



*2007-2008
Increasing Voluntary
and Community Sector
Service Delivery*



Case Study No. 7 – Croydon Compact

INTRODUCTION

The Croydon Compact is a framework that guides partnership working between the council, Croydon Primary Care Trust (PCT) and the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in Croydon. All partners have worked together to develop the Compact which has eight overarching key principles, that were agreed in 2002 and signed at cabinet and board level by the council, PCT and VCS.

While all councils are required by central government to develop a Compact, Croydon has used the eight Compact principles to build on its existing 'Compact way of working' within partnerships already in place, rather than creating additional Compact processes. This has ensured that a 'Compact way of working' is mainstreamed across existing partnerships (such as the Local Strategic Partnership and the Local Area Agreement) and embedded in other related initiatives.

Five action plans addressing key issues of funding, consultation, black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, volunteering and community groups have been taken forward by a combination of various partners in collaboration.

Crucially, the 'Compact way of working' has been successful in delivering key outcomes for all partners, which include:

- Enabling the VCS to play to its strengths (engaging the most marginalised; focusing on the needs of service users; flexible and innovatory; cost-effective; providing different / specialised services)
- Encouraging greater statutory / voluntary sector collaboration
- Building the capacity of VCS organisations as key service providers
- Improving funding and commissioning practices

The Compact's value is in enabling the statutory and voluntary sectors to build on the existing commitment to partnership working in the borough.

This case study will highlight some of the key successes the 'Compact way of working' has achieved in the five action plan areas.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The Compact's eight principles (below) are used to guide all partnership work with the VCS. They outline the commitment in various ways to supporting and developing VCS service delivery and recognising the sector's important contribution:

- Voluntary action is an essential component of democratic society.
- An independent and diverse VCS is fundamental to the well-being of society.
- In the development and delivery of public policy and services, statutory bodies and the VCS have distinct but complementary roles.
- There is added value in working in partnership towards common aims and objectives. Meaningful consultation builds relationships, improves policy development and enhances the design and delivery of services and programmes.
- Statutory bodies and the VCS have different forms of accountability and are answerable to a different range of stakeholders. But common to both is the need for integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.
- VCS organisations are entitled to campaign within the law in order to advance their aims.
- Statutory bodies play a significant role, among other things, as a funder of some VCS organisations. Funding can be an important element of the relationship between statutory bodies and the VCS.
- Both statutory bodies and the VCS acknowledge the importance of promoting equality of opportunity for all people, regardless of race, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation or religion.

OUTCOMES

Croydon can demonstrate substantial outcomes in the five action plan areas by embedding the various principles of the Compact into existing forums of partnership working.

Funding

The new commissioning framework: Based on a firm Local Area Agreement (LAA) commitment, Croydon has improved its procurement methods by developing a new and robust Commissioning Framework in partnership with the VCS, which will lead to a common approach to commissioning across all agencies in the LSP. There are numerous benefits to using the new framework:

- A streamlined commissioning process enables VCS providers to compete equally for contracts.
- It clarifies and formalises practices which helps reduce barriers and increase opportunities for VCS service delivery.
- Ensures consistency is applied across all themed partnerships.
- Gives the VCS equal access to resources for the delivery of aspects of Croydon's LAA.
- A rationalised monitoring system enables VCS providers to meet performance management requirements with the minimum of bureaucracy.

Consultation

Working through the Community Involvement Strategy Group, two successful initiatives are enhancing consultation.

- **The 'A Voice for my Community' Programme** supports VCS representatives to express their perspective on partnership groups. Croydon Voluntary Action also provides training to enhance the confidence and effectiveness of community representatives of Croydon's LSP.
- **Talk2Croydon** is an innovative website that helps to coordinate and share the outcomes of community involvement activity across key agencies and provides a good practice guide on widening engagement and consultation. CVA research with traditionally hard to reach groups is helping to shape this interface for maximum accessibility.

BME Groups

The Croydon BME Forum was established by BME community groups in response to inequalities and identified needs in the borough. The Forum has developed and taken on a key role in recent years, facilitating representation from the BME sector, enhancing awareness of BME issues within partner agencies and delivering a range of support to BME groups.

Its current achievements include: raising awareness of how to engage with partnerships and statutory agencies; working with CVA to help facilitate consultation on behalf of the Council; operating thematic groups for BME organisations and securing additional funds from the Commission for Racial Equality to enhance work on community engagement and representation.

Volunteering

Croydon Voluntary Action (CVA) is the only voluntary sector agency to lead on one of the 12 stretch targets in the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA), which aims to encourage, enable and track volunteers to complete 100 hours of volunteering in a year. On completion they are awarded certificates by the Volunteer Centre Croydon.

Community Groups

Croydon's External Funding Group works with the VCS and other partners to access external funding opportunities to enhance resources for the VCS and the services it delivers. In particular it brings together small community groups and larger organisations in consortium bids for funding. Recent achievements include a successful bid to the Invest to Save fund for £½m by nine VCS organisations, the local authority and PCT.

Croydon Commitment Initiative, a brokerage between private and voluntary sector organisations, which levers in funding from companies to support voluntary activity, has been very successful. Last year it achieved funding of £250k for the voluntary sector. This extra resource has been used to give additional support for initiatives like the Children's Fund and Neighbourhood Renewal.

GOOD PRACTICE POINTS

Mainstreaming

The Compact has been mainstreamed through the Local Strategic Partnership and the Local Area Agreement and it has informed those other strategies from which tangible benefits have resulted (see action plan outcomes).

The **Strengthening Communities Partnership** places VCS issues at the top of the agenda for the first time in Croydon. This is the first full thematic partnership focusing entirely on the VCS agenda. It provides an opportunity for partners to look at the key government agendas for the VCS role in service delivery and voluntary sector / community engagement and put those into practice.

Commitment

Openness and trust are crucial to successful partnerships and the delivery of the principles set out in the Compact. All sectors have equal representation on the Croydon Strategic Partnership Board, which sets the strategic priorities for the borough each year. Croydon Strategic Partnership involves over 100 voluntary / community representatives in theme partnerships and sub-groups, which influence the development of services. There is real and genuine partnership and regular dialogue which happens through the forums that shadow the thematic partnerships and the Community Network itself.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND REFERENCES

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www.croydon.gov.uk/democracy/performance/beaconawards/Comsectservs/