

PO156 RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Policy

This policy reflects CVS Falkirk's commitment to building strong relationships and communicating effectively with its stakeholders in delivering its strategy to support third sector organisations in Falkirk. It emphasises the importance of CVS Falkirk's stakeholders to its activities and the need to engage and communicate with them clearly, consistently and in a timely fashion. It further recognises that managing those relationships is integral to CVS Falkirk's processes and interactions.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- set out CVS Falkirk's key stakeholders and emphasise the importance of proactive and effective engagement with them to the successful delivery of CVS Falkirk's aims and objectives
- define the consultation, engagement and other processes by which CVS Falkirk builds and sustains strong relationships with key stakeholders, and
- meet the requirements of relevant guidance and best practice.

CVS Falkirk will:

- engage, consult, communicate, and otherwise share information with key stakeholders on CVS Falkirk's work including its priorities and achievements
- support Board members and senior officers to act as advocates for CVS Falkirk and develop and sustain relationships with key stakeholders
- engage with stakeholders, use the communications systems, processes and channels that represent best practice and are responsive to the different needs of stakeholders.

Responsibilities for this policy are as follows:

- The Board, the CEO and the Operations Manager committing to act as advocates for CVS Falkirk by developing and sustaining strong relationships with key stakeholders
- CEO, Operations Manager, and Development Officers: managing the implementation of this policy, maintaining a register (on MILO) of CVS Falkirk's key stakeholders and assigned leads and providing and promoting training and other advice and guidance to support implementation of this policy and effective stakeholder engagement and communications
- Development Officers: ensuring operational compliance with this policy and, consistent with the framework provided by this policy, developing and consolidating relationships with relevant key stakeholders
- All staff: ensuring day to day operational compliance with this policy, including ensuring that, acting on learning and development needs, staff take up the training and other advice and guidance available; and, consistent with the framework provided by this policy, developing and consolidating relationships with relevant key stakeholders
- CEO: monitoring the review of this policy

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Guidance

Introduction

This policy emphasises the importance of CVS Falkirk's key stakeholders to its activities and the need to ensure that engagement and communication is continuous, clear, consistent, and prompt. It also emphasises the need to demonstrate openness and accountability by proactively sharing information and consulting with stakeholders on its work.

This policy is designed to provide a range of information, advice and guidance to help build stronger relationships and communicate effectively and appropriately with the individuals and organisations that CVS Falkirk works with.

It sets out CVS Falkirk's key stakeholder groups, the internal and external communication channels, systems and processes which support efforts to communicate effectively, build and maintain strong relationships and protect CVS Falkirk's reputation.

Relationships

CVS Falkirk is committed to be recognised as a stakeholder-centric organisation. We recognise that managing our relationships with our key stakeholders is integral to all our processes and interactions as each group has an important role to play in Falkirk's third sector development.

Successful engagement is core to CVS Falkirk being able to meet its ambitions for Falkirk, to leverage the relationships we have with stakeholders to achieve greater strategic alignment, influence and delivery for Falkirk as well as manage our reputation within Falkirk's economy.

Stakeholder engagement means actively planning, managing and monitoring the way in which we interact and build relationships; providing clarity of our role and remit, understanding stakeholder needs and interests; consulting, listening and providing feedback in a positive and helpful way, providing a fast and efficient, quality service in a friendly and helpful way, by ensuring good communication and positive attitude to stakeholders.

Corporate Service Standards

In all our business transactions, stakeholders have a right to be treated with respect and courtesy. CVS Falkirk has developed a set of corporate service standards outlining what stakeholders can expect. These are:

- Responding to correspondence: CVS Falkirk will answer all correspondence from the public, including letters, emails and faxes within 10 working days;
- Appointments: CVS Falkirk will see people punctually when an appointment is made at its offices. If no appointment has been made, staff will endeavour to see people as promptly as is reasonably possible;
- Answering telephone calls: staff will answer telephone calls in a prompt and helpful manner. Calls to designated points of enquiry should be answered within six rings and an out-of-hours answering service will be installed on all

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CVS Falkirk's numbers, and messages addressed as soon as practicable on opening.

- Information: CVS Falkirk will provide clear and straightforward information about its services and those of related providers to help stakeholders find the information needed.
- Complaints procedure (PO36): CVS Falkirk will publicise a complaints procedure for the service it provides and promptly deal with complaints received, in accordance with that policy.
- Access of services to all: CVS Falkirk will do all that is reasonably possible to make its services available to all including people with special needs; consult with users and potential users about the services provided and improve services as a result of consultations.

Reputational Risk

Reputational risk is concerned with any activity or issue which could potentially negatively impact on the reputation of the CVS Falkirk and its service delivery. All staff have a part to play in enhancing the profile of CVS Falkirk and protecting its reputation. It is important for all staff to be aware of any potential reputational risks emerging from their relationships with stakeholders.

Effective management of our stakeholder relations can enhance the profile of CVS Falkirk and its reputation through:

- the development of a culture of service delivery and responsiveness;
- open and transparent working;
- understanding the needs and interests of the stakeholder.

