



Empowering the voluntary sector

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Working with



Welcome to the eleventh edition of the newsletter

In this edition we look at two cases where the Compact has been used to resolve disputes with public bodies. The first looks at how Sustain, an alliance for better food and farming, used the refreshed national Compact to resolve a dispute around full cost recovery. Our second case study looks at how, when cuts threatened the sector, Thurrock CVS played a lead role using the Compact to promote and gain the best outcome for all.

In this edition we return to our popular “Did you know” articles in which lawyers at the Public Law Project give us an overview on how judicial review and the ombudsman services can be used to resolve public law disputes.

The first year of the new project has proved to be very successful in terms of the training and advice work carried out. Ingela Andersson and Terry Perkins provide an overview of our activities. The EVS project team and Voice4Change England have been working more closely together on some joint outcomes surrounding training and support for the BME sector. Ravi Chauhan, the BME Compact Officer at Voice4Change England, and Terry Perkins outline the specific training events for BME organisations.

Finally the Compact Voice team provides an overview of a series of regional events it is hosting: “Building Better Communities Through Stronger Partnerships”. Partners from both the public and voluntary and community sectors will come together to work through common problems, share best practice, and find common solutions.

Using the Compact to gain full cost recovery

Daniel Fluskey, Compact Advocate, Compact Advocacy Team

Sustain – Receiving full cost recovery

A key element of the Compact is recognition that when voluntary and community organisations are funded to deliver projects by any level of government that this funding is provided on a full cost recovery basis. This means that as well as ‘core’ costs for the project, relevant administrative costs and overheads are also provided for. This can include anything from use of office space, insurance, and management costs. We strongly advocate that all government funds voluntary organisations on this basis.

This recent case, raised with the Compact Advocacy Programme by Sustain, shows how it can be tricky to achieve full cost recovery in real-life scenarios, but that by using the Compact it can be achieved.

The problem

Sustain, an alliance for better food and farming, advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, enrich society and culture and promote equity. Sustain had a funding arrangement with the London Development Agency (LDA) to deliver a project in London. The LDA withdrew funding for the project without Sustain receiving appropriate costs that they had legitimately incurred.

The Compact issue

Although the term ‘full cost recovery’ does not appear in the refreshed national Compact, the principles that it underlines are clearly stated.

Government undertakes to:

8.1 Recognise that it is appropriate to include relevant overhead and administrative costs in applications.

11.2 Make payments within 10 working days of invoices being received.

Furthermore, it is important to think about why these principles are so important. For voluntary and community organisations it is crucial to recover the costs associated with a project so that they can manage their own affairs well, that other projects they run do not suffer, and that they do not run services at a loss, which could threaten their future financial stability. Funding bodies have an interest in ensuring that organisations can manage and administer their activities effectively and this means that the projects that they work on deliver the best outcomes for service users and will provide the best value for money.

The action

Following the LDA's withdrawal from the project, Sustain wrote to them to find out what would happen now that funding had been withdrawn and request that their demonstrated and evidenced costs would be released to them. After not receiving a response from the LDA, Sustain contacted the Compact Advocacy Programme.

Having determined the issue and discussing possible options we wrote to the LDA to support Sustain's position on the basis of the Compact principles that payment should be prompt and that organisations should be funded on a full cost recovery basis. The LDA offered to settle the matter with Sustain, but not at the full cost rate that they were entitled to. Compact Advocacy continued to advocate on Sustain's behalf stating that they are entitled to recover all of the administrative and overhead costs that they had incurred.

The outcome

Compact Advocacy continued to advocate on Sustain's behalf stating that they are entitled to recover all of the administrative and overhead costs that they had incurred. Following correspondence between Compact Advocacy and the LDA where the LDA offered to settle on a couple of occasions, but at a low rate, they then made an offer to Sustain to make a payment at the full cost rate as first asked for. This was of course a positive outcome for Sustain who, after working with the LDA originally in good faith, were out of pocket and justifiably needed the costs that they had legitimately incurred paid back to them.

