



EdinburghCompact

Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations' Council

on behalf of the

Edinburgh Compact Working Group

Developing the Edinburgh Compact

A report on the experience of developing the Compact between Edinburgh's voluntary and community sectors and public sector agencies, 2002 – 2004

February 2005

Developing the Edinburgh Compact

1 Introduction

The Edinburgh Compact (the Compact) was developed over a two year period beginning in the summer of 2002. Its strategy document *In Equal Respect: A Shared Vision* was published and launched in December 2004.

The strategy sets out clearly and concisely the principles on which the Compact is built and the commitments the partners have made to ensure its implementation. These do not need to be re-stated here but it is worth repeating that the Compact, as a multi-lateral agreement between the voluntary and community sectors and public agencies, embedded into the city's community planning framework, is the first of its kind in Scotland. Its development has been followed with interest.

This report describes and comments upon the process by which the Compact took shape. It sets out some key questions raised and conclusions drawn by people who were directly involved in its development or who observed the process firsthand. As local compacts are developed across Scotland it is hoped the report will be of interest and use to others who may wish to emulate or learn from Edinburgh's experience.

2 The historical context

There is a long history of the voluntary and public sectors working together in Edinburgh to improve local services and quality of life. A written Partnership Statement was agreed between the voluntary sector and the local authority in 1996 and a Partnership Monitoring and Development Group (PMDG) was set up to oversee it. The shared goals of the public and voluntary sectors were further set out in the *Edinburgh City Plan 1999-2003* which acknowledged that the key challenges facing the city required a cohesive, jointly planned response from all organisations in the city working for public benefit.

In practice, however, the members of the PMDG (drawn from the voluntary sector and local authority) had little monitoring to do. The Partnership Statement, whilst laying down some valuable principles, did not include an action plan with measurable targets and outcomes. By 2000 the PMDG was meeting infrequently and the Partnership Statement was widely held to be no longer fit for the purpose of defining and upholding joint interests in a rapidly changing planning and policy environment. Working jointly, local authority and voluntary sector officers agreed to review the Statement and explore the best ways to move partnership working forward.

It was to be another two years before a clear plan emerged as to how to progress the Compact. In that time the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) had undergone major structural and procedural changes in response to the modernising local government agenda. The new role to be assigned to local authorities as initiators and facilitators of community planning was by now well known (if not well understood). CEC was actively reviewing its partnership structures and consultation arrangements in anticipation of the responsibilities it would assume under sections 15-19 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

By June 2002 CEC and Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations' Council (EVOC) shared a clear vision of the shape and functions the Compact should adopt. This date marks the beginning of the two years of sustained, well-documented activity towards achieving the goal described in this report.

3 The Compact and community planning

In the views of CEC and EVOC it was of critical importance that the development of the Compact took account of and was firmly embedded into the new partnership and planning arrangements required to deliver community planning. This demanded the Compact to be driven by a high level strategic body, directly represented on and accountable to the Edinburgh Partnership (the city's overarching community planning partnership). It followed that the Compact should set out to guide the voluntary sector's relationships not only with the local authority but also with other public sector partners to community planning. In short, it was required to be more ambitious than simply re-vamping the existing Partnership Statement.

4 Setting out the vision: early consultation

In June 2002 CEC and EVOC set about making the case for their shared vision to the voluntary sector and to the other intended public sector partners. The potential partners were identified as NHS Lothian, Lothian and Borders Police, Communities Scotland and Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh and Lothian (SEEL). Importantly, the approach to them to seek their commitment was undertaken jointly by officers from CEC and EVOC, promoting a clear message of shared responsibility.

Agreement was obtained from each partner to provide a brief input to a conference (billed as a '*Compact Discussion Day*') for the voluntary sector. EVOC's extensive - but by no means comprehensive - database of voluntary organisations (around 850 contacts) was used as the invitation

list. The level of interest was encouraging. Over 70 delegates from the sector attended the conference with many more asking to be kept informed of its outcomes.

