



**Supporting Communities
in Kent & Medway**



Strategic Plan



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INTRODUCTION

For more than three decades, MVA has evolved alongside the communities it serves. Founded in 1989, MVA emerged at a time when the voluntary and community sector was becoming increasingly recognised as a vital force for social change. Over the years, MVA has grown from a small local infrastructure organisation into a trusted anchor within Medway and across Kent, supporting Voluntary, Community, Social Enterprise and Faith (VCSEF) organisations to develop, collaborate and respond to the changing needs of local people. Throughout its history, MVA has played a pivotal role during periods of transition, whether responding to economic downturns, public sector reform, or shifts in health and social care. This adaptability, grounded in strong community relationships and an understanding of place, has enabled MVA to remain relevant and impactful for over 35 years. However, the environment in which MVA now operates is more complex, uncertain and demanding than ever before.

Communities are experiencing widening inequality, increased pressure on health and social care systems, and rising demand for preventative, community-based support. At the same time, the VCSEF sector faces shrinking resources, short-term funding, workforce pressures and increased expectations to deliver more with less. Alongside this, significant system change, including health reform, place-based approaches and local government reorganisation, is reshaping how decisions are made, services are commissioned and voices are heard.

This strategy has been developed in response to these challenges and opportunities. It recognises that while MVA's core purpose remains unchanged, how we deliver it must evolve. To continue supporting the VCSEF sector effectively, MVA must strengthen its own resilience, diversify its income, and expand its role from a traditional infrastructure body into an organisation that combines sector leadership with direct, community-led delivery. The strategy sets out how MVA will build on its heritage while positioning itself for the future: deepening its influence within local systems, enabling social action, supporting innovation, and ensuring the VCSEF sector is not only responding to change, but shaping it. This is not diverting from MVA's roots, but a necessary and deliberate step forward, ensuring that the organisation is equipped to meet the scale, pace and complexity of change facing communities today and in the future.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MVA exists to empower, connect, and champion the voluntary, community, social enterprise, and faith (VCSEF) sector across Kent and Medway. At a time of significant social, economic, and health challenges, MVA plays a vital role in building a strong, resilient VCSEF ecosystem that improves lives and strengthens communities.

Over the next five years (2026-2031), MVA's strategy is driven by two core ambitions: to strengthen the capacity, influence, and voice of the VCSEF sector, and to ensure MVA's own sustainability and growth so we can continue delivering meaningful social impact. This requires evolving from a traditional infrastructure body into a dynamic service-delivery organisation, diversifying income, and investing in people and systems to secure long-term resilience.

To achieve sustainability, MVA will reduce reliance on short-term statutory funding while maintaining strong strategic relationships with local authorities and NHS partners. We will build a balanced funding portfolio that combines earned income from fee-based services with grants, individual giving, corporate partnerships, and high-impact fundraising. This approach will generate more predictable income while strengthening engagement with donors, businesses, and communities.

MVA will expand its role beyond advisory support to deliver services that respond to emerging needs. This includes community-led programmes addressing inequalities, social isolation, and prevention services. We will strengthen volunteering through recruitment, training, and digital platforms, creating pathways for young people into volunteering, employment and creating the next generation of leaders. Alongside this, we will deliver capacity-building programmes for VCSEF organisations, run innovation pilots, and co-design solutions with public, private, and community partners, amplifying impact while creating mission-aligned income streams.

Sustainability depends on organisational capability. We will invest in our workforce through growth, skills development, and new roles focused on business development, donor relations, impact, data, and digital delivery. We will introduce modern systems to improve efficiency, service management, and stewardship, while fostering a culture of inclusion, wellbeing, and leadership. Financial resilience will be supported by robust governance, clear revenue-mix targets, cost recovery across services, and the gradual building of reserves to cover three to six months of operating costs by Year Five.

Through this strategy, MVA will continue to empower the VCSEF sector, tackle inequality, and drive collaboration, while securing the resources, partnerships, and capabilities needed to thrive in a changing landscape and amplify our impact across Kent and Medway.

VISION

Empowering Communities, Reducing Inequality to Shape a Better Future.

Our vision is a future where empowered, inclusive communities thrive, inequalities are addressed at their roots, and social and economic outcomes are improved for all. By investing in people, place, and potential, enabling local leadership, and working collaboratively to ensure no one is left behind, we will shape a better, fairer, and more resilient future, one that is prosperous, and sustainable for current and future generations.

MISSION

Strengthening communities by building capacity, tackling inequalities, and inspiring community-led action. We champion collaboration, innovation, volunteering, inclusion, and high-quality service delivery, ensuring organisations and marginalised voices are empowered to achieve sustainable solutions into the future.

