

Compact and Single Outcome Agreement Regional Events Feedback Report Summary

The third sector approached The Highland Council in 2007 to request that a Compact be developed. A high profile pan Highland conference was held in March 2008 to investigate the wider appetite for a Compact between the public and third sector in Highland. The recommendation of the conference was that a Compact between the third sector in Highland, Highland Council, NHS Highland and Highlands and Islands Enterprise should be taken forward.

The conference recommended that there should be regional events across Highland in order to consult on the development of a Highland Compact. These were hosted by the local CVS and held on:

- 26th November in Lairg
- 2nd December in Thurso
- 13th January to cover the Inner Moray Firth area held in Inverness
- 27th January in Fort William
- 11th February to cover Skye, Lochalsh and Wester Ross held in Kyleakin

The events were an opportunity to consult with the sector on the design and expectations of the Compact and also to raise awareness about Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) and new and emerging Community Planning Structures. They enabled third sector organisations to evidence how they can contribute to the SOA and clarified how the Compact and SOA process will be taken forward. This report summarises the responses received from all five regional consultation events.

Session 1 - Single Outcome Agreement Mapping

Following presentations about the SOA and Community Planning, third sector delegates were requested to 'map' their contribution to the 15 national and 53 local outcomes in Highland.

- 175 third sector organisations participated in the SOA mapping across all five events
- All 15 national and 53 local outcomes were contributed to by at least one third sector organisation

The diversity of the organisations attending the events is reflected by the national and local outcomes contributed to the most:

Of the national outcomes, over half of third sector organisations indicated that they contributed to:

- National outcome 3 – *We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation*
- National outcome 7 – *We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society*
- National outcome 11 – *We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others*
- National outcome 15 – *Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs.*

Of the local outcomes, over 40% of third sector organisations indicated that they contributed to:

- Local Outcome 3.3 – *More people able to access opportunities for learning and employment in their communities*
- Local outcome 7.5 – *Tackling discrimination, promoting equality, participation and good relations*
- Local Outcome 11.3 – *Improved quality of life through community led action and more people feeling connected to their communities*

Session 2 What Works Well and What Could Work Better

Within the context of the Compact aiming to improve relationships between the third and public sectors and establish a framework for future relationships, participants were split into sectoral groups and asked to identify what currently works well and what could work better in working relationships.

What works well - There were significant commonalities between both sets of groups: Trust, respect and honesty were seen as very important for good relationships and clear lines of communication were also seen as significant. Local, one to one relationships and shared understanding in terms of expectations and purpose were identified as very important.

Public sector groups highlighted transparency as important for good relationships whereas third sector groups identified sustainability of funding and a feeling that the sector is valued as significant where relationships between the sectors work well.

What could work better – There were also significant commonalities between both sectors. Areas for improvement included: understanding of the use of joint language and the purpose of organisations; better communication not just between sectors but within sectors and in each organisation; development of joint priorities and objectives and; a clearer understanding of who represents the third sector.

Public sector groups identified the need for them to be better at communicating change, consulting and feeding back from consultations and acknowledged that funding generally could work better and that funding restraints sometimes constrained the development of good working relationships

The third sector identified funding as a key area that needs to work better. Understanding the opportunities and the criteria for funding were identified as important along with the need for the Added Value of the sector to be given consideration. Inclusion in meetings, policy development and decision making was also seen as an area that could certainly work better.

Session 3 - Benefits, Obstacles and What a Compact should Include

The afternoon session of each of the regional events focused upon the Compact itself. Following presentations on what a Compact is and the process in Highland to date, mixed sectoral groups were asked to identify potential benefits of a Compact, what a Compact should include and also any potential obstacles. A number of the areas highlighted as needing to work better in terms of the relationships between the sectors were identified as potential areas for inclusion within a Compact.

Five key potential benefits of a Compact were identified across the regional events. These were:

- Communication
- Commitment
- Relationships
- Representation
- Understanding

Delegates felt that a Compact would assist in formalising the relationship between the sectors and providing a clear framework for it. The Compact would result in a clear commitment from partners to work together and assist in recognising the value of the sector. The Compact would help in improving communication and understanding across the sectors in a number of ways.

Closely related to this, delegates highlighted a number of key areas which the Compact should include in order to achieve these benefits and become a robust and effective tool. In addition to comments on the Draft Principles, delegates indicated the need for a communication and consultation strategy, shared objectives, a dispute resolution mechanism, code of conduct and a monitoring framework to be included within the Compact. Delegates also highlighted the need for partners to sign up to the Compact.

However, the events also highlighted a number of potential obstacles, which should be considered when developing the Compact and monitoring it going forward:

- lack of commitment from any side could lead to the Compact becoming tokenistic;
- challenges in how to ensure wide awareness of the Compact across and within sectors;
- concerns that the funder/funded relationship was unequal which could put a strain on the Compact and;
- unrealistic expectations of what a Compact could achieve.

Session 4 – ABCD: Achieved, Benefits, Concerns, Do Next Evaluation

The final session of the day asked delegates to evaluate what had been achieved on the day, the benefits, whether there were concerns and what should be done next.

Achieved

Delegates reported that a lot had been achieved on the day in terms of understanding and awareness raising of the Compact and Single Outcome Agreement. There was a feeling the day had resulted in improved working relationships between sectors and allowed for an exchange of views.

Benefits

The identified benefits of the day were similar, relating to the raising awareness of the Compact and Single Outcome Agreement and an opportunity to feed in to the development of the Compact. Delegates reported feeling that contribution of the third sector was now better understood and that the Compact would act as a vehicle for change.

Concerns

Concerns were around the Compact becoming tokenistic, the possibility that there may be a lack of commitment to implement it, representation of the third sector and that the process must be two-way.

Do next

Delegates reported going forward it was important that participants were kept informed about progress, further consultation was required and the sector must move towards having one voice in order to participate effectively in the process.

Next Steps

The Compact Working Group has continued to meet following the regional consultation events. It has considered the feedback received from these events and is taking forward a number of the actions proposed.

One of the critical areas for development is the proposal to develop an action plan to sit alongside the Principles and demonstrate they are being achieved. It is proposed that this would be an evolving document and would express what the partners are working on together at any one time.

There are three key areas of work that should form the basis for the action plan in year one of the Compact. These are:

- Communication
- Participation and Representation (including how the sector could organise itself as a forum within the range of community planning forums)
- Funding arrangements

In addition to these areas, the group is looking at behaviours which relate to each of the five Principles to form the basis of a Code of Conduct for partners, as suggested at the consultation events.

A further strand of work being taken forward is the need to develop a monitoring template and conflict resolution mode for the Compact.

The Compact Working Group will work on these areas of development over the next few months with a view to holding a further consultation event in autumn 2009.