

# COMPACT AT WORK



## Creating a space for cross-sector dialogue in Warrington

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**Compact**  
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In seeking to improve their relationship with the local voluntary sector, Warrington Borough Council created the new post of Third Sector Partnership Development Officer (TSPDO). The new role, managed jointly by the council and Warrington Voluntary Action (WVA), coordinates a Third Sector Network Hub, which hosts meetings of strategic importance to cross-sector relationships and ensures a positive dialogue is maintained between the council and the voluntary sector. These innovations have led to improved practices in how the council works with the voluntary sector, and a refreshed local Compact.

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## What Happened

In 2007, Warrington Borough Council commissioned a review into how they could improve their relationship with the local voluntary sector. A recommendation to create a new Third Sector Partnership Development Officer (TSPDO) post, was subsequently adopted. The TSPDO, employed by the council but managed jointly by the council and the local voluntary sector infrastructure organisation, Warrington Voluntary Action (WVA), is responsible for coordinating a Third Sector Network Hub, which provides a space for cross-sector dialogue and a mechanism for ensuring the views of the voluntary sector are communicated to the council and Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB).

Since 2012 the TSPDO has been co-located at Warrington Voluntary Action, resulting in even closer cross-sector collaboration. The TSPDO coordinates a number of meetings of strategic importance to the relationship between the council and the voluntary sector. These include the Third Sector Policy Group, which focuses on the Localism agenda and is chaired by the Executive Member for Leisure, Culture

and Community; the Compact Implementation Group, which focuses on the implementation of the Local Compact and is chaired by WVA's Chief Officer; and the Commissioning Sub Group, which seeks to improve the council's commissioning processes by removing barriers to voluntary sector involvement.

## Impact

Through the Third Sector Network Hub and the TSPDO, the council ensures the voluntary sector can impact the design and delivery of policies, programmes and public services. A number of tangible benefits have resulted, including the development of a commissioning checklist for council contracts which incorporates the principles of the local Compact, and forward commissioning intentions being advertised on the council website, ensuring that voluntary organisations are able to plan effectively.

The Commissioning Sub Group, one of the groups coordinated by the TSPDO, recommended that the council adopt a third sector quality assurance standard, which would enable accredited volun-

## Compact Principles

1. Partnership working
2. Designing policies and services

## Tags

Commissioning  
Engagement  
Local Compacts  
Working Groups

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tary organisations to clearly establish with commissioners their competence and effectiveness. It was felt that although voluntary organisations typically provide excellent services and value for money, they need to be able to demonstrate this to commissioners more effectively. Following this recommendation, a quality assurance framework will be trialled over the next 12 months.

The TSPDO also played a key role in refreshing the Warrington local Compact by reconvening members of the Compact Implementation Group to discuss the future of the local Compact in December 2013. All members agreed it was important to keep the local Compact but it was felt that it needed to be updated and made easier to read, with case studies which would help people put the guidance into practice. This process took around 12 months, and the refreshed Local Compact was launched at an event during National Compact Week in November 2014. The Compact Implementation Group now meets twice a year.

## Quote

“Warrington has a very vibrant Third Sector Hub with representatives drawn from over 20 sub-sectors. We have been very fortunate to have a Third Sector Partnership Officer, Rebecca Brown, co-located with the Local authority and Warrington Voluntary Action. Becky has provided essential support to the hub with terms of reference, secretariat services, democratic election processes etc. The processes have ensured that the sector has representation on the Local Strategic Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing Board. In addition the post has enabled the hub to participate in vital sub groups working with statutory partners to improve policies and commissioning practices.”

*Steve Cullen, Chief Officer, Warrington & District Citizens Advice Bureau*

## Relevant Compact Principles

1. Partnership working.
2. Designing policies and services.

## Related links

- The local Compact for Warrington:  
<http://warringtonva.org.uk/policy/local-compact-warrington>
- 3rd Sector Network Hub:  
<http://warringtonva.org.uk/policy/3rd-sector-network-hub>

