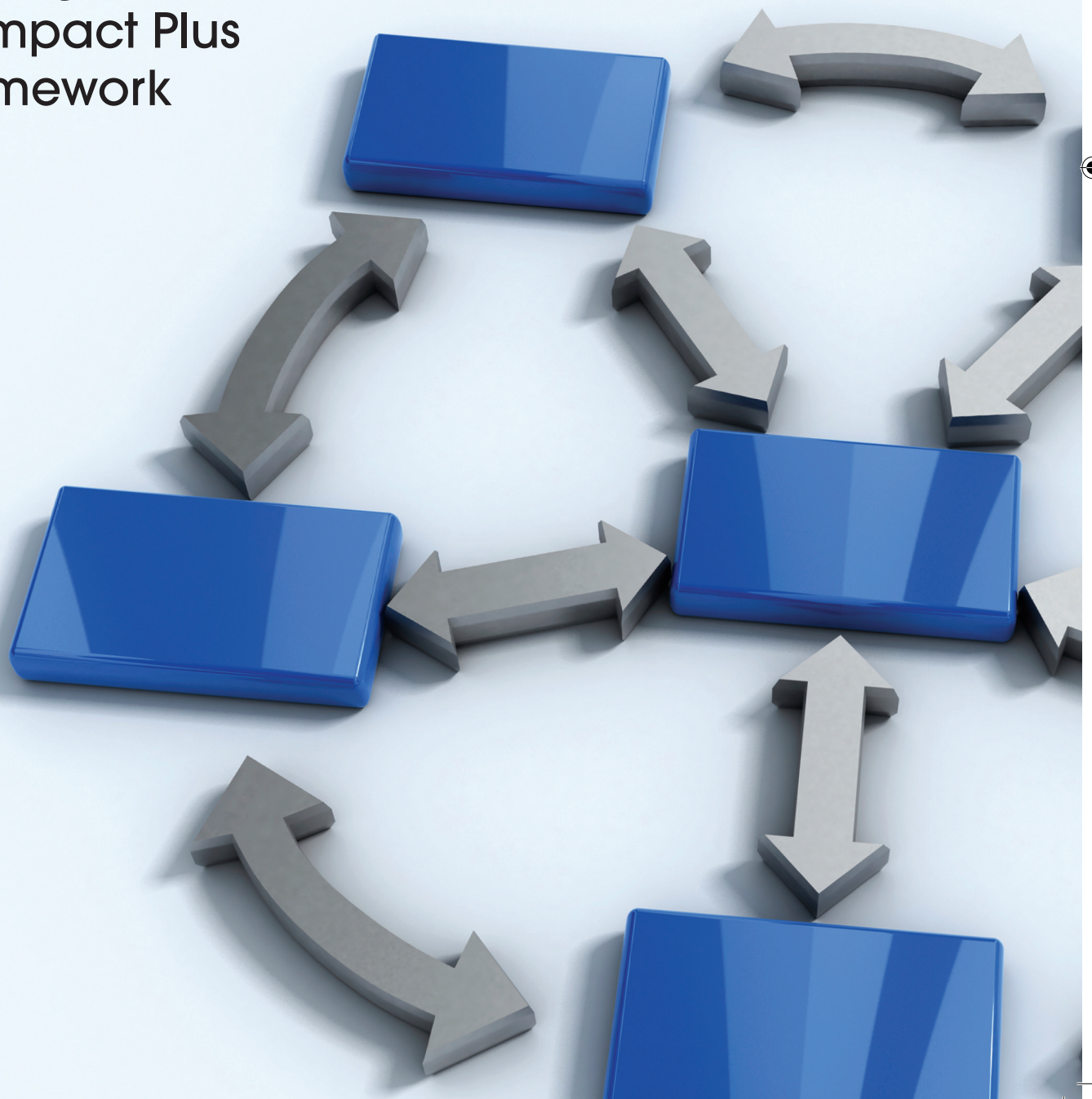


Working Together, Improving Services.

Nottingham's
Compact Plus
Framework





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Section 1: The Compact Plus Framework

Foreword..

