

SOUTH WEST REGIONAL COMPACT

Annual
Review
2009/10



Foreword

by Jon Bright,
Director,
Government Office
for the South West

I am very pleased to introduce the 2009/10 Annual Review of the South West Regional Compact. In doing so, I commend the examples of collaborative working across the South West of which both the voluntary / community and public sectors should be proud. We are in a period of change. The Coalition Government has set us all a challenge, to re-evaluate our activity and to work together to build a 'Big Society'. This will require significant savings across all areas of Government, and a need to find new ways of delivering services. "Big Society" provides a guiding principle for both public and civil society organisations, based as it is on the transfer of power to both local communities and the organisations that support them. The Government believes the Compact is an integral part of this process and has announced its commitment to refresh and renew it. Already the Compact has demonstrated that where

strong relationships and collaborative working exists, service improvements, efficiency savings, increased investment and innovation invariably follow. In reading this year's review, I ask you to reflect on your current work and consider the expectation that has been set for us all. Within the South West, there is a huge amount of positive activity to build upon. I believe we are well placed to rise to this challenge.



Introduction

South West Regional Compact was the first ever Regional Compact and was signed on 21st September 2004 by: Black South West Network, Countryside Agency (South West), Government Office for the South West, South West Forum, South West Local Government Association, South West of England Regional Development Agency and South West Regional Assembly.

Over time organisational structures have changed and new partners have joined. The current member organisations are:

Black South West Network	www.bswn.org.uk/
Citizens Advice	www.citizensadvice.org.uk/
Clinks	www.clinks.org/
Creating Excellence	www.creatingexcellence.org.uk/
Equality South West	www.equalitysouthwest.org.uk/
Faithnetsouthwest	www.faithnetsouthwest.org.uk/
Government Office for the South West	www.gosw.gov.uk/
Jobcentre Plus	www.dwp.gov.uk/
National Offender Management Service	www.justice.gov.uk/about/noms.htm
Natural England	www.naturalengland.org.uk/
South West Councils	www.swcouncils.gov.uk/
South West Forum	www.southwestforum.org.uk/
South West Regional Development Agency	www.southwestrda.org.uk/
South West Strategic Health Authority	www.southwest.nhs.uk/
SWAN - The South West ACRE Network	www.swan-network.org.uk/
South Western Ambulance Service NHS Trust	www.swast.nhs.uk/

This review of our work covers the period from January 2009 to March 2010 and in it we are presenting case studies about different pieces of collaborative work which partner organisations have been involved in during this period.



1 South West Councils and South West Forum

South West Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (SW IEP) and voluntary and community organisations

The SW IEP welcomes this opportunity to highlight how we have been engaging with voluntary and community organisations in our region; we recognise the important contribution these organisations make to the design and delivery of efficient public services. We are also taking a proactive approach to enabling small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to make a full contribution to economic growth and development. In addition South West Councils are signatories to the Regional Compact which aims to improve partnership working between regional voluntary and community organisations and public bodies.

We are working to improve local authorities' awareness of voluntary and community organisations and we have begun to support fairer commissioning and procurement processes to enable voluntary and community and SME participation. We have also aimed to increase voluntary and community organisations' engagement in key partnership and governance structures, both within the SW IEP through membership of programme boards and externally through Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements. We will continue to develop this work.

The SW IEP has commissioned many voluntary

and community organisations to deliver projects and has benefited from the sector's expertise in understanding the needs of communities.

Involving voluntary and community organisations in service delivery and design and enabling SMEs to contribute to economic growth are cross-cutting issues and as such most SW IEP programmes have a role to play. Consequently the information below is presented by programme. Furthermore, we are ensuring that learning is spread across programmes.

