

Newcastle Compact



What is the Newcastle Compact?

The Compact recognises an independent, diverse and thriving Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) is vital to the wellbeing of society and the prosperity of Newcastle. Voluntary action is an essential part of democratic society and life in Newcastle.

The Newcastle Compact is an agreement between the public sector and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations working in Newcastle. The Compact describes the relationship between the sectors. It sets out the shared principles and commitments both sectors make to working together more effectively to meet the needs of communities and individuals. The purpose of including commitments is to help us have constructive conversations within our relationships. These commitments are detailed under five themes:

1. Allocating resources efficiently
2. Promoting equality, community cohesion and social inclusion
3. Consulting with and involving the VCS, service users and governance bodies
4. Promoting and supporting volunteering
5. Managing changes to services

The national Compact

The Newcastle Compact reflects the commitment to positive relationships between the public sector and the VCS outlined in the national Compact which states,

‘An effective partnership between the Government and CSOs (*1) will help achieve the following outcomes:

- A strong, diverse and independent civil society

- Effective and transparent design and implementation 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.

(*1) The national Compact uses the term ‘civil society’ and ‘civil society organisations’ to describe the VCS and VCS organisations.

Why revise the Newcastle Compact?

Newcastle’s first Compact was agreed in March 2001 and it was refreshed and presented in a new format in July 2010. Since this time there have been significant changes within sectors and within the partnerships structures within the City. This revised Compact takes account of these changes. Questions about how well the Compact is known, used and fit for purpose have informed this document.

Who is the Compact for?

The previous Compact agreements were between Newcastle City Council and the Newcastle VCS as represented by Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service (NCVS). This Compact covers **all of the public sector and VCS organisations working in Newcastle**. It recognises the best outcomes for the people and communities within Newcastle can only be achieved by positive working relationships and partnerships within, and between the sectors.

The Newcastle Compact will be an integral part of the commissioning cycle of public sector and VCS organisations working in Newcastle.

Who has committed to the Compact?

The Wellbeing for Life Board is a Newcastle partnership working to improve the wellbeing and health of everyone in the city, with a particular focus on reducing health inequalities. This Board has adopted the Newcastle Compact on behalf of the city. The Board hopes all public sector and VCS organisations working in Newcastle will commit to the Newcastle Compact. The Board will promote and encourage Compact implementation.

The Compact is relevant to all VCS groups – large or small – and public sector organisations working in Newcastle and is our shared responsibility. Its successful implementation depends on those in the public sector and the VCS.

The Compact Review Group, which is a joint public sector and VCS group, oversees the implementation and monitoring of the Compact in Newcastle.

Our Compact Principles

Shared Vision: Partners share a commitment to a vision for Newcastle as described in the Newcastle Future Needs Assessment (NFNA). As a process, the NFNA will provide an integrated, coherent and evidence-based means of partners working together to determine priorities for the city.

Benefit: Everything we do as partners is done for the benefit of Newcastle, its people and communities.

Realism: Partners have to work within the available resources linked to priorities for the city and established in consultation with the VCS.

Respect: Public sector and VCS organisations are accountable in different ways, both need to act with transparency and integrity. Effective partnerships are built on mutual understanding

and an appreciation of the differences between partners of the Compact.

Honesty: It is only through open communication that strong partnerships can be built and maintained. Full and frank discussions should be the basis for resolving difficulties.

Independence: The independence of the VCS is recognised, and supported. This includes the right within the law to campaign, to comment on and to challenge national, regional and local government policy (whatever funding or other relationship may exist with government) and to determine and manage its own affairs.

Diversity: The public sector and the VCS value a thriving civil society, which brings innovation and choice through a multitude of voices.

Fairness: The public sector and the VCS will work together to achieve fair decisions. Fairness for everyone, regardless of their background, is a fundamental goal.

Unlocking potential: By working co-operatively and focusing on assets the public sector and the VCS can deliver change that is built around communities and people.

