

June 2004

The Ashford Borough Compact



Developing better working relationships between Ashford Borough Council, the Ashford Primary Care Trust, other public bodies and voluntary and community organisations to ensure the effective delivery of services to Ashford's growing local communities

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Foreword

I am delighted to present the Ashford Borough Compact and its Codes of Practice. It has been developed by local voluntary and community groups, Ashford Borough Council and Ashford Primary Care Trust, with the endorsement of Ashford (Local Strategic) Partnership.

Working together has become increasingly important in recent years, with closer links between the public, private and voluntary sectors leading to the delivery of better services to local communities. The Compact demonstrates a real commitment to working in partnership and creates a firm framework for the further development of effective working relationships between service providers.

The Compact has been drafted against the government's Sustainable Communities Plan that identifies Ashford as one of the four major growth areas over the next two decades and beyond. The research for Ashford's Future shows that the town has the capacity to accommodate up to 13,050 new homes by 2016 and 30,000 by 2030.

This major expansion of Ashford will bring with it challenges and opportunities that require the support

and co-operation of voluntary and community groups, particularly in providing the necessary social infrastructure to support and protect local communities.

It is therefore timely for the voluntary and community sector, Ashford Borough Council and the Primary Care Trust to agree a framework for achieving shared objectives.

We anticipate that some of these objectives will be challenging but worth it! We look forward to continuing to work together to make the Compact a living, useful guide for action and a benchmark for service providers serving Ashford's growing communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long, sweeping line extending to the right.

Mick Fleming

Chairman, Ashford Borough Compact Steering Group

Introduction

The national framework document, 'Compact – Getting It Right Together' was published in 1998 in order to show how working relationships between the government and the voluntary and community sectors could be developed. This national compact was followed by more detailed Codes of Practice on funding, consultation, volunteering and working with community and black and minority ethnic groups.

Guidelines on local compacts were published in 2000 and inspired the work of the Ashford Borough Compact Steering Group that was set up the following year. The group brought together representatives from:

- Mid and South East Kent Council for Voluntary Service (CVS)
- Ashford Borough Council
- Ashford and District Volunteer Bureau
- Ashford & Tenterden Citizens Advice Bureaux
- Tenterden Age Concern
- Ashford Access
- Churches Together in Ashford
- Crossroads South East Kent
- East Kent Hospitals NHS Trust
- Ashford Primary Care Trust
- Kent County Council Social Services
- Ashford Gingerbread.

In June 2003 the Steering Group set up a workshop based conference which invited delegates to identify the issues which have been included in this compact.

Mission statement

The Ashford Borough Compact sets out a framework for the future working relationship between Ashford Borough Council, Ashford Primary Care Trust and the local voluntary and community sector. Its aim is to ensure the effective delivery of services to the borough's local communities. It sets out a range of shared principles and undertakings from all partners and proposes some specific action points for the current year (2004-5).

Objectives

Objectives

1.1 The objectives of the compact are:

- To establish the mandate under which it will operate and to agree and deliver planned action points
- To achieve greater consistency and co-operation in service delivery, avoiding duplication and making more effective use of local resources
- To agree clear codes of practice on funding and in kind support; representation, communication and consultation; voluntary sector development and volunteering
- To encourage cross-sector employment and staff development opportunities
- To make sharing best practice and information the usual way of working
- To enable the voluntary sector to play a greater role in setting out policies and planning how they can be achieved
- To ensure the voluntary and community sector is working together and is capable of delivering the social infrastructure necessary to sustain Ashford's future growth

The Partners

Ashford's voluntary sector makes an important social and economic contribution to the borough. The sector is a significant local employer, provides thousands of voluntary hours and brings significant income to the borough from a range of public and private sources. The borough has an estimated 700-plus organisations in the voluntary and community sector, ranging from professional organisations such as Kent Rural Community Council, Ashford & District Volunteer Bureau, Mid & South East Kent CVS, Ashford & Tenterden Citizens Advice Bureaux, Home Start, Shelter and Churches Together in Ashford to smaller 'grass-roots' organisations within the community such as parent and toddler groups, cubs and brownies, cricket clubs, residents' associations and community trusts and forums.

