

# West Essex Compact Pilot Project

## Evaluation Report

March 2010: Claire Greenhill – on behalf of Rainbow Services

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### Executive Summary

The Compact has the potential to improve partnership working between the voluntary and community sector and the statutory sector at local, countywide and a national level by embedding best practice principles and commitments into organisational procedures and the general ethos of effective and meaningful partnership working. The aim of the pilot was to investigate whether the refreshed Essex Compact could be used in a local manner by raising awareness of the benefits of signing up to working in a Compact compliant manner and establishing a local group of representatives from both the voluntary and statutory sectors to maintain the momentum created throughout the duration of the pilot.

Involvement from voluntary and statutory based organisations varied between districts. However, it was positive to have consistent input and interest throughout the six month period from representatives from both sectors. Statutory involvement has included; Local Authority, NHS West Essex, Princess Alexandra Hospital, North Essex Partnership Foundation Trust, Essex Police and Essex Fire and Rescue Service. Voluntary and community sector involvement included; infrastructure organisations in each district, Home Start, Mind, Community Transport, Women's Aid, Young Concern, Community Transport. Challenges have arisen with regard to engaging some of the key organisations in each district i.e. despite repeated attempts to contact some organisations, no response was received.

Establishing the implementation groups proved to be a positive action as again, there was involvement and commitment in each district in attempting to use the Compact as a local tool for improved and meaningful partnership working. Due to the varying levels of impact that the original district level versions of the Compact had, it is a fair assumption to suggest that without continued effort and input via the Implementation Groups, it is possible that the Compact could once again fall off the local agenda. However through continual discussion, action and impetus, the Compact principles and commitments could become a valuable tool for improved behaviours and thinking behind all collaborative working arrangements between the voluntary and statutory sector.

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### Introduction

The Compact is a document outlining a set of principles and commitments for both voluntary and statutory sector organisations to agree to in order to develop and maintain effective and meaningful partnerships and relationships between the two sectors.

Each district involved in this pilot project (Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford) had a district Compact which had been used locally to varying levels of success and awareness - for example the Harlow Compact was agreed in 2004 with the Codes of Practice signed off in 2006. The voluntary sector via the Voluntary Sector Forum were very involved in writing these codes and the process of getting the compact agreed and finalised was very much an example of the voluntary and statutory sectors working collaboratively. With many new initiatives and programmes, after the initial work to 'get the ball rolling', momentum is often lost and what was a well thought out and collaborative project often becomes a document without impact or effectiveness. It could be suggested that the use of the Compact was one such initiative.

The Essex Compact (primarily established to support countywide partnerships across the voluntary and statutory sector) was reviewed and refreshed in 2008/2009. This process was undertaken to ensure that the Essex Compact reflected the current needs of the county with regard to how the voluntary and statutory sectors work together.

The Compact Pilot Project was identified as an action under National Indicator 7, “an environment for a thriving third sector” as part of the Essex Area Agreement. The pilot was funded by the Performance Reward Grant. Rainbow Services was commissioned to undertake the pilot with a view to learning from the findings and results of the work in order to ascertain whether using a countywide document i.e. Essex Compact in a localised manner, i.e. via district level implementation groups is a feasible option for the rest of the county.

Liaison with the main officer at Essex County Council regarding the Essex Compact was regularly required in order to ensure that updates regarding progress and ideas for supporting newly signed up organisations could be discussed. This regular contact also ensured that feedback to the Essex Compact Steering Group could be maintained.

