



**Medway Voluntary Action**

**Report on 2016 survey of the impact of  
MVA on the Voluntary and Community  
Sector in Medway**



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## Introduction

This paper reports on the findings of outcomes of a survey carried out to interrogate Medway Voluntary Action's (MVA) key stakeholders' opinion on MVA's performance. Some of this data relates to the PBR criteria in MVA's contract to provide infrastructure support to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in Medway, specifically that it:

- Feels stronger
- Feels informed and engaged
- Representation is judged to be effective.

## Background

This survey was undertaken in the context of a time of great change for the VCS, with declining sources of income, due to the massive cuts to statutory agencies and high demand on other funders. This is well illustrated by the situation faced by the Reaching Communities Fund where a significant increase in funding applications have been received, but more than ever before, far outstrip the resource allocation from the Big Lottery fund.

At the same time as funding and direct provision by statutory agencies reduces, demand for services delivered by the VCS has increased, leaving many in the sector feeling insecure.

## Methodology

The survey was emailed to 469 contacts drawn from:

- MVA's membership which comprises of Voluntary & Community groups of all sizes and areas of interest, including social care, health, the arts, heritage and the environment
- People who have attended MVA events
- Key stakeholders we have worked with (including Councillors and Council officers, local DWP contacts etc.)
- People who have attended training with NKTS (MVA's training arm)
- Subscribers to MVA's newsletter
- People who have had one-to-one support from MVA

A questionnaire was prepared and distributed through the Mailchimp platform (see appendix for a full copy of the survey). Responses were incentivised with prize draw. Non-responders were contacted by telephone and encouraged to take part.

The questionnaire was mailed out on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2016 and closed on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016. In that period, 144 individuals completed the survey, a response rate of just under 31%

The PBR criteria were investigated in questions 15, 16 and 17:

Q15 Tell us about the changes you have made as a result of support you have received from MVA.

Q16 Has support from MVA made your organisation:

- Stronger
- Better informed
- More connected
- Other

Q17 Has support and information from MVA made you feel better able to engage with statutory bodies, strategic planning and service design?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Other

## Limitations of methodology

It is difficult to capture the impact of our services on the needs of a range of differently constituted organisations delivering a massive range of services in diverse social and demographic contexts by using the 'blunt instrument' of three outcomes.

The survey doesn't measure MVA's contribution to developing communities in Medway for example through the support of newly emerging community groups, such as a new peer support group for parents whose children self-harm, or through our direct involvement in projects like Whoo Cares and WALT. Each of these organisations make big impacts and require a lot of resource to support, but can make only one response

## Analysis

The report includes analysis of aggregated responses to the questions, but also includes analysis by interaction with MVA as different types of interaction are likely to generate different outcomes. For example people receiving the newsletter were likely to report being better informed and those who attended events likely to report being better connected.

### Ratings of experiences of MVA Services

The first part of the survey asked respondents to identify which of MVA's services they had used and to rate their interaction with each area of MVA on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being not very useful and 5 being extremely useful.

119 respondents reported using the MVA web site (just under 83% of respondents), of those 88% rated their experience as very or extremely useful .

25 respondents reported having a one-to-one support session (just over 17% of respondents), of those 84% rated their experience as very or extremely useful.

113 respondents reported subscribing to the MVA newsletter (over 78% of respondents), of those 81% rated their experience as very or extremely useful.

83 respondents reported attending MVA events (just under 58% of respondents), of those 87% rated their experience as very or extremely useful.

63 respondents reported receiving training from NKTS (just under 44% of respondents), of those 94% rated their experience as very or extremely useful.

Question 15 asked respondents to tell us about the changes they have made as a result of support from MVA. Themes included:

#### Feeling stronger

- *"I am more committed to seeking external grants and funding"*
- *"Improved bid writing"*
- *"improved our relationships with our volunteers"*
- *"Implemented a lone working policy"*
- *"We have managed to progress volunteers, improve our health and safety measures and feel more confident in our approach"*
- *"Reviewed alternative options for funding"*
- *"Funding applications are now more concise"*
- *"Realising that every potential volunteer might not suit your own organisation's needs"*
- *"We have been able to access funding. Our team of staff have improved their skills"*
- *"Help with the financial side of running a charity"*
- *"Have up to date legal policy document and also a structured organisational hierarchy"*
- *"I have a greater understanding of applying for funding as well as completing a business plan"*

