

# SOUTH WEST REGIONAL COMPACT



A framework for strong and effective relationships between the voluntary and community and public sector in the South West



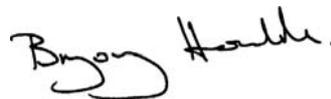
# Signature page

“We, the undersigned, on behalf of our organisations, commit to upholding and implementing the South West Regional Compact.” signed 21st September 2004



**Black South West Network**

Black South West Network



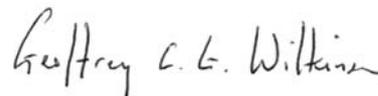
**SOUTH WEST**  
Local Government Association

South West Local Government Association



**The Countryside Agency**

Countryside Agency (South West)



**South West of England**  
Regional Development Agency

South West of England Regional Development Agency



**GOVERNMENT OFFICE FOR THE SOUTH WEST**

Government Office for the South West



**SOUTH WEST**  
Regional Assembly

South West Regional Assembly



**SOUTH WEST FORUM**  
the regional voice of the voluntary and community sector

South West Forum



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**The South West is home to almost five million people (8.6% of Britain's population) and is the largest, geographically, of all English regions. About half of the region's population live in rural areas. It is one of the most varied regions in Britain – in terms of its environmental, political, social, cultural and economic conditions.**

## 1 Introduction

- 1 The South West Regional Compact is aimed at improving partnership working and relationships between the voluntary and community sector and the public sector in the region. It provides a basic framework setting out the main principles, values and commitments for specific working agreements that these relationships can be based on.
- 2 We have designed the regional compact so that all partners understand the roles and responsibilities of voluntary and community sector and public-sector organisations, and the common ground between them.
- 3 The regional compact has been drawn up over the last 12 months by a working group of regional public organisations and two regional voluntary sector networks – Black South West Network and South West Forum. It is the result of substantial discussion, negotiation and consultation within partner organisations and with the wider voluntary and community sector.

- 4 This regional compact supports the national compact which the Government published in 1998, and the local compacts which already exist or are being developed with local authorities, primary care trusts and other local and subregional public organisations
- 5 Since the national compact was introduced, several codes have been published providing detailed guidance on the compact in relation to particular areas of work. South West partners are committed to drawing up and adopting a set of regional codes (to include consultation, funding, volunteering, community groups and black and minority ethnic groups) to support this compact. These will be the main features of a framework for action for putting the regional compact into practice.
- 6 We will develop a process for monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the regional compact. All partners recognise that the regional compact is more about process than a formal document, and that it must develop and adapt over time.

## 2 A shared understanding

- 1 As with the national and local compacts, the regional compact is based on a shared understanding of the different but complementary functions of government, public and statutory organisations, and the voluntary and community sector. The compact recognises that all partner organisations and the private sector make a major contribution to developing the social, cultural, economic and political life of the South West.
- 2 Partners recognise that voluntary and community organisations are independent, not-for-profit organisations, run by boards or committees of volunteer trustees. Many, but not all, will be registered charities. They are value-based organisations, for which the principle of how a service is provided is often as important as what kind of work is carried out. The voluntary and community sector is committed to working for a better society for everyone. The sector is varied in the areas in which it works, its activities and its users.
- 3 Partners recognise that the statutory and public sector is made up of those organisations created through Acts of Parliament. They are responsible for developing the social wellbeing, economy, environment and health of the general population.
- 4 Compact partners:
  - recognise the importance of working together;
  - value honest and open communication; and
  - are committed to improving relationships with each other.

## 3 Shared values

Compact partners share the following values, which are considered to be equally important.

- 1 An independent, varied and successful voluntary and community sector, and the ability and right of people to take action voluntarily to benefit their communities and groups, is vital to the wellbeing of society.
- 2 Effective consultation with all stakeholders builds relationships and leads to better policies and better decisions.

- 3 Partnership working based on good practice generally achieves more than organisations working individually.
- 4 Different organisations and different sectors have different ways of being held responsible for their actions, but partners share a common commitment to honesty, openness, sharing information (within the boundaries of the law) and effective leadership.
- 5 The ability and right of voluntary and community organisations to campaign and speak on behalf of particular communities, including communities of interest, (for example, groups of young people or religious groups), is welcomed and respected.
- 6 In the area of delivering public services, the Government, statutory organisations and voluntary and community organisations have different but complementary roles.
- 7 A commitment to promote equal opportunities for everyone and to recognise, respect and celebrate how differences strengthen the South West region.
- 8 A recognition that because of the geography, scale and population of the South West, particular effort is often needed to involve, represent and understand the needs of specific groups and communities.
- 9 A commitment to improving working practices, reducing the amount of work that is repeated unnecessarily and increasing the efficiency of activities.
- 10 A shared and equal responsibility among all partners to build and maintain the regional compact as an effective way of strengthening and improving relationships by supporting and maintaining the processes associated with it.