Did you know?

How judicial review can help to resolve disputes and improve the strength of your relationship

Diane Astin, Acting Director, Public Law Project

Judicial review is a special kind of legal action whereby individuals and organisations can challenge the decisions of public bodies. Broadly, decisions are challenged on the basis that they are unlawful. This may be for a range of reasons:

- the public body didn't have the power to do what it did;
- the public body didn't act fairly;
- the public body didn't take into account certain important things when making its decision (this could include its legal duties and/or information relevant to the decision);
- the decision is one no reasonable or rational person could have made.

The outcome of a successful claim for judicial review will usually be that the court cancels (quashes) the decision made by the public body. This means the decision must be taken again.

Most judicial review claims are about the way a decision is made rather than the merits of the decision itself. However, if a public body has to reconsider its decision and take into account things it did not take into account in the first place it may well reach a different decision.

It takes quite a long time for a claim to be heard by the court but a judge can make an order on an urgent basis to stop a decision being implemented or to order a public body to do something (e.g. provide services needed in an emergency) until a claim for judicial review can be heard.

Because of the need for those affected to be able to rely on decisions made by public bodies there are some special rules that apply in judicial review cases:

- A claim must be brought promptly and, in any event, within three months. So, even if a public body has acted unlawfully, it may be too late to challenge a decision.
- The court considers the case initially to decide whether to give permission for the claim to be brought. This is to filter out claims that are unlikely to succeed.
- The court has a discretion about what remedy to grant. A court may agree that a decision was made in an unlawful way but decide that the decision will stand. This could be because the public interest in the decision remaining intact outweighs the public interest in the decision having to be taken again.
- Judicial review should be used as a last resort. The court may refuse permission for a claim if other ways of resolving the dispute haven't been tried.

Judicial review claims can be brought by individuals or organisations. In all cases, a decision must be made about how the claim will be paid for. Judicial review claims are expensive. Usually, the claimant's lawyers will need to be paid although it is sometimes possible that the lawyers will represent the claimant for free (pro bono). Further, if a claim for judicial review is not successful, the usual rule is that the unsuccessful claimant must pay the legal costs of the successful public body.

The outcome of a successful claim for judicial review will usually be that the court cancels (quashes) the decision made by the public body.

If an individual can get legal aid to bring a claim they will not have to pay their own lawyers; instead their costs are paid by the Legal Services Commission. And, if they lose the case, the usual rule is that they will not be ordered to pay the opponent's costs.

Voluntary organisations cannot get legal aid. They must pay their own legal costs or find lawyers willing to act pro bono. However, they still face the risk of having to pay the opponent's legal costs if they are not successful. In some cases, where the issue at stake affects a lot of people and it is in the public interest that it is resolved, the court can make an order limiting the organisation's liability for the opponent's costs so that the claim can be heard. This is called a 'Protective Costs Order'. Such orders will not be made if the organisation has an interest in the claim (e.g. if it is about the organisation's funding).

Sometimes when an issue is about the funding of an organisation the best way for the case to be brought is for individuals who use the services provided by the organisation to bring the claim. The courts will usually accept that such individuals have sufficient interest in the issue to bring a claim for judicial review. Such individuals may be able to get legal aid providing the Legal Services Commission accepts that they will benefit sufficiently from bringing the claim.

Most judicial review claims don't end up in a hearing. When the parties have considered the legal arguments they usually try to reach a compromise. Often a public body will agree to withdraw its decision and reconsider.

Many organisations believe that bringing a claim for judicial review against a funding body will mean that will never get funding from that body in the future, or that the relationship will be destroyed. However, it is our experience that organisations who have brought or threatened judicial review find that the relationship is strengthened; the public body is more aware of its legal duties and the organisation is treated with more respect.