Goashford.com, the council's voluntary and community sector website, lists 480 such local organisations, but despite this and the membership directory compiled by the CVS there remains a lack of detailed information about local organisations and their activities.

Ashford Borough Council is committed to working in partnership to deliver services which meet the needs of local residents. Responsibility for planning and delivering cultural services and facilities, including the council's community strategy and this compact, lies with the Cultural Services Unit. In recognition of the voluntary sector's role in helping the council achieve its aim of facilitating the best possible quality of life for its residents, a newly-appointed officer is now responsible for voluntary sector liaison, policy and procedures. There is also a specific portfolio on the council's Executive to deal with voluntary sector issues. The council is increasingly involved in setting up and partnering community trusts to help deliver local services.

Ashford Primary Care Trust was set up on 1 April 2002 and is responsible for the health of everyone in the Borough of Ashford. It provides GP and other services through its own staff and also commissions the full range of NHS services from other providers.

Ashford PCT has followed government guidance and agreed a Strategy for Patient, Public and Community Involvement which meets the overall objectives of this compact. New mechanisms for involving patients and

the public will include Patient Forums and Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS). Patient Forums will involve local patients and carers appointed by the Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health. Forums will elect one of their members to sit on the trust's board as a non-executive director and will monitor and review services. The policy action prioritises "joint working with other key agencies such as Ashford Borough Council and Social Services."

Kent County Council's Social Services Department has perhaps the greatest involvement with Ashford's voluntary sector of all the statutory agencies. Although not a partner in this compact, the county council's commitment to improved relations with the sector is clear. The county council, has joined forces with representatives from the voluntary and community sector in Kent to produce a countywide compact. It is expected that area offices will be able to sign up to district level compacts in the future.

Undertakings and commitments

- 2.1** All partners agree that a practical and effective compact between public and voluntary and community sectors which improves services for the people of the borough is key to achieving high level targets.
- 2.2** Both public and voluntary sectors have an important role to play in representing the communities they serve. Ashford Borough Council has a statutory duty and a democratic mandate to represent all the communities within the borough, together with a responsibility to develop policies and to provide important local services. The council is accountable to its electors, via elected members, and to a variety of statutory regulatory bodies.
- 2.3** Voluntary and community organisations are independent bodies with their own independent accountable structures. Organisations are primarily accountable to their membership, but also to the Charity Commission (which accords them their charitable status), to other bodies that regulate their status (e.g. Companies House) and to funders who provide the cash to support particular pieces of work.
- 2.4** Both sectors recognise their distinct routes of accountability and the ways in which these affect the way they operate, the way they develop policies and the timetables to which they work.
- 2.5** All partners are responsible for the success of the compact and are committed to the action plan resulting from it.
- 2.6** Both sectors recognise that there are times when partnership working is more difficult. Each sector recognises the right of the other to pursue a policy that the other does not agree with and recognises the right of the other to argue and campaign vigorously on that issue.
- 2.7** Statutory partners will ensure that the voluntary and community sector is able to comment on and influence policy, strategies and service delivery plans.
- 2.8** All partners are committed to sharing best practice freely.
- 2.9** Partners will be represented on a Compact Steering Group which will be set up to monitor compliance with the compact and progress on the action plan.
- 2.10** All partners agree to be fair and honest in their use of information and to use discretion and confidentiality.

