

Mind the gap: voluntary and community perspectives on 10 years of the Compact



History of the Compact

- Recommendation of the Deakin Commission's Report 1996
- Change in Government 1997
- The Compact 1998
- Five codes of practice since 1998
- 96% of councils have local Compacts

What is the Compact?

- Agreement between Government and Voluntary and Community Sector
- Outlines ways of working
- Emphasis on partnership working
- Mutual benefit to both sectors and to wider society

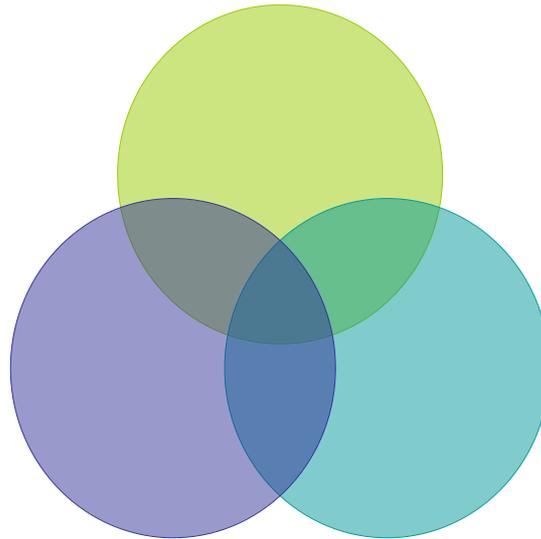
National Compact bodies

**Compact Commission
Ombudsman
Mediation**

**Statutory
Sector**

**Voluntary
Sector**

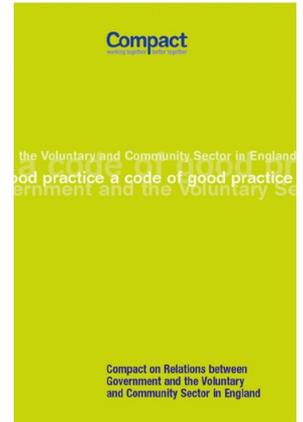
**Office of the
Third Sector (OTS)**



**Compact Voice
Compact Advocacy
Public Law Project**

Key Compact principles

- Independence of the sector
- Equality of opportunity
- Partnership working
- Meaningful and timely consultation
- Sustainable, strategic, proportionate, consistent and transparent funding
- Respect and open dialogue



Codes of Good Practice

- Funding and Procurement
- Consultation and Policy Appraisal
- Volunteering
- Community Groups
- Black and Ethnic Minority Groups



Key Government Undertakings

Funding and Procurement code:

- Involving the sector in programme design
- Clear application processes and timescales
- Full cost recovery
- Risk management
- Advance payment
- Longer-term funding
- Proportionate monitoring and focus on outcomes
- Performance management
- 3-months' notice and reasons why when funding is terminated



Key Government Undertakings

Consultation and Policy Appraisal code:

- Consulting the sector on issues likely to affect it
- 12-week consultations in accessible formats
- Making clear what can be changed
- Giving clear feedback on responses received and why decisions were taken

Volunteering code:

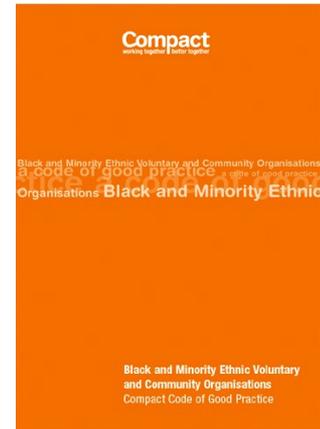
- Consult on and minimise barriers to volunteering
- Improve understanding of volunteering



Key Government Undertakings

Black and Minority Ethnic Groups code:

- A joint review when funding is withdrawn
- A flexible and supportive approach during crisis
- Targeted consultation and funding to reflect the barriers these groups face



Community Groups code:

- Extra support for accessing funding, consultation and partnerships
- Support on volunteers, small grants, community assets and capacity building



Key Voluntary Sector Undertakings

- Maintain high standards of governance and conduct
- Respect confidentiality and be accountable to the law
- Involve and consult stakeholders where appropriate and communicate their views clearly and accurately
- Promote effective working relationships with Government bodies
- Develop quality standards and put in place policies and standards as appropriate to ensure best practice and equality.

Perspectives from the Sector

Reflections on Compact Voice's Annual Sector Report 2007

- Compact Advocacy Programme Annual Report
- Focus Group Findings Report
- Focus Group Verification Workshop Report
- Local Compact Voice Network Member Feedback Report

The Compact



is like gym membership.

There's no point having one unless you use it!

Apple Pie



Marriage



“The Compact might not have any teeth but it can give you a really nice kiss, and I know which I’d sooner have.”

