

The New Newcastle Compact

This is a 'new' Newcastle Compact because it is the first Newcastle Compact to refer to the relationship between the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and a range of public sector partners. This document is a partnership tool intended to help further develop and improve relationships between the VCS and public sector partners in Newcastle. Our New Newcastle Compact underpins the on-going informal and formal conversation between public sector partners and the VCS.

Public and Voluntary Sector partners are subject to a range of external statutory regulation and this Compact is not intended to take precedence over this. Rather, it is a statement of intended good practice

Currently (August 2015), the public sector partners supporting this Compact are: the Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group, Newcastle City Council, Brunswick Parish Council, the Police & Crime Commissioner and Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust. Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service (NCVS) has signed up on behalf of the Newcastle Community & Voluntary Sector.



Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group



**Brunswick Parish
Council**



VERA BAIRD^{QC}
POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER

**Compact
Awards 2014**

This New Newcastle Compact recognises that relationships go wider than commissioning, contracting and grant aid processes. The quality of our relationships is indicative of how can work together for the maximum benefit of Newcastle's citizens and communities. We believe the best outcomes for the people and communities within Newcastle can only be achieved by positive and collaborative working relationships and partnerships within, and between, the sectors. We welcome additional public sector partners.

What is the New Newcastle Compact?

The New Newcastle 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 and community action is an essential part of democratic society and life in Newcastle. The New Newcastle Compact is an agreement between public sector and Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations working in Newcastle.

The New Newcastle 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 on-going 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 and involving the VCS, service users and governance bodies
4. Promoting and supporting volunteering
5. Managing changes to services

The national Compact

The New 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 agree a New Newcastle Compact?

There has been a Compact between Newcastle City Council and the VCS since March 2001 which was refreshed in July 2010. However, since this time, there have been significant changes within sectors and within the partnerships structures across the City. This New Newcastle 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 New Newcastle Compact for?

This is a New Newcastle Compact because it refers to the relationship between the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and a range of public sector partners. The document is a partnership tool intended to help further develop and improve relationships between the VCS and public sector partners in Newcastle. The New Newcastle Compact will be an integral part of the commissioning and delivery cycle of public sector and VCS organisations working in Newcastle.

The New Newcastle Compact recognises the best outcomes for the people and communities within Newcastle can only be achieved by positive and collaborative working relationships and partnerships within, and between the sectors.

We would welcome any new public sector partners interested in finding out more about the New Newcastle Compact and signing up to it. Contact details are provided at the end of this document.

Who has committed to the New Newcastle Compact

Newcastle Wellbeing for Life Board is the statutory platform for partnership working to improve wellbeing and health for all those who live, work or learn in the city. The Board has recognised that good quality robust relationships between partners are a foundation of effective partnership working.

In February 2013, the Board endorsed a Concordat that had been developed between Newcastle City Council and the NHS partners in the City. The Concordat recognised the importance of relationships with a wider set of partners, including the voluntary and community sector.

In this context, the Wellbeing for Life Board, at its meeting on 1st May 2014 endorsed the New Newcastle Compact as initially an agreement between the Newcastle Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG's), Newcastle City Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). The Board recommended to its constituent partner organisations that they work within its framework and principles in all their work with the VCS. Since this time the Newcastle CCGs have merged with the Gateshead CCG to form the Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group. New partners have also signed up to the Compact - Brunswick Parish Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner and Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust.

The New Newcastle 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 upon co-operation between those in the public sector and the VCS. Conversations with other public sector partners will be ongoing and we hope a range of public sector partners will be able to sign up to the New Newcastle Compact.

Representatives of public sector organisations and the VCS meet as the 'Voluntary Sector Liaison Group' (VSLG). This group currently oversees the implementation and monitoring of the New Newcastle Compact.

Our New Newcastle 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: All partners have to work within the available resources linked to priorities for the city and established in consultation with each other.

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, co-operation 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, frank and mature 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 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 and actions

Fairness: The public sector and the VCS will work together to achieve fair decisions. [Fairness](#) for everyone, across diverse backgrounds, is a fundamental goal.

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

Volunteering: Volunteering 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 partners recognise that volunteering activities are an important part of citizenship and essential to public life and democracy.

All partners will aim to be volunteer-friendly and also volunteering-literate; that is, aware of ways that their actions and decisions may affect community and voluntary activity. Supporting volunteers effectively requires resources and this will inform the ability of partners to respond to volunteering requests.

[Volunteer Centre Newcastle](#) can provide good practice support to partners involving volunteers.

Our New Newcastle 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:

- We will integrate the principles of intelligent commissioning (*1) and social value (*2) into all commissioning process and policy.
- We will work co-operatively with partners, local people and communities, to inform service development proposals and to ensure resources are used effectively and value for money.
- We will ensure all stages of the commissioning process are as inclusive as possible.
- We recognise we are working in a fast changing environment and will be sensitive to the challenges this presents.
- We recognise sometimes our collaborative approaches will cut across traditional boundaries and responsibilities
- We will share best practice.
- We will share resources, where possible, to help increase our efficiency and effectiveness.