#### Feeling informed

- *"Changed the way staff approach service users with learning difficulties and mental health issues"*
- *"Updated processes and policies so we keep in line with current regulation. Improved the way we work so that we become more effective/efficient"*
- *"Outreach workers training courses have allowed them to understand their job role and put learning into practice."*
- *"Been made more aware of employment rights and employers responsibilities"*
- *"Great support in identifying relevant funding streams and sensible, speedy accurate information and comms"*
- *"The weekly newsletter is very informative and I often pick up tips on funding strands that are available and I pass onto our local contacts too"*
- *"MVA have and continue to provide information and support particularly around funding bids"*
- *"MVA helps me to keep in touch with developments and challenges in the voluntary sector"*
- *"I've found out about current news regionally and nationally about the sector"*

#### Feeling engaged:

- *"Invaluable for networking and making contacts with other local organisations"*
- *"Links to other organisations resulting in new contacts and discussions"*
- *"I have been able to find out what is currently available in the area"*
- *"Better connectivity to other voluntary sector organisations, improved partnership working"*
- *"I have made a numbers of a new contacts with other similar organisations in the area"*
- *"It has given me wider community networks and current partnership working relationships"*
- *"Incredibly helpful especially by helping our organisation connect with VCS organisations across Medway"*

### Effective representation

- *“Opportunities have been provided to have our voices heard, and hence assist the service providers to be aware of cultural issues when planning and delivering their services”*
- *“Networking events have helped us to forge relationship with other service providers, and raise awareness of their services to marginalised groups”*
- *“Networking opportunities”*
- *“Our association with MVA is one of partnership, understanding local needs from a range of clients and responding to situations which lead to a reduction in risk and harm within the community and home”*
- *“I am part of the new VCS forum”*

For further information on Representation please see comments in conclusion.

## **Outcomes**

Question 16 asked respondents to identify whether support from MVA had made their organisation feel stronger, better informed and/or more connected. Only 37 of the respondents (26%) ticked more than one box so it is likely that the question wasn't read properly. This is illustrated by the high level of responses that report feeling better informed which, by definition, must mean that they feel stronger. Similarly, nearly 99% of respondents rated events as 3 or over, all events contain a strong element of networking, yet only 51% of event attendees reported feeling more connected.

In total, 119 respondents (83%) answered Q 16, of these 24 reported being stronger (20%), 103 better informed (86%) and 49 more connected (41%).

When analysed by the respondents interaction with MVA there is some movement in these figures. For example a higher proportion of those respondents who had received one-to-one support reported feeling stronger, similarly with respondents attending events feeling more connected.

### Web site users

105 responses

- 18% Stronger
- 85% better informed
- 39% more connected

### Received one-to-one support

21 responses

- 33% Stronger
- 95% better informed
- 38% more connected

### Newsletter subscribers

94 responses

- 17% Stronger
- 86% better informed
- 43% more connected

### Event attendees

74 responses

- 22% Stronger
- 86% better informed
- 51% more connected

### Received training

56 responses

- 21% Stronger
- 89% better informed
- 43% more connected

Question 17 asked respondents to identify whether support from MVA had made them feel better able to engage with statutory bodies, strategic planning and service design.

In total, 134 respondents (93%) answered Q 17, of these 51 (38%) answered yes, 32 (24%) no, 45 (34%) answered don't know and 6 gave another response (4%).

'Other' responses were

- "It has highlighted the need for me to be more than a Sole Trader"
- "Not relevant"
- "Not requested this advice but would be interested in doing so"
- "Not yet, but info provided will be of use in the future"
- "We struggle to do this in Medway"
- "With the comm and voluntary sector"

Again when analysed by the respondents interaction with MVA there is some movement in these figures, reflecting the analysis of Q16. Those respondents who had received one-to-one support reported feeling better able to engage.

### Web site users

112 responses

- Yes - 42%
- No – 24%
- Don't know – 4%
- Other – 30%

### Received one-to-one support

24 responses

- Yes – 63%
- No – 8%
- Don't know – 4%
- Other – 25%

### Newsletter subscribers

106 responses

- Yes – 38%
- No – 24%
- Don't know – 5%
- Other – 34%

## Event attendees

60 responses

- Yes – 50%
- No – 23%
- Don't know – 3%
- Other – 33%

## **Conclusion**

The survey identified that resource intensive interaction, such as training, one-to-one support and events, achieve the best outcomes, however our resources to provide this level of engagement are limited by the level of income we receive to provide these services.

It also identified that respondents value the services they receive and consider them to be of high quality.

We have learnt that MVA is very good at providing information that is appropriate to respondents needs. However, making the sector feel stronger is difficult in a 'perfect storm' of declining income and increasing demand for services

Through engagement with the sector and analysis of best practice by similar organisations in other areas of the country, we know that building effective representation and engagement is a long and complicated process that requires the building of trust, common cause, structures and the skills to collaborate.