## 4 Monitoring and reviewing the regional compact

- 1 A process for monitoring and reviewing the regional compact is essential. Partners recognise that the regional compact is not a one-off document but rather part of a process for continuously improving relationships and partnership working between the Government, statutory agencies, and voluntary and community organisations. The Regional Compact Group will prepare and review a framework for action for putting the regional compact into practice.
- 2 At the moment there are no specific resources dedicated to the regional compact so monitoring and review systems must be built on existing arrangements wherever possible. The proposed monitoring and review process is described below.
- 3 A Regional Compact Group, made up of senior representatives of all partner organisations, will take overall responsibility for monitoring the compact's effectiveness and proposing changes to the compact itself. This group will meet at least twice a year.
- 4 Members of the Regional Compact Group will get feedback from their organisation or network on the compact. Regional voluntary and community sector networks will use their annual conference, annual general meeting or other appropriate event to report and get feedback from the wider voluntary and community sector on how the regional compact works. Other partners will use reporting and feedback systems appropriate to their own organisations.

- 5 Representatives on the Regional Compact Group will promote the compact within their organisations, and share information with staff and members. They will try to make sure that staff within their organisation understand the compact and are working with other partners in line with it.
- 6 At least once a year, the Regional Compact Group will receive feedback from members on the progress and effectiveness of the compact, and will use it to consider issues and concerns and agree changes. We will publish a Compact Progress Report every year reflecting these discussions and decisions.
- 7 The Regional Compact Group will develop appropriate standards by which the effectiveness of the regional compact can be measured every year. Once they have been agreed, these will be included in the regional compact itself.
- 8 If the regional compact is not followed, this should be reported to the appropriate partner organisation, which has a duty to share this information with members of the Regional Compact Group at a regular meeting or between meetings. These cases will be considered as part of the annual monitoring review and reporting process. If there is a disagreement between the compact partners, the following process will apply.
- 9 The partners involved in the disagreement will try to settle matters between themselves. If this does not succeed:
  - the compact group will try to mediate and settle the disagreement;
  - if this fails, the matter will go to the National Compact Mediation Service or another independent mediator that partners agree to.
- 10 All partners are committed to settling disagreements and to learn from failures and mistakes.

## 5 Policy development

- 1 The partners recognise the importance of effective consultation in developing strategies, policies and programmes designed to build communities in the South West that are active, strong and include everyone. We recognise, value and will draw on each other's independence, knowledge and expertise in developing policies, formal and informal consultation processes.
- 2 To make sure that policies are co-ordinated, partners will consult each other at the earliest possible stage and will take account of the specific needs, interests and contributions of disadvantaged groups and people who are excluded from society.
- 3 Partners will provide information under the Freedom of Information Act (as of January 2005) and other relevant legislation.
- 4 All partners will make sure that service users, volunteers, staff and members are consulted about each other's activities and policies and will communicate their views accurately when presenting a case to the Government or responding to consultations.

- 5 Partners will agree a code of best practice when developing policies, which will include commitments to:
  - making sure information is available to everyone;
  - communication being a two-way process;
  - fair representation of disadvantaged and excluded groups;
  - producing clear consultation documents using clear, accessible language;
  - making documents available in languages other than English, and producing information in different formats, including Braille, when this is reasonably practical;
  - giving feedback to the people who have been consulted; and
  - identifying shared issues and interests, and working towards joint action.
- 6 In the meantime, partners will adopt the principles of best practice in consultation with the voluntary and community sector as outlined in the national Consultation and Appraisal: a Code of Good Practice.
- 7 Partners will make sure that the voluntary and community sector is appropriately represented on, and supported to take part in, regional partnerships, and advisory and other strategic and policy-development groups. Partners will make sure that there are enough resources (for example, through service level agreements) to allow this representation to be carried out effectively.
- 8 Partners recognise the financial and time pressures on each other and, in particular, on individuals and organisations which represent the voluntary community sector.
- 9 Partners to the compact will make sure that the direct expenses of individuals appointed to represent the voluntary and community sector on strategic and policy groups can be met. This may be through voluntary and community sector groups with funds available for this purpose or a direct refund from the strategic group itself. This is especially significant in the South West where journey times can be long, difficult and expensive. Partners will also investigate and consider developing systems through which voluntary and community sector representatives' own organisations can be compensated for the time their paid or unpaid staff spend fulfilling representative roles.

