

Review of Compact in the West Midlands

Key Findings and Recommendations from the Self Assessment of Compact in the West Midlands

March 2009

A. Executive Summary

This is the Third West Midlands Compact Self Assessment Review sponsored by the West Midlands Compact Panel, RAWM, GOWM and the Compact Commission. Data was collected from all 14 upper tier Compacts and several district level Compacts.

The findings of this Review are set against the worsening economic situation in the region. As budgets are squeezed and demand for some services rise, it is likely that Compact's role in supporting partnership working will become more important and more difficult.

The analysis shows Compact continuing to impact on relations between the voluntary and community sector and statutory agencies in the context of Local Strategic Partnerships. While progress in some areas remains slow, in many areas this year has seen a range of Compacts renewed or refreshed, many new Codes of Practice put in place and an embedding of Compact principles in many policies and guidelines.

Seven themes emerge from the review:

- **The Worsening Economic Situation**
The work of Compact over the next two or three years will be impacted by the worsening economic situation across the region. Resources will be scarce and the focus will be on the efficient delivery of services to target groups. Some may see Compact as a luxury in such a situation. Others argue that its importance is heightened as more emphasis is put on the need to engage with third sector service providers. Continuing national and regional political support for Compact is important.
- **Embedding Compact Principles and Practice**
As Compact moves on from being understood as a stand alone policy, the emphasis moves to embedding its principles in the policies and processes that effect relations between sectors. For example, across the region respondents report on the role of Compact in developing third sector strategies at district and upper tier levels.



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- **Promoting Compact and Sharing Experience**

The work of promoting Compact across the region is on going. There continues to be the need to share learning across the region, of taking best practice from one area to another, of jointly developing Compact responses to new situations. The work to promote and support all the roles contained under the heading of Compact Champions remains important. Promoting Compact with decision makers and elected members is an important aspect of this work. Putting in place a Compact output action plan in each area is also important.
- **Compact's role in achieving LAA targets**

Compact is increasingly seen as one of the tools being used to achieve LAA national indicators. While some see this as controversial (suggesting that it impinges on the independence of the third sector) it is an increasingly reality across the region. This is likely to support the rationale for more emphasis being placed on Compact into the future.
- **Changing Attitudes Between Sectors**

There is a feeling that attitudes between the sectors are changing and that the language and dialogue promoted by Compact can play an important role in that change. The principles of Compact, being one expression of the principles of partnership working, are as relevant for supporting partnership working between sectors as they are for supporting partnership working between different public agencies.
- **The Business Case for Compact**

Many people in the region are asking for evidence that Compact makes a difference. Referred to as the business case, many people ask if the investment in time and effort required to promote Compact yields a return that can be shown by evidence. There are a great deal of case studies and anecdotes showing the effectiveness of Compact. But there remains the need see how Compact links to improvements in public services.
- **Compact and the Mediation of Differences**

Finally, Compact is playing an increasing role in the mediation and resolution of issues that arise between partners. While this work remains at the early stages in the region, more areas are reporting the results of successful Compact interventions to avoid issues arising or to resolve them when they have arisen.



B. Introduction

The Story So Far

This report contains the results of the latest self assessment review of Compact in the West Midlands. It is the third in a series of reviews, initiated by the then West Midlands Compact Group and Government Office West Midlands in late 2006.

- The first review was completed in February 2007. Piloting the self-assessment methodology, it looked at the development of Compact across five areas, Worcestershire, Birmingham, Walsall, Wolverhampton and Warwickshire. It looked specifically at Compact's contribution to the LAA process with regard to the engagement and involvement of the community and voluntary sector.
- The second review, completed in April 2008, extended the review to all 14 upper tier authorities in the Region.
- This, the third review, looked beyond the upper tier Compacts and looked also at relationships between upper tier and District level Compacts.

During the course of these reviews, the Compact Commission and RAWM have joined the reconstituted West Midlands Compact Panel and Government Office West Midlands as sponsors of the work. The data collected over the years, from telephone and face to face interviews and self assessment focus groups shows how Compact in the West Midlands is becoming integrated into the partnership dialogue. This integration, sometimes slow, sometimes hard won, goes to the heart of partnership approaches to improving the quality of life of communities across the Region. Changing the way public services are planned and delivered will never be an easy task. It is positive therefore to be able to report many stories of local and regional progress, progress that has been recognised by several national awards.

