



Communications Strategy

Contents :

- 1. Introduction**

- 2. Aims and Objectives of the strategy**

- 3. Mapping our Communication and Roles and Responsibilities**

- 4. Roles and Responsibilities**

- 5. Key Principles of Communication**

- 6. Evaluation process**

- 7. Policy review**

Tuesday 15th March 2011

Voluntary Action Shetland Communication Strategy

1 Introduction

The purpose of this strategy is to outline how communication within VAS will support the overall vision for the organisation. VAS believes that effective communications are essential if VAS as an organisation is to operate as efficiently as possible

Mission

Voluntary Action Shetland seeks to respond to and support voluntary services in Shetland by meeting present and emerging needs, developing and promoting new ways of responding and encouraging people in Shetland to offer voluntary service to their community.

Our aims:

- Building on relationships with community planning
- Supporting and developing a strong third sector
- Developing Social Enterprise
- Volunteering

Communicating well will:

- Help create a can-do culture and build commitment and confidence focused on achieving goals
- Boost morale and motivation
- Provide skilled Directors to be ambassadors for VAS
- Help the organisation learn from the experiences of others
- Improve VAS's performance
- Ensure that members and staff are well informed and better able to act as ambassadors in helping increase awareness and understanding of VAS as an organisation

Voluntary Action Shetland Communication Strategy

2.1 Aims of the Strategy

The aim of the strategy is to create a culture of communication that helps stakeholders understand individual and corporate communication responsibilities. The intention is to enable VAS to work more effectively and efficiently towards the strategic aims.

Performance goals for the Internal Communication Strategy are;

- Support Communications as a priority issue and demonstrate our commitment to improving communication
- Instill in stakeholders a complete vision of the communication function and understanding of its core importance to the organisation
- Support the aims, objectives, and implementation requirements of the long term development plan
- Provide communication guidance to all stakeholders
- Encourage engagement in our culture to be environmentally friendly
- Ensure members and staff are always well informed and involved in matters that concern them
- Ensure members and staff are aware of the VAS aims and objectives that they are working towards, what is necessary and why, and how they are contributing to their achievement
- Enable staff to voice their ideas and opinions on VAS policies, procedures, and services
- Ensure that the standard of internal communications provides a solid foundation for more effective and efficient external communications.

2.2 Objectives

We will achieve the aims through targeted objectives:

Develop an inclusive approach to communications and our communication culture:

- Ensure people have the time to communicate more effectively
- Know the roles and responsibilities of all within the organisation
- Know how to contact relevant stakeholders and who they are
- VAS staff and development team meetings are held monthly

Create an integrated, accessible internal communications role to:

- Manage and oversee the Internal Communications Strategy and implement and advise on specific actions and activities
- Support/coordinate communications e.g. Network briefings, web pages, events, project communications and media releases

Voluntary Action Shetland Communication Strategy

- Ensure communications is an agenda item at staff and development team meetings

Strengthen and refine our face-to-face communications to add value to information transaction:

- Develop and implement a core information cascade and team briefing process throughout VAS

Reinforce credibility and authority of communication within in the organisation:

- Reinforce the reliable channels of communication
- Develop a clear set of guidelines and support for all Directors
- Create a best practice guide and communication toolkit.

Develop e-communications:

- Regular briefings and communicate electronically through the VISP newsletters (with hard copy available for those that prefer)
- Develop a network feedback section within the VAS website

Engage stakeholders in, and to contribute towards, strategic development of VAS:

- Establish recognised feedback mechanisms to enable stakeholders to contribute to organisational development
- Ensure that stakeholders are aware of changes to policy and the impact on activity and their roles by identifying and communicating policy changes
- Establish regulatory and knowledge-sharing values in stakeholders (region meetings, etc).

3 Mapping our Communication

To guide our communications, we need to ensure we give:

- the right information:- **What?**
- to the right people: - **Who?**
- at the right time
- and in the right way: - **How?**

3.1 What?

Key messages help stakeholders know what is important to them and VAS. They will help shape the perception thereby ensuring consistency even when communicated through a number of channels.

