

Title: Communication Policy

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Contents

		Page
1.	Purpose	3
2.	Scope	3
3.	References	3
4.	Key Objectives	3
5.	Customer Involvement	3
6.	Monitoring against the Customer Top 10	4
7.	The Policy	4
7.1	Background	4
7.2	Implementing the Policy	4
	▪ Planning	4
	▪ Principles of Good Communication	4
	▪ Data Protection	5
	▪ When People Contact Staff	5
7.3	Channels of Communication	6
8.	Appendices	
8.1	• Appendix 1 – Single Equality Impact Assessment	7

1.	Purpose
	To establish a corporate approach to communicating with St Vincent's customers, stakeholders and the general public (known throughout the document as people), ensuring all sections of the community can be reached and engaged with.
2.	Scope
	<p>The Marketing & Communications Manager is responsible for reviewing the overall communications policy.</p> <p>All staff across the organisation has a responsibility to ensure the policy is implemented and Managers have a responsibility to monitor their team's performance in this area.</p> <p>The policy applies to everyone who comes into contact with St Vincent's.</p>
3.	References
	<p>Communications Strategy ..\..\Communication\Marketing Plans and Budget\PR and Comms Plan and Budget 2012.xls</p> <p>Translations procedure Translation Procedure May 2010.doc</p> <p>Need help with our literature leaflet http://www.svha.co.uk/downloads/svha_downloads/Need%20Help%20With%20Translations.pdf</p> <p>List of staff with second languages – available in Noah, please request from HR for most current version</p> <p>Data Protection Act http://www.ico.gov.uk/Home/what_we_cover/data_protection/the_basics.aspx</p> <p>Customer Service Statement http://www.svha.co.uk/downloads/tenant_downloads/Our%20Offer%20to%20You%202011.pdf</p>
4.	Key Objectives
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communicate the aims, objectives and vision of the organisation to people in a format suitable to meet their needs. ▪ Provide relevant information, literature and advice in a variety of formats. ▪ Communicate well with people, and within the 8 principles of the Data Protection Act ▪ Establish and monitor good communication across the organisation in-line with standards
5.	Customer Involvement
	<p>Key publications are review by the Approved By Our Customers panel</p> <p>Customers are involved in contributing to communication through a variety of channels, including the Customer Magazine, Website, Customer Panels and Young Voice, Foyer E-briefings and promotions.</p>

6.	Monitoring
	Standards of communication will be monitored quarterly by Managers against the Customer Service Statement. Feedback and themes relating to communication will be provided in The Brief.
7.	The Policy
7.1	Background
	<p>Good communication fosters good relationships, and builds trust and understanding. The quality of our communication will affect outcomes, ie working efficiently and achieving our aims.</p> <p>Where no communication or mis-communication happens, relationships with people can suffer and breakdown.</p> <p><i>Externally</i></p> <p>St Vincent's Housing Association operates across the North West providing homes and services to a wide range of people, all of whom St Vincent's wishes to communicate with effectively, but who have varying needs. Additionally, we recognise the need to communicate effectively and efficiently with our partners and the general public.</p> <p><i>Internally</i></p> <p>St Vincent's encourages open and honest communication between it's staff, board and volunteers, and will consult with them on important issues and changes.</p>
7.2	Implementing the Policy
	<p><i>Planning</i></p> <p>Through the annual Communications Strategy, staff plan how they will communicate with stakeholders throughout the year. They consider:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Key messages ▪ The channel of communication ▪ The recipients of the message ▪ Timescales ▪ Contributions from other Managers

	<p><i>Principles of Good Communication</i></p> <p>Good communication means writing and speaking in a clear and respectful way that:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses Plain English • Gives no less and no more information than is required • Takes into account the needs of the audience • Presents the objectives of the communication positively • Promotes the reputation of St Vincent's positively • Gives complex information in a digestible, 'easy to understand' format • Invites feedback and participation, and follows up on issues raised • Is respectful, open and honest
	<p><i>Data Protection</i></p> <p>In all cases, staff will ensure that the 8 Principles of the 1988 Data Protection Act are adhered to. They will ensure personal information is:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairly and lawfully processed • Processed for limited purposes • Adequate, relevant and not excessive • Accurate and up to date • Not kept for longer than is necessary • Processed in line with the individual's rights • Secure • Not transferred to other countries without adequate protection <p>Additionally, individuals have the right to find out what personal information is held about them by St Vincent's.</p> <p>If staff are unsure about the Act, they should consult the Director of Finance/IT.</p>
	<p><i>When People contact Staff</i></p> <p>We are extremely aware of the need to offer a high standard of communication to everyone. When a person has contact with St Vincent's they can expect staff to be friendly, polite and helpful. St Vincent's staff will:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always introduce themselves and treat enquiries with respect, confidentiality and honesty • Answer phone calls to any offices within 20 seconds and provide an out-of-hours emergency call service • Be trained to deal with queries at the first point of contact • Let people know exactly when to expect a response and by whom, if the query cannot be dealt with immediately. This will be during the next working day. • Respond to letters, texts and e-mails within 5 working days • Provide an accessible, friendly and welcoming service at all offices and surgeries, including private areas if needed

