



Medway Voluntary Action Communication Plan

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Abbreviations used throughout:

Medway Voluntary Action (MVA)

Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE)

Medway Volunteer Network (MVN)

North Kent Training Service (NKTS)

Objective

The primary objective of this communications plan is to ensure that Medway Voluntary Action develops and maintains effective two way communications which maximises its reach to a wide & diverse range of VCSE organisations and the communities they serve.

The aims of the plan are to:

- Ensure that MVA is listening and is seen to be listening to the VCSE
- Promote MVA services to the VCSE
- Ensure that MVA serves as a hub that gathers and disseminates information from the VCSE and statutory stakeholders
- Identify issues and trends in the VCSE
- Identify and share best practice with and between the VCSE
- Promote the value of the VCSE and how it can help communities
- Remove barriers to participation wherever/whenever identified.

MVA believe that delivery of these aims will help ensure effective engagement of all VCS organisations within Medway, especially smaller and traditionally less well served organisations; better supporting them to become sustainable members of a vibrant and resilient VCS.

Key Audiences

The key audiences for Medway Voluntary Action are:

- VCSE organisations based in or providing services in Medway, including charities, mutuals, cooperatives, community organisations, Community Interest Companies and Social Enterprises.
- VCS organisations that are less well served by traditional methods (sometime referred to as 'hard to reach'), for example: micro-organisations, those serving faith communities, BAME, LGBTQIA+
- Statutory bodies, particularly commissioners, political leaders and key officers
- Funding bodies – trusts, corporates etc.
- National organisations – Locality etc.
- NKTS Customers
- Potential volunteers – general public and corporates
- Local residents interested in community support and engagement.

Core Principles

- Communication should reflect the values and purpose set out in MVA's mission 'to be a catalyst for social change to support and empower Medway communities to come together to help improve their lives and solve problems that are important within their communities.'
- Communication should be appropriate and of interest to MVA's key audiences – and should be appropriately targeted using audience segmentation wherever possible.
- Where possible, existing 'touch points' (e.g. events, invitations) should be optimised for communication with key audiences.
- Remain mindful that audience members may be subscribed to multiple MVA communication channels and schedule content accordingly.
- Communication should adhere to MVA's brand guidelines.
- Digital media and communication/social platforms should be optimised to help reduce costs and carbon footprint.
- Communication should be accessible to all.
- Communication channels (and the resource required to deliver them) should be flexible and suitable to support local crisis response activities. *As demonstrated in the immediate wake of the*

Covid-19 crisis, MVA's communication channels and resources were able to adapt to provide 'real time' support for VCS, Statutory partners and local residents.

Brand Guidelines – applies to digital and printed content

Brand guidelines provide a consistent and easily recognisable expression of the MVA 'brand'. They must be followed and these can be found in the Medway Voluntary Action Style Guide. The brand guidelines:

- Define logo usage
- Define document styles (fonts/layouts etc)
- Provide templates (PowerPoint Presentations etc)

And must

- Be communicated to all members of staff/volunteers
- Used by all members of staff/volunteers
- Be managed or overseen by the Communications Officer

Medway Voluntary Action Editorial Policy & Publishing Criteria

This relates to all MVA published content (digital, social and print).

MVA are committed to publishing what is true and relevant. Any person submitting information to MVA for publication is responsible for providing accurate and relevant information. MVA will only publish articles that fit with the following publishing criteria.

All information published should benefit communities in Medway - either directly (i.e. engaging in peer support groups, getting involved in service co-design etc.) or indirectly providing support to the organisations that support communities.

MVA will publish:

- Opportunities that the sector can learn from or engage with – best practice, opportunities to refer their clients, opportunities to collaborate etc.
- Information of benefit to the sector – legislative changes, strategic developments (local plans etc.)
- Funding opportunities/news about funders priorities.
- Opportunities for the sector to access internal and low cost/free resources. If MVA decide to publish paid for services, they will issue a disclaimer.
- Job opportunities provided they meet the following criteria: 1) Post must be based in or benefit Medway and its people and 2) Post must benefit the Voluntary and Community sector

MVA will NOT publish:

- Articles that promote fundraising activities or performances etc that only benefit one organisation. Opportunities that can be assessed on an individual basis, may qualify to be post on MVA Social Media channels.
- Closed projects. Such projects rarely have an opportunity for other organisations to engage their clients in the activity/opportunity.
- General information about an organisation as the organisation would be the only beneficiary.
- Articles that are purely political or religious rather than charitable – for example groups where the intention is simply to object to/change a law.

