



Devon Compact Monitoring (November 2008)

(1) Where the Compact has achieved something or changed something

- A CVS attended the overview and scrutiny committee review of consultation and engagement practice at the Council. CVS gave details of the Compact Code of Practice and good practice outlines. Council policy is now being revised to include the good practice outlines in the Compact Code.
- Within the Voluntary Youth Service the Compact has been used to embed a twelve week consultation period within the commissioning process for young people's infrastructure services.
- The Compact has been very helpful in my writing reports for District Council Executive Committee, leading to awarding of grants over the next three years, rather than the one year grant that was initially suggested. It has also been helpful in my being able to argue that the report on allocation of grants needed to go to an Executive Committee meeting early enough in the financial year that we have been able to tell grant recipients of funding in October this year i.e. five months' notice of grant funding and in the couple of cases that grant funding has not been awarded.
- Devon County Council Children and Young People's Directorate has been shortlisted for a Beacon Award for its commissioning processes and practice. The application refers to the Compact, to its Code of Practice in Funding and Procurement and to the work being done to develop a Third Sector Commissioning Strategy, using CYPS as a model to be rolled out across Devon County Council. The application was written without any advice from me, showing a degree of Compact awareness within CYPS. My advice was asked subsequently, to provide additional information regarding the strategic organisational links to the Corporate Procurement Strategy.
- Where the Compact was referenced as a means of dealing with an issue related to redundancy payments.
- In the resolution of issues pertaining to funding allocation and project management between the Local Strategic Partnership and the community wellbeing project.

- In working with the Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health an issue arose on a contract extension and a budget line for it. Redundancy responsibilities were resolved with reference to the Compact and codes.
- The verbal negotiations between partners were reneged on as far as one party was concerned. When the Compact's codes were invoked and explained a threatened service had its informally agreed arrangement formally accepted.
- I am on a steering group which is assisting the Primary Care Trust and Devon County Council Adult and Community Services Directorate to develop a policy and procedure for volunteering within those organisations. A near final draft of the policy has been produced prior to widespread consultation. I offered to 'Compact proof' the document with reference to the volunteering code of practice. I found it to be almost compliant with the Compact but made three suggestions for improvement, backing these up with quotes from the code of practice. These were accepted and incorporated in the final draft. Whilst it is likely that other issues will be raised during consultation at least we can be reasonably confident that the policy is fit for purpose and has taken Compact principles and practice into account at an early stage.

(2) Where you feel the Compact has not been followed

- Working with one group who identified that, in negotiations regarding the extension of their Contract, monitoring data that was 'over the top' was being requested and the use of volunteers was being questioned by the County Council. Some confusion both with ourselves and with the County about whether the Compact could support every time we quoted the Compact the County rephrased or changed slightly their 'concern'.
- When the decision to lose a post was made without reference to the Code on Funding and Procurement and without the requisite transparency the Compact recommends as good practice.
- Where short-term decisions about contract renewal breached the Code on Funding and Procurement and led to a succession of anxieties around service survival.
- When an extra care housing project had its function and remit changed without the proper lengths of time for consultation being respected.
- In December 2008 we were approached by a voluntary youth group who have received a partnership agreement from Devon Youth Services which is far from compact-compliant. DYS wish for the group to hand over all staff and volunteer management; all responsibility for spend of funds and accounting of funds and all premises management (to name just a few areas). This would leave the group with usual liabilities but with no decision making powers to ensure best practice; no understanding of day-to day issues regarding staffing nor any idea of how their monies were being spent. To date DYS have not accounted for any petty cash spend nor feel the need to report to the group's trustees on how they are spending monies. This has resulted in the group being unable to have their accounts for the year signed off. CVS has worked through the partnership agreement with the group to highlight areas of negotiation and compromise.

(3) Where the Compact for Devon did not address the real issue

- When informal agreement was made to continue funding to a particular project but was then retracted in a more formal context. This process did breach the Compact in spirit but asked questions about its currency with the relevant partners.
- When parents of children with learning disabilities were formally consulted about future provision when it was apparent to them that plans to remove services were already in train.
- When plans for a rapid service change were drawn up without reference to the Compact's principles of longer-term planning.

(4) Other examples of the successes or failures of the Compact for Devon

- The Compact was used to agree some of the content of contracts with regard to the provision for young people and young people's representation.
- The tendency of large organisations to use standards, drafted by 'Head Office' or lawyers briefed to protect the organisations, which their employees cannot realistically be expected to vary to fit the particular case.
- The imbalance of power between the commissioner and the charity or service deliverer. Until there is competition in commissioning in the same way there is for service delivery, then standards (other than isolated beacons of good practice) may be difficult to improve.