Methodology

For the first time this year, self-assessment review data was collected not just from the 14 upper tier Compacts but also from a range of District level Compacts. This allows some insight into the ways that Compact at the two levels operate together. In completing their reviews, Compacts used different approaches;

- Some convened a special review focus group;
- Some reported the results of their own annual planning and review processes;
- Some gave the task to be completed by their respective Compact Implementation or Steering Group;
- Some review summaries were completed by individuals responsible for their respective Compacts.



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As before, the review collected information both from the statutory and third sectors. As before, there are a wide range of differing and sometimes contradictory views. As before, Compact retains its detractors as well as its advocates. However, the essence of this semi-structured and self assessment process is that it provides space for all voices to be heard and for the assessment debates to take place locally.

Appendix 1 contains the responses to the assessment pro-forma used this year.

C. Findings

1. Progress made over the past 12 months

Table 1 shows the summary of responses outlining achievements made over the past 12 months. In the last review 13 of the 14 upper tier Compacts were in place. They are all now in place and progress is reported in renewing and extending membership of Compact Steering Groups (e.g. Worcestershire.) In Coventry the Steering Group has been re-established and in Solihull the Compact Monitoring Group is about to be re-launched. In many areas, codes of practice are being newly developed or refreshed (e.g. in Herefordshire, Solihull, Sandwell, Coventry, Worcestershire and others). In Shropshire, with the new unitary status starting in April 2009, a new Compact is being put in place in line with the new unitary structure in the County. A Development Group is in place, a Compact Officer appointed and the writing of the new Compact is underway.

The process of completing the initial implementation of Compact throughout the Region highlighted last year has now been replaced by Compact reviews and refreshes in many areas.

There are many comments concerning the embedding of Compact into LSP structures and processes and into the achievement of LAA targets. In Wolverhampton this is referred to as the process of “hard wiring” Compact into the Wolverhampton Partnership. In Staffordshire, the action plan for achieving NI 7 includes a process to refresh Compact. In Herefordshire, a Volunteering Code has been developed linked to the achievement of NI 6. While these processes remain at an early stage, there are indications that in some areas, Compact is being seen as a tool in the achievement of LAA targets. This process is likely to proceed as the existence of a thriving Compact may well feature as evidence in the new CAA process.



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As in previous years, progress is mixed across the region. Some areas report little or no progress, due to lack of resources or lack of senior leadership or commitment to the ideas of Compact. However, many comments appear to indicate that Compact is, in places, beginning to embed and infiltrate the processes and the language of partnership working. One respondent noted that Compact language was beginning to be used “as a matter of course and to unlock doors”. Some reported more commitment from senior decision makers as the Compact supported “rules of engagement” for partnership working became more evident. One interesting aspect of this was the reported reduction in the “victim” culture often associated with partnership working. “Victimhood” is sometimes seen as a characteristic of the third sector (which is seen by some as expecting inappropriate special treatment). However, it can also apply to officers in partnership agencies who feel trapped by structures and processes over which they feel they have little control. Compact can provide a language to confront this feeling of victimhood in the name of partnership working.

It is difficult to assess the overall progress of Compact across the region. In some areas, partnership working is developing without a strong and formal Compact structure. In some areas, Compact is having an impact on the development of partnership relations. In some areas, there remains a great deal of work to do before a strong and effective relationship between the sectors is achieved. Overall however, the more recent Compact developments are an encouraging sign for the future and reflect the political support provided by Central and Regional Government over several years.

2. Key Challenges

Table 2 summarises the key challenges facing Compact across the region at present. While the lack of finance and dedicated personnel remains a challenge to the work of Compact, there are less comments on this issue than last year. This may be due to a realistic lowering of expectations (and last year’s review did indicate that many of the early expectations for Compact had not been fulfilled) in the light of worsening economic situation. It is clear that there has not been any overall increase in the resources dedicated to Compact.

