

Compact

**Between Newcastle's voluntary
and community sector
and Newcastle City Council**

**How it works and
how to deal with
disagreements**

Revised July 2008

1. Introduction

Newcastle City Council recognises the value of voluntary and community organisations and supports their independence. This commitment is set out and explained in the Compact between Newcastle's voluntary and community sector and Newcastle City Council, published in March 2001. This was agreed by Newcastle Council for Voluntary Services (NCVS) on behalf of the sector.

The Compact provides an overall framework for how the relationship between the council and voluntary and community organisations is managed. The Compact is backed-up with agreed, detailed codes of practice in particular areas such as funding, consultation, and volunteering.

The purpose of this document is to explain how voluntary and community organisations can raise concerns when they feel the Compact or the codes are not being properly followed.

2. Who can raise a concern?

Only constituted voluntary and community organisations can raise concerns about matters relating to the Compact and its codes. For individuals wishing to make a complaint or for organisations wishing to complain about matters unrelated to the Compact the council has different procedures (see section 5).

Voluntary and community organisations can raise concerns individually or jointly. An umbrella organisation, forum or network can also raise concerns on behalf of one or more of its members.

If you want to complain as a forum or network you may not be a constituted body. In that case the form you submit should be signed by the chair of the forum or network and another member. If a statement exists about the purpose and structure of the forum this should be included with the form. The council reserves the right to decide whether or not the forum or network is sufficiently robust to be accepted as a body able to make a complaint under this code.

3. Resolving disagreements

The procedure for resolving disagreements has two elements; an informal approach and a formal procedure. These are separate but making an informal approach does not prevent the concern being raised formally at a later date.

3.1 How to make an informal approach

Disagreements and concerns are often the result of misunderstandings, lack of information etc. In these cases, an informal approach is usually the best way to resolve the matter, and avoids the need for the formal process set out in section 3.2.

To make an informal approach you should first discuss the matter with the relevant council or NCVS officer using the contact details given in section 4.

The officer will note the details of your concern and discuss them with relevant people. They will then report back to you to see if a satisfactory resolution can be reached. In normal circumstances, this should take no more than 5 working days. If, for some reason (such as officers being on leave), this timescale cannot be met you will be informed and a new deadline arranged.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of this informal approach you may then wish to pursue the matter through the formal procedure set out in section 6.

3.2 How to raise a concern formally

All formal complaints relating to the Compact must be submitted on the form attached as appendix 2, and must be signed by the chair of your organisation and either the vice chair, treasurer or senior member of staff. They will then follow the formal procedure set out in section 6.

You may raise a concern through this procedure only if:

1. you are a constituted voluntary or community organisation, and,
2. you wish to raise a concern about the council or one of its directorates not following some particular part of the Compact or its codes of practice, and,
3. your organisation wishes to raise this concern on its own behalf i.e. not one individual who happens to belong to your organisation.

To raise a concern through the formal procedure you must satisfy all three points.

Issues about individual funding agreements between your organisation and the council should be addressed in the first instance by contacting the officer responsible for overseeing your grant or contract.

In any case, you should not use this procedure to challenge a decision about your funding unless you feel that the council has not followed the terms of the Compact Funding Code of Practice in reaching its decision.

4. How to submit your formal complaint

Once you have completed the formal complaint form, attached as appendix 2, please make sure that it is signed by the chair of your organisation and either the vice chair, treasurer or senior member of staff. Then send it to:

Michael Robinson
Chief Executive's Office
Newcastle City Council
Civic Centre
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 8PR
Tel: 0191 211 5834
Fax: 0191 211 5899
Email: mike.robinson@newcastle.gov.uk

Whether making a formal complaint, adopting an informal approach or simply wondering what to do, you can get help and support from:

Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service (NCVS)
MEA House
Ellison Place
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 8XS

5. How to raise other concerns with the council

In addition to this Compact procedure, the council has a formal complaints procedure for individuals or organisations who wish to complain about a specific service they have received. There is also a separate council procedure for making complaints about the conduct of councillors. For more information about these other procedures please contact:

Ian Humphries
Corporate Complaints Officer
Democratic Services
Chief Executives Officer
Civic Centre
Barras Bridge
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 8PR

Tel: 0191 211 5116
Fax: 0191 211 4942
Email ian.humphries@newcastle.gov.uk

6. The formal procedure

Stage 1

Once you have set out your concerns on the form and sent it to Newcastle City Council, care of Michael Robinson, stage 1 of the formal procedure will begin.

