and respond to consultations, as appropriate, ensuring that the voices of traditionally hard to reach people and communities can be heard.
Identify the implications and social impact of policy and programme development on inspiring and empowering communities.	When putting forward ideas, focus on evidence-based solutions, with clear proposals for positive outcomes.
Give early notice of consultations and allow enough time (12 weeks) for VSOs to involve their service users, members, beneficiaries, volunteers and trustees. Use a range of consultation methods to be as accessible as possible to smaller and hard to reach groups. Where a shorter time frame is necessary, provide sound reasons.	Involve service users, beneficiaries and volunteers when preparing responses, being clear about who is represented, in what capacity and on what basis representation is being made. Recognise that, in rare occasions, consultations may need to take place in shorter time frames.

Be clear which matters are open to change and which are not, providing feedback on how responses have influenced new policies, programmes and services.	Provide feedback to statutory partners, when collecting the views of local communities.
Assess the implications of new policies or practices and aim to reduce the bureaucratic burden, particularly on small organisations.	Highlight when new policies or practices are likely to become burdensome or disproportionate, particularly on small organisations.

3. Responsive and high quality programmes and services

By working together statutory organisations and VSOs can deliver policies and programmes that are built around communities and individuals.

Statutory organisations aim to...	VSOs aim to...
Ensure that VSOs have a greater role and more opportunities in accordance with national and local government strategy for public services and commissioning.	Demonstrate the social, environmental or economic value of programmes and services provided, where appropriate.
Consider a range of ways to resource VSOs, including grants, contracts, loan finance, use of premises; committing to funding agreements of 3 years or more where possible. Work to remove barriers to enable smaller VSOs to access funding and become involved in delivering services, where they are best placed to achieve the desired outcomes. Ensure that the widest possible range of organisations can be involved in the provision of services by using appropriate funding models, including payment in advance of expenditure.	Ensure eligibility for funding before applying and be clear about how outcomes will be achieved, the scale of the proposed project, and be realistic on timescales for delivery. Work with statutory organisations to develop innovative and flexible approaches to funding. Recognise that statutory organisations can legitimately expect VSOs to give public recognition of its funding.
Ensure well managed and transparent application processes, and provide clear information regarding funding decisions.	Ensure that robust financial planning arrangements are in place so that money is managed effectively.

Ensuring that monitoring and reporting is relevant and proportionate to the opportunity, agreeing how outcomes will be monitored at the outset. Be clear what information is being asked for, why and how it will be used.	Work with funders to achieve clear and proportionate reporting and monitoring. Recognise that reporting and monitoring, whether internal or external, is an aspect of good management practice.
Recognise that when VSOs apply for funding they should be appropriate and relevant overheads to ensure full cost recovery for their activities.	Be open and transparent about how costs have been formulated when working up proposals.
Allocate risks to the organisation best equipped to manage them, proportionate to the size and scale of the opportunity.	Ensure robust governance arrangements to best manage risk associated with funding and service delivery.
Encourage feedback from a range of sources on the effectiveness of the service or activity in delivering objectives.	Facilitate feedback from clients and beneficiaries to help improve delivery of programmes and services.

4. Clear arrangements for managing changes to programmes and services

By working together statutory organisations and VSOs are able to be more flexible to changes that may need to be made to programmes and services.

Statutory organisations aim to ...	VSOs aim to...
If a programme or service is encountering problems, agree an action plan for improvements before making a decision to end a financial relationship.	Give early notice of significant changes in circumstances or potential interruption to a programme or service.
Assess the impact on all stakeholders before reducing or ending funding. Consider the wider impact on the continued viability of the VSO or service.	Highlight the impact of funding changes, and their effect, on communities and people in vulnerable situations
Where there are restrictions on future resources, discuss the potential implications with VSOs as soon as possible.	Contribute in a meaningful way to reviews of programmes and funding practice.
Give a minimum of six months notice, in writing when ending a funding agreement.	Prepare for when funding ends with exit plans that are mindful of the needs of local communities.

5. An equal and fair society

Equality and fairness are core values for both statutory organisations and the voluntary sector. Statutory organisations recognise that the voluntary sector works closely with specific groups who may be under represented or marginalised in society. The Brentwood Compact means that the needs of these groups can be better met by both sectors.