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge complaints within 5 working days and respond in full within 10 working days • Respond to all housing applications within 10 working days <p>Equally, however, our staff expect to be treated in a fair and reasonable manner, and will not tolerate abusive, threatening or bad language from others.</p>
7.3	Channels of Communication
	<p>St Vincent's has adopted a corporate approach to communication, using tools such as:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Style Manual, design guide and templates for written communication • communications induction training for new staff • Communications Champions who ensure consistency across teams • Plain English training for Communications Champions • A 'clearing house' which oversees key communications • An Approved by our Customers panel to ensure customer involvement <p>We will communicate imaginatively using the following methods/vehicles:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbally, by telephone, through briefing sessions, meetings, surgeries, estate walk-about, customer and staff conferences • Written correspondence, newsletters and briefing notes • Electronically through e-briefings, the web site, emails, on-line forums • Other media such as videos, radio broadcasting • New media such as digital TV and Twitter

8.	Appendices		
8.1	Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment		
Policy/Procedure being assessed:	Communication Policy		
Section:	Chief Executive’s Department		
Date of assessment:	17 January 2012		
Person (S) Responsible for assessment:	Sarah Hodgkinson		
Is this a new or existing policy?	Existing		
1. Briefly describe the function being assessed	Communication within St Vincent’s and its stakeholders		
2. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the function?	<p><i>Customers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tenants - residents - social investment customers - service users <p><i>Internal</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff - Volunteers - Board Members <p><i>Corporate</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local authority partners - Funders/lenders - Agencies - HCS - TSA - Audit Commission <p><i>External</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The press - Communities 		
3. Who will be consulted as part of this EIA? What types of consultation will be carried out?	<p>Internally - Directors and Managers</p> <p>Externally – Customers through the Approved by our Customers Panel</p> <p>The policy will be circulated electronically, and discussed by a panel in a special meeting.</p>		
4. <u>Could</u> the function have a differential impact on <u>racial groups</u> ?	Yes✓	No	

What evidence exists to support your analysis?	Our staff must ensure they can communicate effectively with many people from a variety of cultures and nationalities, for many of whom English is not their first language.		
5. <u>Could</u> the function have a differential impact due to gender ?	Yes	No✓	
What evidence exists to support your analysis?			
6. <u>Could</u> the function have a differential impact on disabled people ?	Yes✓	No	
What evidence exists to support your analysis?	People with a disability, such as blindness, may find it difficult to read correspondence from St Vincent's. Additionally, people with a disability such as deafness, may find it difficult to communicate directly with staff.		
7. <u>Could</u> the function have a differential impact due to age ?	Yes✓	No	
What evidence exists to support your analysis?	Older people may find it difficult to read St Vincent's standard size print – 11 point aerial		
8. <u>Could</u> the function have a differential impact due to sexuality ?	Yes	No✓	
What evidence exists to support your analysis?			
9. <u>Could</u> the function have a differential impact due to religion or belief ?	Yes	No✓	
What evidence exists to support your analysis?			
If the answer is NO to <u>all</u> questions 4-9 and no differential treatment has been found there is no requirement for a full Equality Impact Assessment. Please go back regularly and review the cycle.			

If the answer is YES to any of the questions 4-9 please continue to question 10

<p>10. In what areas could the differential impact identified in 4-9 be considered to be an adverse impact in this function? (Please tick if yes)</p>	<p>Race ✓</p>	<p>Gender</p>	<p>Disability ✓</p>	<p>Age ✓</p>	<p>Sexuality</p>	<p>Religion /belief</p>
<p>11. What solutions will be introduced to overcome these adverse impacts?</p>	<p>A translation procedure has been implemented as part of the communications policy.</p> <p>Key documents have been translated into other languages, and all documents have a translation strapline.</p> <p>A list of staff with second languages is available and can be called upon to provide translations.</p> <p>A translation service is also available through LanguageLine and M4 Translations.</p> <p>Large print and Braille versions of all our literature is available on request, and the Customer Magazine is circulated in A3 format to our Independent Living schemes.</p> <p>The Association has the use of a mini-com, the number is printed on letterheads and other key documents</p> <p>St Vincent's website is accredited to the W3C standard for accessibility and offers the Google web translator.</p> <p>A hearing loop is available at all St Vincent's offices.</p> <p>An interpreter service is available for anyone who requires it at key meetings/events (on request).</p>					
<p>12. In what areas could the differential impact identified in 4-9 be considered to be a positive impact in this function? (please tick if yes)</p>	<p>Race</p>	<p>Gender</p>	<p>Disability</p>	<p>Age</p>	<p>Sexuality</p>	<p>Religion/b elief</p>
<p>14. What strategies will be introduced to safeguard and spread these positive impacts?</p>						

<p>15. Which Action Plans have these solutions/strategies been transferred into?</p>	<p>Communications Strategy Communications Policy Translations procedure</p>

Signed off by (Director):

Date:.....