Many respondents highlight the need for a compelling business case for Compact. They argue that it needs to show impact on the achievement of LAA targets if it is to be taken more seriously. To date there is no definitive data showing a link between a strong local Compact and good performance against LAA targets. Indeed it is hard to imagine how such a link could be proven conclusively given the wide range of factors that effect LAA performance. However, there may be a series of intervening variables which could be affected by Compact and which could be shown to impact on LAA performance. Also, having an effective Compact is increasingly seen as an indicator of success under NI 6 and 7. Developing the business case for Compact is an on-going project.



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The need to continue to market Compact, to provide effective training and communications and to embed it into the mainstream of LSP activities remains a priority. Some respondents report the difficulty of a role for Compact in some streams of LAA work. Others continue to report that Compact is often ignored by some partnerships agencies, for example the police or PCTs. In some areas respondents feel that the embedding process may be under threat. For example, while in some areas Compact is being embedded in commissioning and procurement processes, some procurement practices (for example putting larger contracts) are increasingly excluding smaller third sector organisations. Respondents recognise that third sector organisations are increasingly reliant on the contracts they win. This increases the importance of compact compliant processes and of the work in many areas to develop them. Respondents argue that Compact must find its way into people's job descriptions and performance reviews. Also it is essential that the Compact implications of any policy or decision are made clear to decision makers on relevant papers. This would indicate that it had reached a new and deeper level of influence.

For the first time the Compact assessment has looked both at upper tier and district level Compacts. As can be seen in Table 4, ensuring that Compacts at the two levels are working in a complementary way is a challenge. Many respondents see this as a political challenge.

Two further issues are also highlighted. The first is the economic situation. Data for this assessment was collected at the end of 2008 and in early 2009. As the economic downturn gathers pace, its implications for the supply of and demand for different public services becomes increasingly apparent. While funding streams become tighter, demand for some services is rising. Some respondents say that this will cause increased tension in relations between partners and increase the importance of having an effective Compact in place. And indeed, there is already evidence in the assessment of the Compact disputes procedure (or mediation processes as they are in some areas) being used more often and to some effect. It is likely that this will grow over time.

Some respondents talk of the role of Compact as a tool for change and of the challenges faced by any change process. While Compact has been implemented by the "early adopters" across the region, the work of providing evidence of its usefulness to a more sceptical audience is now underway. We need to find ways of attracting new audiences and different people into the Compact discussions. This is especially true of elected members. Persuading the resisters will be a future challenge.



3. Support needs over the next 12 to 18 months

As would be expected, many respondents feel that additional resources would be useful for the implementation of their Compact. They recognise that these are unlikely to be available locally. However, continued political support, both regionally and nationally, is important if Compact is to make its full impact on the delivery of LAA targets. GOWM locality leads are important in this process. Compact has a political dimension and often that is not talked about enough. Compact promotes change, and change generates winners and losers.

Many respondents look for support from other areas and other regions in the development of their own Compacts. They ask for examples and case studies of how Compact has been used successfully. They would like to exchange training and promotional materials. Compact training for commissioning managers is important to ensure that they are sensitised to the possibilities offered by the third sector.

In building the business case for Compact, respondents asked for more input around Compacts role in the CAA and in other LAA evaluation processes (for example the OTS Third Sector Review and the evaluation regimes for other partnership organisations.) They also requested advice on how best to argue the case in favour of different codes of practice. How can these be shown to be valuable tools to assist partnership working?

The role of Compact Champions was noted by several respondents. (See more details below). Exchanging information on the different roles that Compact Champions play is a process that is underway both regionally and nationally by the Compact Commission. There is a link between effective and respected Compact Champions and the use of Compact to challenge decisions and processes that are not in line with best partnership practice. Compact offers the possibility of making challenges in appropriate and respectful yet effective ways. Compact Champions are important in this process.

4. Relations between upper tier and district level Compacts

This assessment began the process of understanding the complex relations between Compacts at the different levels. Respondents reported a wide range of practice in different areas;

- Some had upper tier level Compacts with action plans developed in line with that Compact at district level.
- Some argued that it is the district Compacts that should inform the upper tier Compacts using a bottom up approach.
- In some areas, district and county Compacts have been developed separately.
- There can be political issues to be resolved between Compacts at the different levels.