The aims of the conference were as follows:

- To rekindle interest within voluntary and community sectors in developing the Compact.
- To set local proposals in the context of national developments (Scotland and UK-wide). Delegates heard presentations from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on national research findings and from the Scottish Executive on the review of the Scottish Compact.
- To examine the concept and implications of the Compact, to present proposals, explore options and agree the form the Compact should take. Three options for the way forward were put to delegates:
 - i Not to take any action to develop a Compact.
 - ii To develop a bilateral compact between the voluntary sector and CEC; in other words to strengthen the existing Partnership Statement (described as the 'quick fix' solution).
 - iii To develop a multi-lateral compact between the voluntary sector, CEC and other public sector partners linked to the community planning framework in the city.

To follow up the conference EVOC organised a short series of four half-day consultation seminars in August 2002 at locations around the city for voluntary sector organisations who had either been unable to attend the conference or who wished for more time to consider the options. 22 organisations participated. Input to each event covered:

- what is the Compact and on what principles should it be based?
- what is community planning?
- why link the Compact to the community planning agenda?
- remit and composition of a Compact Working Group (assuming an option to proceed was favoured)

5 Key issues raised in the early consultation

A report summarising the findings of the early consultation was prepared by EVOC for the PMDG. It gave a clear indication that the voluntary sector wished to pursue the third option, to develop a multi-lateral compact. It also raised some other important issues:

- A compact as a 'statement of intent' alone was insufficient. It must include measurable and measured outcomes and a commitment on the part of the partners to accountability.
- It must be firmly embedded within the existing and emerging planning structures within the city.
- It must be properly resourced to maximise opportunities for participation by voluntary and community organisations.
- It must be reinforced by an extensive programme of awareness raising and training for policy-makers, planners and practitioners in all partners and in the voluntary sector.
- In order to encourage compliance it must be subject to some form of independent scrutiny and should include access to an independent 'ombudsperson' service.

The report was received and accepted by the PMDG in November 2002 at which point it agreed to dissolve, instructing CEC and EVOC to move forward with developing a multi-partner compact.

6 How meaningful was the early consultation?

It has been suggested that the conference and seminars of 2002 were more an exercise in selling than consulting. Certainly, voluntary and community sector participants in these events were left in no doubt of the preferred option of the consultants. But the exercise was honest and directive. Overwhelmingly the voluntary sector was persuaded by the case made for the nature of the Compact, although some dissent was noted. Significantly, the key issues given above were voiced, heard and recorded. As the Compact has developed these issues have not been lost; they are clearly reflected in the principles and design of the Compact set out in *In Equal Respect: A Shared Vision*. Therefore it may fairly be concluded that this was an important and meaningful phase of the consultation.

7 The Compact Working Group: remit

The principal body driving the development of the Compact was the Compact Working Group (CWG), first convened in February 2003. From its outset there was agreement that the CWG was to be a short-life group with a clearly defined, time-limited remit to oversee and manage the development phase. At the conclusion of this phase it was dissolved, replaced by an Interim (and eventually to be a permanent) Compact Partnership. The purpose of the CWG was agreed as:

- To provide an arena for representation of the varying interests of the voluntary sector and all public sector partners.
- To commission and supervise independent research to form the basis of the Compact Strategy.
- To ensure regular information updates and an inclusive and extensive programme of consultation throughout the duration of the development phase.
- To report to the Edinburgh Partnership and to secure commitment from the corporate governance of each of the partners as necessary.

8 Membership of the Compact Working Group

The composition of the CWG was agreed as:

- Officer representation from each of the five public sector partners
- An equal number of voluntary sector members
- One representative from the Board of Directors of EVOC

The CWG secretariat role was shared by officers of EVOC and CEC. The development of the Compact generated a large volume of paperwork and administrative demand, particularly during the periods of consultation. On a practical level it was valuable for this burden to be shared, but more importantly it was an ongoing symbol of the commitment to partnership working demonstrated from the outset.

