



review of the compact

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The Regional Forum
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What is the Compact?

The Compact is a set of 'key rules of engagement' or 'undertakings' that Government should observe and uphold when dealing with the voluntary and community sector (VCS). It is also an undertaking from the sector to enter into a 'mutually beneficial partnership' with government at all levels.

Compacts operate at national, regional and local authority levels. In 2005 an independent Commissioner for the Compact was appointed to act as a champion and encourage a change in behaviours. Sir Bert Massie is the current Commissioner.

Why is a review of the Compact needed?

The Commission is concerned that the Government's commitment to, and compliance with, the Compact is perceived by the VCS as being slow and patchy. There has been a long standing view that if it is to have any real impact, the Compact needs to have statutory authority.

The existing arrangements are now out of date. For example, meaningful engagement should go beyond having a 12 week consultation period, and there is a new climate of public service delivery which is increasingly based on commissioning.

What form will the review take?

An 'informal' consultation/debate with the VCS and other strategic partners has begun and will last for 3 months. This will include the Compact conference on 9th September in Birmingham.

At the end of this process the Commission will present options for a way forward to the Minister for the Third Sector, Phil Hope, who will also have feedback from other government departments. If there is a consensus on the way forward the Office of the Third Sector will have to carry out a formal impact assessment, considering costs and funding, and then run a formal full scale public consultation, which will run for a further 3 months.

It is likely that 2010 will be the earliest date from which any changes will be made.

What is the Regional Forum's involvement?

The Regional Forum will be contributing to the forthcoming informal consultation and debate on behalf of the region's VCS. Further details will be available soon, but the three questions on which the Commission are seeking feedback are:

- What sort of agreement should the Compact be in future?
- How could the form and content of the Compact be enhanced to make it fit for the future?
- How could the Commission for the Compact change to ensure better implementation of the Compact?

If you, or your organisation, have any initial views or comments to make about these questions, or would like to take part in a Focus Group session organised by the Regional Forum in September/ October to discuss a regional response do please contact Stephen Fox, Development Officer Policy and Engagement on 0113 394 2300 or e-mail stephen.fox@regionalforum.org.uk

You can keep up-to-date with all relevant developments on the UK Policy website at: <http://www.ukpolicy.org.uk>