



Communications Strategy

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Recognised by the Inland Revenue as a Scottish Charity - No. SCO 17286

Communications Strategy

Contents :

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Aims the strategy**
- 3. Communication Strategy Objectives**
- 4. How**
- 5. Roles and Responsibilities**
- 6. Key Principles of Communication**
- 7. Evaluation process**
- 8. Policy review**

1 Introduction

The Communication Strategy will inform how communication will support the overall vision for Voluntary Action Shetland. We believe that good communication at all levels, both internally and externally, is vital to achieving our objectives. This strategy underlines our commitment to the highest standards of communication, highlights the key responsibilities of all Directors, staff and volunteers.

Mission

Voluntary Action Shetland seeks to respond to and support the third sector 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 objectives are:-

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

Our Communication aims:-

- Communication will be honest, open and accurate
- Communication will be relevant, consistent and timely
- Communication will build commitment and confidence focused on achieving objectives of Voluntary Action Shetland
- Communication will be cost effective and look to make the most effective use of new technology as appropriate
- Communication will be available and accessible in alternative formats

2. 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 our strategic objectives.

Planned communication aims to:

- provide stakeholders with timely information regarding matters of interest or concern to them;
- ensure Directors, staff and volunteers are engaged on a regular basis in order to provide information, receive feedback and act on this as appropriate;

- enhance the commitment of all Directors, staff and volunteers to Voluntary Action Shetland;
- raise awareness of Voluntary Action Shetland's achievements;
- champion and facilitate the ethos of staff and volunteers involvement within Voluntary Action Shetland and ensure that all staff and volunteers receive consistent messages

3. Communication Strategy Objectives

Internal

Develop an inclusive approach to communications:

- Ensure staff and volunteers have the time to communicate more effectively
- Know the roles and responsibilities of all within the organisation
- VAS staff meetings are held monthly
- E-mail bulletins
- Staff meeting minutes and updates
- Management Board minutes
- To ensure staff maximise potential opportunities to promote Voluntary Action Shetland to relevant stakeholders
- Communications will be a standing item on the staff meeting agenda.

External

- To develop effective two way communications channels between the Voluntary Action Shetland and key stakeholders.
- To build and maintain confidence in the quality of services provided by Voluntary Action Shetland
- To develop and sustain positive relationships with key external stakeholders
- 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

4. How

Communications in VAS will occur through various mediums they will be interpreted as a single voice of VAS.

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

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.

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.

Social Media

Social media including Facebook and Twitter is an effective way of promoting and informing the work of VAS. This is an effective way of sharing information and engaging in dialogue. Staff should adhere to guidelines in the use of social media.

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.

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 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.

5. 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 and volunteers will be key in implementing the strategy

6. 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	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.

7. Evaluation Process

Communications is an integral part of our feedback and evaluation process.

8. Policy Review

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