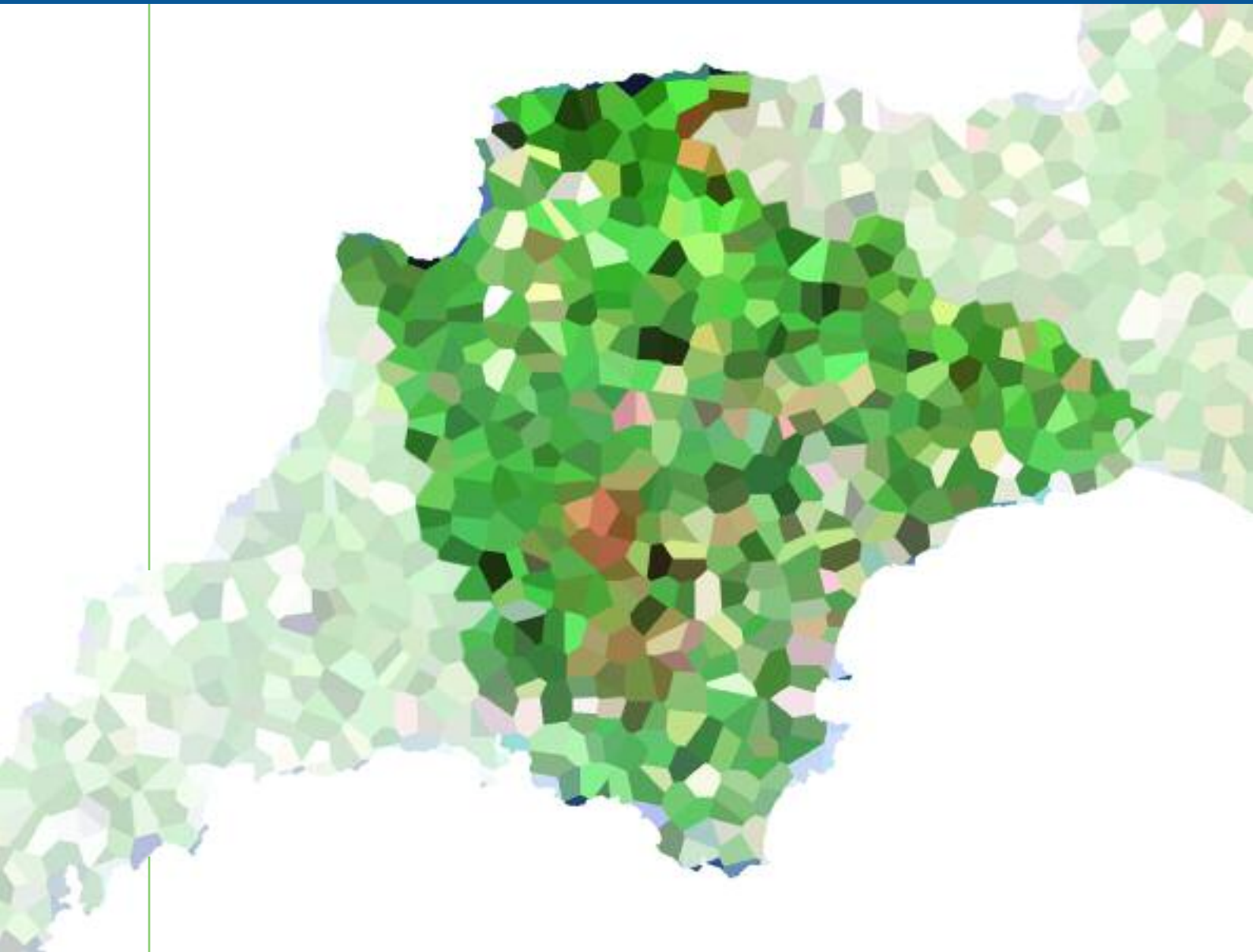


A Compact for Devon







Partnership

Code of Good Practice

June 2008



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Compact for Devon

The Compact is the agreement between the Statutory Sector (including Devon County Council, District Councils, Devon Primary Care Trust, other Healthcare Trusts, Connexions, Police, Fire Service etc.) and the Voluntary and Community Sector, to improve and develop their relationship for the benefit of each other and the communities they serve. It was revised in 2005. For further details contact www.dacvs.org.uk (DACVS*).