Key issues for the Ashford area

- 3.1** The variety and range of voluntary and community organisations in the sector makes it inevitable that some services are duplicated. It is also true that some organisations provide the same service more effectively than others and that what might look like the same service may actually be reaching a different client base. If public and voluntary organisations are to work together to provide effective services, particularly given the pressures of Ashford's growth, the first requirement will be to map what is currently being provided, by whom and how effective it is, against community need.
- 3.2** Voluntary organisations are increasingly being asked to take part in consultation and to sit on partnership boards despite having no additional resources to do this work. The Ashford Partnership (LSP) and Ashford's Future initiatives are particularly demanding.
- 3.3** Communication between and within Ashford's infrastructure bodies and the networks that serve them needs to be improved. The Voluntary Sector Forum serviced by the CVS is one channel of communication between the sector and local statutory agencies, but attendance levels vary and it does not, as yet, ensure broad representation of the sector. This strategic weakness must be addressed before the sector can move forward.
- 3.4** Voluntary sector members of Ashford's Local Strategic Partnership have expressed discomfort with their role in that they have no official mandate to represent, or speak on behalf of, the sector. This reflects the fact that they have not been elected or selected through or by a representative infrastructure body.
- 3.5** Berwick House is no longer large enough and the Citizens Advice Bureau will leave Seabrooke House in 2005. The need to find new and suitable premises coincides with the need for an effective central resource/information point where local groups can exchange equipment, staff know-how, and best practice. One solution could be to house such organisations within a 'one-stop' type facility.
- 3.6** Reducing government grant to the borough council, together with other budgetary pressures, has left the authority with limited funds to contribute to voluntary sector organisations. The government's funding regime has changed and is targeting significant funding streams at agencies such as Sure Start, the Children's Fund and the Local Network Fund, all of which have a duty to consult and involve local people.
- 3.7** The PCT faces similar funding pressures, largely associated with the need to sustain and develop the East Kent Hospitals Trust's secondary care services. Steps are being taken to ensure that Ashford's growing population is reflected in increased funding for the PCT. At the same time, the PCT sees the expansion of Ashford as an opportunity to deliver services differently and more creatively. This will mean close involvement with public and patient representatives and community organisations. The PCT is working with council planning officers to ensure that development is carried out in a harmonious way.
- 3.8** Voluntary and community organisations are often best placed to engage and involve those sections of the community that the mainstream public sector may find hard to reach. Such organisations can also access funding that is not available to public bodies. At the same time, it is clear that Ashford's development will place considerable strain on these organisations, many of which are already struggling to maintain existing levels of service in the face of reduced core funding.
- 3.9** Ashford is going through a period of change and development to ensure it can accommodate future growth. All sectors must work together effectively to protect and strengthen the social fabric of the borough and to deliver inclusive services that meet the needs of the communities within the Borough of Ashford.

Codes of Practice

Funding and in kind support

4.1 At the conference which launched this compact process in June 2003, delegates made a number of suggestions as to how funding and support from other sectors could be improved. Those suggestions have been included in the action points at the end of this section

- 4.2** Alongside grants, statutory bodies are able to provide 'in kind' support such as:
- Access to specialist advice (for example, from staff in the borough council's legal, financial and personnel departments)
 - Voluntary sector places on in-house training programmes (formalised)
 - A register of venues available for meetings and other events (detailing discounts to the sector etc)
 - Administration – help with producing such things as newsletters and leaflets
 - Formalised equipment loans. In addition to the equipment that could be loaned by statutory agencies, the voluntary and community sector has equipment that could be shared. The CVS and other groups have been given funding for equipment on the proviso that they allow other groups access to it
 - Transport
 - IT advice and assistance

4.3 Ashford Borough Council distributes funding to voluntary and community organisations in a number of ways:

4.3.1 Community grants

These are 'one-off' capital grants of up to £10,000 for community-based projects benefiting people in the borough. The scheme has specified priorities, there is a match-funding requirement and organisations must give evidence of support from local people and councillors. The grant panel meets three times a year. Since 1998 the scheme has contributed more than £300,000 in grants to local voluntary and community groups.

Community Grants Fund application forms are available online at www.goashford.com.

4.3.2 Service level agreements

A number of organisations are paid to deliver projects and/or services on the borough council's behalf or in partnership with the council. Such funding depends on the council's corporate priorities and budget and is not guaranteed. Some core-funded organisations such as the Citizens' Advice Bureaux are currently subject to a service level agreement, and the council is aiming to make this the case for all core-funded organisations. It also plans to introduce a clear application protocol to ensure equity and transparency. Despite significant pressure on the council's budget, Ashford Borough Council made core funding contributions in the last financial year to a range of voluntary sector organisations including the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Relate, Tenterden and Ashford CABx, the Ashford Mediation Service and Shopmobility.

4.3.3 Contracts

Some 'not for profit' organisations provide services under contract from Ashford Borough Council. Contracts are subject to the procurement process and are conducted through open tender. This compact is not intended to cover these arrangements.