Nottingham is thriving - with good housing, a brilliant nightlife, quality shopping, high levels of employment and good cultural, leisure, education and business facilities. It's a modern regional capital and welcomes many people from all over the world to live, work and spend leisure time here.

It's also a city where some neighbourhoods have needs or concerns including poor housing and facilities; high levels of crime, fear and alienation; low educational achievement; low income; poor health and low personal aspirations and ambition.

We are therefore a city with two faces - the first achieving and prosperous and the second relatively underachieving and less affluent.

We recognise that we need to address all forms of inequality affecting our communities and neighbourhoods if we are to build a city that is prosperous, peaceful and healthy with a good quality of life. The public sector and the voluntary and community sector (VCS) are crucial to achieving this.

Public sector organisations increasingly rely on the VCS to deliver services where it can't or where the VCS has greater

expertise, knowledge or local contacts. They recognise that the VCS contributes to improving the quality of local life by supporting voluntary work, delivering local services and supporting families and individuals. They recognise that the VCS is a large local employer of staff and volunteers and that it contributes significantly to both the local and national economies. The public sector provides funding and other support for many of these VCS activities.

It's sensible, therefore, to establish a formal partnership agreement or Compact between our sectors, to frame the way we should work together to improve and expand our joint working arrangements for the common good.

Representatives of both sectors have been working to engage local VCS organisations and City Council staff in developing new arrangements. A draft consultative report was published earlier this year. It was called 'If It's Broken—Fix It!' This 'Compact Plus' framework takes into account the wide range of views that were expressed during the consultation and focuses on the main issues that people prioritised.

The main priorities identified were:

- Improve Communication and Engagement
- Improve Funding Arrangements for the VCS
- Establish Compact Monitoring and Dispute Resolution Arrangements
- Improve the Capacity of the VCS

The framework will evolve over time in response to changing circumstances. It is designed to provide the context within which existing partnership arrangements are developed, sustained, improved and scrutinised. We have also agreed an Action Plan (see page 16) to energise the process.

We encourage other partners within our Local Strategic Partnership, 'One Nottingham', to use the framework to help their member organisations improve their own partnership arrangements with the VCS. In the future we may even develop jointly a more comprehensive framework that can be introduced throughout both our sectors.

The first part of this document introduces and describes our Compact Plus framework while the second outlines our first year priorities and actions to ensure that it is successfully introduced and implemented.

Overall vision

Our vision is that: "Compact Plus should recognise the valuable contribution that both our sectors make to reducing inequalities in our society and to improving cohesion between our different communities and neighbourhoods.

By implementing this Compact, we seek to improve our cross-sector working arrangements and the impact we make on building a fairer and more prosperous city."

Developing the Nottingham Compact Plus: 'Working Together, Improving Services'

This development process recognised that, with the tradition of good voluntary and community work in Nottingham, we already had a firm foundation on which to enhance partnership arrangements between the public sector and the local VCS.

This framework builds on the previous work but learns from past mistakes. It responds to consultation within both sectors over the last few months - overseen by senior representatives from the VCS and the City Council.

The document describes the main priorities that people have highlighted and suggests specific areas for improving our performance.

The recent establishment of a joint Compact Implementation Group has agreed some first year key actions (see page 16) and will develop others to address the 'Areas for Improvement' set out in this document, as changing circumstances require.

The process will be monitored within the Council by its Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ensure that a genuine partnership approach is adopted. Progress will also be reported to meetings of the VCS Open Forum.

Underpinning the framework is a recognition that we need to respond to inequalities in our society and develop cohesion within and between our different communities and neighbourhoods.

In signing up to this Compact the City Council demonstrates the value it places on the diversity, independence and work of the VCS in Nottingham.

Both sectors may not always agree with each other, and sometimes disagree over issues including funding or consultation. The important constant is that we rely on one another for mutual support and have jointly developed many examples of quality partnership work that can be built on.

This Compact framework is just a start. It will evolve and develop over time as changing circumstances and issues emerge. It will identify specific projects for action and will, in time, provide signposting to other projects, policies and good-practice documents that have been produced that help to improve working arrangements between our sectors.

Many individuals and organisations have contributed and the consultation teams in both sectors wish to express their thanks to all of those who have taken part.

