

1. Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the membership will benefit VAST and will ensure maximum support for its members.

As a sector we are on the threshold of major change - a result of increasing demands and expectations by our own users, government and partner agencies and a changing funding climate.

One of the activities that we are embarking upon to help the voluntary and community sectors (VCS) fully contribute to the economy of Stoke on Trent is to improve our membership base, and be fully recognised as the strong, committed and experienced sector it is. Our new membership enables every VCS organisation across Staffordshire, regardless of size, to access, be represented, and benefit from VAST.

In the interest of partnership working we have also recognised the need for our membership to engage key statutory/partner agencies and private sector organisations in regeneration and development.

2. Why join VAST?

Receive the latest news and information

Keep your organisation up to date with the latest news affecting the VCS and benefit from news and policy updates.

Be part of local change

Keep your organisation up to date with the latest consultations affecting the local economy and make sure you have your say in consultation, local decision making processes and the future.

Raise your profile

Share information about your organisation with key partner agencies within the city as well as hundreds of VCS organisations across Staffordshire.

Save money

Take advantage of VAST's services and facilities which include conference facilities with full support, meeting rooms to hire, accounts support, office bureau services and photocopying.

Take part in networking and events

Receive priority invitations for local events and benefit from various networking and publicity opportunities.

Influence Direction

Vote for who you would like to see on our Board of Trustees or Nominate yourself as a candidate and influence the strategic direction of the organisation

3. Categories of Membership

3.1. ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP - FREE and open to everyone.

Individuals, groups or businesses enter the details on to the website and join our information database, this entitles associate members to:

- Receive our weekly email bulletin with the opportunity to include content
- Receive a PDF version of our bi-monthly 'Action' newsletter with the opportunity to include editorial content
- Receive email updates as and when appropriate
- Invitation to annual conference
- FREE access to funder finder – grants funding programme

3.2. FULL MEMBERSHIP – Fee based, open to Not-for-Profit organisations, charities and residents of Staffordshire. Full members are entitled to all the benefits under section 3.1 plus:

- Receive a printed and/or PDF version of our bi-monthly 'Action' newsletter with the opportunity to include editorial content
- 10% discount on all of our corporate (chargeable) services - Payroll, Accounts, Graphic Design, Website Design and Printing
- 10% discount on advertising within our 'Action' newsletter
- 10% discount on all VAST's training events with priority booking
- FREE recruitment advertising on our website
- FREE access to funder finder – grants funding programme
- FREE admission to annual conference
- Vote at VAST's AGM
- Stand for election to the Trustees Board
- Claim 'Gift Aid' on donations
- Access to exclusive discounted products and services from our corporate partners

3.3. CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP – Fee based, open to Public and Private Sector organisations. Corporate members are entitled to all the benefits under section 3.1 plus:

- Receive a printed and/or PDF version of our bi-monthly 'Action' newsletter with the opportunity to include editorial content
- Promote information to over 5,000 database contacts
- 10% discount on all of our corporate (chargeable) services - Payroll, Accounts, Graphic Design, Website Design and Printing
- 10% discount on advertising within our 'Action' newsletter
- 10% discount on all VAST's training events with priority booking
- FREE recruitment advertising on our website
- FREE access to funder finder – grants funding programme
- FREE admission to annual conference
- Vote at VAST's AGM
- Stand for election to the Trustees Board
- Access to exclusive discounted products and services from our corporate partners

Admission Procedures

- The Trustees may, make invitations to Membership in any category and admission to membership
- Admissions will be through the receipt of a signed application

- All applications for membership will be considered by the Trustees as promptly as possible and VAST may undertake inquiries in order to determine the suitability of the applicant for membership.
- The decision of the Trustees shall be final and the Trustees do not have to give any reason for refusal.

4. Obligations of Membership

The obligations of members shall be to: -

- 4.1. At all times act in the best interests of and promote VAST
- 4.2. Pay all subscriptions as detailed in appendix once they become due
- 4.3. Act and exercise their rights as members within the law and the constitution and core values of VAST

5. Rights of members

- 5.1. The Members shall have the rights of members of VAST accordance with the Companies Acts and the Charity law.
- 5.2. Each member shall have one vote and may speak, attend and vote at all general meetings
- 5.3. Each member may propose and second motions and members who are individuals may stand for election to membership of the Board of Trustees.

6. Benefits to members

VAST will aim to provide a strong voice for the local voluntary and Community Sectors, liaising with:

- a) Stoke City Council
- b) NHS Stoke
- c) Stoke LSP
- d) Local Compact
- e) Learning & Skills Council
- f) Government Office West Midlands
- g) Advantage West Midlands
- h) Regional Action West Midlands
- i) Representing local VCS in Staffordshire and the West Midlands region
- j) Voice at a national level through our affiliation with NAVCA (National Association for Voluntary and Community Action) and Volunteering England.

7. Membership fees

VCS

Income	Less than £50k	£50,001 - £100k	101k - £500k	Over £500k	National Org.
Associate	free	free	free	free	free
Full	£10	£20	£50	£100	£500
Corporate	£50	£75	£100	£300	£500

Private Sector

No of staff	Less than 2 staff	3 - 10 staff	Over 10 Staff	PLC/National/International
Associate	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Full	£10	£20	£100	£300
Corporate	£50	£75	£100	£300

Public Sector

Location	Stoke	Staffordshire	Others	Contracting Partner
Associate	£100	£150	£200	free
Full	£300	£350	£500	free
Corporate	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Notes.

- Membership year will run from 1st April – 31st March
- Fees will be pro rata for any one joining through the year
- VAST reserves the right to refuse or cancel membership at any time
- Applications for membership for VCS organisations must be accompanied by:
 - a signed and completed application form
 - a charity registration number or a current constitution
- All Membership of VAST will be approved by the trustees
- All members will have voting rights at the AGM
- Data Protection. The information that you will provide on the application form will be used for the purpose for which you have provided it and any relevant procedures following from this. This data will be maintained in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and will not be passed on or sold to any other organisation unless required by law or with your consent through VAST's Directory.

Relevant Policies	Membership Form – MGF 01		
Relevant Forms	Nov 2009		
Approved by SMT	1	Approved By Trustees	Jan 2010
Issue No		Revisions	0
Date adopted	Jan 2010	Review Date	March 2011