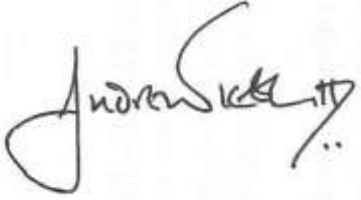


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Signature:	Signed by:	Position:	Date:
	Andrew Tebbutt	Policy Trustee	June 2021

Communications – Definitions & Context

Communication is the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium. Communication is the act of transferring information from one place, person or group to another. Every **communication** involves (at least) one sender, a message and a recipient and includes our emotions, the cultural situation, the medium used to **communicate**, and even the location.

Communications describes the means by which information is sent or received; the imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, or signs. It involves verbal exchange, written exchange, including the use of electronic devices such as phones or computers.

Wansbeck Valley Food Bank (WVFB) Context

WVFB is required to communicate in a number of different ways. There should be principles and guidelines for all forms of communication. Whilst it will normally use English as the language of communication, it should be prepared to seek ways of communicating in other languages if required to do so.

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Charity Commission

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following Wansbeck Valley Food Bank (WVFB) documents:

- Staff Handbook
- Communications Procedures
- GDPR (Data Protection) Policy
- Freedom of Information Policy & Procedures

- ICT Control & Security
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Business Continuity Plan
- Confidentiality

There are a number of main communication channels including between

- Individual Trustees, and the Trustees as a Board
- Individual Trustees and paid staff
- Trustees and volunteers
- Paid Staff and volunteers
- Trustees and key Stakeholders, including funders
- Paid staff & volunteers and beneficiaries
- Trustees & paid staff with providers of goods
- Trustees and Supporters
- Trustees and the media (press, radio, TV, social media)

This list is not exhaustive and can be added to.

Confidentiality: The very nature of the role of WVFB will mean that much of the communication within the organisation will be of a confidential nature, and access to information will be governed by

- Data Protection & Safeguarding requirements
- The Need to Know

Therefore, the Trust has a general principle that all communication relating to work with volunteers and beneficiaries is confidential unless the need for openness has been established at Trustee level.

1. Introduction:

WVFB has a commitment to open, clear and transparent communication in all its dealings with staff, volunteers, beneficiaries, stakeholders, donors and the general public as appropriate. This policy sets out the aims of the WVFB with regard to internal and external communication and the responsibilities of all trustees, staff & volunteers.

2. Aims and Objectives:

WVFB aims to promote effective communication between trustees, staff, volunteers, stakeholders and the community. Our objectives are:

- To have clear and professional communication systems in place which will help us to keep trustees, staff, volunteers and the wider community well informed
- To be open, honest, ethical, professional and recognisable
- To use jargon free, plain language and be easily understood by all
- To use the method of communication most effective and appropriate for the context, message and audience.

Communication is much more than the exchange of information. It involves the management of relationships and the need to involve people.

Communication is as much about attitude and behaviour as it is about the message. We are welcoming and professional, are polite and interested, listen and support, deliver against our promises and inform others when actions have been taken.

3. A) Responsibilities - The WVFB Board of Trustees responsibilities:

- To make sure key policies, documents and procedures are easily accessible to trustees, staff & volunteers.
- The Trustees will determine, from time to time, which policies should be located on the website & which are considered internal documents only.

B) Responsibilities - Staff responsibilities

- To ensure the principles and procedures of this policy are followed.
- Ensuring that relevant information is passed on to volunteers.
- To retain confidentiality about beneficiaries at all times.
- To deal professionally with all callers, including beneficiaries.

C) Responsibilities - Volunteers responsibilities

- To be aware of the conditions of the policy and ensure it is complied with.
- To retain confidentiality about beneficiaries at all times.
- To deal professionally with beneficiaries

4. Internal and external communication

The Trust will communicate **internally** by the following methods:

- Face to face contact
- Emails
- Phone Calls
- Text & WhatsApp
- Letter

The Trust will communicate **externally** by the following methods:

- Face to face contact
- Emails
- Phone Calls
- Text & WhatsApp
- Letter
- Press Releases
- Radio & TV
- Social Media, including Twitter
- Trust website

- 5. Contacting the Media** All contact with the media will be undertaken by the trustees, unless authorisation is given to another person to speak on behalf of WVFB. Under normal circumstances external communication will be initiated by the Chair, unless he/she delegates action to another trustee.

Whilst staff & volunteers can promote the work of WVFB they must not communicate externally about WVFB policies and activities, including on personal social media accounts, unless approved to do so by the Communications Trustee.

- 6. Personal Responsibility:** Any trustee, member of staff or volunteer must be conscious at all times of the need to keep personal and professional lives separate. In particular:

- Do not engage in activities involving social media which might bring the charity into disrepute.
- You must not represent your personal views as those of the charity on any social medium.
- Do not discuss personal information about other volunteers or any beneficiaries, charity staff and other professionals you interact with as part of your work on social media.

- Do not use social media and the internet in any way to attack, insult, abuse or defame WVFB, or any person associated with the work of the charity.

7. Relationships:

The very nature of the work of WVFB can mean that trustees, staff and volunteers may come across people that they know personally. In such circumstances:

- Where possible the person should ensure they don't get involved with that person as a beneficiary, and on no account disclose to anyone outside the trust of their knowledge.
- Trustees, staff & volunteers should avoid forming any new relationship with a beneficiary.
- Trustees, staff & volunteers should decline any personal gifts offered by beneficiaries or stakeholders. Donations to the charity must be handed to staff or appropriate trustee asap after receipt and recorded as received.
- Trustees, staff & volunteers should not give personal details to beneficiaries, including home addresses, phone numbers, email addresses or any other information which could compromise their security.

8 Freedom Of Information:

WVFB is unlikely to receive many, if any, Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. In the event of one being received, it will be acknowledged by the Chair within 10 working days, indicating that the Board of Trustees will consider the request within its Confidentiality Policy.

The Chair, Secretary & Policy Trustee (or others appointed by those people) will review the request against the Freedom of Information regulations and determine, within 21 days, whether it should be granted in whole or part. The decision will be communicated to the applicant within a further 7 days, indicating basically what will be allowed & what will be excluded, the time scale for delivering the full details, and indicating whether a charge will be made.

Charges: where the work to comply with the FOI request will take more than 10 hours work the applicant will be advised there will be an initial £50 charge, and further charges may be rendered if the work required is considered excessive.

Redacted Material: Any information, including all personal details, relating to a beneficiary, volunteer or member of staff will be either full redacted or omitted totally. A general request for information about WVFB which could include personal information about staff, volunteers of staff will be considered under the FOI policy.

9 Communication in a language other than English:

WVFB does not have the resources to offer general communication in languages other than English. However, if a volunteer or member of staff encounters a language barrier that cannot be resolved by a family member or friend, the charity will do all it can to identify an appropriate interpreter (formal or informal). An alternative action might be to refer a specific beneficiary to another provider that is more likely to be able to assist. (The West End, Newcastle Food Bank and the Red Cross are two possible alternatives)

10 Breaches of the policy

Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the trustee, staff member or volunteer involved in line with the charity's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

A breach of this policy leading to breaches of confidentiality, or defamation or damage to the reputation of the charity, or any illegal acts or acts that render the charity liable to third parties may result in disciplinary action or dismissal.