



Coventry **COMPACT**

Inform, Consult
& Involve

September 2011

1. Introduction to Compact

Coventry's Compact is about building true partnership working between the statutory, voluntary and community sectors. It's about recognising our different contributions (and utilising both the common ground and the differences between them) so as to work in partnership more effectively and to pool our efforts to improve the quality of life for Coventry people. It's about promoting good practice, and identifying and challenging poor practice.

2. The Inform, Consult & Involve (ICI) Framework

Increasing the number of people who feel able to influence decisions affecting them is a local priority and is set out in the Coventry Partnership Sustainable Community Strategy. The Coventry Partnership has developed the Inform, Consult & Involve (ICI) Framework to ensure that:

By working together

people within the community

and partner organisations

will deliver activities and services

that are more effective,

meet need *and*

deliver better value for money

within a culture of understanding, mutual respect and trust.

This code embeds this commitment within the Coventry Compact and ensures that working appropriately to the ICI Framework becomes a key part of working to the Compact. This code takes key points from the Framework - the full framework can be downloaded at:
www.coventrypartnership.com/research

3. Principles

Partner organisations have signed up to work according to the following principles:

We inform, consult and/or involve local people and organisations:

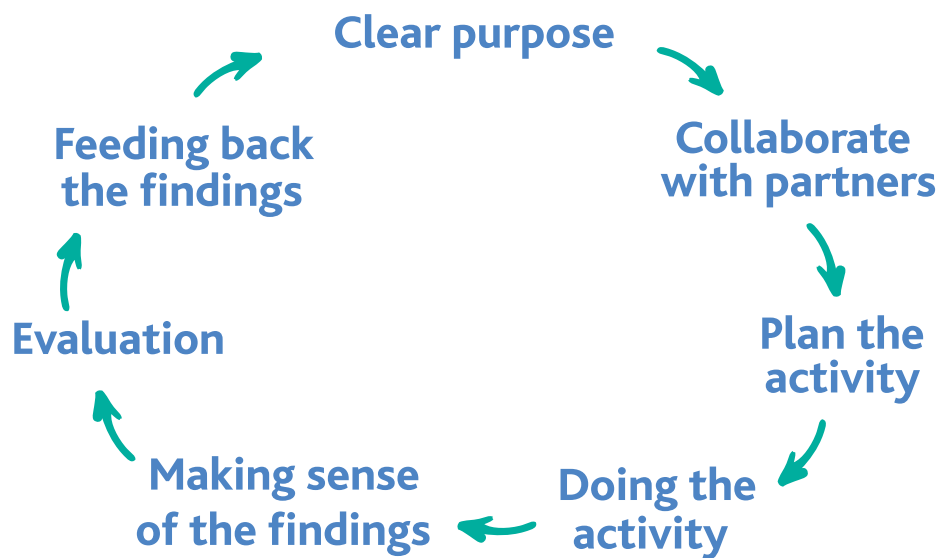
- To provide genuine opportunities for local people and organisations, including businesses, to have a say and to work with public bodies to make a difference to quality of life in the city;
- To help us achieve high quality, relevant public services that meet the needs of our communities;

We will work together to improve the effectiveness and co-ordination of informing, consulting and involving activities together, by encouraging:

- Collaboration amongst partners to undertake joint activity and where appropriate to jointly interpret and to make use of each others findings
- Better communications, through closer and more effective working amongst communications and consultation practitioners
- Partners to make good use of networks, skills and resources available in community and voluntary sectors and ensure involvement is valued and appropriately resourced
- Practitioners to improve their skills and to exchange ideas and good practice
- More people to get involved and have a say, particularly those whose voices are least often heard

When we undertake joint activities we will:

- Be honest and open about whether we are informing people, consulting their opinions or seeking to involve them in other ways
- Be clear about the level of influence that is on offer
- Choose methods and tools that are fit for purpose and succeed in engaging people who are most affected or interested
- Seek to involve all partners with a stake in outcomes of the activity, including individuals, service users, businesses, voluntary and community organisations and those that have the authority to make change happen
- Work in ways that are fair, inclusive, sensitive to difference and seek to promote equality / inclusion
- Feed back to people about what was decided and why, and about what difference their involvement has made
- Evaluate activities to understand their impact and learn how to be more effective in the future.



4. Examples of good practice

- a. Be clear about the purpose of the activity, who the appropriate audience is, and any groups of people who will be affected by the outcomes of your activity but whose voices are harder to hear
- b. Once you are clear on what it is that you are trying to achieve and what audience you are going to target, choose appropriate methods, including ensuring that Hard to Reach / Hard to Hear groups have a genuine opportunity to be engaged
- c. Identify in advance what communication tools you are going to use for publicising and feeding back / sharing findings after the activity
- d. Avoid unnecessary duplication – contact the other partners to see if they already have the data / information you are after either partially or fully, or who could join up with to carry out your activity to ensure that it achieves maximum benefits
- e. Consider how community / voluntary sector practitioners contribute / benefit and resource this
- f. Involve other stakeholders, including commissioners of services / decision makers in the planning of your activity
- g. Ensure that your activity is accessible to your audience, is fair and sensitive to difference, and promotes equality / inclusion
- h. Make it clear to participants how much influence they have in achieving the outcomes of the activity
- i. Analyse and interpret findings to high standards so that other partners are more likely to use them
- j. Evaluate the activity - what can you learn from for future activities? How many people were involved and was it representative, including Hard to Reach Communities? What changes have been made as a result of the activity and did those engaged feel better informed or able to influence the decision, service or policy?
- k. Share an accessible summary of findings with participants that makes it clear what difference their contribution made / will make
- l. Communicate findings and lessons learned to the other partnerships and stakeholders
- m. Give early notice of forthcoming consultations, where possible, allowing enough time for voluntary and community organisations to involve their service users, beneficiaries, members, volunteers and trustees in preparing responses.
- n. Allow sufficient time for meaningful engagement, usually 12 weeks, or with clear explanations and rationale for shorter time-frames.

5. Examples of unacceptable practice

- a. Not getting back to participants with the results or impact of their contribution
- b. Not seeing through the decisions or changes that have come about because of the consultation or involvement
- c. Failing to engage those who are most affected; or excluding particular groups or individuals because they challenge decisions, are critical or may not be satisfied with activities or processes.
- d. Presenting an activity in ways that lead people to think they are being consulted when a decision has already been made
- e. Using methods because they are easy to use where the people most interested or affected by the issue won't be able to engage - e.g. using an electronic survey to seek views of people who don't have access to the internet
- f. Selective use of methods and / or findings to skew a consultation to confirm a pre-set course of action

6. For further information

To access full copies of the Coventry Compact, visit:

www.vacoventry.org.uk/compact or www.coventrypartnership.com

For more information on Compact regionally and nationally, visit:

www.thecompact.org.uk

For an example of Involvement Standards visit:

www.coventrycypsp.org.uk/ccm/navigation/get-involved

