

Sheffield Health Compact Protocol On Partnership Executive Summary

What is the Sheffield Health Compact?

It is an agreement between the NHS Trusts and the voluntary, community and faith (VCF) sector, about how they work together. All parties signed up to common principles in April 2004. Since then, working groups have been developing protocols on funding, partnership, and participation and consultation.

Why have a protocol?

The aim of the three protocols is to make a positive impact on the relationship that exists between the statutory agencies and the VCF Sector in Sheffield. The protocol will help to develop and sustain effective procedures that result in a more effective relationship between NHS trusts and the VCF sector.

The protocol's long-term aim is for the sector's full role to be adequately supported by acknowledging the role of the sector in the great contribution it makes to providing services to those who are of greatest need.

Aims of the Partnership protocol

- A partnership can be seen as when two or more organisations work together for a common goal. Partnership working is essential in nearly all areas of work within local communities. Equality is key - it enables power sharing, representation and equal influence.
- Partners from all sectors - public, voluntary, community and private bring together a variety of interests, skills, resources and experience to joint working.
- Genuine equal partnership needs to represent the communities it is working within. If this happens, the partnership will be able to make decisions appropriate to all sections of the community.

Main principles

To achieve genuine partnership working the Health and VCF sector need to demonstrate how they can work cooperatively and on equal terms:

- All partners have the opportunity to shape and set agendas
- Everyone is able to contribute to debate and discussion
- Everyone has an influence on policy and decision making
- The partnership is representative of the community it serves
- The partnership includes the right organisations and people that can contribute to its aims

Main benefits of working in partnership

- Working towards common aims that are understood by all involved
- Sharing ideas, resources, skills and experiences
- Harnessing the talents of everyone involved and providing support for each other

- Developing an understanding of how different partner organisations work
- Actions more likely to meet local community needs; this contributes to community cohesion
- Increases coordination of service delivery within communities and avoids duplication

Main Barriers and Challenges to a successful partnership

Lack of trust and a suspicion of others	Organisations don't want to let go of own identity
Inequalities of power and control	Organisations with the resources control the agenda and debate
Failure to recognise different personalities and communication styles	Lack of respect for each others experiences and backgrounds
Lack of clarity about purpose, roles, responsibility and leadership	Why are you working together, who is doing what and how can people participate?
A lack of appropriate representation	This can be a source of tension and disengagement and can mean that the intended community benefits are not fully realised

How to build a successful partnership

To ensure a balance of inclusiveness and effectiveness, time and effort needs to be put into building partnerships and making sure that they work. Things to consider include:

Define a clear role and purpose	What is the partnership supposed to be doing? Agree a shared, clear reason for joint working
Agree membership	Who should be on the partnership and how are they selected? Are the right partners involved that can contribute to the agenda?
Be representative	Is the membership representative of the community?
Define responsibilities and roles for the partners	Why are they there and who are they accountable to?
Establish protocols	Have open and active decision-making. What structures and procedures support partnership working?
Share power and engage minority interests	Make sure that the agenda is not dominated by one or two organisations
Build capacity	Support skill development across organisations and amongst partners.
Communicate clearly	Use a variety of communication methods that allows everyone to get involved.
Be accountable	Are there effective procedures in place that set out the accountability of the Partnership and the actions of the individual partners?
Monitor what you are doing	Design a work programme, define clear tasks which have real outcomes.
Review how effective your partnership is	Review your strengths and weaknesses and agree what to do next together.

Checklist for Partnership Working

	Key things to consider	✓
1.	Your organisation is signed up to the COMPACT and this code of conduct	
2.	The purpose for the Partnership working is clearly understood by both parties	
3.	You will negotiate and agree protocols for joint working	
4.	You will identify key contacts and communication links	
5.	You will identify support and resource needs for partnership working	
6.	COMPACT Partnership breach: in a situation of conflict either partner can seek advice	

	from the COMPACT steering group and then national COMPACT	
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