Voluntary Action Shetland Communication Strategy

3.2 Who?

VAS is made up of a number of audience groups divided into: The Board of Directors, staff and stakeholders. Stakeholders include our funders, our members, other voluntary groups, volunteers, volunteer involving organisations, the social enterprise sector, the third sector as a whole, National, Scottish and Local Government, the public and private sector and the people of Shetland.

We will identify and target the relevant audience in all our communications, providing information tailored to their needs. Communication will be monitored for content, tone and language to ensure information is clear and fit for its audience(s).

3.3 How?

Communications in VAS will occur via three mediums; electronic, face-to-face, and paper publications. Together they will be interpreted as a single voice of VAS, providing key measurable outcomes of the Strategy.

3.3.1 Electronic Communication

e-communication is a productive method of communications in VAS therefore it is important that there are clear guidelines developed and implemented. This form of communication is not a suitable format in isolation as some stakeholders, may not have access to PC's.

3.3.2 Face-to-Face

As with all communication activities, the information and messages communicated via face-to-face channels will maintain consistency in content, approach and output as much as our other forms of communication. We will introduce co-ordinated information releases to enhance the reliability and confidence in communications.

3.3.3 Publications

VAS publications are an important way to improve understanding of the activities of our organisation, and local developments in the third sector. They are an accessible and digestible source of reference for staff and all our stakeholders. Use of publications will be enhanced by access to our web site: www.va-shetland.org.uk and to the Shetland Community Portal www.shetland-communities.org.uk with its associated Shetland Community Toolkit.

3.4 Branding

Integral to every publication VAS produces is the corporate identity – the VAS image. It is the one logo that stakeholders will automatically associate with

Voluntary Action Shetland Communication Strategy

Voluntary Action Shetland publications and literature and should be apparent in all material produced. The logo should be applied to all communications.

VAS headed paper to be used at all times, this to include Executive Officer details and also the member of staff who has developed the publication or literature. VAS charity and company number must appear on all communications.

4 Roles and Responsibilities

Effective communication requires time, energy and commitment from all. To make this strategy work it is important that we all recognise the part we must play.

In order to assist in successful implementation the following will be important:

- The Strategy will be endorsed by the Board of Directors, with explicit commitment from those members to make it work
- Improved communication will be part of the objectives of The Board of Directors

The Board of Directors

- Approve the Communication Strategy and support communication activities

Staff

- The active participation of staff will be key in implementing the strategy

Priorities

- Implement effective communication methods to ensure the flow of information to all levels of the organisation
- Communicate a clear sense of purpose
- Ensure that input into local strategies is consistent with VAS mission and values
- Establish clear consistent communication channels and encourage quality internal communication
- Encourage feedback
- High visibility and availability to all
- Adopt communication skills training for yourself and others

Voluntary Action Shetland Communication Strategy

5 Key Principles of Good Communication

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Be clear | get messages across simply, clearly and with any relevant facts to minimise confusion. |
| Good timing | provide the information at a time when it is most useful to the receiver. |
| Be consistent | keep information regularly updated, in a recurring style and through familiar channels. |
| Have integrity | keep information factual, concise and leave room for feedback. |
| Be appropriate way | the right message for the right person in the right way |
| Always respond | reflecting the feedback of your audience creates a better sense of Involvement. |
| Be honest | report what is happening not what you think is happening. |

6 Evaluation Process

- The communications strategy will be reviewed annually. A questionnaire will be distributed to the stakeholders and evaluated to determine the impact of the communication strategy.
- Stakeholders views will be sought at: Community Planning events, Customer Feedback, Joint Conferences, VAS briefings, events and through website feedback.

7 Policy Review

The Internal Communication Strategy and Action Plan will be reviewed and developed on an annual basis to ensure that it meets the needs of Voluntary Action Shetland and its stakeholders.