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In some ways Compact is a microcosm of the complexity of relations that exist between authorities at different levels. Integrated district and county level Compacts can ensure that relations with the third sector are equally across districts. The regional Compact Panel is a vehicle for comparing situations in different areas and for sharing information on different practice. Ensuring that Compact is contained within third sector action plans across all districts is a way of ensuring coherence and integration.

5. Compact Champions

Practice with regard to Compact Champions across the region is more diverse than might be expected. These include:

- In some areas there are no named Champions and their roles are played informally by a range of people.
- In some areas there are Champions but their roles are not clearly defined.
- Some districts have Champions but their upper tier authority does not.
- In some areas members of the Compact Steering Group are referred to as Champions.
- In some areas, key senior people in each partnership organisations are Champions although they may or may not be part of a Steering Group.
- Some respondents found Champions very important. Others argued that they had limited use and indeed may be seen as marginalising the promotion of Compact. Whereas it is everyone's responsibility to promote and abide by Compact, the idea of Champions could suggest that only they are responsible for Compact.
- In some areas Champions are elected at an annual Compact conference and their role is to act as guides for others.
- In some areas the roles of Champions are seen in relation to Compact and its impact on LAA performance.
- Some areas have Champions, but they are not resourced and supported and therefore have limited impact.
- There is a distinction made between those whose role as a Champion is their day job and those who perform the role in addition to their other roles.

So, while overall most agree on the importance of Champions, there is a wide variety of practice across the region. In a separate piece of work, it has been suggested that it would be useful to distinguish the different roles currently lumped under the one heading of Champion. It has been proposed that there are four different roles involved:

- Compact Officers. These are staff in partnership organisations for whom the whole or a large part of their work involves promoting or implementing Compact.



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- Compact Decision Makers. These include the Board of the LSP (which is ultimately responsible for the implementation of Compact,) the Boards of other partnership bodies that are signed up to Compact and the managers (or Boards) to which compact officers report.
- Other Compact advocates. These include a wide range of people for whom Compact principles and practices are important. Their role as advocates of Compact is unpaid and they may come from within partnership organisations and from other community or voluntary sector organisations.
- Other officers who have responsibilities for implementing Compact. Once a Compact is approved it has implications for the work of many people. They are responsible for ensuring that it is implemented and this should be part of their job description.

These general terms, and recognising that the role of Compact Officers cuts across many of the following categories, it could be argued that;

- Compact officers are **Compact Officers**
- Compact Decision Makers are **Compact Overseers**
- Other Compact advocates are **Compact Advocates**
- Other Officers are **Compact Implementers** and that, all of these roles can be collected under the generic title of **Compact Champions**.

Each of the different Compact roles should be supported as respondents have suggested. It may therefore be useful to define the respective needs of each type of Champion and then develop support under the headings of awareness, skills and knowledge.

D. Recommendations for further action

Regular review of progress, learning from that review and planning future work is an essential part of Compacts presence in each area or district. That same process is undertaken at regional level as the West Midlands Compact Panel looks at the results of the annual review and plans its work for the future. The Compact Panel itself has been refreshed over the last year. It will continue to assume responsibility for coordinating, sharing information and supporting the work of local compacts across the region.

1. Minding the Gaps in Performance Between Compacts in different Areas

Gaps exist between the progress being made by different Compacts across the Region. In some areas Compacts are developing effectively and indeed the West Midlands is fortunate in having some area Compacts that are recognised as among the best in the Country. In



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other areas, Compact is not developing as well and it is not clear if this is having an impact on the development of partnerships working and the achievement of targets. Work to “Mind the Gap” is needed if this differential is not to widen over time. Also, by understanding why Compact is not developing in some areas, and the impact of differently successful Compacts on the achievement of targets, interesting data on the impact of Compact and evidence for the business case might be generated

2. Building the Business Case for Compact

Building the rationale for Compact, or the business case, or the evidence base for its impact, remains a task. It is both an intellectual and pragmatic challenge. To date, there is no conclusive evidence that effort put into the development of Compact feeds through into measurable impact on the quality of public services and the achievement of LAA outcomes. It could be that in the West Midlands we are in a good position to make a key contribution to this debate.