## 6 Equality and diversity

- 1 Compact partners recognise that the South West region has a 'diverse' population. This simply means that we are different from one another, and that this difference adds value and depth to the region resulting in a positive social, economic and cultural effect on the region. The partners agree to value this difference by practising and promoting equality and diversity.
- 2 We agree to promote equal opportunities for everyone in the South West. Working with Equality South West and other appropriate organisations, we will aim to:
  - end unlawful discrimination;
  - work with all equality strands (BME, disability, race, sex, sexuality and faith) and communities to provide equal opportunities for everyone and to tackle discrimination together; and
  - produce and work to an equality and diversity code.
  - partners will adopt the national BME code.

## 7 Working together

- 1 Compact partners have to work together to settle problems, to deliver responsive and high-quality services, and use public resources efficiently. Partnerships involving public and voluntary and community sector organisations create opportunities and challenges which need to be recognised.
- 2 The main principles for working together effectively are as follows.
  - Wherever possible, existing partnership structures should be built on, rather than new ones created.
  - Where new partnerships are to be created, all potential partners should be involved in the development process from the earliest possible stage.
  - The different ability of organisations and sectors to contribute to partnerships must be recognised and respected, but there should be a commitment to making sure everyone has an equal opportunity to be involved.
  - Effective involvement in partnerships needs time, skills, knowledge and resources.
  - Partners should continuously review and aim to improve the processes of the partnership, drawing on best-practice guidance.
  - Partners should make sure that everyone knows what role they have in involving and communicating with a wider community.
  - Partners should make sure the service users and communities they want to help are fully represented.

## 8 Social and economic inclusion

- 1 Partners recognise that people can be excluded from society because of race, ethnic origin, age, disability, sex, sexuality, geographic remoteness, and access to economic and social resources.
- 2 Partners will promote inclusion in their activities and policies, and make sure that the benefits of inclusion are highlighted.
- 3 Partners will promote inclusion by doing the following.
  - Supporting the development of the ability within the voluntary and community sector, at local, subregional and regional levels, to tackle inclusion through accessible training and organisational development opportunities.
  - Working with black and minority ethnic and other under represented groups and communities, when developing policies and strategies, carrying out consultations, managing programmes, and providing funding and resources.
  - Working with and through appropriate organisations and networks while also helping individual group and communities to take part directly.

- Making sure that race equality and other strategies specifically aimed at promoting inclusion are included in the corporate planning processes of their organisation.
- Making sure there is fair access to funding programmes that have a significant effect on under-represented groups and communities through developing an inclusion management framework and other processes.
- Helping to make sure that organisations tackling exclusion have the resources they need.

## 9 Funding and resources

- 1 Partners agree to improve the funding relationships between each other, and to work together to make sure that national decisions on funding and resources are based on a full understanding of the needs of the South West. Partners will try to make sure that the region receives a fair share of national resources.
- 2 Partners will develop a funding code to provide a clear framework for effective funding relationships. It will include the main principles and values summarised below.
- 3 All partners agree to do the following.
  - Review the balance between outcome and output needs in funding relationships.
  - Make sure there are clear processes for providing funds, so that all appropriate organisations have a fair opportunity to secure funding and contracts.
  - Adopt best practice in managing funding programmes, including publishing assessment standards, providing feedback on unsuccessful applications and providing advice and support.
  - Share information and work with other funders to reduce the amount of work that is repeated unnecessarily, streamline funding processes and develop common approaches to the benefit of applicants.
  - Encourage full cost recovery principles in preparing project budgets and funding applications.
  - Aim to develop funding programmes and processes which improve the financial stability of organisations, and support long-term planning. Where possible, funding agreements should last for at least three years, and preferably longer periods whenever possible.
  - Inform voluntary and community organisations about changes to funding arrangements as soon as possible, and well before the end of any grant period.
  - Make sure that good quality assurance and management systems are included in their programmes, schemes and projects.
  - Consider other support methods – for example, rent-free or reduced-rate premises, free or reduced-rate training, seconding staff and donating equipment.
  - Make sure that funding arrangements and procedures are clear and understood at the beginning of any funding period.

## 10 Supporting information

- 1 Once the regional compact has been adopted, it will include or be supported by the following information.
  - A list of useful resources (organisations, publications, toolkits and websites) which will help individual organisations apply the compact.
  - A framework for action which identifies the main activities that the Regional Compact Group and individual partners will carry out.
  - The regional compact will adopt national codes and guidelines.
  - However, where the national code does not meet the South West needs, partners will develop a regional code or guidelines.