Critical to the success of the CWG was the early decision to seek an independent chairperson. Crucially the person finally identified had practical experience and knowledge of working in the public and voluntary sectors and a good understanding of partnership working in Edinburgh. He had the undoubted confidence of all CWG members and proved to be a skilful and inspirational leader of its meetings and of wider public events.

Observers were invited and attended regularly from the Scottish Executive Voluntary Issues Unit (VIU), the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA). Each made significant contributions, assisting the CWG to keep abreast of national policy developments.

9 Voluntary sector members and the challenge of ‘representation’

No attempt was made to seek ‘democratic’ representation when selecting the voluntary sector members of the CWG. This was largely a matter of expedience; a reflection of the desire to move ahead swiftly and a recognition of the absence of any widely accepted means of defining a voluntary sector ‘electorate’. Individuals were approached on the basis that they and the voluntary organisations they worked for reflected a diversity of interests and experience of relationships with the public partners. As such they could be thought of as a ‘typical’ sample rather than ‘representative’ one.

Approaches to individuals were made by EVOC and sought to ensure a gender balance. Five priority areas of voluntary sector interest and activity were identified:

- volunteering
- black and minority ethnic interests
- local area regeneration and social care
- advice and advocacy
- children and young people

The five members accepting the invitation to join the CWG were known to EVOC beforehand although not all in connection with partnership work. They included one former member of the PMDG, others who had taken part in the early consultation on the Compact and several with whom EVOC had worked on unrelated matters. All five were paid employees within their organisations although this was not intentional or thought significant. The chairperson of EVOC attended in a voluntary capacity.

From the outset it was made clear that there was no expectation of the voluntary sector members to speak on behalf of, or report to, any sub-sector, forum or interest group. It was agreed that the CWG *as a whole* was accountable to the voluntary sector.

It is worthy of note that this approach to the selection of the voluntary sector members has not been the subject of loud or sustained challenge. It is immediately evident when looking at the five priority areas given above that they leave many gaps. Neither EVOC nor the members themselves

received much voiced criticism. It is rare for the voluntary sector to be indifferent when it comes to matters of its representation so the lack of protest may perhaps be construed as meaning:

- The CWG was rightly seen as a temporary body that needed to progress swiftly. Voluntary sector membership of its long-term successor may be more vigorously contested.
- EVOC has the confidence of the voluntary sector in the city to act and be directive on its behalf.
- Voluntary sector confidence (or compliance) is testimony to the skill with which the members conducted themselves and the evident co-operation between them, particularly on the occasions when the CWG was on public view.

10 Meetings of the Compact Working Group

Initially the CWG met on a monthly basis, establishing its remit, planning targets and timescales and agreeing methods. This regularity of meetings was identified as important for building a momentum. It has been noted that, from its outset, the CWG was very 'task oriented' and that not much time was spent defining relationships or setting 'ground rules'. It might be expected that some members - particularly perhaps from the voluntary sector - would object to this approach, seeing in it a neglect of team-building. No such objection has been recorded. On the contrary, CWG members appear to have welcomed the directive approach and pre-planning by the secretariat which was evident from the first. The task to be done and the timescale were clearly set out in Gantt charts, but there was still ample opportunity to influence the process and methodology.

Later on meetings became less frequent, once sub-groups had been formed to take forward specific tasks and the research phase was under way. Although the initially agreed timescale for completion of various phases slipped by some months, there was no overall loss of momentum or focus.

Voluntary sector membership was consistent throughout the life of the CWG but there was change of representation among some public partners and others who were largely absent until the latter stages of development. Although absence should not necessarily be viewed as a lack of commitment some members of the CWG perceived it as such.

All meetings were recorded and together the minutes form a detailed and informative record of the CWG's work. There was a substantial number of

supporting papers; often lengthy and often tabled at meetings, which was not well received by some members.

It has been commented that the principle of '*equal respect*' was well reflected in the work of the CWG. Certainly all CWG members were encouraged to participate and their contributions are recorded. The tasks and responsibilities of the CWG and its Sub-Groups were well shared between members without regard for the sector or body they were representing. That the CWG members were visibly working as a team became especially potent on the occasions when they were 'on public show', at the final consultation event and the official launch, of which more below.