3. Compact Champions and Learning and Improvement

We will support work with local Compacts on their recruitment and support for Compact Champions in the range of roles that Champions perform. In line with the work of the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership, this support will build on the understanding of how Compact, as part of service delivery systems, can create opportunities for learning and the potential for generating change.

4. Sharing Experience; re-developing the Compact Web-Site

Many respondents have requested that emphasis is put on the sharing of Compact experiences, plans, evidence of outputs and case studies of innovative practice. In order to facilitate such a sharing exercise, the Compact Panel will begin discussions with the Compact Commission on the possibility of developing the regional section of the Compact Commission web-site as the West Midlands Compact web-site. This could then act as a model for supporting Compact web-sites in other regions. It may also be possible to establish a Compact Community of Practice on the IDEA web-site.

5. Maintaining Political Support for Compact

The implementation of Compact has a political dimension. As Compact impacts on the partnership relationships between partners, and as it impacts on decisions that can positively or negatively impact on different partners (for example for contracts to be awarded to one partner and not another,) Compact has a political dimension. It is therefore important to win and maintain political support for Compact. Therefore, work this year will focus on maintaining GOWMs active



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involvement in the promotion of Compact across the region and supporting locality leads in their local support for Compact. It will also involve support for promoting Compact to elected members and senior regional decision makers.

6. Understanding Best Practice for Compacts in Multi-Tiered Authorities

This years review of Compact began to look at the relationship between area and district Compacts in multi-tiered authorities. We will develop a best practice model based on learning in the Region to support Compacts at both levels to work together in a coordinated and effective way that avoids duplication and disagreement.

7. Output Focused Compact Action Planning

Some Compacts in the Region are developing an output focused approach to their action planning. Local Compact annual planning processes will be collated and shared across the Region. The development of output focus planning will be supported and shared.



D. Appendices

TABLE 1

	Progress Achieved over the past 12 months.	Frequency
1	Re-established the steering group and extended membership.	
2	Reviewing codes, producing new codes.	High
3	Incorporating codes into LA or LSP procedures. Hard wiring of Compact into other policies and procedures.	High
4	Renew Compact, new version produced or new area covered.	Medium
5	Publish Compact.	
6.	Disputes resolved by using Compact procedures.	Medium
7	Using Compact as learning tool, supporting involvement and partnership working.	Medium
8	Third Sector policies impacted by Compact.	
9	Compact now a regular item on LSP agenda	Medium
10	New Compact Monitoring or Steering Group established.	Medium
11	Compact included in action plans for achieving some LAA targets and indicators.	
12	Development of outcome focused action planning for implementing Compact.	Medium
13	Compact language and words used more as matter of course and as lever to unlock doors. Ownership across sectors.	Medium
14	Reducing the “victim” culture in both sectors.	
15	Compact better understood at senior level, as the established rules of engagement.	
16	Better communications of Compact both outwards and upwards.	Medium
17	Regular review of Compact impact and of Champions	
18	Using Compact to challenge decisions.	

What Progress Have you Made in Your Compact Work over the past 12 Months?



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TABLE 2

	What are the key challenges you face at the moment?	Frequency
1	Lack of dedicated officer and other resources. Funding reduced straining relations. Efficiency savings.	High
2	Need to get increased engagement beyond the Local Authority, (e.g. Police, NHS.)	
3	Need senior level buy-in. Compact is not cascading through large organisations.	
4	Need compelling business case for Compact by demonstrating its impact.	High
5	Need to develop Compact Action Plan.	Medium
6	Need to increase marketing, training and awareness.	High
7	Embed Compact ethos and culture in the mainstream.	High
8	Create ownership and understanding.	Medium
9	Need full cost recovery.	
10	Commissioning is excluding VCS and is less Compact compliant as public sector services are protected. Excludes smaller VCS organisations.	High
11	Need external support as new structures put in place	
12	Economic situation. Reduced funding, increase demand for services.	High
13	Need grass roots promotion of Compact.	
14	Political challenge of combining district and upper tier Compacts. How should they relate? Make them cohesive.	High
15	Reconcile Compact with the equalities agenda.	
16	Need more teeth to confront Compact non compliance.	
17	Take dispute resolution more seriously.	
18	Compact needs to be more linked to achieving national indicators.	
19	We have made little progress. We need external support.	
20	Do we develop district Compact	
21	We should be engaging the private sector.	
22	Compact not involved in some strands of work. We are not winning synergy across strands.	
23	Compact and change. Changes forced on sector and use of Compact as a tool for change.	High
24	Build VCS capacity and capacity to embed Compact.	
25	Make Compact more current, more user friendly, more meaningful.	