## 11 Regional compact partners

- 1 The following organisations have been involved in developing the regional compact – Black South West Network, South West Forum, Government Office for the South West, South West of England Regional Development Agency, Countryside Agency, South West Local Government Association and South West Regional Assembly. These are the current Regional Compact Partners.
- 2 Representatives of other agencies and organisations have also taken part in the process. These include the Learning and Skills Council, a Strategic Health Authority and a Police Constabulary.
- 3 We hope that other regional (or regionally structured) voluntary and community sector and public sector organisations will want to become involved in the future development of the regional compact, including as partners.

## The Regional Compact Partners

### **Black South West Network**

The BSWN is a voice for the BME community and voluntary sector. BSWN provides representation on policy where it matters most within statutory organisations. The Black South West Network aims to strengthen the BME and voluntary sector in the South West, working with regional institutions to make sure there is equal access to policymaking and resources, across social, economic and environmental development programmes for the benefit of all communities in the South West.

[bswn@bswn.org.uk](mailto:bswn@bswn.org.uk)

0117 939 6648

[www.bswn.org.uk](http://www.bswn.org.uk)

### **Countryside Agency (South West)**

The Countryside Agency's role is to work for people and places in rural England. The Agency is a statutory adviser to the government, in particular to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. The Agency in the South West has initiated and managed a number of socio-economic and environmental programmes of funding, advice and influence. We welcome the Regional Compact as an essential tool for enabling improved joint working between the voluntary and statutory sectors for the benefit of all those living in the South West.

[www.countryside.gov.uk/regions/SouthWest/index.asp](http://www.countryside.gov.uk/regions/SouthWest/index.asp)

### **Government Office for the South West**

GOSW's mission is to make the South West a better place to live and work. Our focus is on bringing together the policies and programmes of the 10 Government departments who sponsor us to make sure they are delivered effectively in a way that benefits the South West. We are the voice of central Government in the region and have a key role in ensuring the region's interests are communicated and understood by Government. We rely on our work and relationships with a wide variety of partners in the region to help us achieve and the voluntary and community sector are a key part of this. We welcome the regional Compact and the process of implementing, monitoring and reviewing which we see as ongoing, as an important step in further developing stronger and improved understanding and relationship between the region's statutory and voluntary and community sector.

[dwoods.gosw@go-regions.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:dwoods.gosw@go-regions.gsi.gov.uk)

0117 900 1827

### **South West Forum**

South West Forum is the regional voice for the voluntary and community sector. It is a network for sharing information and promoting good practice and

championing and representing the interests of voluntary and community groups at regional level. Of the Forum's over 230 members almost half are network organisations which themselves represent and support several thousand individual groups. The Forum sees the process of implementing, monitoring and revising the regional compact as crucial to building stronger understanding amongst and better relationships between the South West's public and voluntary and community sectors.

[admin@southwestforum.org.uk](mailto:admin@southwestforum.org.uk)

01392 823758

[www.southwestforum.org.uk](http://www.southwestforum.org.uk)

### **South West Local Government Association**

The South West Local Government Association exists to represent and promote the regional interests of the population of the South West, and the local authorities that serve them. SWLGA views the regional compact as a useful framework for involving the voluntary and community sector at the regional level and developing local compacts.

[swra@southwest-ra.gov.uk](mailto:swra@southwest-ra.gov.uk)

01823 270101

### **South West of England Regional Development Agency (RDA)**

The South West RDA's mission is to increase long-term economic success and productivity for the region and all our people. We will achieve this by applying three strategic aims – to raise business productivity, to increase economic inclusion, and to improve regional communications and partnership. The regional compact has helped the RDA to develop its relationship with the region's voluntary, community and public sector partners. The South West RDA fully supports the compact.

[enquiries@southwestrda.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@southwestrda.org.uk)

01392 214 747

[www.southwestrda.org.uk](http://www.southwestrda.org.uk)

### **South West Regional Assembly (SWRA)**

The South West Regional Assembly exists to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of everyone who lives and works in the region. It is a partnership of councillors from all local authorities in the region and representatives of a wide range of sectors, including business, education and the environment. It reviews wide-ranging strategies at the regional level to provide a vision for the wellbeing of the region. It scrutinises the South West of England Regional Development Agency and is also the Regional Planning Body. SWRA aims to promote closer regional working where possible, for which the compact provides a useful framework.

[swra@southwest-ra.gov.uk](mailto:swra@southwest-ra.gov.uk)

01823 270101



**Black South  
West Network**



**South West of England**  
Regional Development Agency



**SOUTH WEST**  
*Regional Assembly*



**SOUTH WEST**  
*Local Government Association*



**GOVERNMENT OFFICE  
FOR THE SOUTH WEST**