The council will:

- Keep a copy of your completed form.
- Decide who should deal with it. This will include looking at whether the concern is about the Compact or would be better dealt with through the council's formal complaints procedures.
- If the concern is relevant to the Compact, forward the issue to the appropriate Directorate Liaison Officer, or to a nominated officer dealing with general complaints.

- Write to you stating either a) who will be dealing with the concern and how to contact them, or b) how to raise your concern through other council procedures that are more appropriate.
- Report the concern and the details of who is dealing with it to NCVS.
- Monitor what happens with your concern and report this to the council's Voluntary and Community Sector Liaison Group.

The Directorate Liaison Officer will:

- Examine the details of your concern, and contact your organisation and anyone else concerned as appropriate.
- Consider the relevant parts of the Compact and its codes.
- Decide whether any action should be taken and what that action should be.
- Report their decision in writing to you within 15 working days, and,
- Copy their letter to Michael Robinson and to NCVS.

Stage 2

If you do not feel that your concern has been fully or properly addressed by stage 1, you can ask for it to be looked at again. You must put this request in writing to Michael Robinson and explain why you think your concern has not been properly addressed.

The council will:

- Write to you within 5 working days to confirm that your request has been received and explain the next steps.
- Report the situation to NCVS and to the relevant Directorate Liaison Officer.
- Convene a panel to look at your concern again.
- Notify you of when this panel is meeting.
- Take minutes of the panel meeting and its decisions.
- Ensure that any decisions made by the panel are actioned.

The panel will:

- Re-examine the details of your concern, contacting you and anyone else concerned as appropriate.
- Consider the relevant parts of the Compact and its codes.
- Decide whether any action should be taken and by whom.
- Agree which Directorate Liaison Officer will work with Michael Robinson to follow up the decisions made by the panel.
- Make recommendations to the relevant Directorate Management Teams.
- Report the outcome in writing within 15 working days from the date of the meeting. If more time is needed they will write to you to explain what is happening and when an outcome will be reached.

Review

The council and NCVS report all concerns and their outcomes to the Compact Review Group. These reports specify any unresolved concerns and any wider issues that have arisen as a result of the formal procedure.

The Compact Review Group is able to agree actions to address outstanding concerns or issues. These will form part of the Compact action plan for the following year.

The Compact Review Group will also consider the effectiveness of the procedure in dealing with the concerns that have been raised. Again, they are able to agree actions that will form part of the Compact action plan for the following year.

APPENDIX 1: WHO'S WHO

Compact Review Group

This group looks at all work on the Compact and its Codes, considers any concerns raised, and sets an agreed work plan. The group is made up of:

- Six councillors, four from the council's Executive and one each from the Neighbourhood Scrutiny Panel and the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel, and,
- Six representatives of voluntary and community organisations, selected by and from the membership of NCVS.

In addition the Compact Review Group has two standing officers in attendance:

- The council's lead officer on the Compact, and,
- The lead officer on the Compact from NCVS.

Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service (NCVS)

NCVS is the main umbrella body for voluntary and community organisations in Newcastle. NCVS works with the council to develop and carry out work on the Compact and its codes. They are able to provide support to organisations wanting to raise concerns about the Compact.

Voluntary and Community Sector Liaison Group

This is a group of Directorate Liaison Officers and others that meets regularly to discuss and take action about the Compact, its codes of practice and other issues affecting voluntary and community organisations.

APPENDIX 2: FORMALLY RAISING A CONCERN UNDER THE COMPACT

1. Organisation

Name of Organisation	
Address	
Telephone	
Email	
Charity No. (if applicable)	
Do you have a constitution? (We may ask to see this)	

2. The nature of the concern (Please continue on separate sheets if necessary)

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**3. Which part of the Compact does your organisation think has not been followed?
This may be the Compact itself or one of its codes of practice**

DECLARATION

I can confirm that I have been authorised to submit this complaint on behalf of the organisation

Name of Organisation

1st SIGNATURE

Chair's name (please print).....

Chair's signature.....

Date.....

2ND SIGNATURE

Name (please print).....

Signature.....

Position in organisation.....

Date.....