4.3.4 Other forms of support currently offered

- The leasing of property owned by the council at non-market rents; subsidised rent or hire of community and leisure centres (e.g. Park Farm and Bockhanger Community Centres, Julie Rose Stadium and the Stour Leisure Centre).
- In 2002/03 the value of mandatory business rate relief to the voluntary sector was £1,102,162. Discretionary rate relief amounted to a further £95,690.
- Providing places on council training programme (informal).
- The loan of staff time and expertise.

-
- 4.4** The PCT does not have a comparable direct funding relationship with the voluntary sector. However, via joint funding with social services, PCTs in East Kent commission voluntary organisations to provide care and support to NHS patients. As an example, Ashford PCT hosts the Learning Disabilities Team. It is hoped that the Patient, Public and Community Involvement Policy will provide a framework for closer co-operation with the voluntary sector generally.
- 4.5** The private sector should be encouraged, through the LSP, to provide support, in-kind or otherwise.
- 4.6** The voluntary sector recognises that receiving public money carries with it responsibilities to the funding body and to the members of the public who will benefit from the service provided.

Financial reserves

- 4.7** It is financial good practice for voluntary and community organisations to build up a healthy level of reserves, and where practical to draw up a reserves policy. Three months' running costs in reserve is a useful benchmark. Mid and South East Kent CVS will help groups without a reserves policy to draft an appropriate one.
- 4.8** While reserves are important, voluntary and

community sector groups must not lose sight of their primary role. Providing services according to their stated aims is as important as providing for the future; building up large free reserves to an extent that restricts spending on core activities is unjustifiable.

- 4.9** Ashford Borough Council will consider the level of an organisation's free reserves when considering grant applications, although restricted or ring-fenced cash set aside for specific purposes in line with the objects of the group will not prejudice a grant application. Similarly, the council will not take into account any reserves that are accounted for by a properly drawn-up reserves policy.

Action points

- There is a need for a voluntary sector funding group who can take a co-ordinated approach to strategic funding opportunities.
- There should be better promotion and signposting about where to go for fundraising help and support.
- Funding bodies should give clear and transparent reasons when refusing an application.
- Voluntary sector organisations should be informed as quickly as possible about changes to funding arrangements and should be given at least three months notice of any change to funding and service level agreements.
- The council and the PCT will regularly review their funding arrangements to ensure fair access to funding.
- The council and the PCT will provide equitable and transparent processes for applying for funding and be open about the organisations that are receiving funding.
- The voluntary and community sector will use effective systems for the management, control, accountability and audit of finances. It will meet its obligations to funders with regards to reporting requirements.
- The PCT will actively involve individuals and organisations from the voluntary sector in Patient, Public and Community Involvement activities.
- The CVS will investigate ways of negotiating discounts for voluntary and community sector groups in Ashford.
- All partners will formalise the arrangements for offering training places/venue hire/equipment sharing to voluntary organisations.

Representation, communication and consultation

- 5.1** The voluntary and community sector is involved in partnership work across the borough with both the statutory and private sectors (Ashford Local Strategic Partnership, Health Partnerships, Town Centre Partnership, Children's Fund, Sure Start etc).
- 5.2** The Department of Health recognises that the voluntary sector plays an important part in promoting good health, lobbying for better provision or by providing information. Local groups involved in health and social care are vital sources of expertise on specialist areas such as Parkinsons, care of the elderly, learning disabilities, mental health and improving physical access.
- 5.3** It is appropriate that the voluntary and community sector should be involved as a key player in local cross-sector forums and partnerships, but it is important for statutory organisations to realise that this has resource implications for the sector. Statutory organisations must give sufficient notice of partnership meetings and should wherever possible provide compensation and/or expenses for the time involved, both for voluntary and paid staff from the voluntary sector.
- 5.4** There is an urgent need to strengthen the current Voluntary Sector Forum and establish a representative body with a mandate to represent and act on the views of the sector and to be available to help with consultation and planning.
- 5.5** There is a need for the voluntary sector to provide quality information about its services and the value it provides to local communities in order to promote itself and make sure the information it gives to funding bodies is up-to-date.
- 5.6** Consultation is a vital part of any communication process and is fundamental to any partnership project. Ashford Borough Council and the PCT are committed to establishing and maintaining best practice in effective consultation and policy appraisal. The council and the PCT agree to:
- Consult the sector on issues that are likely to affect it, particularly where statutory agencies are proposing new roles and responsibilities for the voluntary and community sector
 - Target consultations at appropriate organisations
- 5.7** The voluntary and community sector is committed to pursuing best practice in responding to consultations. The sector agrees to:
- Look carefully at new policies and procedures, particularly at the development stage, in order to identify, as far as possible, any implications for the sector
 - Carry out consultations as early as possible (subject to considerations of urgency, sensitivity or confidentiality)
 - Ensure that enough time is provided for consultation and give sufficient advance notice of, and publicity for, the process. This is particularly important for community groups which tend to need the most time to respond but often get the least because they are at the end of the communications chain.
 - Be sensitive to any additional resource implications for the sector when planning consultations
 - Use those methods of consultation that the sector prefers and that are designed to encourage effective responses. This will include making consultation materials available in accessible formats and preparing consultation documents that are concise, clearly laid out and written clearly in language that will be understood by the intended audience
 - Take account of the specific needs, interests and contributions of those parts of the sector which represent minority groups and the socially excluded and not discriminate on any grounds
 - Respect the confidentiality of information provided by the sector when given access to it on that basis within the constraints of the law and the proper performance of public duties
 - Provide feedback to those who have been consulted on each consultation and on the ways that views have been taken into account
 - Evaluate consultations jointly with a view to developing and sharing best practice

stated constituency by stating what groups or causes in society it represents and how it involved those interests in forming its policies and positions and in responding to the consultation in question

- Give their constituency feedback on the outcome of each consultation
- Consult directly those on whose behalf they are speaking wherever possible (including service users, volunteers, members and supporters) Where this is not practical or appropriate

groups will indicate that they are responding on the basis of their accumulated knowledge and experience of working with those concerned

- Take account of the specific needs, interests and contributions of minority groups and the socially excluded
- Respect the confidentiality of council and PCT information when given access to it on that basis

Action points

- There is a need to identify 'champions' within the Compact Steering Group who will take on the responsibility of ensuring that public bodies and voluntary and community groups know about and adhere to the compact.
- A communications protocol needs to be developed to improve the flow of information between the voluntary and community sector and statutory agencies.
- Take action to strengthen the Voluntary Sector Forum and establish a 'network of networks'.
- Identify information that needs to be made available to voluntary and community sector organisations and communicate it through effective and appropriate media (e.g. circulation through Voluntary Sector Forums, posting on www.goashford.com and articles in East Kent Health News and the Ashford Borough Review).
- Produce a briefing paper for voluntary and community organisations on the new structures and responsibilities of both the council and PCT and how voluntary and community organisations can get involved and influence them. Include the paper initially in the CVS newsletter.
- Map voluntary sector activity and services across the borough and inform people about the nature, range and work of the voluntary and community sector, including existing formal partnerships between statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sector.
- Create additional opportunities for council members and officers and representatives of voluntary and community organisations to meet and discuss areas of concern and how they can be tackled.
- Actively promote the voluntary sector's contribution to local communities by providing quality up-to-date information on the sector and its work.
- Pilot methods of compensating voluntary and community sector representatives for attending partnership meetings and evaluate their effectiveness.
- Create a suitable mechanism to agree methods of consultation in advance and for reviewing and improving consultation between the council, the PCT and the voluntary and community sector.
- Develop a way of detailing and monitoring consultations and outcomes.
- Consider ways to encourage good consultation practice including promoting the principles of Best Value.

Voluntary sector development

User involvement

- 6.1** All partners to the compact should ensure that good relationships are built with service users to ensure that they are involved in the design, delivery, review and assessment of services in order to ensure their needs are met.
- 6.2** Groups must explore ways of promoting their services as widely as possible and ensure that they are as accessible as possible.

Action points

- Voluntary and community organisations should ensure that management committee members, staff and volunteers are appropriately trained to meet their responsibilities.
- Produce a good practice guide on how to involve users in shaping service delivery and monitor its implementation.
- Larger voluntary sector organisations should embrace new technology as key to their development, in particular by using e-mail, finding funding to update IT equipment and creating a web presence, either through their own website or as part of another organisation's website (www.goashford.com offers local groups a free web page).