The Compact sets out:

- A shared vision and principles
- Actions from both sides
- The Statutory Sector's commitment to respect the independence of the Voluntary and Community Sector, and
- Systems to help make sure that the agreement works

The Compact is supported by six codes of good practice covering:

- Funding and Procurement
- Volunteering
- Equality and Diversity
- Consultation
- Community Groups
- Partnership

The Funding and Procurement Code, the Volunteering Code and the Equality and Diversity Code were published in November 2006. The Consultation Code, the Community Groups Code and the Partnerships Code were published in June 2008. The Compact is informed by the Codes of Practice and together they form Devon's agreed approach to partnership working. None of the documents should be taken in isolation.

Local Compacts have been agreed in most areas to cover relations between local councils, other local public bodies and the voluntary and community sector. The Compact for Devon and this Code of Practice are informed by the national Compact on Relations between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in England (Home Office, 1998), a national code of good practice and numerous Codes from other places.

For more information go to www.thecompact.org.uk or www.homeoffice.gov.uk. The Volunteering Code is also informed by the Working Together for Devon Code of Practice on Volunteering and Community Action.

The Compact for Devon and its Codes of Good Practice have been developed by the Devon Compact Hub, whose representation stretches across the diverse range of organisations (both voluntary & community and statutory) in the County. Individuals from organisations across the spectrum of the sectors took part in the consultation on the draft documents in a variety of ways including:

- Working groups
- Voluntary sector forums
- Postal/email questionnaires
- Local Strategic Partnership meetings
- Internal organisation meetings

Implementation of the Compact and its Codes of Practice is the responsibility of each organisation. The Compact Hub sees the Compact and its codes as living documents that will be used as the basis of continued partnership working between the two sectors.

The Devon Compact Hub is responsible for carrying out regular monitoring and an annual review of the Compact for Devon and its Codes of Good Practice. For a list of Compact Champions and their contact details please go to www.dacvs.org.uk or telephone 01392 202057.

Rurality

The Compact for Devon recognises the issue of rurality* and the impact that this has on providing services in rural areas.

“The Partnership Code is excellent and has clearly been written in meaningful partnership”

1

Summary

This Code of Practice forms part of the Compact for Devon and aims to have a positive impact on the way in which partnerships in Devon are established and organised in order to achieve their goals.

It sets out the key responsibilities and commitments of all those who work in partnerships across the county.

1.1 The headlines of this Code of Practice are:

- a. partnerships vary in terms of size, longevity, makeup and purpose
- b. partnerships take time, energy and resources to develop and sustain
- c. new partnerships should be established only where there is clear evidence of added value*
- d. partnerships need to set clear, achievable goals and outcomes* that are agreed by all partners
- e. partnerships need to consider best practice around equality and diversity issues
- f. partnerships need to build in proportionate review and evaluation mechanisms

Organisations who work in partnership are asked to consider how this Code of Practice can impact on, and support, effective partnership working.

2

Introduction

2.1 What do we mean by ‘partnership’?

A partnership brings together organisations, often from across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors, to pursue a common vision and to work together to achieve more than any one of them could on their own. It can be informal or formal, large or small. It may be a local partnership focused on a small geographical area such as a neighbourhood, or it could be city-wide, region-wide or even national. It could cover a range of issues such as community safety and crime, or a single issue such as regenerating a local estate. It could be time limited or ongoing. It could be a voluntary partnership set up with the intention of mutual benefit, or a contractual partnership where partnership working is a contractual requirement.

For the purposes of this Code, we define a partnership as a process in which two or more organisations or groups work together to achieve a common goal and do so in such a way that they achieve more effective outcomes than by working separately.

2.2 What is the Partnership Code of Practice?

The Partnership Code of Practice seeks to have a positive impact on the way in which partnerships in Devon are established and organised in order to achieve their goals, recognising that partnerships take time, energy and resources to develop and sustain. This Code aims to support organisations and individuals to be ‘good partners’; to work respectfully together to achieve better services for the people of Devon.

2.3 How does the Partnership Code of Practice complement the Compact for Devon?

Partnership working is the very essence of the Compact for Devon. This Code acknowledges that the status, responsibilities, resources and operational functions of statutory and voluntary and community organisations are not the same, but that despite their differences, and indeed through acknowledging their differences, partners can and should treat each other as equals.

There is a long history of effective partnership working in Devon. The Partnership Code of Practice recognises this history. The development of partnerships to deliver improved services to individual residents, communities, businesses and visitors across the county has brought significant benefits. It is also important to recognise where partnerships have had difficulties and have not worked, and to draw on those experiences and lessons.

This Code complements the overall aims of the Compact for Devon, to improve and develop the relationship between sectors for the benefit of each other and the communities they serve.