We have come a long way on this journey with the support that we give to the development of thematic groups, such as the Medway Neurological Network and the creation of the VCS Leaders group, who have already formed a strong steering group of representatives from across the sector and hosted two network events designed to maximise opportunities for the sector to be engaged, consulted and represented on new landscapes going forward.

We have created awareness and a demand for engagement, and this is reflected in some of the comments in response to question 18, for example:

*“More partnership working and joint bid writing for projects, i.e. health, to ensure the projects have a wider reach (and) are better value for money”*

*“Link me up with the local council and councillors”*

We also need to work better and more closely with local statutory bodies

*“We can only become engaged with statutory bodies when they recognise the impact that local, small organisation charities have and that we have a voice that needs to be listened to”*

Finally, we have identified that the simplistic outcomes measurements that define the PBR criteria are probably not the most appropriate and that a more sophisticated and nuanced approach is required, something we are working towards with the development and implementation of our CRM database.

## Appendix

### MVA Research

Thank you for taking part in the MVA survey. Its purpose is to assess and improve our service.

Your responses will be anonymised unless you have told us otherwise. You can find our privacy policy here: <http://mva.org.uk/privacy-policy>

The only question that requires a response is your e-mail address. This is for tracking purposes only and your data will only be used for the purposes of evaluating, reporting on and improving our service.

\*Required

1.

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2. **Would you like your responses to be kept anonymous?**

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes  
 No

3. **Would you like to be entered into the prize draw for one of two £30 Marks & Spencer vouchers or a free place on any North Kent Training Service one day course - click here to find out what they can offer <http://nkts.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/web-pdf-brochure.pdf> ?**

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes  
 No

### Your details

4. **Please tell us the name of your organisation**

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5. **Please tell us your name**

.....

6. **Please tell us your e-mail address (required question) \***

.....

## Website

### 7. Have you used the MVA website?

MVA's website contains a huge amount of funding and other news, links to data sources, toolkits and other useful information - [www.mva.org.uk](http://www.mva.org.uk)

Mark only one oval.

- Yes Skip to question 8.
- No Skip to question 9.

### 8. How useful do you find the MVA website?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not very useful	<input type="radio"/>	Extremely useful				

## One to one advice/support sessions.

MVA provides members with 1 hour advice, support and signposting sessions on a range of subjects.

### 9. Have you had an advice/support session?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes Skip to question 10.
- No Skip to question 11.

### 10. How useful did you find the one-to-one support session?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not very useful	<input type="radio"/>	Extremely useful				

## MVA Newsletter

### 11. Do you subscribe to the MVA newsletter?

The MVA newsletter comes out once or twice a week and contains links to funding and other opportunities, news about changes to legislation, vacancies and much more. You can sign up here: <http://wp.me/P4XpJ9-uP>

Mark only one oval.

- Yes Skip to question 12.
- No Skip to question 13.

### 12. How useful do you find the MVA Newsletter?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not very useful	<input type="radio"/>	Extremely useful				

## MVA Events

### 13. Have you attended any MVA events?

MVA run regular events including small scale 'meet the expert' events on subjects such as safeguarding and European funding and large scale information and consultation events on subjects such as Social Isolation and the Medway Health & Wellbeing strategy. We have also run events where not-for-profit organisations can meet funders face-to-face.

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes *Skip to question 14.*
- No *Skip to question 15.*

### 14. How useful do you find MVA events?

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not very useful	<input type="radio"/>	Extremely useful				

## Training

### 15. Have you attended training with MVA's training arm, North Kent Training Service?

NKTS offer training on a wide range of subject including compliance, inclusion and awareness, staff/personal development, income generation and management & governance. - [www.nkts.co.uk](http://www.nkts.co.uk).

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes *Skip to question 16.*
- No *Skip to question 17.*

### 16. How useful do you find training from NKTS?

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not very useful	<input type="radio"/>	Extremely useful				

## Impact

Please tell us about the changes that you have made as a result of support you have received from MVA

17.

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**18. Has support from MVA made your organisation:**

Tick as many as you feel appropriate

*Tick all that apply.*

- Stronger
- Better informed
- More connected
- Other: .....

**19. Has support and information from MVA made you feel better able to engage with statutory bodies, strategic planning and service design?**

*Tick all that apply.*

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Other: .....

**20. What could MVA do to help your organisation to be more sustainable, better informed and more engaged?**

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**21. Thank you**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. If you have any further comments, please include them in the box below. If you have any questions about the survey or MVA, please contact Neville Dack - [neville@mva.org.uk](mailto:neville@mva.org.uk)

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