Stronger Communities

The Stronger Communities Programme Board has a strong voluntary and community presence which is reflected in one of the key programme aims: 'Improving engagement between local authorities and voluntary and community organisations'. South West Forum (a voluntary and community support services organisation) is delivering a flagship project which has established a local authority Officers Network. Activities include bespoke workshops for Members and commissioning managers. The project is funded for two years and is due to complete in March 2011. The key objectives are:



Sir Bert Massie, Commissioner for the Compact, presents the 2010 Compact Award for Regional Partnership Working to the South West Regional Compact Partners represented by Rupert Daniel (Black South West Network), Jane Bowley (Citizens Advice), Lesley Frazer (Clinks) and Roger Haworth (South West Forum) (photo: Commission for the Compact)

- To increase awareness and understanding of voluntary and community organisations amongst local authority officers and members
- To improve local authority relationships and engagement with voluntary and community organisations
- To improve working practices within local authorities in commissioning from voluntary and community organisations, including grant-giving.

Smarter Procurement

The public sector has enormous potential to support the local and regional economy by encouraging and supporting local Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs), social enterprises and voluntary and community organisations to bid for contracts. The Glover Review – Accelerating the economic engine: through transparent, simple and strategic procurement stated that improving SME participation in public procurement is best achieved by making the market work effectively to allow SMEs to compete effectively for contracts. This requires that opportunities should be transparent, the process as simple as possible, and that a strategic approach to procurement encourages innovation and gives

SMEs a fair deal when they are sub-contractors.

The SW IEP is supporting the SW Sustainable Procurement Network to provide targeted support and advice to help councils make their procurement processes and contracts accessible to SME and voluntary and community organisation providers. A series of networking and training events is providing clear guidance to councils on how to support procurement from social enterprise and voluntary and community organisations.

The SW IEP is supporting a regional procurement portal, 'Supplying the South West', which provides a single web-based point of access to a range of public sector contract opportunities. By hosting a broad range of opportunities in one place, the RIEP is helping to make public sector contracts easier to identify and bid for.

The Programme is also encouraging councils to use P-cards which help to speed up payments to suppliers. In the context of the recession, paying suppliers promptly is critical to help SMEs and voluntary and community organisations maintain their cash flow and survive.



Local Economy

The SW IEP launched an Economic Challenge Fund in April 2009. The fund provided an opportunity for Local Authorities, in collaboration with partners, to bid for funding to deliver projects to combat the immediate impacts of the downturn. Interventions included the provision of incubator space for SMEs in the creative industries sector, business mentoring for SMEs, and a Community Banking Feasibility study.

Children & Young People

The Children & Young People (CYP) Programme has worked to improve the opportunities for SMEs to provide placement services for CYP. The Programme led the development of sub-regional commissioning frameworks which allow for local/small providers to join a pre-qualified list of independent providers of placement services for CYP.

Overall Improvement

In September 2008 the SW IEP funded an LSP stock-take which highlighted strengths and areas for development for individual LSPs across the south west. As a result the Overall Improvement Programme funded North Somerset Partnership to provide additional support to their voluntary and community sector to improve their confidence to engage in the LSP. Voluntary and community sector organisations now have a greater role within the Partnership, and are able to influence direction and activity. A case study setting out lessons learned and good practice from North Somerset will be disseminated across the South West.

Local Strategic Partnership & Local Area Agreements

The focus of a recent LAA Network was on improving engagement with voluntary and community organisations. LAA Managers from Bournemouth Borough Council & the Borough of Poole showcased their work on engaging with voluntary and community organisations, in particular their success in involving faith organisations.

Local Improvement Advisors

The SW IEP has commissioned assignments for local improvement advisors (LIAs) which have improving voluntary and community involvement as a key theme. For example the Safer Poole Partnership and Bournemouth Safer & Stronger Communities Strategy Group both received LIA support focused on improving voluntary and community organisations involvement in their governance structures.

Total Place

We recognise the importance of voluntary and community engagement in the successful delivery of the Total Place projects. To ensure voluntary and community organisations are involved in the design and delivery of a joined up single service we are working to promote their role in the Total Place agenda through South West Forum and our Officer's Network.