OUR VALUES

Respect

We treat everyone with dignity, fairness and kindness. We listen to lived experience, value different perspectives, and create inclusive spaces where people and organisations can grow.

Community First

We put people and place at the heart of everything we do. We work alongside communities, not above them, ensuring solutions are shaped locally and respond to real need.

Collaboration

We believe we are stronger together. We build trusted partnerships, share knowledge openly, and choose cooperation over competition to create lasting impact.

Integrity

We do what we say we will do. We act transparently, manage resources responsibly, and uphold high standards of governance, safeguarding and accountability.

Learning & Improvement

We stay curious and forward-looking. We reflect, adapt and innovate – using evidence, insight and feedback to continuously strengthen our work and our impact.

SUSTAINING MVA FOR THE FUTURE

MVA's sustainability plan is built around four connected pillars that strengthen our resilience, impact, and independence. Together, they set out how we will diversify income, expand and adapt our services, invest in our people and systems, and strengthen financial discipline and governance. This approach ensures MVA remains fit for the future and able to respond to change, support the VCSEF sector, and deliver lasting benefits for communities across Kent and Medway. The four pillars are:

1. Diversifying Income Beyond Statutory Funding

While local authority and NHS funding remain important, we will reduce dependency on short-term transactional grants by developing a balanced funding portfolio. This includes:

- **Earned income** through fee-based services and social enterprise models such as governance support, safeguarding audits, volunteer systems, impact measurement, and digital transformation. (Not limited)
- **Philanthropic grants and Trusts** focused on inequality reduction, youth engagement, and capacity building.
- **Individual giving and donor relations**, including major gifts, annual giving, legacy giving, and membership programmes supported by strong donor stewardship.
- **Corporate partnerships and sponsorships**, leveraging Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental, Social and Governance commitments to create shared value.
- **Fundraising events** that both generate income and strengthen community engagement.

2. Expanding Services and Becoming a Service Delivery Organisation

MVA will evolve beyond its traditional infrastructure role and build on developing a dynamic delivery service, offering a broader range of community-focused and sector-strengthening services. This means moving more from primarily advisory and support functions to direct delivery of programmes and solutions that meet emerging needs across Kent and Medway.

Our expansion will include:

- **Community-led programmes** tackling health inequalities, social isolation, and prevention, such as social prescribing, befriending, and holistic wellbeing initiatives.
- **Volunteer development services**, including recruitment, training, and digital platforms, to strengthen civic participation and create pathways for young people into volunteering and employment.
- **Capacity-building programmes** for VCSEF organisations, delivered through practical workshops, leadership development, and shared service models.
- **Innovation pilots and collaborative projects** that bring together public, private, and community partners to co-design solutions for local challenges.
- **Fee-based specialist services** that add value to VCSEF organisations, such as governance support, safeguarding audits, and impact measurement, ensuring sustainability while maintaining affordability for smaller groups.

By diversifying our service delivery, MVA will generate new income streams, deepen its impact on communities, and strengthen its position as a trusted partner in shaping local systems. This approach aligns with our funding strategy, enabling us to combine earned income with philanthropic support, corporate partnerships, and donor engagement.

3. Investing in People and Organisational Capacity

Sustainability depends on organisational capability. To ensure long-term impact and resilience, we will deliberately expand and upskill our team, strengthening both specialist and leadership capacity across the organisation. This will include the introduction and development of roles focused on business development, donor and partner relations, impact measurement and data analysis, and digital adoption. These capabilities will enable us to diversify income streams, strengthen relationships with funders and stakeholders, demonstrate measurable outcomes, and work more efficiently at scale.

We will invest in modern, fit-for-purpose systems to support our operations and service delivery. This includes upskilling our team on our customer relationship management (CRM) platforms, service management tools, and digital content delivery systems to improve data quality, reporting, transparency, and stewardship. These systems will reduce administrative burden, enable evidence-based decision-making, and ensure consistent, high-quality engagement with the communities and partners we serve.

Alongside systems and skills, we will cultivate a strong organisational culture that prioritises inclusion, wellbeing, and continuous learning. We will foster inclusive

practices that value diverse perspectives, support staff wellbeing through sustainable workloads and flexible ways of working and invest in leadership development at all levels. By empowering our people and creating clear pathways for growth, we will improve retention, build institutional knowledge, and create an environment that encourages innovation, collaboration, and shared ownership of our mission.