“Writing the Partnership Code has been a helpful process towards better understanding amongst partners”

3 Key Commitments and Undertakings by Stakeholders*

A number of elements, if they are present, will facilitate successful partnership working, including:

- a. the aim of the partnership is agreed and understood by all the partners
- b. the partnership has clear, effective leadership
- c. the role of each partner is identified and clear to others in the partnership
- d. there is a shared ownership of the partnership and all partners feel that the activities / services / outcomes being delivered will benefit from the work of the partnership
- e. dedicated time and resources for the administration and operation of the partnership have been built in
- f. there is recognition of different organisational cultures* and constraints within the partnership
- g. a supportive atmosphere exists within the partnership where suggestions, ideas and conflicts are openly addressed
- h. partnerships are prepared to explore previously untried approaches and to work in innovative ways

GOOD PRACTICE CHECKLIST

In supporting this Code, stakeholders commit to a range of practical and value based issues and actions in order to establish and maintain best practice in partnership working. Headlines of these commitments are below:

3.1 All partners undertake to:

- a. recognise that partners' roles on a project will be different but the contribution of each is important
- b. work in an open and honest manner to optimise everyone's contribution to achieving the end goal, whilst accepting that each partner has different ways of working, different organisational limitations etc.
- c. agree a process for dealing with conflicts of interest
- d. explore how best the needs and concerns of diverse groups are met, in both the management and delivery of the partnership's business
- e. be clear about the reasons for entering into any partnership and about what each partner has to offer
- f. ensure partnership working skills amongst key personnel, including an awareness of how the voluntary and community sector and the statutory sector operate and the issues that affect each sector

- g. be open to working with new partners, and with partners where there may be no previous history of collaborative working
- h. recognise that working together is positive when it provides added value and the interchange of ideas across institutional boundaries
- i. evaluate partnership working experiences and use the lessons learned to inform future partnership working
- j. celebrate success and adopt, promote and disseminate effective practice

3.2 The statutory sector undertakes to:

- a. be open to working in partnership with new partners, including partners from within the voluntary and community sector and the statutory sector
- b. enable effective participation and representation of the voluntary and community sector on partnership boards, working groups etc.
- c. recognise and be aware of the diversity of voluntary and community sector partners

3.3 The voluntary and community sector undertakes to:

- a. be open to working in partnership with new partners, including partners from within the voluntary and community sector and the statutory sector
- b. recognise the potential added value of working in partnership and, as appropriate, committing time and resources to partnership working
- c. be explicit when extra support and resources are needed to engage effectively in partnerships
- d. support less established voluntary and community organisations to build their capacity to engage effectively in partnerships
- e. be accountable to their stakeholders when undertaking partnership work
- f. create open and transparent mechanisms for ensuring that user perspectives positively influence partnership working and partnership outcomes

These good practice points are further developed in the next section of this Code.

4 Practicalities of Establishing and Maintaining Effective Partnerships

4.1 Is setting up a partnership appropriate?

Effective partnerships take time, energy and resources to establish, develop and sustain. They should only be entered into when it is clear that a new partnership arrangement is the best way to achieve the desired outcomes. Before establishing a partnership, consider:

- what has already taken place, or is taking place, that could inform this work (e.g. research, evaluations, quantitative and qualitative surveys etc.)
- whether this work is already being undertaken elsewhere, or if it links in to other existing work
- whether an appropriate partnership already exists where this piece of work could take place
- what constraints are placed on this work

4.2 Who should the partners be?

The choice of partners is important. Partnerships are often formed from existing networks or where there is a history of collaborative work between potential partners. However, there will be circumstances where it will be important to invite new partners to the table. Existing partnerships should formally review their composition to ensure that the right partners are involved. As far as possible, the same individuals should commit to attending partnership meetings in order to preserve continuity.

At the outset, a list of the obvious stakeholders should be drawn up. In doing this, consider:

- a. community and voluntary organisations
- b. statutory bodies
- c. other service providers including the private sector
- d. 'expert' groups
- e. advisory groups
- f. funders and potential funders
- g. target groups, organisations, individuals and communities likely to be affected by the outcomes of the work of the partnership

4.3 Establishing constructive working relationships

Effective partnerships recognise that partnership building is an important process, and should take time at the beginning to understand each other as separate organisations before they engage in partnership building. This ensures a much deeper understanding of each other's aims, aspirations and constraints, and in turn supports the development of a shared vision for achieving a common goal.

Examples of good practice include partnerships which have broken down the key milestones of their partnership 'journey', and set these milestones to a clear timescale, so that all partners share the same understanding of where they are going and how quickly they will get there.