2 Jobcentre Plus and Citizens Advice

In November 2009 Citizens Advice and Jobcentre Plus, both members of the Regional Compact, ran a one year secondment for an officer from Jobcentre Plus to work with Citizens Advice across the South West.

Jane Bowley from Jobcentre Plus writes her report of this interesting joint project that demonstrates both the spirit and practical benefits of compact partnership.

My Background

I applied for a position as a band B benefit processor in Jobcentre plus St Austell Benefit Delivery Centre five years ago following my redundancy from the private sector where I was employed as a sales, marketing and export manager.

Following my induction and training at the Benefit Delivery Centre I worked as a Jobseekers Allowance processor which involved processing new claims. Once I had consolidated my knowledge in this area I was given further training in how to process jobseekers changes and deal with the maintenance of the claims.

After approximately 18 months I progressed to the role of deputy team leader on the new claims section and six months later applied for and was successful in progression to a band C team leader for Income Support Telephony section.

A year later I was transferred to the post of income support maintenance team leader and following my successful re-organisation of the section was asked to transfer to fulfil the same role on Jobseekers Allowance where I also was

given the opportunity to deputise for the band D manager of this benefit

Secondment Opportunity

I had been in this job role for just five months when I saw the secondment position advertised and decided to apply for several reasons;

- Having already had some contact with Citizens Advice staff via the customers escalation process I thought it would be a good opportunity to find out how we are perceived by agencies outside the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and also whether these perceptions were correct and vice versa. Also it was an opportunity to dispel any myths and improve our working relationship.
- To broaden my outlook on the whole customer experience and to hopefully enable me to improve my own work and performance on return to the DWP.
- I saw this as an opportunity to enable me to prepare and gain experience in a more senior and very different role.
- To enable me to utilise my previous work experience in marketing, promotion and research.

How it's going

Following my successful application I joined Citizens Advice at the end of November 2009 working for Helen Scadding, the Partnership Development Manager. Helen manages my secondment although I was also provided with a 'buddy' within the Citizens Advice organisation to ensure that I had full support I am thoroughly enjoying my new role. I have



successfully researched and completed a PowerPoint marketing aid for use by Bureaux and a leaflet for use with partners. Helen has lead and guided me through this, advising me of expected outcomes and providing contacts for people who could possibly assist. I have also completed research and evidence reports on fuel poverty in the South West, discrimination enquiries and quarterly reports on the enquiries the service handles in the South West.

I have learnt about the Citizens Advice organisation and their work on social policy, something I was previously completely unaware of, and visited several local bureaux where I was able to provide some insight into the procedural workings of Jobcentre Plus and as a consequence guide staff as to how they might better support their clients. I have also been able to dispel several myths concerning Jobcentre Plus, primarily around customer service, and re-enforced the message that customer service is every bit as important to Jobcentre Plus and the DWP as it is to Citizens Advice and indeed we are measured on it.

Following on from this I arranged several 'Inside Jobcentre Plus' staff awareness sessions across the region and did a two hour presentation at staff briefings and specific meetings of both managers and advisors. These have proved very successful with positive feedback received and have gone a long way in improving lines of communication. I arranged for 20 staff from Citizens Advice, along with Helen and myself, to visit Bristol Benefit Delivery Centre where they were able to discuss procedures with the various benefit delivery managers as well as actually view the operational procedures which provided them with an excellent insight into the workings and processes, which in turn aids in understanding of the customer journey. We can

then focus on where in the chain problems have occurred and what we can do to fix them. Service delivery and joint escalation results between bureaux and Jobcentre Plus offices have been clarified and strengthened due to my work.

I have also attended several meetings and forums of local partnership groups after being briefed by Helen and my secondment has given and is perceived as a positive message by all. In particular I have regularly attended the South West Regional Intelligence Group meetings with GOSW, Councils, the Audit Commission and other agencies and produced reports which have been utilised by the Office for National statistics in particular. Citizens Advice would have found this level of participation difficult without a given additional resource yet the information and partnership working in this area has proved valuable to both.

