

## **NEW ADVOCACY SERVICE LAUNCHED TO HELP CHARITIES CHALLENGE ‘UNJUST’ DECISIONS BY PUBLIC BODIES**

A new advice and advocacy service to help voluntary and community organisations challenge ‘unjust’ decisions by public bodies is launched today.

The ***‘Empowering the Voluntary Sector’*** programme brings together advice and advocacy services provided by the three of the sector’s most influential agencies – the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA), and the Public Law Project (PLP).

The new programme means that, for the first time, charities will have access to a ‘one-stop’ advice and advocacy service that integrates the avenues for challenging public bodies including the Compact, complaints procedures, and judicial review. The three partners already have impressive records of achievement in supporting such challenges, and by joining forces this impact will be even greater.

Stuart Etherington, NCVO Chief Executive, said: “Our Compact Advocacy Programme has already helped over a hundred voluntary and community sector organisations improve their relationships with public bodies. These improvements have benefited both sectors and – most importantly - the communities that they serve. We are delighted that this new programme will enable us to build on our success in partnership with NAVCA and the Public Law Project.”

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## **2/ NEW ADVOCACY SERVICE LAUNCHED**

Kevin Curley, NAVCA Chief Executive, said: “The public law training courses have helped to transform the negotiating skills of local third sector representatives across England since 2006. Equipped with an understanding of the principles of public law infrastructure organisations and frontline groups are able to challenge local authorities and Primary Care Trusts which fail to consult the local third sector or commit serious Compact breaches. Neither local charities nor local authorities want to end up in the High Court as a result of judicial reviews. These public law courses enable local organisations to argue and negotiate from a position of strength. Through this new partnership we will be able to give local organisations even more help.”

Conrad Haley, Director of the Public Law Project, said: “We are delighted to be able to build on the good work of the last three years, and to assist the voluntary sector and public bodies in striving to ensure that important decisions taken about some of our communities’ most vulnerable groups are taken fairly, reasonably and in accordance with the law”.

***‘Empowering the Voluntary Sector’*** will be funded for three years by the Big Lottery Fund.

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### **Notes to Editors**

- 1. The EVS brings together NCVO’s Compact Advocacy Programme (CAP) and a pre-existing partnership involving NAVCA and PLP. The CAP provides advice and assistance to voluntary and community organisation that are in dispute with public bodies over issues relating to the Compact. NAVCA and PLP have been working in partnership since 2006, in a project designed to enable VCOs to use public law to challenge unjust public sector decisions and practices. The new EVS programme will bring together these two strands of advice and support. The ‘Empowering the Voluntary Sector’ (EVS) programme has received £700,000 over three years from the Big Lottery Fund.**