- Religious activities where there is no charitable activity or where there is conflict with MVAs Equal opportunities policy.

Reach and Access

MVA communications should maximise reach to a wide & diverse range of VCSE organisations and the communities they serve. They therefore will:

Ensure relevance to MVA's key audiences:

MVA aim to be considerate towards a diverse and complex sector which may involve the following: Health, Social care, Green spaces, Advocacy, Housing, Mental Health, Education, Social Isolation

Use appropriate language:

MVA aim to use appropriate and truthful language that is non-discriminating and non-offensive.

- When speaking about conditions, MVA will aim to state that people are living with the conditions and will not use the terms 'Suffering from' or 'victims of'.
- MVA will aim to use impartial language. Phrases such as 'Unique' or 'The best' will not be used unless the copy from the source states it as factual information. For example, if an award has been won by the organisation and they are stating that in their advertising, MVA will state this where appropriate.

Ensure Accessibility:

MVA aim to create publication material that is accessible to all. MVA will ensure that the following guidelines are met to ensure they are accessible to all audiences.

- For online publications, image tags will be available on all images for people using reading software on computers due to visual impairment.
- All publications published by MVA will be careful of the use of colours/fonts as to be mindful of those living with sight impairments/ dyslexia.
- Provide a link for translating our website content into any language
- Include, on printed materials, a statement offering to provide materials in alternative formats (e.g. braille, larger print, audio, other language, easy read).

Purpose of Communications

Communications Out	
Audience	Purpose
VCSE	Share knowledge & best practice; inform of changes to political, economic, social and technical environment; support sustainability and promote MVA/NKTS services
Statutory organisations	Influence in line with membership issues; promote value of sector; support delivery of VCS Framework & MOU
Funding bodies	Build reputation of sector in Medway; make aware of diversity and opportunities. Share the opportunities they are providing with the Sector.
National/Regional/County organisations	Pass info and knowledge of local sector to inform national picture; influence policy and strategy
NKTS Customers	Offer opportunities to access training
Potential Volunteers	Awareness of benefits of volunteering and increased accessibility to local opportunities

Befriending Hub Partners	Share knowledge, best practice & Funding Opportunities
Better Together Consortium partners	Share knowledge, best practice & Funding Opportunities. Support 'Engagement Management' goals (Section 10. in BTC Comms Plan) once the monthly publication schedule has been agreed between partners.
Health partners (ICB, H&CP, PCN)	Share knowledge; influence in line with membership issues; promote value of sector; support Population Health Management goals.

Communications In	
Audience	Purpose
VCSE	Gather knowledge and data; identify issues; identify best practice, identify activities of interest to other VCSE organisations
Statutory organisations	Identify strategy/policy/opportunities/changes to political, economic, social and technical environment
Funding bodies	Identify strategy/policy/opportunities
National organisations	Identify strategy/policy/opportunities/best practice
Volunteers	Identify good volunteering practice and respond to any VCSE training/support needs
Befriending Hub Partners	Identifying shared opportunities and good practice
VCS Better Together Consortium partners	Identify best practice, shared learning & Funding Opportunities

Methods of Communication

Communication channel	How delivered	Content	Primary audience	Frequency	Responsibility
MVA Newsletter/Submissions	e-bulletin	Information, Funding/training/volunteering Opportunities, news etc.	VCSE organisations	Monthly, 1st	See below
Website	Online	Info, news, surveys, Funding/training/Volunteering Opportunities/resources. Training news	All stakeholders	On-going	See below
Social Media MVA	Online	Immediate news, info, debate and some training reminders	All stakeholders	As & when	See below
NKTS Mailings	e-bulletin	Information on upcoming training/resources	VCSE organisations	Ad hoc	See below
Social Media NKTS	Online	Immediate news, info and training reminders	All stakeholders	Ad hoc	See below
MVN Bulletin	e-bulletin	Most recent volunteering opportunities listed and relevant	Public	Monthly, second week	See below