Summary

I think the timing of this placement was good as Citizens Advice are under considerable pressure due to the economic recession.

My placement assists in relieving some of this pressure and I feel my support at a time when resources are strained is particularly valued.

Apart from the obvious benefits in my personal upskilling, it has quickly become apparent that the secondment can and is improving working relationships on both sides. From my experience it enhances the understanding of the roles we all play in the customer journey and therefore enables us both to better utilise one another's skills and strengths.

3 South West Rural Partners and Government Office for the South West

South West Rural Groups – Joining the voices together

The South West as we all know – and love – is predominantly a rural region, but with some major urban conurbations, and while its ‘rural voice’ is strong and well developed in some quarters, it is not necessarily united in its message.

Late in 2009, the Government Office for the South West [GoSW] recognised the value of enhancing this strength by inviting four key rural partners to join it in a twice yearly meeting in order to generate key core messages to Government and to obviate duplication and encourage joint working. This was an important move in a time of great flux, and SW CORE [South West Chamber for Rural Enterprise]; SWRAF [South West Rural Affairs Forum]; SWAN – the South West ACRE Network] and the Rural Advisory Group of SW RDA [the South West Regional Development Agency] all readily agreed to be represented by their Chair and main officer.

“The reason for us getting together” Hilary Neal, Deputy Director of GoSW with responsibility for rural issues, transport and the West of England, told the first meeting in January 2010 “arose from a recent discussion some of us held to explore the linkages and synergies that already exist between us. With a new Government and new Ministers, it is vitally important that we

combine to provide impetus and objectivity to what otherwise can be a disparate debate.”

The groups have already added their combined voice to the issue of next generation broadband access in the rural South West , and especially to those ‘have not’ areas which will benefit least from proposals for a 2Mgb provision unless their status is hugely enhanced. They have worked together through SWRAF to produce a “Rural Vision for the South West” which was consulted on at a conference in October 2009, and covers ten key policy areas from food and farming to energy and from housing and transport to young people. [www.swan-network.org.uk].

Similarly, and with an eye to Common Agricultural Policy [CAP] reforms for 2013 the Groups added their visions behind the SWRAF and SWCORE when in March they organised a major conference at Bicton College to look at what the south west might need from a revised CAP.

“The Compact is about working together across sectors, in a myriad of ways – even when contractual obligations do not necessarily exist” said Stephen Wright Regional Director of SWAN. “We all welcome this initiative from our colleagues in the Government Office showing leadership in a sub-national context.”

4 Clinks and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS)

Engagement and Partnership in the South West

Part of the Ministry of Justice, NOMS is the national agency responsible for reducing reoffending and protecting the public, through the work of local Prison establishments and Probation Trusts. In a restructuring in 2009, a Director of Offender Management (DOM) was appointed to commission and oversee NOMS' activity in every region, but this was accompanied by budgetary cuts that greatly reduced the size of the regional NOMS team. In many regions this resulted in a dilution of NOMS' regional work to engage with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) as strategic and delivery partners. However in the South West region the new DOM, Colin Allars, made a firm commitment to sustain partnership work. In Autumn 2009 he therefore took steps to ensure that the role of Mark Ellery, NOMS Regional Partnership Lead, was protected and maintained at a senior level.

Clinks was established just over 11 years ago, and is the national umbrella infrastructure body for VCS organisations working with offenders. Clinks' vision is of a dynamic and independent VCS working with informed and engaged communities to enable effective rehabilitation and thereby reduce offending. It does this by:

- Facilitating engagement and partnership work between the VCS and public sector agencies (NOMS in particular) at national, regional and local levels;
- Providing information and support for small to medium sized VCS groups, helping them to take on important roles in local service delivery;

- Acting as a conduit for disseminating policy information to, and seeking feedback from, the sector to inform government thinking and the development of best practice;
- Promoting and broadening the role and effectiveness of mentoring and volunteering.