4.4 Involving the Voluntary and Community Sectors

The voluntary and community sector in Devon includes a diverse array of groups and organisations. They have a lot to offer in terms of skills, expertise and experience. However, many groups may be small and not well resourced, and may find it difficult to get involved in partnerships. The effective involvement of voluntary and community groups requires commitment, willingness and resources from both the groups themselves and also from public and private partners, and each partnership should identify a budget to enable effective voluntary and community sector involvement. By effectively engaging voluntary and community groups in local partnerships, the needs of local communities of place* and interest* can be better understood and addressed.

4.5 Defining roles and responsibilities

Successful partnerships are greatly enhanced by early clarity around roles and responsibilities, supporting everyone to commit to the partnership and function effectively within it. All partners have responsibility to:

- listen, input and apply the principles of self-assessment and continuous improvement
- be a supportive partner
- bring their stakeholder group into the work of the partnership in an appropriate way
- challenge behaviour which is detrimental to effective partnership working

Consider:

- whether the roles and responsibilities have been clearly identified and specified, and if there is a shared understanding and commitment to fulfil these roles within the partnership

- the need to have structures in place to remind partners of their responsibilities
- whether there is a clear induction process for new partners regarding roles and responsibilities

4.6 Building the capacity of partners

Successful partnerships flourish where partners have their skills, knowledge and expertise valued, but are also given the chance to develop their capacity, grow in their role and acquire new skills and expertise.

4.7 Maintaining the involvement of partners

The spirit in which a partnership is developed and maintained will have a direct effect on the sustainability of partner involvement. The Partnership Chair has a key role in routinely and regularly checking that all partners feel valued, listened to, empowered and energised by the partnership.

Sustainable partnerships consider the following:

- the language used – language should be a tool for inclusion within the partnership, not a barrier which results in exclusion
- how to resolve differences of opinion appropriately within the partnership in order to meet agreed objectives
- how to stay focused on the task of the partnership, whilst building in flexibility for considering other issues which might impact on partnership progress
- the financial and other resource implications of maintaining and developing the partnership

4.8 Reviewing and Evaluating Partnerships

REVIEW

Periodically partnerships find it useful to engage in a quick 'health check' review, to establish if they need to adapt and make modifications to their practice. They might ask the questions:

- a. do all partners attend meetings and input equally to discussions and decisions?
- b. do all partners feel valued and listened to?
- c. is the partnership making appropriate progress towards its stated goals?
- d. are the current partners still the right ones?
- e. is the partnership effectively engaging with and reporting back to the wider stakeholder group?

- f. is the partnership appropriately resourced to function effectively?
- g. what, if anything, do we need to change in order to succeed in achieving our goals?
- h. what other work is taking place that we need to pay attention to, or build links with?

EVALUATION

Partnerships need to develop evaluative performance measurement mechanisms* which are:

- a. proportionate to the timescale, business, size, scope and scale of the partnership
- b. clear from the outset
- c. appropriate to the activities undertaken
- d. sufficiently flexible to allow partnerships to adapt and evolve dependent on local circumstances
- e. where possible, built on activities already being undertaken by partner organisations

“Partnership working is a common vehicle for achieving better and more targeted services for local people”



Appendix 1

Glossary

Added value

The additional value created through the combined contribution of joint working.

Communities of interest

A group of people who share a common interest or passion, who then exchange ideas and thoughts about this interest.

Communities of place

Groups where membership is defined geographically, for example those living on a particular estate or those living near an airport.

DACVS

Devon Association of Councils' for Voluntary Service works to support the voluntary and community sector to develop and improve its contribution to the lives of citizens in Devon. It is made up of the eight district CVS in Devon.

Organisational cultures

The collection of values and norms that are shared by groups and organisations which guides the way they interact with each other and with stakeholders. They are the beliefs and ideas about goals to pursue and appropriate standards of behaviour.

Outcomes

The final product, end result, or conclusion.

Performance measurement mechanisms

Targets and measurements for success which are set by a group or organisation in order to ensure that it is pursuing strategies and actions which will enable it to achieve its goals.

Rurality

Expressed as the density of households outside urban areas with less than 10,000 population, and may also include sparsity, social, environmental and economic challenges. This includes population, transport, remoteness, access to services and deprivation. Please refer to www.defra.gov.uk.

Stakeholders

A person or group that has an interest in, and is potentially able to influence the work of an organisation or the delivery of a service.