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What are the Key Challenges you face at the Moment?

TABLE 3

	What support would be most useful to you over the next 12 to 18 months?	Frequency
1	Bottom up networking is better than top down direction.	
2	Greater resources. Especially national funding. Resources to embed Compact changes.	High
3	Compact needs more authority to confront Government agencies when they break it.	
4	More sharing of best practice around the region. And sharing of best practice across Regions. Sharing model documents.	High
5	Strong leadership from the Compact Commission.	
6	Awareness raising and training for managers and senior decision making. Training for service commissioners.	High
7	Showcasing of local achievements.	Medium
8	Creation of clear business case showing benefits of Compact and Codes of Practice.	Medium
9	Political support for the implementation of Compact. Especially as it relates to achieving LAA outcomes.	High
10	More work on the relationship between Compact and the CAA.	
11	A performance management framework at sub-regional level.	
12	Too much monitoring and too much regional Compact organising.	
13	Support to develop outcomes focused action planning.	
14	More and better Compact champions and CC networks. Include CC role in job descriptions.	Medium
15	More support with Compact mediation processes.	
16	If Compact is way of meeting LAA outcomes, it needs support from GOWM locality leads.	
17	Link Compact to World Class Commissioning.	



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What support would be most useful to you over the next 12 to 18 months?

TABLE 4

	How do upper tier and district Compacts support each other and share information and learning?
1	There are separate upper tier and district level Compact networks.
2	Working at different tiers creates challenges including political challenges.
3	Little support provided by GOWM to overcome these challenges.
4	Should be bottom up, districts inform upper tier. Does not always happen.
5	Consensus that district Compacts work to county-wide Compact.
6	One over-arching Compact with action plans in each district.
7	Compact needs to be contained in the third sector action plan at all levels.
8	District and County Compacts have developed separately.
9	Development of County Compact to be in line with the existing district Compacts.
10	Compact more important in two tier authorities in order to ensure third sector treated equally across an Authority,
11	All tiers need third sector action plan based on Compact principles, brought together under upper tier LAA.
12	Compact Panel useful to keep Compacts from different tiers together.



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How do Upper Tier and District Compacts support each other and Share information and learning?

	Do you have Compact Champions? What are their support needs?
1	No named CCs. People do the task informally.
2	Could we get Champions together regionally? For mutual learning and support.
3	Champions are members of Compact Working Group, designated by CEO of each partnership organisation.
4	There is no clear definition of role of CCs.
5	No CC structure in place.
6	CCs selected at Compact Conference and they will signpost people to sources of Compact support.
7	Very important to clarify role of CCs.
8	CCs need support mechanisms and training.
9	CCs at district level but not at County level.
10	Role of CCs must relate to LAA delivery plans and the CAA.
11	CCs are the members of the Compact Steering Group.
12	We have 14 CCs in place, to train, keep up to date and signpost.
13	Yes we have CCs. Problem is they do not have the time and commitment to undertake the role.
14	Yes we have CCs, but they are not effective.
15	CCs create risk of marginalising Compact. It is responsibility of whole of LSP.
16	Each partnership body needs third sector strategy and senior and member support.
17	Maybe Compact advocate is better term. Must be effective. Needs to be part of the day job.
18	Maybe we need partnership advocates rather than CCs.

TABLE 5

Do you have Compact Champions? What do they need to Maximise their Effectiveness?

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