COMPACT ADVOCACY PROGRAMME EVIDENCE

Overall caseload

80 cases and 37 enquiries

62% of cases are with local statutory bodies

38% are with national statutory bodies

89% had a Funding and Procurement code breach*

34% had a Consultation code breach

11% had a BME code breach

9% had breaches of the Compact (overarching document)

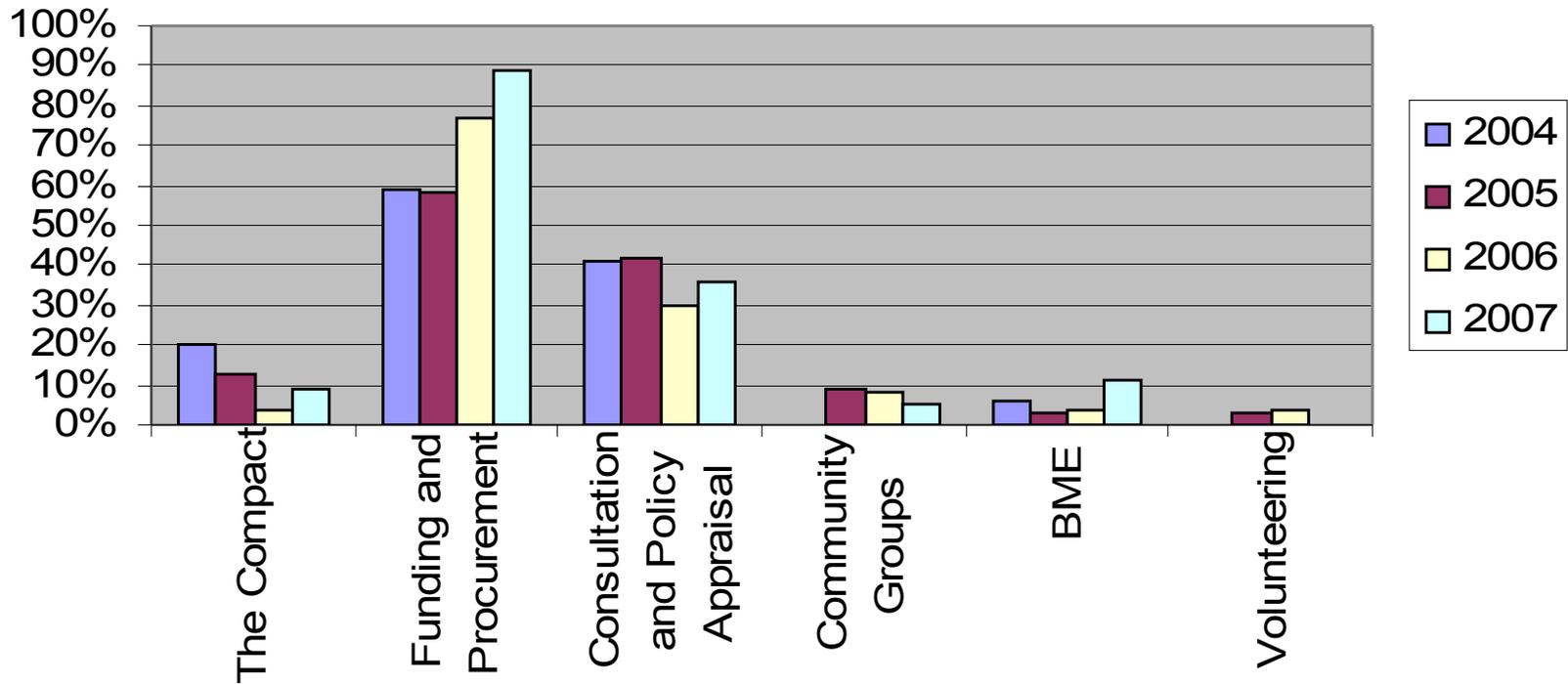
4% had a Community groups code breach

Many cases have breaches of more than one code and are therefore counted in each relevant category.