Appendix 2

Taking the Code Forward

To sign up to the Compact for Devon and its Codes of Good Practice, please go to www.dacvs.org.uk or ask for a signatory form from compact@dacvs.org.uk or telephone 01392 202057.

Appendix 3

How this code was produced

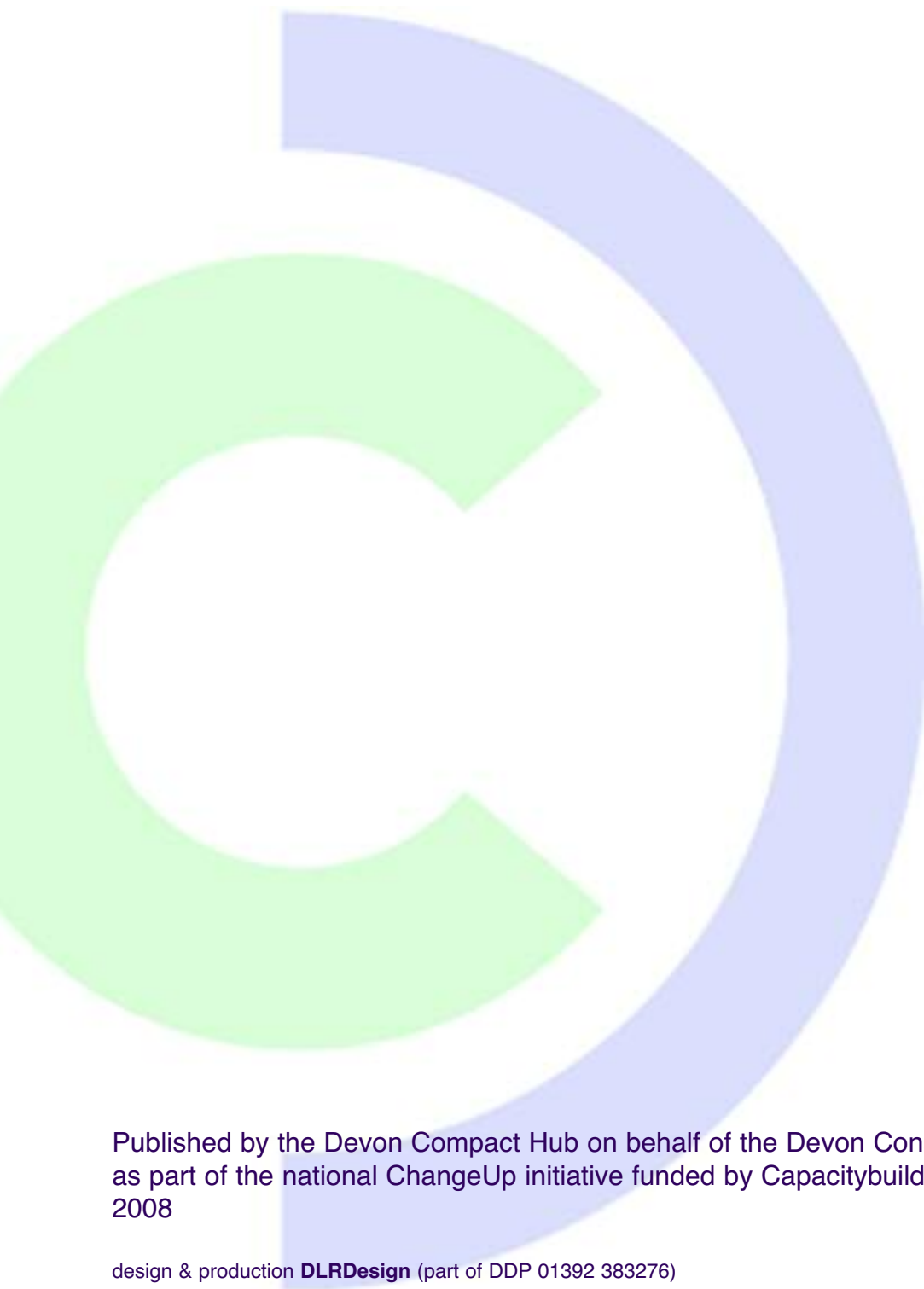
The Devon Compact Hub wishes to thank the members of the working group who enabled the development of this Code of Practice:

Professor Rod Blackshaw	Teignbridge Local Strategic Partnership
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Thanks are also extended to all of those who made comment on the Code during the consultation period and helped to make it work for Devon. Your input is greatly appreciated.

This Code of Practice can be made available in alternative formats.

Please contact: **compact@dacvs.org.uk**
or 01392 202057 for further information



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