Statutory organisations aim to...	VSOs aim to ...
Work with VSOs to take practical steps towards eliminating discrimination, promoting equality and ensuring the voice of the under-represented and disadvantaged may be heard.	Demonstrate how their work promotes equality, tackles discrimination, particularly when receiving funding from a statutory organisation.
Work with VSOs that represent, support or provide services to under-represented and disadvantaged groups to actively seek their views, including assessing impact, when designing and implementing policies, programmes and services.	Support the statutory sector to engage with under-represented and disadvantaged groups, recognising that all organisations have a role to play in helping the sector understand and engage with communities.

If things go wrong

The Brentwood Compact offers clear commitments around funding, consultation and other partnership working relationships; so don't wait until things go wrong before using it. A diplomatic approach to challenging bad practice often works best, so asking whether a decision or process is Compact Compliant can often spark a joint resolve to make things right.

Sometimes it is not easy working together and where problems arise:

- Each organisation has the right to raise concerns and to be listened to positively.
- The Brentwood Compact can be used as a framework to underpin discussions and encourage disagreements to be resolved between the parties concerned.
- Where this is not possible, the support of an independent mediator should be sought. The Essex Compact Steering Group has a mediation panel that may be able to help or suggest a neutral figure who could be approached.
- Please let a member of the Compact Steering Group know about any disagreements that require mediation so that the Brentwood Compact can be adapted and strengthened.

Resources

For more information about the National Compact, the Essex Compact, other local compacts and guidance on how the Compact can work for you, call Compact Voice on 0207 520 2451 or visit www.compactvoice.org.uk

The Compact Advocacy programme exists to offer support and advice to voluntary and community organisations in their dealings with public bodies. Visit: <https://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/compactadvocacy> or call 020 7520 3161.

Brentwood Council for Voluntary Services also has a wealth of information and can offer support to local voluntary and community groups and charities wishing to engage with the compact. Call 01277 222299 or visit www.brentwoodcvs.org.uk

For printed copies of this document, or to have it made available in large print or electronic format, please contact Brentwood Borough Council. Call 01277 312500 or email localism@brentwood.gov.uk

Sign Up and Support the Brentwood Compact

The Brentwood Compact can only work effectively if organisations commit to it and it becomes part of any joint undertaking between the sectors. We would like to encourage all voluntary, community and statutory organisations working in Brentwood to sign up and commit to a Compact way of working.

To sign up please, in the first instance, contact Brentwood CVS or Brentwood Borough Council (contact details above).

Signing up to the Brentwood Compact

On behalf of my organisation, I hereby sign up to the Brentwood Compact, committing ourselves to advance and support the Compact within our capabilities and to comply with its principles. We will appoint a Compact Champion or champions and promote the Compact within our organisation. I have read the Brentwood Compact and it has been discussed with my organisation.

Signed	
Name (Please print)	
Role/Job Title	
Organisation	
Address	
Telephone	
Email	

Compact Champions

Each organisation that signs up to the Brentwood Compact should appoint a Compact Champion whose job is to make sure that there is awareness of Compact and its principles within their own organisation. They are able to answer questions on the Compact and raise concerns when a Compact commitment may be broken, as well as liaising with the Compact Steering Group responsible for the whole Brentwood Compact.

In a large organisation it may make sense to have a champion in each department, with one person as the Lead Champion. The Compact Champion does not need to be the person in charge but has direct access to that person.

BRENTWOOD COMPACT SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT	
1. Membership and level of reach and involvement	Notes
Is the process for becoming a signatory to the local Compact clear and easy to find?	
Are the benefits of being a signatory to the local Compact widely promoted to, for example, new commissioning bodies or prime contractors?	
Are new Commissioning bodies such as Clinical Commissioning Groups or Police and Crime Commissioners signed up?	
Are local private sector bodies encouraged to sign up? Have any signed up?	
2. Policy and priorities	
What influence does the voluntary sector and the Compact group have on statutory policy formation, including deciding what to commission and how?	
Do both sectors, through the Compact Group or otherwise, develop joint responses to central government programmes or consultations?	
Are major policy decisions by the statutory sector generally in line with Compact principles?	
What consideration has been given by the local authority to the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 and/or any relevant subsequent legislation? With what impact? What consideration have the local Compact Group and lead bodies for the Voluntary Sector given to the Social Value Act?	
3. Procedures and systems	
Is there a local Compact working, steering or implementation group? Are members elected and a membership updated annually?	
Is there an annual Compact meeting or event in the area? Is it well-attended and by a good range of representatives (both sectors, young and old, BME and disability organizations, all main parts of the area)? Does it generate lively discussion?	
Does the Compact group have a clear agenda for its meetings and activities? Are discussions relevant and helpful?	