11 Funding the development of the Compact

The CWG sought and received funding from the Edinburgh Partnership. This combined with financial contributions from each of the public sector partners funded the work of the CWG, enabled it to commission independent research and, more recently, will fund the construction of a new voluntary sector database for the city. The Scottish Executive VIU also provided grant in order to produce this report, as a set of transferable principles to aid others in the development of local compacts. EVOC acted as bankers of funds received.

Of immense (and incalculable) value was the contribution made by partners through the allocation of senior staff time. Other 'in kind' contributions have also been significant. One of the public sector partners met the printing costs of the strategy document *In Equal Respect: A Shared Vision*; another met the design costs of this document; venues for public consultation were provided at the expense of another, and so on.

12 Commissioning independent research

The decision to commission independent consultants to conduct opinion research and to draft the strategy document was taken by the CWG at its first meeting. There were two principal reasons for this. Firstly, on a practical level, if the work had been undertaken by the joint secretariat it would have taken much longer and risked substantial time-slippage as the EVOC and CEC officers were already engaged in other significant duties. Secondly, it was considered important that consultation was undertaken by an independent, non-partisan body so that respondents could have confidence that their views were treated as paramount in the process.

Early in its life the CWG formed a Commissioning Sub-Group for the purpose of drawing up a research brief, inviting tenders and agreeing the research contract with the successful consultants. The Sub-Group was

chaired by the EVOC Chairperson and included representation from both voluntary and public sector members. A detailed research brief was drawn up identifying the key research objectives as:

- defining the voluntary sector
- examining the diversity of relationship between voluntary and public sector partners, highlighting examples of good practice
- identifying and reporting issues and concerns raised by all stakeholders
- identifying priorities for improvement and providing recommendations and a framework for developing joint objectives---

No indicative budget was given with the invitation to tender. The two tenders received were costed substantially over budget and each was invited to re-submit at reduced cost. Despite the detailed research brief the two tenders were markedly different in approach and tone, rendering the scoring system devised by the Sub-Group for evaluating bids difficult to use. In the event, both firms of consultants were invited to make a presentation to the Sub-Group and discuss their approach. This proved a more satisfactory means of selecting the successful tender, although it resulted in some slippage in the timescale.

Once the consultants had been selected and contract terms agreed the consultants made a presentation to the full CWG on their proposed research methodology. As a result significant changes were made to the questionnaire they planned to use, in particular to reduce the emphasis on voluntary sector profiling (see section 14 below).

13 The research consultation phase

The research undertaken by the consultants consisted of three main activities:

- a questionnaire circulated to a sample of 400 voluntary and community organisations, selected on the basis of their geographical spread and field of interest;
- interviews with the public sector partners and other key stakeholders;
- public and voluntary sector focus groups organised on a geographical or thematic basis

It was perhaps unfortunate, due to the slipped timescale, that much of the research consultation was undertaken in late November / early December 2003. This may in part account for the disappointing level of response from some quarters. 53 completed questionnaires were returned (13% of the sample) and some planned focus groups were cancelled or poorly attended.

The researchers reported that they encountered a high level of cynicism about the Compact and many respondents expressed the view that the issues they were raising were not new and had been well discussed on previous occasions.

In view of the poor response to focus groups the decision was taken to abandon the plan to hold feedback sessions. It was agreed that the consultants' time would be better spent on consultation on the draft strategy and action plan.

14 The lack of an accurate voluntary sector profile

Edinburgh has an extremely large, diverse and dynamic voluntary sector. A figure of around 1800 voluntary and community organisations is cited in the strategy document. Despite a bewildering array of networks, forums and sub-sector 'umbrella' organisations its full extent remains imperfectly understood and hard to reach. Both consultants' tenders initially interpreted the 'defining the sector' objective in the research brief as a large part of the work and placed much emphasis on 'mapping' the sector. The Sub-Group requested this element to be scaled down as part of the reduction of time and costs.