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## Aims of the project

The primary aims of the project were to:

1. Increase understanding of the Compact principles and how to use them to improve relationships between the voluntary and statutory sectors in West Essex
2. Increase the number of organisations committed to using the Compact principles by signing up to the Essex Compact
3. Establish an Implementation Group in each of the districts within West Essex in order to assist signed-up organisations with implementing the Compact principles internally

→ *Appendix 1: National Indicator 7 Action Plan*

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## Plan for the project

An initial work schedule was drawn up at the start of the project to plan out how the six months would be spent. In order to establish the Implementation Groups it was intended for there to be two meetings in each district. It was also planned that meetings to raise awareness of the Compact be held in each district during ‘National Compact Week’ in November 2009. Due to the wide ranging and diverse nature of the voluntary sector it was necessary to narrow down the target area for voluntary sector involvement. This was done by actively targeting voluntary sector organisations with a pre-existing financial relationship with Essex County Council i.e. via a contract or grant. Similarly organisations in receipt of a grant or contract from other key statutory organisations such as NHS West Essex and the district authorities were approached. Voluntary sector organisations with a remit to deliver services across more than one district within West Essex were also prioritised. In addition, each Local Strategic Partnership was highlighted as a key influencer with regard to establishing the localised Implementation Groups.

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## Summary of activity completed

### October

- Research national schemes/info/advice
- 1:1 meetings with signed-up organisations
- Prepare for Compact Week events

### November

- Co-ordinate Compact Week events
- Comparison work – Essex Compact vs. local versions
- Papers written for Voluntary Sector Forums in each district
- 1:1 meetings with signed-up organisations

### December

- Prepare for inaugural Implementation Groups

- Chair Implementation Groups
- Produce mid-way report
- Liaison with LSPs

### January

- 1:1 meetings with VCS organisations
- Attendance at Champion training

### February

- Prepare for 2<sup>nd</sup> Implementation Group
- 1:1 meetings with various VCS organisations
- Champion survey
- Chair Implementation Groups

### March

- Present at Champion Training

- Champion 'welcome pack'
  - Finalise all paperwork and 'loose ends'
  - Hand over Implementation Group information
  - Write evaluation report
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## Performance against aims

An evaluation questionnaire was distributed in hard copy at the Implementation Groups as well as via email to enable individuals who had been involved in the West Essex Pilot to contribute their opinions and learning. Out of the 49 individuals who were approached, 17 responded giving a 35% return rate. The data from this questionnaire has been included below within the summary of performance against each of the three aims to evidence and support the findings from the project.

### 1. Increase understanding of the Compact principles and how to use them to improve relationships between the voluntary and statutory sectors in West Essex

*Attempts to raise awareness of the Compact were made through articles written in voluntary sector publications i.e. newsletters and e-bulletins distributed in each district. A paper was written outlining the aims and purpose of the pilot which was presented at the Voluntary Sector Forum held in each district. Feedback was sought regarding the response to this discussion paper to enable follow up contacts to be made to encourage sign-up. Contact was initiated via a range of emails and introductory letters to attempt to engage organisations who had not previously been involved in either a district Compact or the Essex Compact. Through discussions at Compact meetings and during 1:1 conversations it was felt that case studies would help to illustrate the benefits associated with working in a Compact compliant manner. It was also suggested that a regular agenda item at the Implementation Groups regarding how the Compact principles had been used within member organisations daily work, would be useful to demonstrate practical application of the Compact's purpose.*

- 28% stated "I feel better informed about what the Compact principles include now"
- 18% stated "I feel better equipped to use the Compact to help forge productive relationships with partners"

**Performance against aim: ACHIEVED but ONGOING**

### 2. Increase the number of organisations committed to using the Compact principles by signing up to the Essex Compact

*At the start of the project there were 51 organisations signed up to the Essex Compact across the county. Some organisations have more than one Champion ensuring that the principles of the Compact are rolled out internally. Nine of these organisations (18%) were based within West Essex. At the end of the project an additional six organisations had signed up to the Essex Compact. Out of these 57 organisations 25% are from the West Essex district. If the PCT boundary lines are used to divide the county then there are five areas within Essex. Therefore 25% of signed up organisations coming from West Essex is a large proportion of the overall number of organisations, indicating that there is above average awareness of the Compact in this area. In addition, from the organisations that have been involved with the West Essex project there are a number who have indicated that it is their intention to sign up after discussing either with trustees or the senior management board. Based on these verbal commitments, it can be anticipated that this 25% could potentially increase to 35% as an extra 9 organisations sign up.*