4. Building Financial Resilience and Governance Discipline

The financial principles that will support the delivery of MVA's strategy and ensure long-term sustainability. It sets out how income, costs, and risk will be managed to maintain financial resilience while enabling continued investment in services, people, and partnerships that support the VCSEF sector across Kent and Medway. Financial projections will be underpinned by:

- **Balanced revenue mix targets** to avoid single-source dependency.
- **Reserves growth**, aiming for 6 months of operating costs by Year 3.
- **Cost recovery** on service lines, with tiered pricing and subsidy policies for smaller organisations.
- **Scenario planning** and risk management to adapt to changing conditions. Progress will be tracked through clear KPIs and overseen by strong governance, ensuring transparency and accountability.

This strategy ensures MVA can continue to deliver its core mission, empowering the VCSEF sector, reducing inequalities, and driving collaboration, while securing the resources and capabilities to thrive in a changing landscape. By diversifying income, expanding services, investing in people, and building strategic partnerships, MVA will not only sustain itself but also amplify its impact across Kent and Medway.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Our strategic priorities for the next five years reflect both the challenges and opportunities facing the VCSEF sector and MVA's commitment to driving meaningful, sustainable change. They are designed to strengthen the sector's capacity, foster innovation, and ensure that communities across Kent and Medway have access to the support and opportunities they need to thrive. These priorities are interconnected and collectively aim to build resilience, reduce inequalities, and create a more collaborative ecosystem.

We will focus on building sector capacity and sustainability by providing high-quality support and developing the Social Impact Gateway, a single access point for funding that promotes equity and efficiency. Alongside this, we will champion social innovation by creating stronger volunteer pathways, particularly for young people, and embedding these opportunities into our wider partnership and funding strategies. Tackling inequalities remains central to our mission, and we will deliver community-led, preventative services such as social prescribing and befriending, co-designed with health systems to ensure long-term impact rather than short-term fixes.

Collaboration will be a cornerstone of our approach. We will bring together public, private, housing, education, and VCSEF stakeholders to embed social value in local development and create multi-year, co-funded initiatives that deliver systemic change. Finally, we will lead on impact and innovation by introducing shared measurement frameworks, social return on investment tools, and digital solutions that enable data-driven decision-making and strengthen both sector practice and MVA's case for support.

These priorities are ambitious yet achievable, and they position MVA as a catalyst for transformation, empowering organisations, connecting communities, and shaping a fairer, healthier, and more resilient future for Kent and Medway.

Our Strategic Priorities

4.1 Strengthening Sector Capacity and Sustainability

Aim: Continue to build a resilient, well-resourced, and future-ready VCSEF sector.

How we'll deliver and sustain it:

- Establishing a single gateway for funding to improve transparency, equity, and efficiency in resource distribution.
- Providing advice and support on governance, compliance, safeguarding, fundraising, and digital transformation.

- Developing peer learning networks, toolkits, and training programmes focused on leadership, financial resilience, and sustainability.
- Supporting organisations through crises and transition periods, with tailored interventions and mentoring.
- Facilitating access to commissioning and contract opportunities by building sector readiness and visibility.

Impact: A stronger, more confident VCSE sector with the tools and knowledge to deliver high-quality, sustainable services.

4.2 Social Action

Aim: Inspire a culture of volunteering and participation, with a focus on young people and underrepresented groups.

How we'll deliver and sustain it:

- Strengthening local volunteering systems, including platforms for matching, recognition, and volunteer management.
- Working with schools, colleges, and youth services to encourage early participation in volunteering and community action.
- Creating new programmes that support young people into both voluntary and paid work in the VCSE sector.
- Addressing barriers to volunteering such as transport, accessibility, and digital exclusion.
- Celebrating and showcasing the impact of volunteers across the region.
- Creating the next generations of leaders through our nationally recognised transformation academy model.

Impact: A dynamic, intergenerational volunteer workforce; stronger pipelines into the VCSEF workforce; and a programme that is itself a driver of diversified income.

4.3 Tackling Inequalities Through Community-Led Solutions

Aim: Position the VCSEF sector as a key driver in reducing inequalities.

How we'll deliver and sustain it:

- Supporting and expanding social prescribing initiatives in partnership with health and care providers.
- Connecting health systems with grassroots organisations to ensure services are culturally appropriate, community-led, and accessible.
- Promoting community development approaches that prioritise prevention, inclusion, and lived experience.
- Advocating for the VCSE role within Integrated Care Systems (ICS) and health decision-making bodies.
- Building capacity within smaller VCSE organisations to engage effectively with health agendas.

Impact: Healthier, more resilient communities where local organisations play an integral role in tackling health disparities.

4.4 Driving Cross-Sector Collaboration and Systems Change

Aim: Maximise collective impact and embed social value through strategic partnerships.