At the time it was believed that the combined intelligence held by the partners about the sector was sufficient to ensure reasonably comprehensive coverage for consultation purposes. The researchers were assured that they could be quickly provided with all the contacts they would need. In practice the assimilation of a number of different databases proved problematic and time-consuming, highlighting many inaccuracies, duplications and no doubt many gaps. In part this explains why the target date for commencing the research was not met.

A comprehensive profiling of the voluntary and community sector is now identified as one of the key actions in the Compact strategy over the next three years. An important lesson from developing the Compact has been the extent to which our knowledge of the sector remains incomplete.

15 Could more use have been made of information technology?

Throughout the development of the Compact there was heavy reliance upon traditional paper-based methods of communicating and consulting with the sector. This was costly and slower and at times required the CWG secretariat to handle vast quantities of paper, particularly in the latter stages during consultation on the draft strategy document and action plan.

The partners lacked e-contacts for many voluntary sector organisations and the under-developed state of the EVOC website (since developed) prevented speedier and more inclusive consultation such as downloadable questionnaires or on-line discussion groups.

16 Was the use of independent research consultants necessary?

The reasons for opting to commission independent consultants to undertake the consultation research are given in section 12 above. Despite the disappointing response rate to some of the methods used by the consultants, some important findings emerged from the research which reinforced opinions expressed during the earlier consultation (see section 5 above) or which provided greater substance to otherwise anecdotal evidence. These are reflected in specific actions to which the partners have committed in *In Equal Respect: A Shared Vision* including:

- awareness and mutual recognition between sectors and bodies
- policy making and 'proofing'
- funding relationships
- accountability expectations
- building capacity within the voluntary sector

In the view of the CWG members the independence of the research was useful in validating earlier findings and lends greater weight to the final strategy document.

17 Keeping stakeholders informed

The CWG was committed to being accountable to the voluntary sector, public sector partners and other stakeholders. During its life it prepared and circulated two 'briefing notes' to update on progress during the critical research phase (June and September 2003). The EVOC Director also made good use of her position as a representative on other bodies such as the Edinburgh Community Safety Partnership and the Capital City Partnership to provide progress reports. Regular reports were also made to EVOC's own Policy Committee and Management Board.

18 The Voluntary Sector Sub-Group and representation on the Edinburgh Partnership

The Edinburgh Partnership is the overarching community planning partnership for the city charged with responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the new *City Plan*, for improving services, ensuring effective community engagement and quality of life for all Edinburgh's citizens.

From the outset of development work on the Compact it was intended that the permanent body eventually replacing the CWG (to become known as the Compact Partnership) would be represented as one of the city's strategic bodies on the Edinburgh Partnership. However, what was not envisaged at this time was that two places would also be identified on the Edinburgh Partnership for voluntary sector representatives.

This was welcome confirmation of the fact that representation by the Compact Partnership did not equate with voluntary sector representation. However, it also presented a challenge: how were two voluntary sector representatives to be chosen; how could their participation be anything other than tokenistic; how could any claims be made for them to be genuinely 'representative' of such a vast and diverse sector? To address these questions the CWG agreed to set up a Voluntary Sector Sub-Group comprising of its five voluntary sector members and EVOC.

The Voluntary Sector Sub-Group met on three occasions in late 2003 to consider options. Three options emerged:

- i Open elections for the two places are held among all voluntary sector organisations in the city.*

This was potentially the most 'inclusive' option but was quickly dismissed by the Sub-Group as impracticable. The absence of a defined voluntary sector 'electorate', the work involved in organising such an undertaking and the lack of guarantee that candidates with the most popular support would have any claim to be representative were all viewed as negative.

- ii Existing forums and networks are invited to nominate representatives.*

This was viewed as having the advantage of making use of the existing infrastructure within the sector. However, it would take no account of those voluntary sector interests not represented by an existing network or forum. In any case, some process of selection or election of nominees would still be necessary.

