



Compact Awareness Workshops

with Manchester City Council

Context

“The Compact is an agreement



between public

bodies and the voluntary and community sector

(VCS) setting out how they relate to each other. It is

the framework for working together in a spirit of

trust and respect and provides the basis to address

many important issues. The government is

encouraging all councils and voluntary and

community sectors to form a Compact together.” –

Manchester City Council,

www.manchester.gov.uk

The Manchester Compact was launched in September 2003, but it was felt that more could be done to raise awareness and understanding of it and promote its use. A summary booklet was being prepared, intended to help to raise awareness and refer readers to the Compact itself. However, experience of discussing the Compact with local voluntary groups and Council officers directly had suggested that a more effective means might be to work with VCS infrastructure workers and other intermediaries to support and encourage them to raise awareness and promote the use of the Compact through their work.

The Compact Task Group, including representatives of Manchester City Council and the voluntary and community sector in the city,

proposed the development of a tailored half-day facilitated workshop for council officers and VCS staff, based around the use of scenarios, to be repeated around the city.

As a result, ICA:UK was approached by Manchester City Council in August 2006 to design and facilitate a series of such workshops. We had previously worked with the council on a number of facilitated processes, including [Participatory Strategic Planning](#) events with the Voluntary Sector Policy & Grants Team and with the Area Co-ordination team.

The aims of the workshops were agreed to be as follows:

1. for participants from support services of both the VCS and the council to increase their awareness and understanding of how the Compact can valuably be used, and their confidence and commitment to help to raise the awareness and understanding of others
2. to begin to develop a documentary resource on how the Compact can be used
3. for participants from the VCS and the council to better appreciate each others' perspectives on the issues raised, and to promote a sense of collaboration among all towards the shared objective of improving services for Manchester residents.

Process

A half-day session was designed to meet the aims above, building on a number of scenarios drafted by the Compact Task Group to prompt discussion and learning on possible uses of the Compact.

The process was highly participatory, and involved a combination of working in small groups and with the whole group together.

The key elements of the sessions were:

- **Opening**, introductions and overview
- **Discussion** – our experience of the Compact, its relevance and its use
- **Scenario exercise** - creative small group work and brief plenary reports
- **Reflection**, next steps, evaluation and close
- Lunch and informal networking

Following an initial series of three workshops from October-December 2006, a further series of three workshops were delivered in May and June 2007.

Each workshop was attended by mixed groups of up to 20 participants from across the council and the VCS, usually no more than 2 or 3 from each team or organisation.

Outputs and feedback

Each workshop was documented thoroughly, including participants' responses to the scenarios, to begin to develop a resource for others on how to use the Compact.

Also documented were participants' names and roles, their initial questions or concerns about the Compact, common themes drawn from their reflection on the exercise, and their detailed feedback on the workshop from their closing evaluation forms.

The workshops were well received, with average participant satisfaction ratings of up to 7.8 out of 10.

Participants' feedback included:

- *[a highlight was] the mix of people from both council and voluntary sector, and... hearing all the represented groups agreeing and showing similar concerns*
- *going through scenarios was really useful for putting the Compact into practice*
- *my better understanding of the document and its application has increased my confidence*
- *I now feel I can promote Compact as a positive tool to be used*

Outcomes

Madeleine Rose, Programme Officer with the Voluntary Sector Policy and Grants Team of Manchester City Council, and the client for the workshops, wrote in February 2008:

“Manchester received a Compact Commendation for 'Excellence in Communications' from the Compact Commission at their annual meeting in December. This was very much down to the success of the workshops.”

Following an enquiry to Manchester from the Rochdale Borough Compact Steering Group, the process was adapted and delivered for a series of four workshops in Rochdale in March and April 2008.

Karen Salisbury of the group, which includes the Borough's CVS, the PCT, the Centre of Diversity and the GM Fire and Rescue Service, as well as the council, wrote in May 2008:

“The Steering Group found the workshops a useful way of introducing and raising awareness of the Compact, and a good opportunity for people from different agencies and sectors to discuss the needs and views of each. We would certainly recommend the workshops to other local Compacts”.