- 15% stated "I am a Compact Champion"
- 15% stated "My organisation is now signed up the Essex Compact"

**Performance against aim: ACHIEVED but ONGOING**

### 3. Establish an Implementation Group in each of the districts within West Essex in order to assist signed-up organisations with implementing the Compact principles internally

*During National Compact Week an awareness raising session was held in each district to highlight the pilot project and to begin to invite local organisations to get together to discuss the Compact as a useful tool for developing relationships with partner organisations. These meetings were then used as a platform for launching and discussing the role and remit of the proposed Implementation Groups. It was planned that two meetings (in addition to the National Compact Week events) in each district would be held to enable the purpose, structure, terms of reference and action plan to be established prior to the end of the pilot*

*project. Involvement across West Essex varied but there was definite interest across the patch. In some areas it was easier to engage key statutory partners and involvement from the voluntary and community sector also varied between districts. Examples include; organisations that have an overall head office with affiliated local offices – some engaged and some did not. Similarly with local authorities, the willingness and capacity to engage in the pilot differed between districts.*

*The first meetings were held in December. At each district’s meeting there was representation from both the voluntary and statutory sectors. A draft term of reference was tabled, as was an action plan and the structure, frequency and accountability of the groups was discussed. A subsequent meeting was then held in February to agree all changes, agree the mediation role of the group, elect a Chair and agree the undertaking of the administration function. Once again the attendance at this meeting included representation from both the voluntary and statutory sectors indicating that there is value and importance placed upon the Compact from both sides.*

- 15% stated “My organisation is now signed up the Essex Compact”

**Performance against aim: ACHIEVED but ONGOING**

→ Appendix 2: Evaluation data

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## What happens next?

To conclude the West Essex Compact Pilot Project the following actions (at the time of writing this report) are in the process of being completed:

- All notes/actions from February Implementation Group completed and circulated
- All paperwork regarding the continued progress of all Implementation Groups handed over
- Chair elected for each of the three Implementation Groups
- All contact details sent to the organisation offering to provide administration function
- Contact details of the organisations signed-up to the Essex Compact circulated
- Champion Welcome Pack (draft version) given to Essex County Council officer
- Summary of key points from Codes of Practice written
- Ideas for Undertakings Code

→ Appendix 3: Summary of key points from Codes of Practice

→ Appendix 4: Ideas for Undertakings Code

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## Conclusion

The Compact has been predominately well received by all during the pilot. All work completed has proven to be fruitful in terms of attracting organisational interest in the principles and commitments of the Essex Compact. The Implementation Groups have been established and form a sound basis for attempting to keep the Compact fresh and on the local agenda. However, for this to happen effectively, there needs to be regular commitment and genuine enthusiasm for making the Essex Compact work in Harlow, Epping Forest and Uttlesford. In terms of using a similar model in other areas of Essex, it would be necessary to gauge local opinion regarding the perceived influence and effectiveness that the current local version (if there is one at all) has in the district. Within West Essex, because there had been a mutual agreement that the use of the Compact locally needed to be reviewed, the notion of using the Essex Compact in a localised manner was well received.

## Appendix 1 – National Indicator 7 Action Plan

Objective	Action
<p>To ensure full implementation of Essex Compact across the county and effective links with District Compact where appropriate</p> <p>To set up a pilot project in West Essex and develop protocols and procedures that can be rolled out across the county</p>	<p>Recruit p/t worker whose main task will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To gain access to all the CEOs etc from the agencies/organisations who are signed up to the Essex Compact or who could be signed up</li> <li>• To gather baseline data as to who is/was signed up</li> <li>• To create an undertakings code for organisations who sign up e.g. inclusion on job descriptions, induction processes, training programmes etc</li> <li>• To visit all current/potential signatories to elicit champions/contacts</li> <li>• To visit any West Essex LSP that has not as yet agreed to overlay the Essex model over their locality model</li> <li>• To pull together a core group in each district</li> <li>• To pull together an implementation plan</li> <li>• To assist development of a West Essex group to ensure consistency of effort and tasks – overview function</li> <li>• To develop Champions model to take out to other districts</li> <li>• To develop a local mediation group</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2 – Evaluation Results