How we'll deliver and sustain it:

- Building partnerships with housing associations, developers, and private sector organisations to unlock new resources and align priorities.
- Championing social value in procurement and development, ensuring the VCSE sector benefits from local investment.
- Supporting collaborative funding bids, innovation pilots, and shared service models.
- Bringing partners together through cross-sector forums and communities of practice to co-design solutions, ensuring community voice drives responses to complex social challenges and systems change.

Impact: A more joined-up and inclusive ecosystem where collaboration leads to scalable, systemic solutions to local challenges.

4.5 Championing Impact, Learning, and Innovation

Aim: Foster continuous improvement, evidence-based practice, and innovation.

How we'll deliver and sustain it:

- Developing shared frameworks and tools for impact measurement and social return on investment (SROI).
- Encouraging data-informed decision-making and sector-wide learning.
- Providing support for digital adoption, service innovation, and agile approaches to delivery.
- Celebrating and sharing success stories that demonstrate the VCSE sector's value to wider systems and funders.
- Supporting research and policy engagement that amplifies sector voice and drives change.

Impact: A more confident and evidence-driven sector that can innovate, influence policy, and respond effectively to community needs.

GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

To ensure MVA operates with transparency, integrity, and responsiveness, maintaining the trust of stakeholders, partners, and the communities it serves.

Strong governance and accountability underpin the delivery of MVA's strategic goals. As a trusted infrastructure body, MVA is committed to upholding high standards in leadership, financial stewardship, and organisational effectiveness. This includes:

- Regular board and stakeholder reporting to monitor progress, share insights, and provide oversight across strategic objectives.
- Annual review and refinement of strategic priorities to ensure continued relevance, responsiveness, and alignment with emerging needs.
- Transparent communication of finances, programme outcomes, and organisational achievements through accessible public reporting and impact publications.
- Maintaining compliance with all regulatory and legal requirements, including safeguarding, data protection, and charity governance.
- Embedding a culture of continuous learning, reflective practice, and accountability throughout the organisation.
- Ensuring diverse community voices are reflected in decision-making through inclusive consultation and stakeholder engagement processes.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

To measure progress, understand impact, and continuously improve services and strategy based on evidence and community insight.

Effective monitoring and evaluation are essential to ensure MVA remains accountable, responsive, and focused on delivering meaningful outcomes. MVA is committed to embedding a robust and transparent approach to tracking performance across all areas of its work.

Key elements of MVA's monitoring and evaluation approach include:

- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) clearly aligned to each strategic priority, enabling consistent measurement of outputs, outcomes, and impact over time.
- Annual Impact Reports that evaluate progress against strategic goals, celebrate achievements, identify challenges, and inform strategic reviews and refinements.
- Stakeholder and community feedback mechanisms, including surveys, focus groups, and consultations, to ensure the work remains aligned with the evolving needs and priorities of VCSE organisations and the communities they serve.
- Integration of both quantitative and qualitative data, including case studies, lived experience, and service user outcomes, to provide a comprehensive picture of MVA's impact.
- Opportunities for sector-wide learning and shared reflection, enabling MVA and its partners to adapt and grow together.

CONCLUSION

This five-year strategic plan marks a significant milestone in the journey of MVA. It reaffirms our commitment to acting as a trusted infrastructure body and changemaker, one that is responsive to the needs of the sector, ambitious for the future, and grounded in the values of equity, collaboration, and community empowerment.

The landscape in which the VCSE sector operates is complex and constantly evolving. Rising demand, limited resources, widening inequalities, and ongoing system pressures require coordinated, strategic, and inclusive responses. MVA's strategy acknowledges these challenges while placing confidence in the collective power of voluntary action, local partnerships, and community-led solutions.

By delivering on the priorities outlined in this strategy, MVA will:

- Strengthen the infrastructure and sustainability of VCSE organisations, enabling them to grow their impact and resilience.
- Promote volunteering and youth development to nurture the next generation of community leaders and civic contributors.
- Work alongside the health system and other partners to address entrenched inequalities through locally tailored, community-led approaches.
- Act as a bridge between sectors, including housing, private enterprise, and public bodies, to embed social value and unlock new opportunities for collaboration.
- Ensure that all of its work is underpinned by robust governance, transparency, and a commitment to continuous learning and improvement.

We recognise that we cannot deliver this strategy alone. Achieving these ambitions will require strong relationships, open dialogue, and active collaboration with our partners, from grassroots community groups to statutory agencies and national funders. MVA will continue to advocate for the voice, value, and visibility of the VCSE sector in all strategic spaces and ensure that lived experience remains central to decision-making. Ultimately, this strategy is about creating the conditions for voluntary and community organisations to flourish, so that people across Kent and Medway can live healthier, more connected, and fulfilling lives.

Together, we will build a more just, inclusive, and resilient future, powered by the energy, insight, and dedication of the VCSEF sector.