As indicated above, judicial review should be used as a last resort. It may be more appropriate for a dispute to be resolved by way of a formal complaint or by mediation. But, when it is necessary to act quickly and the public body is not responding to your efforts to resolve things by agreement, judicial review is a very powerful weapon.

Remember, the voluntary and community sector can be supported through this process by the Empowering the Voluntary Sector project. This project brings together the expertise at the Public Law Project and Compact Advocacy to help you manage disputes with the public sector. If you are facing a dispute with a public body or think that a problem is about to arise, contact the advice team (Monday-Friday 10.00-16.00) telephone 020 7520 3161 or email evsAdvice@ncvo-vol.org.uk. If you want to find out more about the Empowering the Voluntary Sector project or would like to attend one of our one-day workshops to find out more about how to use public law and the Compact to manage public law disputes then email terry.perkins@navca.org.uk.

Using the Compact to balance cuts from the public sector

Daniel Fluskey, Compact Advocate, Compact Advocacy Team

Too often the Compact is seen just as a set of principles and commitments; something a local authority draws up with the voluntary sector, pays lip service to and name-checks every now and then, but doesn't seem to make any real difference. While the drawing up of a local Compact and putting in place a framework such as a Compact Implementation Group are good starting points, what really matters is trying to embed a Compact way of working. This means agreeing on the principles and then building on this by working together effectively from the beginning and putting things right when they go wrong.

Admittedly, in times where money is tight and there is more pressure on organisations in both sectors it can be hard to keep to these Compact principles and, unless care is taken, a Compact way of working can be overlooked when having to make tough decisions quickly.

It's not all doom and gloom though. Compact working is evident in local areas all around the country, where public bodies and voluntary organisations are working together effectively to deal with problems that

are being faced. Indeed, it is even more important in the current economic climate to use your Compact as it gives you a foundation and mechanism to work through issues with a focus on delivering the best outcomes for service users and communities.

While the drawing up of a local Compact and putting in place a framework such as a Compact Implementation Group are good starting points, what really matters is trying to embed a Compact way of working.

One area where a Compact way of working has helped both sectors work through difficult situations is Thurrock. We aren't saying that everything has always been perfect there, but working in a Compact way has brought about good results and ones that can be used and followed in other local areas.

Managing funding cuts

With less money available, local authorities and councils have to make cuts. Funding overall for the voluntary sector is one area where savings might be targeted.

Poor practice:

It could be thought that a quick and relatively simple way of doing this would be to make unilateral cuts across the board, for example cutting the budget by 20%. This would certainly seem to be bad practice however, as a blanket cut taken without consultation or assessment takes nothing into account in terms of the effect it would have on organisations and the services they provide for people.

Good practice:

Instead of a unilateral cut, in Thurrock the funder worked with local groups to agree priorities and assess the impact of any potential cuts to the sector and organisations. By consulting with the sector it meant that the local authority had much more robust information on what effect a reduction of funds would have. The council sought to talk to organisations and encourage input on the viability of savings before an impact on services would have any direct effect. This helped to provide a more informed picture of the impact of cuts, and subsequently no blanket cuts to the sector were made.

Also important in terms of Compact working is looking at how the voluntary sector reacted. When faced with potential cuts from funders local groups can find themselves in a much stronger position by coming together and giving a united response. Thurrock CVS played a lead role in coordinating the response from voluntary organisations and worked with the funder to promote the best outcome for the sector. Importantly, by using Compact Voice's good practice recording tool they're ensuring that this good practice gets recorded and the knowledge gets passed on within the organisations.

The result of this Compact working from both sides is an outcome that is mutually beneficial for both sectors. The local authority gained evidence of the impact that their funding was having and can see that it is delivering value for money services. Moreover, they are paving the way for the future – for joint impact assessments, consultation and continuing to work together well.