Our shared values and principles

We have agreed a set of shared values and principles that can be used to guide and underpin the long-term development of our working relationships.

These are to:

- Promote effective working between the sectors and encourage good practice and a consistent approach
 - Together, build a democratic, fair and inclusive society by valuing and fostering VCS action and involvement
 - Work together with integrity and communicate in accountable, open and honest ways for mutual benefit
 - Recognise that the independence of the VCS is crucial to the development, delivery and scrutiny of quality public services
 - Recognise that the public sector and the VCS have distinct but valuable and complementary roles, in the development and delivery of public policy and services
 - Recognise that VCS organisations are entitled, regardless of funding sources, to act as advocates in challenging and seeking changes in public policy
- Encourage both sectors to learn from each other and play complementary roles in the development of inclusive, equitable and cohesive communities
 - Acknowledge that differences of opinion will arise. However, be committed to resolving differences within partnerships in a constructive and respectful manner
 - Ensure that resources are deployed to the benefit of our communities as efficiently and effectively as possible
 - Ensure equity in the support provided to the diverse range of VCS organisations via the public sector

Section 2: First Year Priorities

What people wanted

Our key priorities

Having analysed the results of feedback on the consultation document 'If It's Broken - Fix It!' it is clear that there is a need to prioritise four key themes for immediate attention: These are:

- **Improve Communication and Engagement**
- **Improve Funding Arrangements for the VCS**
- **Establish Compact Monitoring and Dispute Resolution arrangements**
- **Improve the Capacity of the VCS**

Although a great deal of good work is already taking place to address the above themes, there is a need to refocus our efforts to improve our collective impact.

Progress on addressing the key priorities will be monitored by a new Cross-Sector Compact Implementation Group and reported to meetings of the VCS Open Forum.

Key Priority 1

Improve Communication and Engagement

Improving how the public sector communicates and engages with the VCS is important to ensure that their services are more effective, VCS organisations are not overburdened and appropriate policies and services are developed in support of them and their communities.

The VCS has a tremendous amount of existing grass-roots knowledge, skills and experience and its role is expanding to provide more local services.

What we were told

Sometimes public sector agencies like the City Council don't listen to local people or groups or don't take their views into account when planning, procuring, commissioning and delivering services

People are not always given real chances to make their voices heard.

Too many public sector organisations are consulting the same neighbourhoods, communities or 'favourite groups' too often - on similar issues - while leaving some communities out altogether.

Some VCS groups (particularly smaller ones) don't have their interests fully represented.

What will success look like?

- People and organisations feel informed, listened to, involved in decision-making and receive feedback, and are engaged in the delivery of services where appropriate
- Trust exists and there are no unexplained surprises
- Compact Plus is widely known and understood within both sectors and used to frame partnership arrangements
- The world outside of Nottingham is aware of a positive story about partnership working between the VCS, the City Council, and other public sector agencies
- Smaller, unaffiliated VCS organisations increasingly feel that their views are being heard

Areas for Improvement

1. Develop a consistent and simplified cross-agency system for VCS communication and engagement processes
2. Improve and simplify information-sharing systems across the sectors - including the development of a contact database
3. Improve the capacity of the VCS to become more representative of all the sector, including unaffiliated organisations
4. Improve engagement with the Local Strategic Partnership (possibly via its Community Empowerment Task Group)

Our key priorities

Key Priority 2

Improve Funding Arrangements for the VCS

Naturally the VCS wants greater funding security. The public sector wants genuine accountability and the public requires good quality services and value for money.

The public sector is committed to supporting the development of a vibrant VCS. It recognises the need to promote and develop its infrastructure and networks. It provides much of the funding to help voluntary and community organisations deliver services and to represent their local communities. Increasingly it expects some of these organisations to deliver public services directly.

There remains therefore a need to continue to fund small, new and un-staffed VCS organisations via grant aid, as well as commission some of them to provide services that may have been delivered by other sectors previously.

We need to ensure that funding and purchasing processes are fair, streamlined and easily understood, and that the monitoring and reporting arrangements

are proportionate to the level of funding provided, as well as the anticipated impact on communities.