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

(*2) According to the [Public Services \(Social Value\) Act 2012](#). Although these are not currently applicable to health public sector partners the principles are shared

Public Sector Commitments

- We will move towards co-production and ensure, where appropriate, the involvement of the VCS in a range of opportunities from the earliest possible point in the process.
- We will publicise information about all types of funding opportunities and we will follow realistic, and clearly communicated, timescales. When this is not possible we will explain why this is the case.
- We will aim, where possible and appropriate, to provide funding through a variety of mechanisms according to commissioners' analysis of the provider market and current practice.

- Health and Social Care Commissioners will collaborate where appropriate, involve the VCS, and try to align decisions
- We will seek multi-year funding commitments and engage in joint commissioning where demonstrably appropriate, and in line with our statutory and contracting requirements. We will balance the need for accountability and value for money with a commitment to proportionate and effective processes that monitor and evaluate.
- We will adhere to internal codes of practice when making payments to the VCS and these will be clearly communicated.
- We recognise that, in some circumstances, flexible payment arrangements may be required to enable more VCS organisations to engage in financial and service development opportunities.
- We will seek to support the VCS in ways other than funding. This support will differ between partners and may include, for example, good practice dissemination and development.
- 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 require a supportive approach. We will create opportunities to proactively maximise opportunities for success.

VCS Commitments

- We will respond constructively to appropriate opportunities for co-production.
- We will respond constructively to information about financial arrangements and opportunities by engaging with service users and governance bodies.
- 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.
- We will share information based on our experience and knowledge to help shape and inform any analysis of the needs of communities and appropriate allocation of resources.
- We will enter into collaborative partnerships with other VCS organisations and the public sector to develop, and deliver, appropriate services within the context of available resources.
- We will 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.

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 Newcastle Future Needs Assessment (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

- We will work with VCS organisations that represent, support or provide services to people specifically protected by legislation and other under-represented and disadvantaged groups.
- We acknowledge that organisations representing specific disadvantaged or under-represented groups can help promote social and community cohesion and should have fair access to funding and commissioning opportunities.
- We will evidence the effects of commissioning through robust evaluation. We will respond constructively to feedback from the VCS.
- We recognise and value the perspectives of the VCS in influencing and shaping policy, strategy and practice.

VCS Commitments

- We will share our specialist knowledge and best practice to assist the public sector to fulfil its duties under the Equalities Act.
- We will assist public agencies to engage with the community by providing advice on appropriate ways of engaging communities and by distributing consultation documents to users of services and / or members of communities on issues of concern to them.
- We will take practical action to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality and build stronger communities.
- We will represent and reflect the views of people and communities who are often excluded by using the reach and trust we have developed

3. Consulting 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 aim to offer 12 weeks of consultation time wherever possible.
- 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 under-pinned by an evidence base.
- We recognise that some consultations will be subject to statutory requirements or involve significant changes and the desired 12 week consultation time will be different for these

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.

Choice: We believe people must be free to choose to volunteer.

Diversity: We believe volunteering should be open to all, across different backgrounds, race, age, disability, sexual orientation, faith or other factors. However, some projects may not be suitable for particular groups of people to volunteer in and this can be discussed with the volunteer

Mutual Respect: We believe volunteers should expect to gain something in return for giving their time, energy and skills. This could include a sense of worthwhile achievement, useful skills, experience and contacts, sociability and fun, inclusion in the life of the organisation.

Recognition: We recognise volunteers' contribution to the health and wellbeing of the community, public sector organisations, the social economy and to wider social objectives.

- We recognise volunteering has costs which impact upon the resources and capacity of volunteer involving organisations.
- We recognise volunteers should not be used as replacements for paid employees.

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 understanding the impact.
- We will work together to ensure any changes are implemented respectfully.
- We will be aware of and seek to proactively mitigate any potential adverse impact on service users, communities and employees.
- 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 the VCS require advance notice 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). Many contractual conditions adhere to or, in many cases, exceed this.
- 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 our first response would be to work with the provider to support performance improvement.
- 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.

VCS Commitments

- We will contribute positively to reviews of services.
- We will 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.

Declaration of Interests

We acknowledge that there may be occasions when it will be necessary to declare an interest. Organisations will be guided by their own procedures and good practice guidelines when this is the case.

Resolving Disputes

Each organisation will have its own complaints resolution process. This section relates purely to those disputes about Compact Compliance.

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, or are interested in signing up to 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

www.cvsnewcastle.org.uk

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

Volunteer Centre Officer

Volunteer Centre Newcastle
Broadacre House
Market Street
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 6HQ



vcnewcastle@yahoo.co.uk



Phone 07419 988821

www.volunteercentrenewcastle.org.uk

Acknowledgements: This document was developed by members of the Compact Working Group and officers from the Newcastle North and East and Newcastle West Clinical Commissioning Groups – now the Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group.