Volunteering: The public sector and VCS recognise volunteering as an important expression of citizenship and essential to democracy. It is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of the society and the community and can take many forms. It is undertaken freely and by choice without concern for financial gain. All decision-makers need to be volunteer-friendly and also volunteering-literate; that is, aware of ways that their actions and decisions may affect community and voluntary activity. [Volunteer Centre Newcastle](#) can provide good practice support to partners involving volunteers and has worked with Newcastle City Council to develop a model Volunteering Policy. *(Insert Hyperlink)*.

Our Compact Themes

The following themes are recognised as especially relevant to Newcastle. The shared commitments, public sector commitments and VCS commitments essential for implementation are detailed below.

1. Allocating Resources Efficiently

Our Shared Commitments are:

- Integrate the principles of intelligent commissioning (*1) and social value (*2) into all commissioning process and policy.
- To ensure resources are used effectively and value for money is achieved we will work co-operatively with partners, local people and communities, to design funding, investment and commissioning opportunities based on best value principles. (See: [Best Value Statutory Guidance](#)).
- To ensure all stages of the commissioning process are as efficient as possible.
- We recognise we are working in a fast changing environment and will be sensitive to the challenges this presents.
- Where possible, we will share resources to help increase our efficiency.

(*1) Audit Commission's 2007 report '[Hearts & Minds: commissioning from the voluntary sector](#)'

(*2) According to the [Public Services \(Social Value\) Act 2012](#).

Public Sector Commitments

- We will move towards co-production and include the VCS in the design of all funding, investment and commissioning opportunities.
- We will provide funding through a variety of mechanisms according to commissioners' analysis of the provider market.
- We will publicise information about all types of funding opportunities and we will follow realistic, and clearly communicated, timescales.
- Our commissioners will, where possible, talk to each other and the VCS about

funding decisions to ensure that decisions are made with reference to each other.

- Where appropriate we will seek multi-year funding commitments and engage in joint commissioning.
- We will balance the need for accountability and value for money with a commitment to proportionate and effective processes that monitor and evaluate outcomes.
- We will recognise that sometimes payment in advance of expenditure will enable more VCS organisations to engage in financial arrangements and opportunities and sustainable service delivery.
- We will support the VCS in ways other than funding, for example community asset transfer, use of public sector buildings and capacity building support.
- We will be aware of potential opportunities which may benefit Newcastle people and communities and we will share our knowledge with the VCS.
- We recognise new ways of working may involve risk and we will support each other to minimise and manage these risks.

VCS Commitments

- Be open and transparent about reporting, recognising that proportionate monitoring is an aspect of good management practice and a reasonable expectation of distributors of funds.
- We will facilitate feedback from users and communities to help improve delivery of programmes and services and ensure that consultation responses accurately reflect the views and experiences of users / communities.

2. Promoting equality, community cohesion and social inclusion

Shared Commitments

- We will work together to agree outcomes and approaches to reduce inequalities in our City. The NFNA will help us to do this.
- We will ensure the voices of under-represented and disadvantaged groups are heard and taken into account when designing and implementing policies, programmes and services. This will include an assessment of impact.
- We will ensure the decisions we take are fair and that we have appropriate communication plans in place.
- We will take practical action to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality and ensure a voice for under-represented and disadvantaged groups.
- We will embed service user and carer involvement in the commissioning process.
- We will seek advice and input from experienced organisations and / or service users and carers.
- We will promote good relations between diverse VCS organisations and between the VCS and public sector. We will do this by communicating clearly and developing and supporting opportunities for collaboration and partnership working.

Public Sector commitments

- Work with VCS organisations that represent, support or provide services to people specifically protected by legislation and other under-represented and disadvantaged groups.
- Acknowledge that organisations representing specific disadvantaged or under-represented groups can help promote social and community cohesion and should have fair access to public funding.
- We will evidence the effects of commissioning through impact reports.
- We will respond constructively to challenges from the VCS.
- We recognise that consultations are

- opportunities to input the perspectives of the VCS to influence policy, strategy and practice.

VCS Commitments

- We will share our specialist knowledge to assist the public sector to fulfil its duties under the Equalities Act.

