

NORTH YORKSHIRE COMPACT

Note of Steering Group meeting

28th April 2006

Present:

From list

Chair: Neil Irving

1. Apologies:

Graham Purdy
Christine Jones
Robert Webb
Milton Pearson
Helen Murfin
Hilary Paxton
Clare Slater

2. Signatories. The list if signatories was considered. Karen Weaver will check whether Harrogate have signed this compact (though they have a compact of their own). Bill Cross to check whether or not Hambleton DC should be included in the list.

3. Update on progress and implementation. Bill Cross reported that awareness of the provisions of the Compact was fairly high with senior managers in the County Council. Discussions with directorate management teams had identified that managers felt that approaches to procurement were sound but might warrant being checked, that we have arrangements which can get us information about the level of spend with the VCS, that there is generally lots of consultation effort with the VCS and that volunteering adds value to the County Council's aims. There is less confidence about awareness of the Compact more generally. (Discussions with the Children and Young People Service have since confirmed these views in that Directorate, too.) The Compact has been adopted by the NYSP and it should be developed through that partnership from now on, rather than as a County Council document. Work has progressed on the funding booklet but it is not complete as yet.

Brian Durham reported that the new Adult and Community Services Directorate is now the custodian of funding for a wide range of support for the VCS and that procurement for care services was adapted to support VCS participation through block contracts rather than individual purchases.

Derek Bartrop confirmed that at the SWRPCT awareness was similarly concentrated at senior management level but that their strategy for

working with the voluntary sector embodies the compact principles and will help awareness more generally.

Sue Graham reported that it was her experience that the compact was well understood by the HRPCT.

VCS representatives confirmed that generally agencies understood and supported the Compact but that there were occasions when this didn't happen. Uncertainty about funding was raised as a particular concern which had threatened a number of well regarded initiatives. Such uncertainty can cause valuable staff to move on or has threatened loss of match funding. Principal causes were the reorganisation of PCTs, the threat of LGR and the effects of budget uncertainty at year end. Delegates were encouraged to understand that agencies ought to be approaching re-structuring with a commitment to minimise disruption and to secure continuity in the hand over to new arrangements. The threat of LGR, remote as it is, is especially not a reason to refrain from negotiating sound arrangements for VCS activities.

Uncertainty in NHS is compounded by budget problems. While there is an intention that existing commitments will be carried forward, in the case where clinical services are being cut, there can be no guarantees. And where VCS can add value, proposals will be gratefully received.

It is not the case that contracts generally terminate at financial year ends, though when they do it can cause uncertainty about renewal while agencies own funding is uncertain. For the County Council, it is not possible to commit to new funding arrangements until after the budget is set in February, for example. It may be possible to support the VCS further by avoiding terminating arrangements at financial year end.

VCS delegates felt that awareness of the compact was not as high as it should be within the sector, though it has been used in discussions with agencies.

The group agreed that the focus for awareness raising should be with the NYSP and that thematic partnerships should consider it explicitly. Also that there needed to be an implementation plan for each agency.

4. Funding booklet. A summary of available information was circulated. Work continues to develop a complete picture from the County Council's perspective. Partners will be asked to contribute their information in the same scheme.
5. Developing new codes and updating the Compact. The group wanted to see codes developing in relation to volunteering (models available elsewhere – eg York) and in relation to BME groups. Research for infrastructure groups on BME groups would need to be taken into account before that code of practice could be developed.

6. Statement of involvement of the VCS in developing the LAA. Bill Cross explained that the Local Area Agreement needed to include a statement of VCS involvement. A meeting with NYFVO had identified a way forward which will be reported on to the NYSP LAA Management Group on 18th May. A good account can be given of engagement to date but consideration will need to be given to ensuring appropriate involvement in programmes.

Discussions touched on awareness of the Local Area Agreement amongst the VCS. Bill Cross explained that efforts were made to ensure that information about its development was widely distributed and offered to help by briefing any group of VCS organisations that wanted it.

The LAA will also include targets relating to the % of VCS organisations reporting growth and the % of certain public services delivered through the VCS.

7. Feedback from regional meetings. Derek Bartrop reported that it is intended that a regional compact be established with the aim of drawing together the GOYH and Yorkshire Forward particularly.
8. Future arrangements for reviewing and developing the Compact. The meeting agreed to establish a working group to develop an action plan to up-date the compact. The action plan would be used by the County Council for its purposes and it would be made available to all signatory organisations to encourage them to adopt a similar approach. The working group members would be:

Paul English, Bill Cross, Judith Bromfield, Neil Irving, Derek Bartrop, Karen Weaver and Paul Hayward.

Progress and monitoring would be undertaken twice yearly by the wider steering group and a suitable occasion would be after each NYSP Wider Partnership conference.

The meeting suggested that NYSP newsletters might include a “box” for news about the compact.

Bill Cross

5th May 2006

(For news on progress contact Justine Williams – 01609 533487, Justine.williams@northyorks.gov.uk or Bill Cross – 01609 780780, bill.cross@northyorks.gov.uk)