When was the content of the local Compact last reviewed? Does the Compact take into account policy changes or changes to the commissioning landscape?	
4. Training and induction	
Is the Compact covered in induction for staff of some key agencies, for example CVSs and local authorities? To what extent and with what impact?	
Is the Compact covered in induction for members (of councils, NHS Boards, CVS Boards and so on)? To what extent? Is there evidence of this having an impact?	
5. The condition of the voluntary sector and voluntary-statutory relations	
To what extent does the local voluntary sector speak its mind to the statutory sector and its private sector contractors?	
When the voluntary sector needs to speak with one voice to agencies outside the sector, can it do so (for example, through a Forum)? Does it do so in an effective and timely way?	
How often does the statutory sector give three months notice before cutting or allocating funding?	
Does the statutory sector seriously consider social, environmental and economic value when making funding decisions, including the contracting process?	
6. Publicity and communication	
Do key partners like the local authority and CVS make clear their commitment to the Compact on their websites?	
How are success stories of Compact work publicized? Is there reason to think they reach a lot of people?	
Do key decision-makers in both sectors understand the Compact and know where they can find Compact information?	

7. Trouble shooting	
Does the local Compact have a clear Dispute Resolution Procedure ?	
Is it known about and used?	
If someone has a problem which they think is a Compact issue – or if they are uncertain about a Compact issue – do they bring it to the attention of Compact Champions (or their equivalent) or the Compact group?	
8. Looking ahead and being proactive	
Do the local Compact group and its partners prepare for eventualities such as loss of funding or departure of key people?	
Does the local Compact group discuss key issues in the area (for example, decreasing infrastructure support for the VCS) and discuss ways to address these innovatively?	
Does the local Compact group proactively contact new commissioning bodies?	

COMPACT ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE			
	We already do this	We could do this better	We need help with this
Staff awareness :(including volunteers)			
Compact information is included in recruitment packs and induction programmes			
Briefing notes on the Compact are provided to the trustees/managements committee members			
Opportunities are taken to cover the Compact in our existing training courses			
Promotion and Communication of Compact:			
There is a named lead person (or Compact Champion) in our organisation for the Compact			
There is a cascade system for Sharing Compact information to all staff e.g. Intranet, e-bulletin			
Compact information and/or links are on Council and partnership members' websites			
Compact web pages list signed partners			
There is a Compact section in our newsletter			
The Compact is included on meeting agendas			
We make reference to and have displays on the Compact at our events and conferences We advertise that we are signed up to the local Compact with posters and reference in policies, annual reports and on our website.			
Compact Development:			
We are signed up to the local Compact			
We contribute to development of the local Compact or partnership working guidance			
We have an annual action plan for our Compact work			
We conduct and annual review of our Compact work			
We capture and promote positive Compact engagement and record and monitor poor Compact engagement			
We publish a report on our Compact work			

Brentwood Compact 2016

We target marginalized and small groups for Compact engagement			
Funders:			
We give appropriate advance notice of new or revised funding programmes and contracting opportunities before the application process begins, through multiple media methods			
We provide support for any potential bidder			
We ensure processes are clear and have a realistic timetable, that takes into account the time it takes to form appropriate partnerships and develop accountable working relationships for partnership/consortia bids			
We recognize that it is legitimate for VCS organizations to use Full Cost Recovery methods in their estimates for providing a particular service			
Consultations:			
We build consultation into our regular planning cycle and carry it out at an early stage			
We consult all relevant stakeholders in designing and developing services			
We leave enough time to respond when consulting with the VCS. We will aim to allow at least 12 weeks for all consultations			
We analyse carefully the results of consultation and report back on the views received, and actions taken as a result			
Supporting the Compact:			
We challenge where there has not been Compact compliance			
We challenge external forces that affect our ability to comply with the Compact			
We make publicly available reasons where we do not comply with the Compact			