### Prior to you/your organisation's involvement in the West Essex Compact Pilot...

I had never heard of the Compact before – 13%

I had heard of the Compact but didn't really understand what it was all about – 30%

I had a fairly good understanding of what the Compact included – 22%

I was confident with what the Compact sets out to do – 17%

My organisation was not signed up to the Essex Compact – 4%

My organisation was signed up to the Essex Compact – 26%

### After you/your organisation's involvement in the West Essex Compact Pilot...

I feel better informed about what the Compact principles include now – 28%

I feel better equipped to use the Compact to help forge productive relationships with partners – 18%

No change really – my understanding/use of the Compact is the same – 5%

I am now involved in keeping my organisation Compact compliant – 15%

I am a Compact Champion – 15%

My organisation is now signed up the Essex Compact – 15%

Other – Discussions about signing up are now underway – 3%

## Appendix 3– Summary of Key Points from Codes of Practice

### Funding and Procurement Code

- Early involvement of the VCS in the grant funding and procurement processes
- Market analysis to be carried out to ensure a thorough understanding of how potential providers could satisfy needs
- Maintain and develop two separate processes for financing delivery of services by Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) – through grants and procurement
- Clear efforts to be made to simplify the documentation and processes associated with grant applications and procurement
- Consideration to be given on specifying requirements around the sharing of risk to avoid it being the responsibility of one provider
- Evaluation of grants or procurement process to be proportionate to the value of the agreement
- Key Performance Indicators to be proportionate to the value of the grant or contract
- Statutory Sector to fund the full cost of services/activities that are grant funded or contracted from the VCS
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### Volunteering Code

- Four fundamental principles:
  - ✓ Choice – freely chosen by the volunteer
  - ✓ Diversity – open to everyone
  - ✓ Reciprocity – should be a two way process in that the volunteer feels the activity is meaningful and satisfies their needs
  - ✓ Recognition – contribution should be publicly recognised

### For Voluntary and Community Groups Facing Marginalisation, Including Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and Disability Groups

- Joint commitment to taking forward equal opportunity and access
- Sharing best practice and promoting positive relationships
- Improve quality and quantity of consultation and participation with marginalised groups
- Recognise the specific needs of BME and disability groups
- Better access to resources and support for marginalised groups

### Public Engagement Code

- Provide good quality information to enable appropriate decision-making
- Provide a standard of good quality experiences for the public
- Maximise the value of public engagement activities
- All public engagement should be relevant, accessible, accountable, inclusive, informed and timely, balanced, transparent and honest
- Confidentiality will be respected and potentially vulnerable people and groups protected by appropriate protection measures
- Develop clear guidelines on involving local groups in community planning

*(The majority of the above summary points have been taken directly from the codes of practice – specific commitments then expand these overarching principles)*

## *Appendix 4 – Ideas for Undertakings Code*

- Inclusion within job descriptions – role of Champion for posts with natural links with partner sector
- Inclusion in induction processes – ethos of the organisation
- Inclusion within in-house training regarding best practice and quality assurance
- Inclusion on organisational website – public facing
- Inclusion on internal intra-net – news/updates
- Use internal communication methods to distribute news/updates regarding Compact related issues e.g. team meetings, emails, newsletters
- Involvement with recruitment processes if appropriate e.g. between Local Authority and Council for Voluntary Service
- Involvement with local Implementation Group to share best practice and examples of where Compact has been used
- Introduce Compact principles and commitments to all partnership – does not have to be just between voluntary and statutory sector, principles are most effective when embedded in daily activity and ethos of organisation