		volunteering support/information			
Social Media MVN	Online	Immediate news, info and training reminders	All stakeholders	Ad hoc	See below
National/local Media	Press releases, articles	As appropriate	All stakeholders	Ad hoc	Relevant project lead to request comms support
MVA and NKTS publications	Paper, online	As appropriate	All stakeholders	Ad hoc	Relevant project lead to request comms support
Befriending Social Media/Zoom meetings	Online	Immediate news, info, debate and some training reminders	All stakeholders	As & when	Befriending Team
Events	Physical presence	As appropriate	Targeted	Ad hoc	Event lead to request comms support
VCS Community Response Meetings	Online and physical presence (alternating)	As appropriate and requested by VCS peers	VCS and Statutory Stakeholders	Bi-monthly	CEO
VCS Better Together Consortium Meetings	Physical presence	As appropriate	VCS Partners	Quarterly	CEO
Medway Council Comms team (pressoffice@medway.gov.uk)	Press Release	As appropriate for Medway residents	Medway Residents	Ad hoc	CEO
Free training and information and resources	YouTube	Bitesize training on varied topics, MVA project information and services	VCS and project stakeholders	Ad hoc	Relevant project lead to request comms support

For additional information on specific operational requirements for some MVA publications refer to Appendix 1.

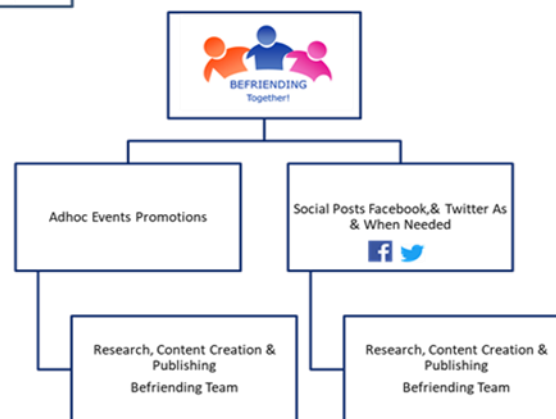
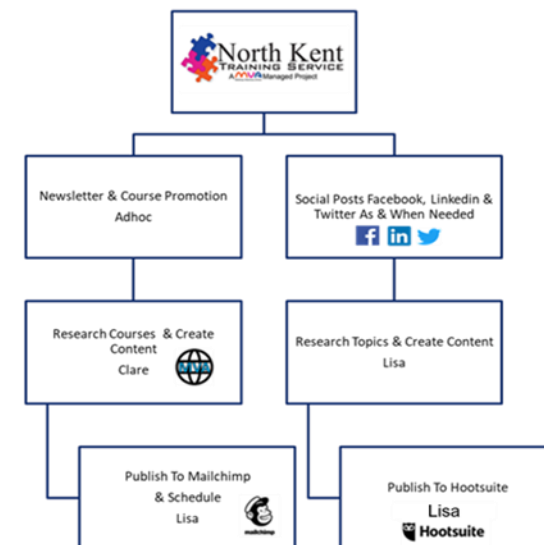
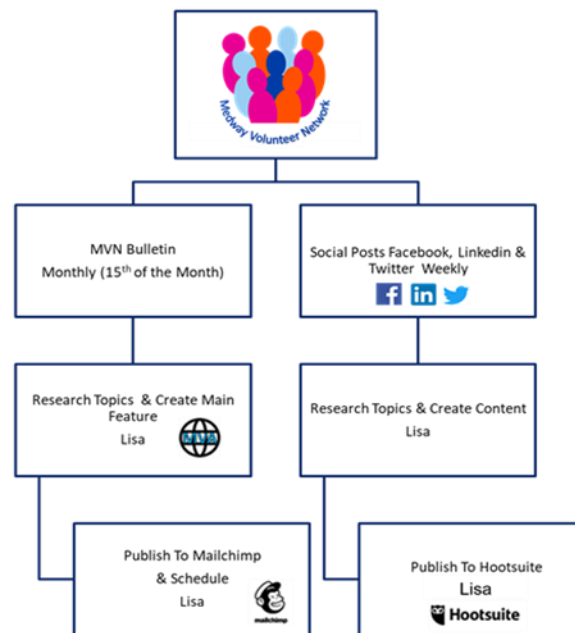
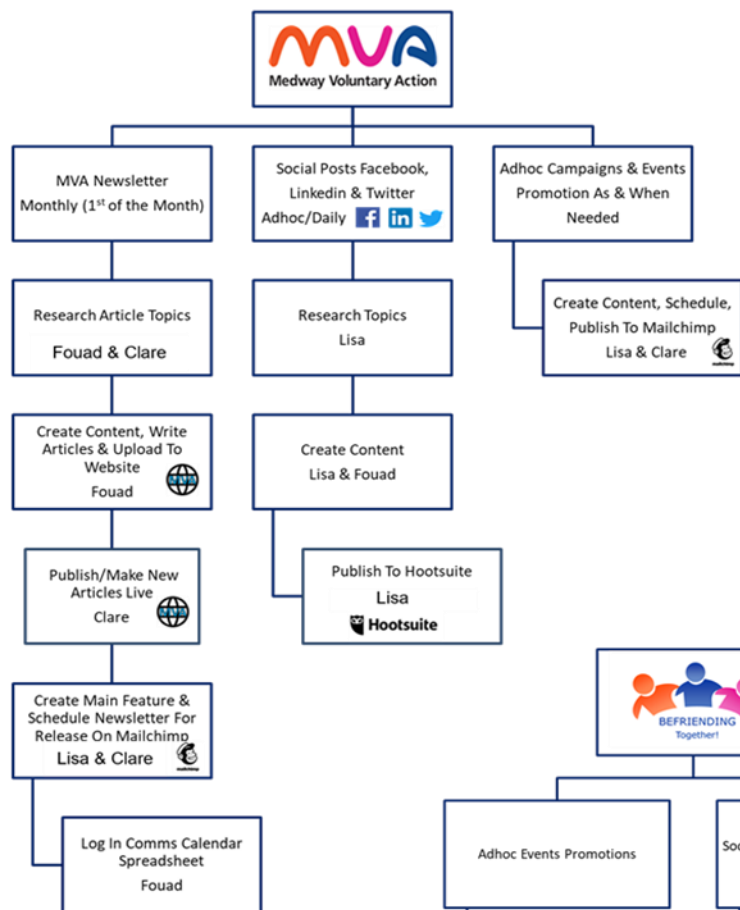