Although this is just one example in one area it illustrates the value of the Compact and the importance of working in a Compact way. Hearing about examples from other areas can help inspire good practice in your area – indeed Thurrock used an example from Merton to kick-start this process. Good practice is out there and is happening right now – if one area can do it then so can yours!

Don't forget, if you use the principles of Compact or public law to make these sorts of changes to the way your public sector partners work with you, then share them with your colleagues around the country through this newsletter. If you have a story to share then email terry.perkins@navca.org.uk to find out more about publishing your successes in the newsletter.

What has the first year of our partnership brought to the voluntary and community sector?

Ingela Andersson, Compact Advocate, Compact Advocacy Team and Terry Perkins, Public Law Training Officer, NAVCA

The project has had a great first year in its new format. Thirty four training courses were delivered, 139 organisations received direct and personalised advice and support from the Compact Advocacy Programme (CAP) and 40 of those organisations also received legal advice from the Public Law Project (PLP). Members of the project team have also attended numerous events around the country, talking to frontline organisations, raising awareness about the Compact and public law and increasing the confidence of staff and volunteers about their rights and ways to challenge bad practice.

Advice team

As well as over-the-phone advice, our teams at CAP and PLP have given organisations support such as:

- attending meetings with local authority staff including at chief executive level and minister level for national cases
- helping organisations draft press releases to send to local press about their situation
- writing to public bodies on behalf of coalitions of voluntary organisations
- identifying Compact breaches and non-compliance with other government guidance
- sign-posting to guidance, training, regulation and resources available for voluntary organisations.

CAP case successes include:

- a government department paying out over £20,000 to an organisation who had their funding cut in an unfair way that was contrary to the Compact
- a local authority withdrawing a policy and re-taking a consultation where a service benefitting elderly and disabled people had been cut without following due process
- a payment of £58,000 secured for an organisation that had been denied full cost recovery
- after over 12 months of involvement of CAP, a regional public body agreed to make a final payment to a small local organisation, which enabled them to fulfil their duties as employers, paying final salaries and holiday entitlements
- the Home Office agreeing to change the monitoring requirement of a voluntary organisation, since it amounted to disproportionate requirements and would have threatened their independence. In response to the advocate's intervention the case contact said: "I am sure your intervention broke what appeared to be a deadlock"
- Leeds City Council changing the terms and conditions of a contract after the CAP wrote to them, putting forward a voluntary organisation's concerns and pointing out how it breached the Compact
- a London local authority providing assurance regarding the future of an organisation's premises, after a dispute about its use.

This does not mean that the lawyers at PLP have had nothing to do! We can see from the figures that:

- in 18 cases advice was given to CAP as to the public law aspects of the case
- in 14 cases contact was made directly with the voluntary organisation and advice and support given
- in five cases substantial and ongoing advice and support, including representation, was provided over an extended period
- in two additional cases in which substantial ongoing advice and support was given this included sending to the public body a Letter

Before Claim (setting out the grounds for an intended judicial review claim). In both of these cases, the outcome was positive: the public body agreed to withdraw or reconsider the decision under challenge.

- in one case, PLP advised that there were grounds for a claim for judicial review but were unable to undertake the litigation and referred the claim to a specialist firm of solicitors.

In the majority of cases in which advice was given to CAP, the conclusion was that the case was either more suitable for work under the Compact or that further information was needed from the organisation in order to advise on the most suitable course of action. In a number of cases, advice was given to CAP as to how they may assist the organisation, such as assisting with Freedom of Information requests, or internal appeals.

Evaluation of the advice service provided has so far been very positive with a majority of respondents being happy or very happy with the support they have received.

Other areas of activity have included:

- CAP providing vital input to the Compact Refresh process and working closely with Compact Voice throughout the refresh process
- web pages for both CAP and NAVCA having been updated with new information and downloads to support local dispute resolution and provide information on our training programme
- NAVCA extending the social media element of its website (navcaboodle) so that the EVS workshop attendees can continue to receive information, discuss themes and network with each other
- CAP meeting with a number of public bodies at national, regional and local level to influence change and raise awareness of the Compact
- NAVCA working with the team to refresh and develop resources for the project's training activities.