Stakeholder Groups

Our stakeholders are individuals and organisations with whom we come into contact and who influence and impact on the development and delivery of our strategic priorities. They may be broadly categorised as follows, although these roles are not mutually exclusive:

- Decision Makers: those who can determine CVS Falkirk's governance, policy and funding;
- Influencers: those who can inform individuals/organisations of the programme's benefits, projects, deliverables etc.
- Strategic Partners: those with whom CVS Falkirk is or could benefit from working in partnership with; there may or may not be a financial relationship;
- Delivery Partners: those who have a contractual relationship delivering work on behalf of CVS Falkirk through programmes and projects including co-commissioners;
- Interests Groups: Individuals or organisations who lobby CVS Falkirk on a single or generic issue; and
- Beneficiaries: individuals or organisations who will directly benefit from CVS Falkirk's activities.

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CVS Falkirk's key stakeholder groups include:

- Scottish Government;
- Falkirk Council;
- NHS Forth Valley;
- Community Councils;
- Other public sector bodies;
- Private Sector Businesses and their representative organisations;
- Third Sector Organisations and their representative organisations;
- Delivery Partners
- Media
- Members of the Public
- Employees and Volunteers.

Communication Channels

There is a range of communication channels which enable effective communications and engagement. These include:

- Face-to-Face: presentations, briefings, meetings, consultations and visits
- Electronic/Digital Media: websites, microsites, emails, e-newsletters, intranet, DVDs and podcasts
- Media: press releases, editorials, TV and Radio interviews
- Events: workshops, conferences, road shows, exhibitions and public meetings
- Print: brochures, reports, briefings, leaflets, posters, corporate stationery, letters and newsletters
- Audio: telephone
- Sponsorship: of awards and events.

Internal resources, systems and processes

To further support the implementation of, and compliance with this policy, CVS Falkirk staff are supported by various tools, systems and processes including:

- Resources including detailed guidelines, tools, templates and points of contact
- Mapping documents: helps visualise, influence and support stakeholders bring information to CVS Falkirk and the community we serve. It provides a consistent dynamic model for stakeholder management
- MILO: a stakeholder relationship management tool designed to provide a single fast access point to stakeholder information. It enables the management of one-to-many relationships through a single contact database to enable information sharing across CVS Falkirk
- Brand guidelines and Logos
- Web management guidelines
- Publication guidelines
- Templates: letters, email signatures, briefing, presentations, events approval, speaking requests.

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Roles and Responsibilities

CVS Falkirk has a range of individuals and teams who have defined roles for managing stakeholder relationships and communications:

- Board: acting as advocates and developing and forging strong relationships with stakeholders
- The CEO is the senior officer with overall accountability and responsibility for CVS Falkirk's stakeholder engagement approach and communications:
 - the implementation and review of the policy at least every two years
 - co-ordinating both induction and regular (i.e. at least annual) training for staff, with assistance from the Operations Manager and Development Officers
 - the monitoring of compliance with the policy.
- The Operations Manager for overseeing and enforcing the implementation of this policy
- Development Officers: ensuring operational compliance with this policy and developing and consolidating relationships with stakeholders with a vested interest in their business area
- All staff: accountability for managing relationships with the Third Sector
- All staff: providing advice and guidance on engagement with private sector businesses and their representative organisations
- All staff: understanding and complying with the requirements of this policy.

Monitoring

The effectiveness of stakeholder engagement and communications are monitored through our corporate processes and in particular through the:

- Annual Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey
- Annual Staff Survey
- Evaluation at every event

Reporting

The effectiveness of stakeholder engagement and communications will be reported through our corporate processes and on a regular basis to the CEO and Board.

COMMUNICATIONS

Internal and External Communication Channels

CVS Falkirk has a range of existing channels which enable members of staff to share information and raise the profile of their projects and activities. These include:

- Shared access filing systems
- Team meetings
- All staff emails
- General staff briefings/meeting

CVS Falkirk's external communication channels which may be utilised to share information and promote CVS Falkirk's activities include:

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- Website and/or other microsite
- Publications e.g. reports and briefings
- Events
- Press releases

Website

Accessibility

In order to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) all our services must be accessible to all and reasonable adjustments must be made to ensure this is the case. CVS Falkirk is committed to ensuring its website(s) are accessible to the widest possible audience regardless of ability or browsing technology, including those who have visual, hearing, motor and cognitive impairments. CVS Falkirk has both a legal requirement as well as a social responsibility to ensure that our sites are accessible.

Mandatory Information

All CVS Falkirk websites must include a link to a legal / terms and conditions page from the footer of every page that contains the following statements:

1. Privacy
2. Data protection
3. Copyright
4. Disclaimer
5. Accessibility (this can be linked to as a separate page)

The text of these statements should adhere to the legislation which supports access to information but will be specific to the type of content and services.

Domain name policy (external)

CVS Falkirk operates a single domain name policy. Our domain name is www.cvsfalkirk.org.uk. In addition to improving the management of websites, it increases the reach of CVS Falkirk and strengthens our brand and reputation.

Occasionally it may be appropriate for new internet domain names to be set up in order to promote specific initiatives or if a website is being produced in conjunction with a delivery partner. Requests to purchase a new domain name must be discussed with and approved by the CEO.