Premises

- 6.3** There is a lack of suitable premises for some voluntary and community organisations in the borough and the cost of purchasing or renting buildings is often prohibitive.
- 6.4** The need for space falls into two areas: Organisations that wish to book rooms on a regular or ad-hoc basis for activities or meetings and those who need office space to carry out their business and perhaps also for training and meetings. For these organisations there would be enormous benefits from a dedicated, shared building close to Ashford Town Centre. With the reshaping of the town centre currently being planned in line with Ashford's future growth, the sector needs to lobby in a co-ordinated fashion for such a facility, possibly on the back of development.

Action points

- Voluntary organisations need to work with the council to investigate the feasibility of a one-stop shop type facility in the town centre, possibly as part of the proposed Ashford Discovery Centre project.
- A representative from the voluntary sector should be involved in discussions on new facility issues such as the Discovery Centre.
- The council and the PCT will actively promote rooms or venues available for purchase, rent or hire by local groups.
- The council will continue to provide a database of local venues for hire on www.goashford.com.

Monitoring and evaluation

- 6.5** It is agreed by all partners that monitoring and evaluation should be part of the work of all organisations, whether or not it is a requirement of funders. Monitoring is a necessary part of evaluating the effectiveness of services and a good way of analysing their usefulness and appeal.
- 6.6** Groups carrying out monitoring and evaluation may identify that their service is exceeding expectations or, conversely, that it is ineffective or failing. Ashford Borough Council will support the work of organisations that use evaluation to tailor or adapt their services to ensure the needs of users are met and that the services they provide remain effective.
- 6.7** Some grants are provided to the voluntary and community sector from external sources which have their own, often complex, monitoring requirements. In these cases Ashford Borough Council and Mid and South East Kent CVS officers will support organisations in providing this information.

Action points

- Ashford Borough Council will work towards standardising its monitoring requirements for grants provided by its various departments so that expectations are broadly consistent.
- The voluntary sector will work towards the achievement of quality standards in all aspects of its operation, particularly in governance and service delivery.

Volunteering

- 7.1** Volunteers contribute their time, energy and skills to benefit people in the community, unpaid and of their own free will. Volunteers play a major role in providing services to the community and there should be recognition of the added value of volunteering and the significant contribution volunteers make in Ashford. They provide a force for good and are a means of building skills and confidence that ultimately helps to build social capital.
- 7.2** All partners agree to work together to improve the public perception of volunteering by raising the profile, status and range of volunteer activities and particularly to promote volunteering to people who do not traditionally volunteer.
- 7.3** Using an estimate based on national figures, the number of people who have volunteered in Ashford at least once in the past 12 months has been estimated at more than 36,000.
- 7.4** The borough council has no policy on employee volunteering but is committed to working with the Ashford Volunteer Bureau on this issue.
- 7.5** The NHS has a long tradition of using volunteers e.g. the "Friends" organisations, patients' shops in hospitals and help with patient transport. There is a volunteer office in each hospital which co-ordinates this provision.

- 7.6** There should be recognition of the benefits that appropriate training and support can give to volunteers. All partners will evaluate their practices with regard to the recruitment, induction, training and support of volunteers.

Principles

- 7.7** All organisations using volunteers should undertake good practice in volunteer management and record keeping. They should:
- carry out appropriate screening
 - ensure that the volunteer has a clearly defined list of activities and a role description
 - reimburse expenses incurred by volunteers
 - provide appropriate insurance cover
 - set up recognised channels for addressing volunteers' views and concerns
 - provide regular opportunities to discuss progress with volunteers and the development needs of the organisation
 - provide or make arrangements for suitable training and support
 - ensure that the health and safety issues of volunteers are properly addressed

Action points

Ashford Borough Council and the PCT will:

- ensure that voluntary organisations are involved in the introduction of new regulations, guidance etc which affects the role of volunteers
- recognise the importance of the Ashford & District Volunteer Bureau and seek its advice on matters relating to volunteering and voluntary groups.

In addition, Ashford Borough Council will continue to support community forums and trusts run by local volunteers.