3. Consulting with and involving the VCS service users and Governance Bodies

Shared Commitments

- We will use an appropriate range of tools to engage groups and individuals in consultations.
- We will offer 12 weeks of consultation time wherever possible. If it is not possible to do so because of pressures beyond our control we will explain why.
- We will work with our partners to find out what is already known and what other consultations are planned so that we can avoid duplication and explore joint consultations.
- We will only consult on things that we can affect the outcome of and we will report back on what this is.
- We will acknowledge the contribution of others where it is given.
- We will ensure that consultations are clear about what they are asking and who should answer so that people contributing do not waste their time if it's not appropriate.

Public Sector Commitments

- We recognise VCS organisations are connected with people and communities and that those relationships can help make consultation more thorough and effective.
- We will facilitate appropriate involvement of the VCS in all key stages of the commissioning process

VSC Commitments

- We will support local people and communities to contribute to consultations as appropriate.
- We will be clear about whom we are representing, in what capacity, and on what basis that representation is being made. Our contribution will be underpinned by an evidence base.

4. Promoting and Supporting Volunteers

Shared Commitments

- We are guided by the model Newcastle City Council Volunteer Policy. This is available to any organisation that involves volunteers and reflects the Compact principles and commitments. (*1)
- We recognise volunteering has costs which impact upon the resources and capacity of volunteer involving organisations.
- We believe volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual and that it should be open to all.
- We will ensure in return for giving their time, energy and skills volunteers gain something in return.
- We recognise volunteers should not be used as replacements for paid employees.
- We will provide volunteers with support and training to ensure their role is a quality experience.
- We want to recognise volunteers' contribution to the city, to the community, to the social economy and to wider social objectives.

(*1) We will refresh the Newcastle Volunteer Policy to reflect this Compact.

5. Managing Changes to Services

Shared Commitments

- We will have mature and sometimes difficult conversations, but will maintain relationships as we both work for the benefit of people and communities in Newcastle.

- We recognise that it may be necessary to end or change funding arrangements (for example, when people's or communities needs change or when funding streams cease).
- Where changes are necessary we will work together on impact assessments.
- We will work together to ensure any changes are implemented respectfully and legally. We will seek to minimise negative impact on service users, communities and employees.
- We will ensure standards about acceptable delivery are clearly communicated and are realistic.
- We will ensure all parties are up to date with information and changes by using appropriate communication mechanisms.
- We will engage in consultations to identify future gaps in provision or services.
- We will work together to try to ensure appropriate transition arrangements and/or temporary measures can be put in place to maintain services and / or buildings. However, we recognise that sometimes this may not be possible.

Public Sector Commitments

- We recognise that the VCS require advance notice of when changing or ending a future relationship or other support and will seek to work to a minimum notice period of 3 months (unless there are exceptional circumstances such as a breach of funding conditions).
- We will discuss the implications of any restrictions or changes to future resources with the VCS and consider comments before making final decisions.
- If a programme or service is encountering problems, discuss and agree with the service provider a timetable of actions to improve performance before making a decision to end a financial relationship.

VCS Commitments

- Contribute positively to reviews of services.
- Advise funders on the social, environmental or economic impact of funding changes, and on ways to minimise their effects on people invulnerable situations.
- We will highlight any difficulties we are experiencing with delivery and seek constructive support.

Resolving Disputes

We aim to resolve disputes about Compact compliance as early as possible. This is because disputes can be damaging to relationships and can result in wasted resources. Disputes involve interests that are negotiable. It is possible to find a solution that at least partially meets the interests and needs of both parties. However, in cases where it has not been possible to resolve a dispute in a timely and satisfactory way a dispute may lead to a formal complaint via the existing complaints procedure of an organisation.

Partners accept mistakes can happen and will respond positively when this is highlighted. Sometimes this may mean changes to processes.

Contact Details

If you require any further information about any aspect of the Newcastle Compact please contact:

Chief Executive

Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service
Higham House
Higham Place
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 8AF



ncvs@cvsnewcastle.org.uk



Phone 0191 232 7445



Fax 0191 230 5640

If you require any information or support around volunteering please contact:

INSERT CONTACT DETAILS



Phone 0191



Fax 0191