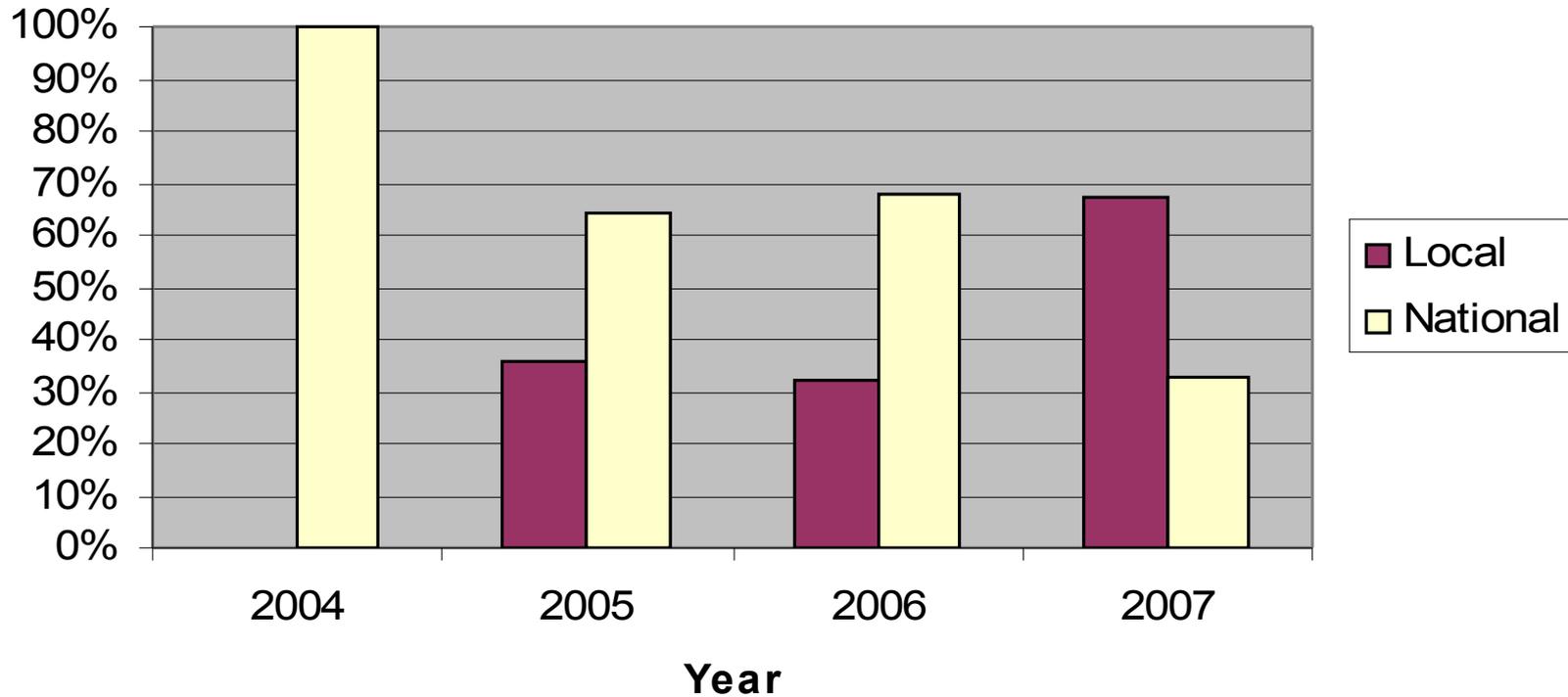
Common cases

- Lack of FCR
- Payment in arrears
- Lack of notice
- Poor communication
- Disproportionate terms and conditions
- Lack of consultation
- Poor consultation practice
- Lack of understanding of BME sector

Percentage of cases breaching each code



Percentage of local and national cases





Where the problems lie

At national level:

- Complicated contract arrangements involving several different public bodies on different levels, that leave both the funding body and the voluntary organisation unsure of if the Compact applies.
- Overburdensome and disproportionate monitoring arrangements, often blamed on EU regulation but sometimes added at a UK level.



- the ignorance of the Compact
- the ignoring of the Compact,
- the lack of reporting of compliance
- the lack of reporting of non compliance and wall of silence

The Compact's teeth

- Groups using it
- Compact Advocacy
- Public law and judicial review
- Ombudsman
- Mediation
- Compact in law debate...



Relationship between the sector and government

An improving relationship?

Between 2001 and 2006, Compact Voice, recorded a steady improvement in the relationship between the sector and government. A 2007 DSC survey found that only 18 percent of respondents felt the relationship between government and the sector is getting better. Nearly half of respondents felt it is getting worse. Particularly around funding

A coded description for conflict

For many on both sides of the relationship, the Compact has come to be seen as a tool for the sector to use to challenge government. Rather than regarding it as a positive means of partnership working and mutual cooperation the Compact is increasingly seen in negative or adversarial terms. The government often see it as “just another thing they have to comply with” and the sector see it as “a weapon of last resort”.

An unequal partnership

The relationship between the sector and government is inevitably one of power imbalance, however a partnership is not necessarily a relationship of equals. The challenge for the Compact is not about creating equal partners but about treating partners equally.

“What is at issue here is an attempt to change the culture of government/voluntary sector relationships.

This is bound to take time. In the next few years, the circular relationship mentioned above must become positive, not negative.”

William Plowden

Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly 2003; 32; 415

Thank you !