MVA Communication Responsibilities

As at August 2022, responsibilities and dependencies for the core digital channels are as detailed on the process map detailed on the following page (Page 7). Additional key responsibilities are as follows:

- **Website responsibilities:**
 - Developments/Maintenance: Hugo
 - Updates/Content addition: Martin, Graham
 - New content/design: Martin, Graham, Hugo and Clare
- **VCS Community Response Zoom/Meetings:**
 - Minutes and updates: Lisa
 - Ad hoc mailings: Lisa
- **VCS Leaders Network Steering Group Meetings:**

- Minutes and updates: Stephen
 - Ad hoc mailings: Stephen, Clare, Jane
- **Community and Faith Forum:**
 - Minutes and updates: Satinder
 - Ad hoc mailings: Satinder, Lisa, Jane
 - WhatsApp group moderation: Satinder

Responsibility for MVA core digital channels flowchart:



APPENDIX 1 - Specific operational requirements for some MVA publications

Annual Report:

Must contain the following:

- Most up to date trustees/ staff list
- Most up to date membership list

Must contain the following reports from:

- Chair of the board of trustees
- Trustees
- Chief Executive Officer
- Key members of staff
- North Kent Training Service
- Project leaders
- Financial statements
- Other compliance requirements (for example public benefit reports)

Medway Voluntary Action Newsletter:

The newsletter is to be sent monthly (1st) via an online emailing system, mailchimp, utilising the RSS feed so that the style of the newsletter remains the same. The Newsletter must aim to:

- Be useful and relevant to its audiences
- Always be posted on Social Media channels when publishing.
- Information with very short deadlines only on social media and on the website

Medway Voluntary Network Bulletin:

The newsletter is to be sent monthly (15th) via an online emailing system, mailchimp, utilising the RSS feed so that the style of the newsletter remains the same. The Bulletin must aim to:

- Include volunteering roles available to Medway residents
- Be useful and relevant to its audiences
- Information with very short deadlines only on social media and on the website

North Kent Training Service News Bulletins:

The NKTS News Bulletin is to be sent ad hoc via the online emailing system, Mailchimp, with relevance to the training courses/ other activities of NKTS or MVA.

The NKTS News Bulletin should:

- Be useful and relevant to its audiences
- Always be posted on Social Media channels when publishing.
- Advertise North Kent Training Service and its provision along with a useful message for the readers.

The NKTS News Bulletin should contain the following:

- The impact the training course could have and it's learning outcomes
- Quotes from previous learners
- Other training courses that relate to the course or would be of similar interest to the audience
- If possible, a useful and relevant toolkit or website link

Website:

News articles on website:

All Articles published should:

- Include the logo of the main organisations mentioned
- Contain around 200 words
- Be consistent with pre-prepared templates
- Not contain the author's opinions, exaggerated statements, quotes or hyperbole.
- Contain facts that may be sourced from the relevant organisation's website or the source of the information.
- Include useful links
- Cross link with dynamic content where appropriate

Static content on the website:

The MVA Website has static content such as reports, toolkits and signposting information to external resources. The static content must:

- Be relevant to the MVA audiences and follow the guidelines set out in section – 'information and news Articles distributed' of this document.
- Be up to date information but information that is long standing and will not go out of date quickly.
- Cross link with dynamic content where appropriate.
- External links will be maintained and kept up to date.
- The Static Content is to be continuously developed.

Dynamic content on the website:

The MVA website has dynamic content that is often time limited such as funding opportunities, job vacancies for the VCS or benefiting them in Medway. The dynamic content must:

- Be relevant to the MVA audiences and follow the guidelines set out in section – 'information and news Articles distributed' of this document.
- Cross link with static content where appropriate
- Be published with sufficient time for people to react. For example, enough time allowed to apply for the opportunity (Short deadlines are to be published on social media only)
- Have a headline that outlines what is in the article. The reader must be able to look at the headline and know the general theme of the article. For Example, – 'XXX Charitable Trust Now Open to Applications to those who support XXX'

SEO:

Where possible, all published material should be fully SEO'd. However, it is important that the essence of the message isn't lost in the attempt to achieve this and judgement calls should be made by the Communications Manager.

All static content should be fully SEO'd, however some it is more important that the article is accessible and appropriate. News articles should be as well SEO'd as reader convenience allows.

Broken Links:

MVA aim to check broken links on the website once a month. Broken links will be either unpublished or replaced where appropriate.

Comments/notifications:

MVA aim to check, and then either publish or decline, a comment as and when a notification is received. It is not MVA's policy to contact the individual that posted the comment to explain why a comment may have been declined. MVA will not publish offensive comments, those looking to sell

or promote goods, purely political or religious comments. Reasons for a comment being declined may also be within our publishing guidelines that are outlined in this document.

Maintenance:

MVA aim to complete all scheduled website maintenance out of hours for minimal disruption to the service. In an instance where the website is 'down' MVA aim to have the website online and functioning within 24 hours.

Use of language:

MVA does not endorse or recommend, for example, information may say that an organisation is the best or has a great reputation or that their service is unique and innovative, however, MVA do not have the time or resource to check this, so language should be neutral.

For example:

"Medway Example Organisation have launched a fantastic and unique information and advice service for residents of Medway who have issues with accessing nail clipping services"

Should read:

"Medway Example Organisation have launched an information and advice service for residents of Medway who have issues with accessing nail clipping services"

The MVA Twitter feed uses the headline of the post as the tweet content and the newsletter uses it as the link to the article, so it is important that the headline clearly indicates the content of the article. This may lessen the ability to SEO, but is more convenient for the reader.