Training

The training programme was redesigned to better represent the new project's work and was launched in April 2009. The new format with greater Compact content has been well received, which is supported by an increase from 14% in the first three years, to over 32% of delegates stating in the (immediate) post-workshop evaluations that they will use their local Compact in dispute resolution. Another marked increase in post-workshop actions is seen in "Dealing with issues with more confidence", from around 8% to 23%.

The detail from the 34 workshops we delivered shows that 323 people from 268 organisations attended. The split of organisations was 66% frontline and 28% local support and development organisations. The breakdown of participants shows that we deliver training to:

- development workers – 42%
- managers – 28%
- chief officers – 18%
- trustees – 13%

The most common action points from the end-of-workshop evaluations were:

- 42% plan to brief colleagues
- 33% plan to improve record keeping
- 32% plan to revisit/use their local Compact
- 23% say they will approach an issue in a more confident manner
- 22% say they will access guidance

Prior to attending a workshop, delegates are asked to rate their confidence in negotiation with public sector bodies. Nearly 85% score between 1 and 2 (1 being low and 4 being high) and after the workshop over 96% score between 3 and 4.

Over 95% of delegates score the "Trainer meeting expectations" and the "Style of training" between 3 and 4 (same scoring system as above).

Did you know?

How the ombudsman service can support your organisation when in dispute with a public body

Ravi Low-Beer, Project Lawyer, Public Law Project

Introduction

Just about every public body now has a complaints procedure, and using them can be a cheap and quick way of obtaining justice when things go wrong. But inherent in any complaints procedure is a lack of impartiality (since the organisation that is being complained about is investigating itself). Where an internal complaint does not bring satisfaction, consideration should be given to complaining to an ombudsman.

A significant proportion of complaints made to ombudsmen are not investigated¹, sometimes because they are outside the ombudsman's remit (e.g. the complaint is brought against a body that the ombudsman has no power to investigate, is premature or is out of time) or because the ombudsman simply decides not to investigate it, or having started an investigation, decides to discontinue it.

To help readers navigate the system, this article summarises key issues for prospective complainants in England² to consider before bringing a complaint, and gives links to guidance and information published by the ombudsmen online.

Types of ombudsman

There are many different ombudsmen, but the ones of most interest to the voluntary sector are the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) and the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO), whose job

¹ For example, see the LGO's detailed complaints statistics for 2008/09 at <http://www.lgo.org.uk/publications/annual-report/>

² The position in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is different, and is not covered here.

comprises two roles: the Parliamentary Ombudsman (PO), and the Health Service Ombudsman (HSO).

The PO can investigate those government departments and other bodies specified in Schedule 2 to the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967. A list is published on the PO's website at http://www.ombudsman.org.uk/can_the_ombudsman_help_you/pathway/who_can_we_look_at.html.

The HSO can investigate complaints about NHS or NHS-funded healthcare. The bodies that are subject to investigation are specified in Section 2 of the Health Service Commissioner Act 1993, and include Strategic Health Authorities, PCTs, NHS foundation trusts, and NHS trusts managing hospitals or other establishments or facilities.

The LGO can investigate local authorities specified in section 25 of the Local Government Act 1974, including metropolitan, district and county councils. A full list is published on the LGO's website at <http://www.lgo.org.uk/making-a-complaint/who-you-can-complain-about/>.

What can be complained about?

Ombudsmen have traditionally investigated complaints of 'injustice' resulting from 'maladministration'.

Neither term has been defined: to show 'injustice', a person must show loss. While this can be financial, it need not be, and can include distress, outrage and loss of opportunity. 'Maladministration' is generally accepted to include arbitrariness, bias, delay, inattention, incompetence, ineptitude, neglect, perversity, turpitude, illegality, misinformation and unfairness.