In 2005, Clinks was awarded funding by a South West partnership between the Tudor Trust and LankellyChase Foundation, to develop the role of the VCS in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) across the region. Clinks was awarded three years continuation funding for its South West project, and a new regional Development Manager, Lesley Frazer, came into post in early 2009.

At that time it was becoming apparent that the focus of commissioning in the CJS was shifting from regional to local, with the formation of independent Probation Trusts (five in the South West region), the establishment of Local Delivery Units within each Probation Trust, and the important role of local Community Safety Partnerships in reducing reoffending and making communities safer. The Clinks South West project shifted its own focus to start facilitating local multi-agency partnership work in Probation Trust areas.

However, there remained a significant need to sustain and develop VCS engagement and partnership work with NOMS at the strategic regional level, to inform the DOM's commissioning and delivery plans, and to work towards consistent practice in work with VCS

partners across all five Probation Trusts and within the region's Prison establishments.

Mark Ellery and Lesley began to discuss how best to take this work forward, and with support from the DOM, Colin Allars, and NOMS' regional Commissioning Manager, Graham Rogers, it was agreed to hold a jointly branded Clinks/NOMS partnership event at Taunton Racecourse in December 2009. This was a highly successful event attended by 100 delegates, 50 from VCS organisations, 50 from public sector agencies and private providers.

Delegates heard an honest appraisal from Colin Allars of the implications of the new financial climate, were introduced to the new DOM's team, and commented on NOMS' draft regional Commissioning Plan for 2010-2013.

Delegates were invited to identify key areas for Clinks and NOMS to work on together to support NOMS' partnership work with the VCS. The six identified priorities were to:

- Bring Probation and Prison partnership leads together to support their role, develop mutual understanding and achieve more consistent approaches to work with VCS partners.
- Improve engagement and partnership between statutory and VCS organisations at Local Delivery Unit level, and VCS strategic links with Local Area Agreements, Community Safety Partnerships, Criminal Justice Boards.
- Enable the sharing of information, examples of best practice and evidence of 'what works'.
- Achieve better co-ordination between Offender Pathways and clarification of VCS membership.
- Address a wide range of diversity issues, including rurality.
- Develop NOMS/Clinks joint inputs in respect of capacity building for the VCS.

Working closely with another NOMS SW colleague, Ingrid McCoid, who prior to restructuring had held responsibility for partnership work within the region's Prison establishments, Lesley and Mark drafted a joint Clinks / NOMS SW Action Plan to address the priorities identified at the event. Following a period of consultation, this was finalised in April 2010. The Action Plan is modest in scope and sets out a number of achievable joint objectives and outcomes that form part, but not all, of Clinks' and NOMS' separate partnership activity. Mark, Ingrid and Lesley meet at monthly intervals to review progress and plan joint work.

Mark, Ingrid and Lesley have also been working to support the work of the Prison staff who carry responsibility for work with VCS partners within each Prison establishment, and NOMS SW staff have met with the managers of each Probation Trust's Local Delivery Unit to discuss how they can best support and develop engagement and partnership work with the VCS at local community level.

Lesley and Mark co-facilitated a workshop at the national Clinks' Spring Conference in March 2010, titled Bridging the Divide: Working in Partnership with the VCS at Regional and Local Levels. The workshop attracted delegates from across the English regions and was filmed and has now been edited into a set of short DVD clips that Clinks will be using nationally in workshops and training events in other regions. Clearly this work has been, and will continue to be, affected by the difficult budgetary climate in which we are all now having to operate. Nonetheless we consider that it represents a model of good practice in regional partnership working between the public and voluntary sectors that has been firmly rooted in the principles of the Compact. We will therefore be endeavouring to sustain it over the coming year.

5 South West Strategic Health Authority and Equality South West

The South West Strategic Health Authority was established on 1 July 2006 and is accountable to the Department of Health for the performance of the NHS in the South West.

Our role is to ensure the NHS in the South West is run effectively and that NHS services, staff and organisations are developed to meet the needs of the future.