We need to ensure that the VCS is involved in the early planning stages of purchasing and funding projects, to assist with the identification of community priorities and requirements, as well as anticipated benefits to service users. It also needs to be involved in the development of decommissioning arrangements.

What we were told

Funding arrangements should be more transparent and streamlined for VCS organisations. There are too many different systems applying different criteria and application requirements.

Commissioning and procurement processes need to be simplified and streamlined and the VCS should be engaged in the development of processes for accessing funding and bidding for service contracts.

The VCS should be helped to increase its capacity to respond to commissioning and procurement processes and to deliver local services

The role of Council VCS Project Officers

needs to be reviewed to make them more useful to the development of local groups.

What will success look like?

- A strategic approach is taken for funding allocation and everyone is aware of the extent, purpose and limitations of funding support
- There are trusted systems for allocating funding and commissioning services which focus on outcomes and making a difference
- The impact of funding decisions are evaluated and used to inform future decisions
- There is openness and transparency around the commissioning and decommissioning of funding and, where any VCS services are to be decommissioned, a partnership approach with clear consultation channels is agreed
- 'Full cost recovery' is understood and encouraged

Areas for Improvement:

1. Building on current arrangements, involve the VCS in the development of a Joint Commissioning and Procurement Strategy and simplify the grant aid system so that both are more transparent
2. Agreement on new Project Officer support arrangements
3. Develop a cross-departmental Council database to record core details about VCS groups - to enable streamlining of funding applications (e.g. organisation aims, constitutions)

Our key priorities

Key Priority 3

Establish Compact Monitoring and Dispute Resolution Arrangements

It is crucial that this time our Compact Plus framework is used by both the Council and voluntary and community organisations to improve our joint working practices.

Sometimes however disputes between the sectors will arise. When this happens it is important that efforts are made to resolve matters amicably. Where this is not possible the Compact Plus framework plans to establish a 'Disputes Resolution Scheme' to provide arbitration. However, arbitration should be seen as a last resort and avoided by all parties whenever possible.

What we were told

Care is needed to ensure that this time the Compact Plus is not ignored by those involved in partnership work from both sectors.

A 'Disputes Resolution System' should be established.

What will success look like?

- The City Council and the VCS use the Compact Plus framework to improve and enhance partnership arrangements
- Cross-sector disagreements are resolved sensibly
- A cross-sector group is established to monitor and report on Compact Plus implementation

Areas for Improvement:

1. Consider the introduction of a Compact Plus Impact Assessment system for all relevant Council reports
2. Establish a cross-sector Compact Plus Implementation Group to evaluate progress at a senior level
3. Introduce a 'Disputes Resolution System'

Our key priorities

Key Priority 4

Improve the Capacity of the VCS

Public sector organisations have ever-increasing expectations that the VCS will be able and willing to be consulted on their plans and priorities. They use the sector to consult and engage local communities. They often expect that the VCS is willing and has the capacity to deliver public services themselves. These expectations put pressure on the VCS - pressure that is not always acknowledged or supported.

What we were told

The public sector needs to recognise the importance and value of investing in VCS capacity.

Provide current, accessible and relevant 'best practice' examples and information (e.g. partnership working, role of the VCS in public life, the role of volunteers).

Public sector agencies need to work closer together to improve the development of the VCS, develop shared objectives and share scarce developmental resources and expertise.

What will success look like?

- VCS organisations are able to meet the expectations of funding bodies as a result of collaborative and supportive partnerships
- VCS organisations feel able to participate in commissioning and procurement processes and that their contributions are assessed fairly
- Services are increasingly designed and delivered in response to local needs
- The VCS is involved in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of services

Areas for Improvement:

1. Develop a strategic approach to providing VCS infrastructure services
2. Negotiate and publicise shared work-programme protocols between cross-sector community development agencies that deliver shared outcomes
3. Introduce a training module for the induction of public sector staff on the role of the VCS on improving the quality of life in Nottingham

Section 2: Further Information on Compact Plus

What is Compact Plus?

This 'Compact Plus' is an agreement, drawn up jointly by local voluntary and community groups and public bodies, establishing principles and guidelines on how we should work together. A national Compact was developed in 1998 by Central Government and recognised that relationships between government and the voluntary and community sector (VCS) needed to improve.

