

Equality Shropshire Compact Briefing



Shropshire Compact

The Shropshire Compact

The Compact is a way of working setting out agreed values and principles. It is an agreement that sets out the 'rules of engagement' for how Public Sector Commissioning bodies and the county's Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) groups and organisations will work together for the benefit of the people they serve. More details are provided on the Shropshire Compact web pages see:

<http://vcsvoice.org/the-compact/>

The Shropshire Compact was renewed in 2013 and involved the production of a shorter, easier to read Compact document. The Compact Group were keen to ensure some of the detail sitting within the Compact was not lost and have produced a series of resources and briefing sheets to accompany the Compact document.

Equality Principles

Shropshire's Compact signatories are keen to ensure equality and diversity is fully embedded into the Compact as a good practice way of working.

One of the Shropshire Compact's 5 values is:

- Treat each other equally, fairly and with respect

Key equality principles supporting the delivery of the Shropshire Compact are:

- Mainstream equality into all aspects of policy making, service design, delivery and volunteering.
- Involve users in the design, development and delivery of services
- Use research and engagement to understand where groups are under-represented
- Bring people together to enrich understanding of needs and experiences
- Provide advice, advocacy and representation for people who feel they do not have a voice
- Ensure services are accessible
- Use commissioning relationships positively to overcome inequality
- Target action on persistent inequality

Equality Commitments

The Shropshire Compact supports the equality principles contained within the National Compact under the heading of **An Equal and Fair Society**.

Commissioners will:

- Work with Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) groups and organisations that represent, support or provide services to people specifically protected by legislation and other under-represented and disadvantaged groups.
- Understand the specific needs of these groups by actively seeking the views of service users and clients. Take these views into account, including assessing impact, when designing and implementing policies, programmes and services.
- Acknowledge that organisations representing specific disadvantaged or under-represented group(s) can help promote social and community cohesion and should have equal access to state funding.

- Take practical action to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality and to ensure a voice for under-represented and disadvantaged groups.

VCSE groups and organisations will:

- If receiving funding from a government body, show how the value of the work can help that body deliver its public sector duties on promoting equality and tackling discrimination.
- Take practical action, such as through funding bids, to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and build stronger communities.

Delivering Best Practice

The Shropshire Compact Group understands the strong link between promoting equality and ensuring effective consultation. The Shropshire Compact states:

“Commissioners will.....Conduct 12 week formal consultations, where appropriate. When this is not possible, clear explanations and rationale for shorter time frames or a more informal approach will be provided”.

There is a shared understanding with the VCSE sector (represented by Shropshire VCS Assembly) that it is not always within the power of local organisations to offer 12 week consultations, particularly when timescales are determined by National Government or the European Union. In these cases Shropshire Compact Signatories are committed to provide a clear explanation of why consultation periods are shorter. The Shropshire Compact supports national best practice in consultation outlined in Compact Voice’s briefing ‘Ensuring Meaningful Engagement when Consulting’ (see extract below).

Meaningful engagement:

1. Goes beyond the ‘usual suspects’ to attempt to ensure all those affected by a decision have been heard. While it may not be possible to reach absolutely everyone, there should be an active attempt to reach a wide range of people, with a published record of what has been attempted.
2. Looks at the impact on different groups separately as well as collectively. While it may not be possible to accommodate every different viewpoint, active understanding of the impact on different groups and their viewpoints should be sought.
3. Ensures questions are answered and enough context has been provided so that stakeholders can make informed decisions.
4. Provides information on what is open to change, and what has already been decided.
5. Provides information on how and where feedback will be provided on what has changed as a result of the consultation
6. Provides a variety of methods for people to feed in to the consultation, ensuring that they are accessible. Examples include websites, events, stalls, focus groups and targeted dissemination
7. Holds meetings and events at times and places that allow as many people to take part as possible.
8. Provides feedback on the consultation, and what has happened as a result

The Shropshire Compact

For more information about the Shropshire Compact use the details below:

📄 **Website:** <http://vcsvoice.org/the-compact/>

✉ **Email:** VCSAssembly@shropshire.gov.uk 📞 **Telephone:** 01743 252740