One of our core commitments is the promotion of Equality and Human Rights across the regional NHS – being an employer of choice, tackling health inequalities and eliminating discrimination that diverse groups may be facing.

To support its activity in the field of Equality and Human Rights, South West Strategic Health Authority has agreed a Service Level Agreement with Equality South West. The Service Level Agreement ensures that South West Strategic Health Authority receives specialist advice and engages with Equality South West members on a regular basis.

Equality South West has been instrumental in the development of our four-year Single Equality Scheme. The engagement has included

facilitating engagement events during the initial development of the Single Equality Scheme, but also on an annual basis as part of refreshing the Single Equality Scheme Action Plan.

The Service Level Agreement ensures that we receive feedback for our full Equality Impact Assessments and support for the development of the Disability Reference Group. Colleagues from Equality South West attend key meetings such as our internal Equality and Human Rights Group or the NHS Regional Equality and Diversity Network.

The Service Level Agreement has acted as a conduit for a stronger working relationship between Equality South West and South West Strategic Health Authority. The link between the two organisations has led to joint activity outside the scope of the initial Service Level Agreement. For example, the South West Strategic Health Authority Equality and Human Rights Manager was invited to speak to an Equality South West trans network meeting and as a result a leaflet with top tips for providing a better service for the transgendered community was launched in June 2010.

6 Natural England and the South West Forum working in partnership for environmental volunteering

As part of signing up to the Regional Compact, colleagues in Natural England understand the importance of working with, and for, a wide range of partners. During the last year we have been working with Third Sector and other

organisations to develop a more connected up approach to environmental volunteering. This has led to a better understanding of the barriers that face potential volunteers, the strengthening or initiation of local networks of organisations

that want to maximise the opportunities for environmental volunteering, an increase in collaborative working with volunteer centres and an increase in mutual respect for all the different organisations and individuals concerned. Our approaches may have been different without the Regional Compact, it is

always good to be constantly reminded of the context in which we work – we need to offer equality of opportunity, mutual respect, fair funding and resources, appropriate time. This environmental volunteering project is aiming to do just that.

7 Faithnetsouthwest and sub-regional public sector partners

Faithnetsouthwest works across the South West region to support the work in the community of all faith groups. We have been a member of the South West Compact Group since 2008.

One of our main priorities is to develop a greater understanding within public bodies, of the needs of faith groups and how services can be more appropriate to their needs. The following are examples of some of this work in the last year.

This year we are producing a booklet for Avon Fire Prevention services, on understanding and liaising with faith communities. In particular this booklet will provide guidance on what Fire Prevention staff need to know when visiting people of faith in their own homes, places of worship and in community resources that they use in the community.

We have contributed to a Bristol Multi-faith Forum project on 'training the trainers'. Through this programme, professional trainers are training members of the Forum and the faith communities they represent, to enable them to give presentations and provide training for

public bodies.

In partnership with the Social Justice and Environmental advisor from the Diocese of Bath and Wells, we provided two training sessions for senior managers from North Somerset Council, on understanding and working with faith communities in North Somerset. This event was one of the precursors towards the creation of a faith forum for North Somerset, to give people of faith a voice on issues of common concern in the community and a direct link to the local authority to put forward these issues. A faith audit report is being carried out in 2010, which will highlight the work in the community, of social support projects provided by faith groups. The findings of this audit, will set the priorities for the newly emerging faith forum.

Through our Target Support project, our development workers are working with faith groups to promote community empowerment, including the greater involvement in the community of young people aged 16-25 and black and ethnic minority communities. We intend to develop a number of initiatives to promote this involvement in 2010/11.

Sign up to the South West Regional Compact

If you are a representative of a regional organisation and you believe that you could sign up to the principles of the Regional Compact, or you would like further information, please get in touch with: South West Forum: Tel 01392 247901, E-mail admin@southwestforum.org.uk or post to South West Forum, The Innovation Centre, University of Exeter, Rennes Drive, Exeter EX4 4RN