- iii *A Voluntary Sector Strategic Group is set up and two representatives are drawn from it.*

This was the preferred option of the Sub-Group since it could draw in expertise from across the city, thematically and geographically, and provide a reference body for briefing the two representatives and to whom, by return, the representatives could be accountable. There remained questions about the composition of such a group and how it would be resourced and supported.

It was agreed that these options should form the basis of consultation with the sector to coincide with the consultation on the draft Compact strategy and action plan.

19 The draft strategy and action plan

In March 2004 the CWG produced the first draft of its strategy document *In Equal Respect: A Shared Vision*. It described the aims of the Compact and the principles on which it was founded and set it in the local and national context. It also contained an extremely detailed Action Plan which, in its own words, set out *'a series of actions which will be progressed over the next five years to make significant progress towards the achievement of the strategic aims outlined in the Compact'*.

In a tabular form the draft Action Plan listed 38 specific actions the Compact Partnership was committed to over the next five years. The actions were grouped under 7 broad headings:

- developing more inclusive policy and decision making
- improving the planning and delivery of services
- addressing funding and resource issues
- facilitating improved voluntary and community engagement
- ensuring change at local as well as city-wide level
- building capacity and mutual understanding
- ensuring effective implementation of the Compact

20 Consultation on the draft strategy and action plan

The CWG was committed to ensuring that the Compact strategy document was the subject as well as the product of wide consultation. It arranged a series of events in May and June 2004 at which the document was to be presented and discussed. This included a 'keynote event' in the city centre in May, followed by three 'community events' at locations around the city in June.

It was intended that the morning of each event would be open to all partners and stakeholders to discuss and give feedback on the draft strategy document. The afternoon was to be reserved for the voluntary sector only to discuss the options for representation on the Edinburgh Partnership as described in section 18 above.

On 31 March 2004 the secretariat mailed out over 1000 copies of the draft strategy with invitations to the events. Recipients were also invited to submit responses to the draft in writing if unable to attend the events. A closing date of 25 June was set. Although interest in the 'keynote event' was encouraging there was little interest in the 'community events' and these were eventually cancelled.

Over 100 delegates attended the 'keynote event' and the secretariat received a further 60 written submissions, including from each of the Compact partners. Responses to the draft strategy varied greatly; some raising specific points in relation to the action plan others commenting on the general tone of the document. In summary the consultation gave a clear welcome for the Compact and a broad endorsement of the key challenges and actions it identified. However there was a prevailing view that the action plan contained too many specific actions to all be treated as priorities and that the tabular format was unhelpful.

Many respondents also raised concerns about the resource requirements of implementing the Compact. Encouragingly, there was strong backing for EVOC having an ongoing role in supporting the Compact Partnership and the delivery of the priority actions (see section 23 below).

21 Endorsement and launch of the final strategy document

A revised draft of *In Equal Respect: A Shared Vision* was prepared by the CWG secretariat taking into account the many written submissions received and comments recorded at the 'keynote event' above. In its final form the strategy document was greatly slimmed down, abandoning the tabular list of actions in favour of a simpler statement of key priorities under each of the 7 themes referred to above (section 19).

The CWG gave its unanimous agreement to the revised draft in August 2004 and a formal launch was agreed for December 2004. In the intervening months representatives from the public sector partners took steps to ensure the Compact was profiled or endorsed at the appropriate level within each partner agency. The document was endorsed by the Edinburgh Partnership in November.

In Equal Respect: A Shared Vision was formally launched by the Lord Provost of Edinburgh on 10 December 2004 to an audience of 120 people from the voluntary and public sectors. It was the final occasion on which the CWG was 'on public view' and as on previous public occasions during the consultation period it was a potent symbol of partnership to witness representatives of the police, local authority, EVOG and the voluntary sector share a platform to promote the strategy and answer questions.

22 Transition to a Compact Partnership

The CWG met for the last time in October 2004 to finalise arrangements for the formal launch and to consider draft Articles of Operation for its successor body. As a transitional arrangement an Interim Compact Partnership was formed, with initial representation from the same partners, to manage, measure and report upon the implementation of the Compact actions. Voluntary sector representation may change, pending the development of the Voluntary Sector Strategic Group in the first half of 2005 (see section 18) and other potential public sector partners have been identified. However, the consolidation and final form of the Compact Partnership is beyond the scope of this report.

