

## **Introduction**

Established in 1989, Medway Voluntary Action is an infrastructure organisation for the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE). We are part of a national network of 200 like organisations across the country. Medway Voluntary Action's membership is in excess of 250 voluntary and community associations and social enterprises, varying in size, but all providing services to a significant proportion of Medway's population of 276,492 (Census data 2015). We also engage with a substantial number of organisations that are not as yet members through our training courses, and communication mechanisms.

Locally, regionally and nationally, the VCSE has a vital role in society whether by mobilising social action, delivering public services, identifying unmet needs or campaigning for change. Each political party has a different approach to the sector and therefore the national policy landscape is heavily shaped by Government policy. There are several major aspects of the national policy context which will affect the VCSE over the coming years such as the withdrawal from the European Union.

We recognise that these changing political, social and economic agendas impact on the operating environment of the VCSE and we are addressing this through our strategic approach.

**Our values:**

**We work to reduce barriers to participation, and to build self-esteem, resilience and aspiration in the individuals and communities in Medway**

**We embrace the diversity of the voluntary and community sector and will reflect this in all areas of our work.**

**We provide an open and welcoming environment accessible to all**

**We value the contributions of the VCSE, our Board, Staff and Volunteers at MVA**

**We operate in a culture of continuous improvement and reflective learning**

Our strategic plan therefore reflects our response to these changes and our continued commitment to be a catalyst for social change. Our mission is 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**

Here are our strategic aims for the next three years. Under each aim is a list of things we will do to achieve these aims. We will review progress against these aims every year.

**Our strategic aims can be found on the following pages**

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## **1. To be a central hub of information, support and guidance**

### **We will:**

- Support the VCSE to increase its strategic capacity by researching their needs and delivering support to up-skill and up-date, to keep abreast of changes, legislative and procedural, to obtain skills and qualifications and to develop professional operating structures and systems by:
  - o Providing high quality and accessible information and communication mechanisms to ensure the VCSE is fully informed to maximise sustainability
  - o Providing networking opportunities to enable the VCSE to work together
  - o Delivering training to maintain the professionalism of the sector
- Develop and maintain a data-base and comprehensive customer relationship management system of VCSE activity in Medway
- Produce an accessible on-line directory of VCSE activity and other Medway support services
- Maintain the skills, experience and knowledge of MVA staff to act in a guidance and advisory role and provide supported signposting to other services
- Develop and maintain our website as a repository of information
- Facilitate a communications interface between organisations to share knowledge and maintain expertise
- Lead by example to ensure safeguarding is embedded in all practice and procedures

### How do we know if we have been successful?

- Our members will be feel stronger as a result of our support
- We will be the organisation of choice for information advice and guidance related to sector activity
- We will have an 75% good to excellent feedback rate on our services from the VCSE

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## 2. To seed and nurture sustainable local projects

### We will:

- Support the VCSE to understand the rapidly changing policy landscape so that it can respond to local needs
- Identify successful models to enable community resilience and increased social capital through understanding what works and doing our part to enable residents to take voluntary action that strengthens resilience and builds social capital
- Seek funding from a range of sources to build capacity in Medway communities
- Provide a flexible and appropriate volunteering offer that enhances community development and the experience of volunteers
- Promote, support and develop volunteering and social action
- Offer advice, information and guidance in engaging volunteers whilst promoting equal opportunities and best practice to local VCSE organisations seeking volunteers.
- Provide high quality support to people and communities, particularly those that are disadvantaged
- Encourage the involvement and leadership of communities, both geographical and interest-based, in addressing and resolving the issues that affect them
- Provide opportunities for VCSE organisations to form partnerships to bid for contracts and funding and delivery jointly
- Where possible obtain funding to subsidise training delivery to improve community accessibility

### How will we know if we have been successful?

- A good level of engagement by host organisations and new volunteers in response to our volunteering offer
- More local people in the VCSE will understand how decisions are made and how they can influence services
- Decision makers and commissioners will have a better understanding of how local people and communities can support Medway initiatives to improve lives

### **3. To be the mandated voice of the VCSE to influence local services, represent its views and facilitate cross-sector dialogue**

#### **We will:**

- Develop and support a network of VCSE organisations to build collaborative opportunities, share best practice and provide a forum for representation to the statutory and other sectors
- Champion the role of the VCSE and promote its ability to demonstrate that it makes a difference for local communities and people
- Act as a 'critical friend' to the public sector by supporting people working in the local VCSE to raise issues of policy and practice that impact on people and communities
- Support dialogue cross-sector to share best practice and knowledge
- Engage with appropriate and relevant networks to keep abreast of relevant local and national developments
- Lead specifically focussed health networks to engage communities and local people in dialogue with the CCG to inform developments associated with Kent and Medway's STP
- Have a clear membership offer, engage members in governance of MVA and conduct a yearly survey to identify need and gain feedback on our effectiveness
- Work with other organisations such as research institutions to help gather evidence about the impact of services on local people

#### How will we know when we have been successful?

- The VCSE Leaders network will continue to thrive
- Organisations cross- sector will be able to engage effectively with the VCSE
- Membership of MVA will grow

#### 4. To maximise opportunities for income generation, funding and sustainability for the VCSE

##### We will:

- Deliver a transparent income generation programme for MVA that will include:
  - Joint contracts/programme delivery or trust funding in line with our mission
  - Project management fees
  - Training
  - Purchasable services
- Understand the skills and employment needs of VCSE organisations and the factors that enable viable, sustainable business models
- Promote or provide a range of courses and learning experiences to meet these needs, developing new topics and delivery mechanisms as required
- Facilitate the growth of the VCSE by providing up-to-date and relevant information on sources of funding and other resources
- Support collaborative working opportunities within the VCSE
- Develop and maintain effective relationships with stakeholders to maximise potential for funding opportunities
- Drive cost effectiveness and efficiency
- Demonstrate evidence of value and impact

##### How do we know we have been successful?

- VCSE organisations we support will be equipped to deliver successful projects
- We will use effective tools to evaluate our success so that we can maintain our relationships with funders and commissioners
- The VCSE will be able to demonstrate their impact