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CHAMPIONING THE COMPACT

A new piece of research involving 10 local authority areas explores the role and impact of Champions for Local Compacts.

Local Compacts provide a framework for local authority areas and third sector organisations to develop and improve their working relationships. Effective championing is key to improving Compact performance and the findings of the research highlight why this is so important. It acts as a practical guide to help local authorities, primary care trusts and third sector organisations both to sign up new Champions, as well as develop the role of existing ones.

Entitled *They are Champions: the role and impact of Local Compact Champions*, the research has been published by the Commission for the Compact and Compact Voice, the independent body which represents the voluntary and community sector on taking forward the Compact. The research was undertaken earlier this year by the Institute for Voluntary Action Research (IVAR) and involved local authorities in Calderdale, Derby, Devon, Rotherham, Southend, Sunderland, Surrey, Warwickshire, Wirral and Wolverhampton.

Simon Blake, Chair of Compact Voice, said:

“This publication is just the start. Compact Voice, in partnership with the Commission for the Compact, will issue a series of targeted guides and further support in the coming year as part of a campaign led by Compact Voice to increase the number of supported Champions.”

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Sir Bert Massie CBE, Commissioner for the Compact, said:

“Now more than ever, we need Compact Champions on the ground making sure that everyone is using the Compact for the benefit of communities. This study recognises the importance of Champions and the impact they can make. Through their energy, enthusiasm, knowledge and commitment, they can create healthy Local Compacts and improve partnership working.”

Saffi Price, Partnership and Participation Co-ordinator at Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council, said:

“Wolverhampton sees Compact Champions as key to embedding Compact principles within every area of the City, from community groups to city-wide strategies. We have learnt that supporting Champions has resulted in both sustained commitment and exchange of practical ideas and solutions. The research and any future publications that stem from it will be invaluable for development officers who are supporting Champions and working to implement their Local Compact.”

Key findings in the research show:

- Champions promote, raise awareness and build understanding of the Compact, which helps increase implementation
- Effective championing is key to improving Compact performance. This helps achieve better outcomes for individuals and communities.
- Champions must have support, training and direction as soon as recruited.
- Champions are needed at both senior and operational levels. Operational champions market the Compact and offer practical support, while senior level champions can create the right working environment and help remove barriers to implementation.

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- Champions do not have to be experts but they do need good communication and promotion skills
- Champions are often energetic, motivated and committed individuals. Being brought together through a network and linked into key strategic decision-making processes can boost their impact.

To download a pdf of the report or to find out more about the Compact, please visit: **www.thecompact.org.uk** To order a hard copy of the report, please telephone the Commission for the Compact on 0121 237 5905.

Notes for Editors

- The Compact was established in England in November 1998 and was inspired by the Deakin Commission report on the Future of the Voluntary Sector. It is an agreement that provides an overall framework for promoting effective partnership working between the Government and the voluntary and community sector. It aims to address areas of poor performance and sets out a statement of intent to work.
- A 12-week consultation concerning a revised national Compact is currently underway. For more information and to take part, please visit: **www.thecompact.org.uk/refresh**

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