23 Resourcing the Compact

During the development phase it became clear to the CWG that there would be ongoing resource implications for supporting and servicing the Compact Partnership and ensuring the implementation of the actions the partners committed themselves to in the strategy document. Encouraged by the endorsement of its lead role it received from the voluntary sector, EVOG applied for and secured funding from CEC for a three-year period from April 2004 for a full-time Community Planning Officer, plus costs for developing the Compact website as an IT resource for communications. As well as supporting the Compact Partnership the Community Planning Officer will provide support for voluntary sector participation in community planning through the Edinburgh Partnership. An appointment to this post was made in October 2004.

24 Summary conclusions: Key factors in the success of developing the Compact

The launch of *In Equal Respect: A Shared Vision* in December 2004 drew to a close the two year period of sustained activity to develop the Compact. Of course, the real test of its success is yet to come, as the actions the partners have committed to are rolled out over the next five years.

However, securing the commitment of the partners thus far and developing the shared vision set out in the strategy document have been, in themselves, ambitious and successful undertakings.

Members of the CWG and others who have contributed to or observed this process have identified the following as the key factors in this success:

- **A clearly visible body responsible for driving the development**

The existence and membership of the CWG were made clear to all stakeholders. The CWG was highly visible on the occasions when the Compact 'went public' (consultation events, launch etc) and it was very evident that its members were working together as a team. The CWG was willing to be held accountable for its decisions and actions. Each of the public sector partners was represented at sufficiently senior level to ensure that the Compact was appropriately profiled within each agency.

- **A defined remit and timescale**

The objectives of the CWG were thought to be clearly defined from its outset and, although some slippage occurred, it set itself a finite time frame in which to complete its task. Speedy working was aided by effective, independent chairing, thorough pre-planning by the secretariat and effective delegation to sub-groups to progress particular tasks.

- **An exemplar of joint working provided by the secretariat**

The close working relationship between EVOC and CEC as initiators of the process and as joint secretariat to the CWG was seen as providing both practical advantages and a powerful symbol of partnership. This is testified by their joint success in securing the commitment of the other public sector agencies.

- **A balance between direction and selective consultation**

The CWG can claim with justification that all the priorities for action identified in the strategy and the principles on which they are based are firmly rooted in the views expressed in consultation. Although there was evidence of some 'consultation fatigue' at times and criticisms of 'going over old ground' the repetition of familiar points aided to reinforce them, especially when recorded by independent consultants.

Judgement was also required when deciding *when* and *about what* was consultation appropriate and when a more directive approach was called for. As one CWG member succinctly put it:

'Guided by EVOC we had to predict the mood of the [voluntary] sector. It would have been dishonest to ask for views about things that weren't negotiable and time-wasting to consult where the sector was looking for a lead. We didn't go into consultation with a blank piece of paper. We tried to come up with a menu and where we had a preferred option we told people so.'

- **A strategy which promises short-term, tangible outcomes**

A very real benefit of the extensive consultation is that the strategy document commits the partners to actions of immediate practical concern to the voluntary and community sectors. One delegate at the consultation event on the draft strategy no doubt spoke for many when she said:

'There is nothing in the draft I can find to disagree with. Without doubt the priorities you [the CWG] have identified are our priorities. If you deliver on these actions I and others like me will be convinced of the worth of all this work.'

- This report was written by:

Steve Kent, Training and Development Worker, EVOC
on behalf of the Edinburgh Compact Working Group

Tel: +44 (0)131 555 9125
email: stevekent@evoc.org.uk

- Copies of the report may be downloaded from the EVOC website at: www.evoc.org.uk

- Further enquiries and requests for progress reports on the implementation of the Edinburgh Compact should be addressed to:

Sallie Anderson, Community Planning Officer, EVOC

Tel: +44 (0)131 555 9138
email: sallieanderson@evoc.org.uk