The LGO has published a useful list of what he considers to be maladministration at <http://www.lgo.org.uk/guidance-inv/analysis-of-material/maladministration/maladministration-generic-list/>.

In addition to complaints of maladministration, the HSO and the LGO (but not the PO) can also investigate complaints of injustice resulting

from service failure, where a public body has a function to provide a service, but either does so unsatisfactorily, or else fails to do so at all.

What can an ombudsman do to provide a remedy?

Ombudsmen can investigate complaints falling within their jurisdiction. If a complaint is investigated and upheld, an ombudsman can recommend that a public body take action (1) to remedy any injustice caused to the complainant (including by paying compensation); and (2) to prevent such injustice from happening again (e.g. where a policy or practice needs to be changed). Ombudsmen's recommendations are not binding on public authorities, but are almost invariably followed.

What is excluded from the ombudsman's jurisdiction?

A large number of matters are expressly excluded from each ombudsman's jurisdiction. They are listed in statute³, and are beyond the scope of this article. The PHSO's published guidance does not give great detail about what matters are not subject to investigation, but the LGO has a summary at <http://www.lgo.org.uk/making-a-complaint/what-we-can-t-look-at/>. If in doubt, advice should be taken before making a complaint, if necessary from the ombudsman's office. Voluntary sector organisations should be aware that the power to investigate contractual or other commercial transactions varies between the three ombudsmen, the PO's power being most restricted, and the LGO's the widest.

Who can complain to an ombudsman?

The general rule is that a complaint must be brought by, or on behalf of, a person who has suffered injustice as a result of the matter complained of. A complaint is made directly to the LGO and the HSO, but must be referred to the PO by an MP.

What are the time limits for complaining to an ombudsman?

A complaint should be brought within a year or not later than 12 months from the day on which the person aggrieved first had notice of the

³ at Schedule 3 to the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967, section 6 of the Health Service Commissioners Act 1993, and Schedule 5 to the Local Government Act 1974

matters alleged in the complaint, but this time can be extended where a good reason is shown. Before a complaint is made to an ombudsman, the public body's internal complaints procedure and any appeal to a tribunal or relevant legal proceedings should be pursued. If they are not, then the ombudsman is liable to refuse to investigate, unless it is considered reasonable in the particular circumstances of the case for these steps to have been omitted.

What discretion do ombudsmen have not to investigate?

It is a feature of all three ombudsmen schemes that they have a wide discretion about a number of matters including:

- whether to start, continue or discontinue an investigation;
- whether to permit a complaint to be made if it is late, or if the complainant could have obtained a remedy by appealing to a tribunal, or bringing legal proceedings (but chose not to).

The LGO has published guidance about the way in which that discretion is exercised, at <http://www.lgo.org.uk/guidance-inv/early-stages/exercising-discretion> , and the PHSO has published guidance about when an investigation will be discontinued, at http://www.ombudsman.org.uk/about_us/FOI/whats_available/documents/casework/in-3-5.html#discontinuing.

Reports

Where an investigation proceeds to a conclusion, the ombudsman prepares a report setting out details of the investigation, the findings and any recommendations.

Reports are available online:

The Parliamentary Ombudsman's at http://www.ombudsman.org.uk/improving_services/special_reports/pca/index.html,

The Health Service Ombudsman's at

http://www.ombudsman.org.uk/improving_services/special_reports/hsc/index.html

The Local Government Ombudsman's at

<http://www.lgo.org.uk/complaint-outcomes/>.

In addition, the LGO publishes a digest of cases broken down by subject matter at <http://www.lgo.org.uk/publications/digest-of-cases/>, and an annual review of each local authority at <http://www.lgo.org.uk/CouncilsPerformance/>.

What policies and principles do ombudsmen apply?