An earlier version of a Compact for Nottingham was developed in 2002. Following review it was concluded that it didn't meet its ambition to improve relationships between the VCS and Nottingham City Council, or to improve outcomes for local people.

Nottingham's experience wasn't unique so in 2005 Central Government produced further guidance for public sector organisations on developing 'Compact Plus' in partnership with their local VCSs. These guidelines encouraged the establishment of formal relationships between the sectors to improve the way they work together.

Why have a Compact plus framework?

Councils increasingly commission and procure services from other partners rather than deliver them all directly. VCS organisations deliver a broad range of local services to individuals and communities.

We now need to alter the relationship between the Council and the VCS – moving away from an historic focus on grant-aid to one of developing a more mixed range of services to meet local needs. Compact Plus responds to this agenda.

Formalising and improving relationships between the public sector and the VCS can also help to develop a strong, diverse and vibrant VCS that can:

- help build social capital (individual and community knowledge, skills, networks etc)
- give people means to address issues that concern them
- deliver personalised public services, particularly to marginalised and disadvantaged groups
- be a means through which communities can influence the design and delivery of public services
- ensure that smaller, less vocal organisations also have a voice and access support

Next steps, Looking to the future

This Compact Plus framework document will only be useful if it is used to improve the standard and content of collaborative work-programmes and outcomes.

It is a fresh start in the process of developing our joint work and will be reviewed regularly by both our sectors.

If you have any comments on this framework document, require copies in alternative formats or further information, please contact:

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Compact Plus Framework Action Plan 2007-2008

Improve Communication and Engagement

Key Action	Key Outcome	Target Date	Lead Body/ Officer
1. Improve info-sharing systems between sectors	• Establish a cross-sector Knowledge Management Group	Mar '08	Knowledge Management Group
	• Develop cross-sector contact database	Sept '08	Knowledge Management Group
2. Improve cross-sector engagement work	• Community Empowerment standards established	Jan '08	One Nottingham Board
	• Community Engagement Strategy agreed	Mar '08	One Nottingham Board
	• Publish community engagement toolkit	Mar '08	Tony Leafe

Improve Funding Arrangements for the VCS

Key Action	Key Outcome	Target Date	Lead Body/ Officer
1. Recurring Grant Aid Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recurring Grant Aid Programme (criteria, appeals, procedures, etc.) approved and introduced. 	Feb '08	Compact Implementation Group (Funding Sub Group)
2. Develop a City Council Commissioning and Procurement Strategy for VCS funded activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VCS engaged in development of the cross-sector strategy (including a 'decommissioning framework') 	Mar '08	Brian Ashley
3. Review and improve role of Council Project Officers support to VCS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VCS engaged in development of enhanced Project Officer role and support arrangements 	Mar '08	Alan Hose

Compact Plus Framework Action Plan 2007-2008

Establish Monitoring and Disputes Resolution Arrangements

Key Action	Key Outcome	Target Date	Lead Body/ Officer
1. Consider introduction of Impact Assessment System for all relevant Council reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council SMT considers options and introduces changes as agreed 	Oct '08	Brian Ashley
2. Establish Cross-Sector Compact Implementation Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation Group established 	Sept '07	Compact Implementation Group
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring and reporting procedures Established 	Nov '07	Compact Implementation Group
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st Year Reports to VCS Open Forum and Communities and Neighbourhoods Partnership meetings 	Dec '07 ongoing	Compact Implementation Group
3. Introduce a 'Disputes Resolution Scheme'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disputes Resolution Scheme in place 	April '08	Compact Implementation Group

Improve the Capacity of the VCS

Key Action	Key Outcome	Target Date	Lead Body/ Officer
1. Encourage enhancement of VCS in delivering local services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Best Practice' examples researched and training delivered to VCS and City Council 	Mar '08	Compact Implementation Group
2. Encourage collaborative cross-sector work in support of the VCS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint work protocols developed between community work agencies (including shared outcomes) 	Mar '08	Compact Implementation Group
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training module introduced for public sector staff on role of VCS 	Mar '08	Compact Implementation Group

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