

Compact Champions Workshops: Key Challenges

This note is a broad overview of the common challenges faced by Compact Champions who attended the 6 regional workshops in June and July 2009. It provides a “snap shot” of championing across the country. This information will be used by Compact Voice, supported by the Commission for the Compact, to design tools to support Champions.

Overview of key issues and challenges

“Selling” the Compact

A common challenge for Champions is “selling” the Compact within their organisation and externally, to Compact partners. Explaining what the Compact is, demonstrating its value and highlighting how it helps organisations achieve objectives was an issue for development. Tailoring the advantages of a Compact way of working to different public sector departments [e.g. commissioners], different levels of seniority and linking it to helping achieve organisational objectives, for example, improved Local Authority National Indicator 7 score or better was considered crucial. Many felt that this approach would help senior staff/elected members to understand and buy into the Compact. How the Compact could benefit public sector organisations in a recession was also a challenge.

Evidencing Compact success

Many Champions felt this was a challenge; how could they sell the Compact if they didn't know what it had achieved. Those Local Compacts with implementation or monitoring groups that tracked and recorded where the Compact had been used and the difference it has made felt they had more chance of increasing awareness and implementation. This was a key action for many champions on their next steps. The issue of marketing skills amongst champions was also raised.

Demystifying language

Many champions felt language connected with the Compact needed to be simplified and made relevant to smaller groups. This would help people understand and engage with the Compact. However, where a Local Compact was embedded, it gave champions an arena to report Compact wins and therefore increase awareness and implementation.

Linking the Compact to Local Strategic Partnership

Ensuring that the Local Strategic Partnership [LSP] recognises and embeds the Local Compact is a challenge for many champions. Where the Compact was formally recognised and supported by the LSP, Champions felt they had a legitimacy to undertake their role and a forum to promote Compact successes.

Recognising the value of third sector

Some champions felt that a key challenge was to increase the knowledge and understanding of the distinctive value of the third sector, particularly in those parts of public sector organisations where interaction was infrequent and knowledge limited.

Elected Members

Almost every workshop agreed that securing greater involvement of elected members as Champions [or more generally in Local Compacts] was considered a challenge; but if overcome; could reap significant benefits for Local Compact implementation.

Resources and support

Financial resources and time were a key challenge. Many champions felt they needed direct financial investment to improve how they champion; for example, creating a full time post or buying in training to support champions within an area. Some champions suggested that Compact Partners could top slice a small percentage and create an overall champion post. However, many recognised that the current economic climate may mean that securing additional resources would be difficult. In this case, some champions suggested that ensuring that senior managers created an enabling environment for championing should be pursued. The issue of support was felt strongly amongst third sector organisation Champions.

Clarity of role

Despite being recognised as a “champion”, many delegates still lacked clarity over the action that a champion should undertake and what their role encompassed. Many felt a job description or basic role description would help. The research addresses this.