Policy and guidance on casework matters is available online:

For PHSO investigators, at

http://www.ombudsman.org.uk/about_us/FOI/whats_available/documents/casework/casework-start.html; and

For LGO investigators, at <http://www.lgo.org.uk/guidance-inv/>.

In addition, the PHSO has published:

- principles of good administration – which are stated to “help clarify the expectations against which the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman will judge performance”
- principles of remedy – which are stated to give the PHSO’s “views on the Principles that should guide how public bodies provide remedies for injustice or hardship resulting from their maladministration or poor service”
- principles of good complaint handling – which set out what the PHSO “expect[s] from public bodies when dealing with complaints”

These can be found at

http://www.ombudsman.org.uk/improving_services

Can your complaint to the ombudsman be brought at the same time as applying for judicial review?

A complaint to the ombudsman will take months or years to be resolved, by which time an application for judicial review to challenge the public body's decision is almost certain to be out of time. So the two remedies are almost always mutually exclusive, and a decision needs to be taken at an early stage – where necessary based on legal advice – about which remedy is appropriate. As a general rule of thumb, if a case requires urgent remedial action, or depends on a dispute about the law, a complaint to the ombudsman is unlikely to be appropriate.

What happens if you are not satisfied with the way the ombudsman has considered your complaint?

Complaints can be made about the service provided by:

1. PHSO, without a formal time limit (although the PHSO's papers are usually destroyed within 14 months of the conclusion of the case)
http://www.ombudsman.org.uk/about_us/satisfied_with_our_service.html
2. LGO, within three months <http://www.lgo.org.uk/guidance-inv/challenges/complaints-about-us/#time>

Conclusion

Given the high failure rate of complaints to ombudsmen, it makes sense to prepare a complaint carefully with an understanding of (1) what the ombudsman has investigated in the past, and (2) the policies and principles governing how the ombudsman's discretion is exercised. This should maximise the chances that a future complaint will be favourably received. Good luck.

Working together to support BME organisations

Ravi Chauhan, BME Compact Officer, Voice4Change England and Terry Perkins, Public Law Training Officer, NAVCA

Voice4Change England, the national policy voice for black and minority ethnic (BME) third sector organisations, is teaming up with the EVS project to deliver a series of BME-specific Compact and public law training workshops.

We are rolling out a programme of one-day and half-day workshops. The one-day events will be delivered jointly by Ravi Chauhan from Voice4Change England and Terry Perkins from the EVS project. The half-day events will be delivered by Ravi.

The aim of the one-day workshops is to explore in some detail Compact and public law principles and how they can be implemented by BME voluntary and community organisations to overcome many of the barriers faced by communities that they represent. It will skill up and empower BME third sector organisations to be able to confidently challenge the decisions of the public bodies they work with.

The half-day workshops will also look at broader aspects of the Compact, including local and regional Compact issues and the relationship to public law, and help organisations to develop action plans to manage disputes. They will use resources developed specifically for the BME sector from the library of resources developed by the Empowering the Voluntary Sector team and Voice4Change England.

We have two one-day workshops planned; to book your place on one of these (listed below) please email ravi@voice4change-england.co.uk. Alternatively if you would like to host either a half-day or full-day training workshop in your local area or region please telephone Ravi Chauhan on 020 7843 6124 or email him at the above address.

- London, 22.9.10
- South West, 17.11.10

Please note additional workshops will be organised in other regions in the future. To be informed of when these are being publicised, add your email address to Voice4Change England's mailing list at www.voice4change-england.co.uk

The Voice4Change BME Compact project is offering a range of support services to help BME voluntary and community organisations use the Compact to build relationships and to challenge when breaches occur.

Advice

Voice4Change England will work with the EVS project partners to identify breaches of the Compact and to challenge decisions made by statutory bodies.

Policy voice

Voice4Change England will ensure that BME third sector issues and needs are heard and met by key stakeholders to shape policy decisions concerning the Compact.

Good practice

Voice4Change England will promote good practice and provide examples of good practice in Compact ways of working.