Website development and creation

All requests for development changes and new websites should be submitted to the CEO in the first instance.

Shared files management

The purpose of the shared files is to facilitate the work of CVS Falkirk staff in pursuit of CVS Falkirk's objectives as set out in the annual Operational Work Plan.

This is the online gateway to facilitate the capture, sharing and collaboration of knowledge and information and to provide staff with access to business tools.

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Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities within the shared files and website governance framework are as follows:

- CEO: responsible for the overall management of the corporate website.
- Administrator: responsible for the day-to-day update and management of the website and associated media
- Network and Operations team (Grant McGregor): responsible for the infrastructure; including security, data backup, disaster recovery, hosting and database management.
- Development Officers: responsible for creating content for their own sections in accordance with editorial and governance guidance. They have responsibility for managing the lifecycle of content to ensure that it is regularly reviewed and archived when redundant.
- Operations Manager: responsible for ensuring that the business objectives are considered in relation to maintenance and further development of internal and external web services.
- CEO: responsible for the protection, access and management of data; and for ensuring that CVS Falkirk adheres to its responsibility to publish information according to the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), and the Information Commissioner.

Publications

There are various options when deciding the type of publication to choose ranging from reports, brochures, posters, which could be presented online and/or by hard copy; the choice of publication should depend on an assessment of the best way of communicating with the target audience.

When the type of publication has been chosen, consideration should be given to all aspects of design and the development of the publication including the appropriate type, content proofing, image sourcing design and print production. The production process varies depending on the size and type of publication but a minimum period of two weeks should be allowed from receipt of final copy to design and print. More time should be allowed if the publication is complex.

The use of publications should be evaluated to determine the effectiveness of the publication.

Brand Guidelines and Logos

The CVS Falkirk brand defines how we are seen by our external stakeholders and helps to build a clear and consistent understanding of who we are and what we do. Our brand is about our visual identity including the use of the logo, the colour, typefaces and the tone of voice used. The CEO must be involved when preparing any communication materials including the way in which the logo is used by partner organisations.

Events

Events are a useful way of communicating with stakeholders, promoting projects, or seeking views and feedback.

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The CEO must be informed of any planned events prior to a final decision being taken to hold an event. This should be at least six weeks before the event which will assist in avoiding clashes with other events at the same time.

The Administrator will provide advice and support such as:

- venue searches
- briefings
- agenda and programme development
- sourcing speakers
- managing information/exhibition stands
- producing marketing collateral.

Sponsorships and Advertising

Sponsorship is an opportunity to promote the CVS Falkirk brand through a paid-for relationship with an individual, event, or organisation. It can play an important role in raising awareness and building an awareness of CVS Falkirk. All sponsorship requests should be logged with the CEO.

The sponsorship opportunity and the organisation requesting sponsorship should be researched to assess the potential benefits and to ensure that the activity meets CVS Falkirk's core objectives and brand values.

Every sponsorship activity should be evaluated to ensure that CVS Falkirk gets a good return on its investment.

All advertising and advertorial requests are to be forward to the CEO for evaluation. Usually practice is not to pay for editorial coverage in publications. Advertorial is a paid opportunity to have an article published.

Consultations

Consultations (Mapping) can be effective in seeking views and feedback from a wide range of stakeholders and strengthening relationships by demonstrating openness and transparency.

Consultation and engagement should be as representative and inclusive as possible ensuring that CVS Falkirk is proactive in targeting specific groups who might otherwise be excluded or who tend to participate less by following good practice outlined in the various statutory and non-statutory codes of good practice on consultation.

The Management Team can provide guidance and expertise in:

- development and delivery of a consultation
- designing the process and preparing the brief
- choosing the best methods/tools for consultation
- identifying the timescales and budgets involved.

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At the end of a consultation period, a report on the impact of the findings and results must be published on CVS Falkirk's website.

The consultation report should include:

- an outline of the consultation strategy
- a detailed breakdown of each comment received
- a summary of the main findings of the consultation programme
- an explanation of how the findings were used in decision-making
- evaluation of the process
- Indicate how feedback has been offered to consultees.

Resource requirements

Staff will need to understand the procedures set out in this policy as well as the underlying reasons for them. Key responsibility will rest with the Chief Executive Officer and other senior staff, who will need to familiarise themselves with the detailed requirements. However, this is considered appropriate in order to achieve CVS Falkirk's key objectives relating to engaging and communicating effectively.

Training requirements

It is vital that all staff are able to understand and appreciate the importance of effective engagement and communications with CVS Falkirk's stakeholders in accordance with our legal obligations and this policy. To reflect this, "Relationships and Communications" will be included as part of CVS Falkirk's induction process for all new staff.

Senior staff will be provided additional detailed training to enable them to understand relevant legislation and this policy, and to advise others when necessary. Additional support and guidance will also be provided to these key staff both generally and on any specific request by the appropriate individuals or teams identified in this policy.

Related Policies:	none	
Related Documents:	none	
Version:	1.0	
Published:	February 2014	
Review Date:	February 2017	Date Reviewed: June 2017
Review Date:	June 2019	Date Reviewed: