

21st April 2010

Dear Pauline

I am responding on behalf of the Liverpool Local Involvement Network (LINK) Core Group and have attached comments received relating to the Compact Consultation.

As you are aware Liverpool LINK relies heavily on volunteer input and the involvement of voluntary, community and faith organisations in all of the work we do.

In relation to Health and Social Care development in Liverpool, I am particularly interested in the establishment of a local Compact and how it will benefit our volunteers and voluntary/community sector organisations.

The codes pertaining to Funding and Procurement and Volunteering are of particular interest to the LINK as any protocol agreement would impact on our work.

If it is decided to establish a Compact Working Group, I would be delighted to ask the Liverpool LINK Core Group to nominate an appropriate representative.

I would also like to be kept informed of future activity surrounding the development of Compact in Liverpool.

Yours sincerely

Mike Marsh
Chair of Liverpool LINK

Response to Liverpool Compact Consultation from Liverpool LINK Core Group

The consultation period 1st March – 23rd April 2010

This period does not allow voluntary and community organisations to share this document with their relevant Trustees, Board of Directors or Management Committees and most importantly does not include a period for engaging with communities of interest, particularly hard to reach or seldom heard communities.

The national Compact recommends a 12-week consultation period.

Observations

There is no background to the history of Compact or indeed any reference to the fact that the Cabinet Office launched the concept in 1998. Additionally it does not make any reference to the efforts that have been made to the development of a Compact for Liverpool since the concept was introduced 12 years ago.

The style of the document does not do its importance justice in terms of partnership development and joint working practices, as it appears to be a half hearted attempt at fulfilling an obligation. It pays no resemblance to its national counterpart.

In some form or other the five national codes are mentioned i.e. BME, Community Groups, Consultation & Policy, Funding & Procurement and Volunteering. They are very fragmented and therefore lose their individual importance in terms of the part that they can play in effective partnership development and working. Indeed there is no separate entry to cover volunteering which is a most crucial and valued contribution to support the work of the voluntary and community sector, whilst fulfilling partners' requirements for community involvement and engagement.

The terminology seems to have changed from the original concept of Funding and Procurement to that of Funding and Accountability. This code needs to be developed in terms of how funding arrangements are made with the sector and how services are to be procured; therefore the word accountability needs to be removed as it relates more to commissioning than to relationships that are based on value agreements such as Compact.

The document states that partners will consider (when available) the National Codes of Good Practice (as referred to above) However these codes are nothing new and are currently being refreshed, therefore in one form or another they should have already been in place.

The production of the new National Codes are being revised to take into consideration the commissioning culture and the more effective use of involving the community, they are being produced as an indicator for local adaptation and adoption. These codes underpin the underlying agreed principles and values that you are currently consulting on and trying to localise. It is important that Liverpool focuses on harnessing the key concept, principles and values with the national codes when they are produced, understanding that local alterations have to be made but to ensure that they are agreed.

If Liverpool First is serious about the development of a Compact they need to establish effective and meaningful engagement with the voluntary and community sector. The Compact alone cannot provide solutions if some of the building blocks are absent.

It is important to ensure Third Sector representation and provide resources for the development of the Compact. There needs to be Key Compact Champions across the partnership, tasked to raise awareness, ensure Compact is embedded into policy and practices, covered in staff inductions and to facilitate continued consultation throughout its development and inevitable reviews.

Additionally it must be recognised that the Compact is not an end in itself and a one size approach or solution suits all. There is a need to ensure that the development of the related codes not only fit local circumstances but that the key players in the Third Sector are instrumental to their development, therefore easing the way for embedment into future practice and developments.