Ashford & District Volunteer Bureau will:

- produce a volunteering toolkit/good practice guide for organisations which encourages best practice in volunteering and user involvement and includes health and safety guidance
- ensure that organisations working with children and vulnerable adults comply with current legislation and local service agency agreements where applicable

- promote volunteering more widely and effectively and participate actively in local and national volunteering events such as volunteer week
- encourage the creation of private and public sector employer policies which allow flexibility for volunteering and community action.

All signatories to this compact will:

- be made aware of current legislation on data protection
- be committed to acknowledging the interests and concerns of their volunteers and actively involving them in the development of the organisation
- encourage their management committees/boards to promote and implement best practice in volunteering, including volunteer and user representation
- ensure a co-ordinated approach to equality of opportunity and health and safety issues.

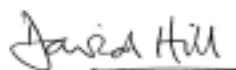
Next steps

- 8.1** The Compact Steering Group will produce new Terms of Reference to govern its work over the next 12 months.
- 8.2** The Compact Steering Group will oversee the implementation of the compact and the Compact Action Plan.
- 8.3** The Compact Steering Group's priorities throughout the coming year will be to encourage more organisations to sign up to the compact, to promote adherence to the codes of practice and to monitor implementation of the action plan.
- 8.4** The ODPM funded Voluntary Sector Development Officer will co-ordinate the implementation of the compact and the Action Plan with particular regard to Ashford's planned growth and will report progress to the Compact Steering Group, statutory partner signatories, the Ashford Partnership (LSP) and Voluntary Sector networks and forums. A report will be published annually in appropriate media (newsletter, websites etc).
- 8.5** The Compact Steering Group will receive progress reports and will monitor and review progress on the way the compact is being implemented.
- 8.6** Any disputes over the application of the compact undertakings will, as far as possible, be resolved directly between the parties involved. The implementation of the compact will be a learning experience for the council, the PCT and the voluntary and community sector and the relationship will be strengthened by an open and honest approach to the process.
- 8.7** The compact will be reviewed and updated in summer 2005.

Founding signatories to the Ashford Borough Compact

- Ashford Borough Council
- Ashford Primary Care Trust
- Ashford Access
- Mid & SE Kent CVS
- Ashford and District Volunteer Bureau
- Ashford and Tenterden CABx
- Churches Together in Ashford
- Tenterden Age Concern
- Crossroads South East
- Ashford Home-Start
- Ashford Gingerbread

The Ashford Borough Compact is fully endorsed by Ashford (Local) Strategic Partnership

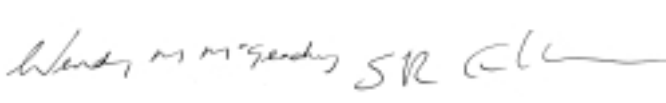


David Hill
Chairman

Chief Executive Ashford Borough Council



Crispin Davies
KRCC



Wendy McGeachy
Mid & SE Kent CVS

Simon Ellis

Churches Together in Ashford



Mick Fleming

Ashford and Tenterden CABx

Voluntary and Community Sector representatives

Contacts

If you have any questions or would like a paper copy of the Ashford Borough Compact please contact:

Mid & South East Kent Council for Voluntary Service
Berwick House, 8 Elwick Road,
Ashford, Kent TN23 1PF
01233 610171
wendy@msekcv.sfsworld.co.uk

Cultural Services
Ashford Borough Council
Civic Centre, Tannery Lane,
Ashford, Kent TN23 1PL
01233 330413
kim.harlow@ashford.gov.uk

Simon Bannister
Ashford's Future
7th floor, Charter House,
Ashford, Kent TN24 8EQ
01233 330814
simon.bannister@goashford.com

Alternatively you can access it online at www.goashford.com

Acknowledgements

In producing this compact we have drawn on the national compact and on local compacts that have already been produced. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the Reading, Bracknell Forest and Islington compacts and the Regional Action and Involvement South East (RAISE) toolkit.

If your organisation would like to sign up to the compact and benefit from its codes of practice please email one of the addresses above or cut out the slip below and return to either of the addresses given above.



Our commitment

We agree with the Ashford Borough Compact and are committed to working with our partners in accordance with this agreement.



Name Signed

Date

On behalf of (organisation)

Contact Address

Telephone