Regular updates

Voice4Change England will keep you updated on regional and national Compact news.

Links to resources

Voice4Change England will produce BME specific resources and also provide links to useful Compact resources and toolkits.

Building better communities through stronger partnerships

Dugald McNaughtan, Communications Officer, Compact Voice

Throughout England, better outcomes for local people are being delivered using the Compact, which provides key ways for local public bodies and the voluntary and community sector to work in partnership.

The recent 'refresh' of the national Compact is a timely opportunity for representatives from voluntary and community groups and regional public body to ensure the key principles of good practice are present in their local Compacts.

To spread the message that working together brings benefits to all, Compact Voice is holding a series of half-day workshops throughout the nine English regions during spring and summer 2010. Themed "Building Better Communities Through Stronger Partnerships", partners from both sectors will come together to work through common problems, share best practice, and find common solutions.

Compact Voice member organisations who've recently refreshed their local Compact, will talk about how they did it, what benefits they have seen in work practices and real outcomes, and will hopefully inspire other local areas to refresh their own local Compacts.

Representatives from voluntary and community groups, local authorities, primary care trusts, parliamentarians and commissioners are encouraged to attend. Through table discussions, participants will generate practical action plans to take away and implement. They will learn about the support available from their Compact Voice Regional Leader, who will chair the event, and can also meet key local and regional decision makers.

These half-day events are free, will run from 1-4pm and lunch is provided; you can read the agenda and register on the Compact Voice website: www.compactvoice.org.uk/regionalevents. Also, feel free to

invite colleagues, or contact Mia Kennedy at Compact Voice on events@compactvoice.org.uk or 020 7520 2451 for more information.

Judicial Review North: Trends & Forecasts 2010

Ade Lukes, Events Manager, Public Law Project

The Public Law Project in association with Garden Court North Chambers and BPP Law School are hosting a conference aimed at those involved with managing and resolving public law disputes.

This conference will take place on Thursday 24 June 2010 at BPP Law School, St James's Building, Oxford Street, Manchester, M1 6FQ.

The full price is £199 + VAT; there is a **reduced rate of £75 + VAT for voluntary and community organisations who have attended an EVS workshop**. Group discounts also available. (See the online booking form for full details.)

Solicitors and barristers earn 5.5 hours CPD.

This conference will be of interest to those providing advocacy, advice and legal advice in the voluntary and community sectors, especially those who have clients in dispute with local councils, benefits agencies, housing providers, or over issues of welfare benefits or community care. The day also includes plenary and workshop sessions on international jurisdictions and the use of international human rights law, a review of the year's Top 10 Judicial Review cases and a debate on legal aid and provision of legal advice.

Please read the full programme and booking form link below:

http://www.publiclawproject.org.uk/documents/PLP_JR_North_2010_programme.pdf

For further information contact at a.lukes@publiclawproject.org.uk or 0845 543 5946.

Details of advice line & training courses

The advice line run by Compact Advocacy in conjunction with the Public Law Project provides free detailed Compact and legal advice to voluntary organisations on disputes involving public bodies' decisions and failures.

The advice line is available NOW on 020 7520 3161 at the following times: Monday to Friday 10.00 to 16.00 or email:

evsAdvice@ncvo-vol.org.uk

The project is running workshops in the following areas:

June 2010

- Bradford
- Middlesbrough
- Stafford
- Wirral
- Dover
- Newcastle – Full

July 2010

- Sunderland – Full
- Darlington – Full
- Liverpool
- Northumberland – Full

September 2010

- Bradford
- Newcastle
- London – Book through Voice4Change England
- Cambridge – Full
- Devon – Location to be confirmed

October & November 2010

- Slough
- Tunbridge Wells

To book your place on one of the workshops listed go to www.navca.org.uk/evs and follow the link for the national training programme or email terry.perkins@navca.org.uk. If you wish to host a workshop, details can also be found on the same web page.