Social Media

MVA, MVN and NKTS can use social media channels to enhance and support its online presence – promoting the work and services of their (and other) organisations where appropriate. When using the social media channels, we must:

- Include the Social Media handles of our and other organisations, where appropriate.
- Use pictures where possible to boost visibility.
- Post about events attended if and when appropriate.
- Only 'retweet', 'share' and 'like' appropriate posts that follow MVA and NKTS's overall guidelines and ones that are relevant to the MVA/ NKTS audiences and follow the guidelines set out in section – 'information and news Articles distributed' of this document.
- MVA will post all news items included in the newsletter, plus fundraisers/performances etc. where appropriate

APPENDIX 2 – MVA SMALL/MICRO VCS RECRUITMENT AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN

We use an engagement funnel model to develop our communication and engagement plans. Outlined below are details of our current work plans to help enhance our reach with not for profit start-ups.

Stage	Action	Frequency	Who
Identify	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research new groups/orgs (notice boards, community news, word of mouth) Log details onto VC Connect – contact them if further info required Paid press adverts to raise awareness of MVA (budget dependent) 	Ongoing Ongoing TBA	Data Officer/All Data Officer Comms Officer
Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Cold call' contacts on VCConnect when we have a relevant opportunity for them to engage with (e.g. IMS focus group payments, participate in VCS surveys (e.g. covid, COLC)) Short video explaining what MVA does on website – YouTube and links from our website (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80Q5MOfx9xM) Talks at community events (e.g. Medway's Champions Breakfast, Medway Arts Forum) Talk through other MVA support/services when supporting organisations to register their activities on Connect Well Press Releases about MVA Promotions via Medway Council comms team (via Mary Coldham) MVA Outcome report published on website Distribute Outcome report to stakeholders (e.g. Councilors, commissioners, H&CP) Signposting to financial opportunities (e.g. test bed fund, IM community grants) Social media 'outreach' activity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> liking, sharing and following other VCS' content direct messaging groups if appropriate (e.g. mutual aid private groups during covid) Send all new groups added to VC Connect the MVA 'Welcome/Information pack on offer and services' and invite/help them to sign up to MVA's comms channels (e-newsletters, socials, zoom delegate list etc) Send MVA information pack/short 'About MVA' video link to Councilors 	Ad hoc One off Ad hoc Ongoing Ad hoc Quarterly Annually Annually Ongoing Ongoing Annually	Data or Project Officers Comms Officer All Data Officer Comms Officer Comms Officer Comms Officer CEO All Comms Officer Data Officer Comms Officer
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surveys – consulting on which services/support they want/need; priorities and challenges 121 support sessions Signposting following phone, email, face to face enquiries/contacts Website resources (including a dedicated start up page: http://www.medwayvoluntaryaction.org.uk/advice-support-starting-up) VCS Events suitable for all size of groups/orgs (Trustees Evening, Re-engage & Reinvent) Community & Faith Forum Capacity Building – e.g. training (Bitesize), Financial Capability skills 'in-house' for service users, collaborative bids, volunteering support pack 'White board' function for suggestions on MVA future support (online and face to face events, feedback/evaluation forms) 	Ad hoc Ongoing Ongoing Ad hoc Ad hoc Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing	Data Officer Data Manager All Comms Officer All Project Officer All Data Officer
Returning/Regular	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subscribing to MVA bulletin 	Ongoing	All

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joining VCS Leaders Network • VCS Community Response Meetings • Developing relationships & collaborative working with VCS partners on existing and new projects (e.g. IMS, CHCat. Befriending) • Joining the VCS Transformation Academy • Joining Volunteer Managers Network 	Ad hoc Bi-monthly Ad-hoc Ad hoc Ad hoc	CEO/PDs Project Officer CEO/PDs Project Officer Project Officer
Loyalty/Recommend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represented on VCS Leaders Network Steering group • Feedback/Testimonials • Consider a 'MVA Champions' scheme (provided VCS were interested in volunteering to do this) formalizing the 'word of mouth' recommendations that are given about MVA 	Ongoing Annually TBA	Project Officer Data Officer Project Officer