

## **Volunteering digital strategy (2019-2021)**

### **Background**

Digital and social media allows us to communicate and engage with our dispersed network of volunteers, reach and attract potential new volunteers, and even offer digital volunteering roles.

Our staff and volunteers use digital platforms to communicate and collaborate with each other. Our branch and group network of volunteers across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, often operate remotely but digital allows them to access resources online, liaise with staff for support, share helpful hints and tips with one another, and promote their local activities.

As an Association, we have a digital vision which is to “improve the lives of people affected by MND and the way we engage with them through maximising the potential of digital technologies and making best use of our resources to deliver results.” To help achieve this vision, we use a set of Digital Principles to guide work, ensuring digital aspects are considered (see appendix 1).

### **Where are we now (2018)?**

We have a network of approximately 90 volunteer-led branches and groups across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, all of whom have a digital presence, such as websites and social media profiles. Some even have specific digital volunteering roles, such as managing their social media or web presence – allowing potential for volunteers to support us from anywhere in the world.

Our micro-volunteering opportunities are primarily online based and are short and snappy, ad-hoc micro actions. These aren't attributed to a formal volunteering role, but cumulatively can have a large impact. This is consistent with our STRONG initiative, which focuses on the benefits of short-term volunteering.

Centrally we manage many digital platforms, including: our online volunteer resource hub; Volunteering Twitter page and an applicant tracking system. We also have a database which hosts a Volunteer Portal, allowing volunteers to update information and post on a discussion forum.

Currently, for volunteering we don't have an overarching structure to govern our use of digital and promote best practice when representing the MND Association online. Whilst we have guidance available for specific platforms, we need to collate these resources to create a digital toolkit. Over the next 3 years we will focus on developing our work in the following areas.

## Objectives

### 1) Volunteer recruitment

*We can use digital channels as a method of recruiting new volunteers, reaching a wider, diverse network of talent and skills that could support our cause.*

Over the next 3 years we will:

- work with branches and groups to use social media advertising to reach specific pools of potential volunteers and target audiences by location or interest. All branches and groups will be aware of these advertising options and by 2021 more than 40% will have trialled paid social media advertising
- ensure our applicant tracking system gives prospective volunteers a better user experience, whilst allowing us to accurately track conversion rate from enquiry to registered volunteer
- promote our initiatives, such as STRONG, which offer potential volunteers short-term, flexible opportunities to fit around their lifestyles
- push recruitment drive campaigns and see a spike in interest around calendar events such as Student Volunteering Week.

### 2) Volunteer information

*Digital channels allow staff and volunteers to share information and resources. We distribute a monthly volunteer e-newsletter and have a volunteer resource hub called the Volunteer Zone. Each branch and group has their own dedicated webpage on our website, to share their local information.*

Over the next 3 years we will:

- explore ways to deliver news and updates in a live real-time way via channels that are accessible to all volunteers
- work with our volunteers to ensure the information they share online is accurate, up to date and follows our brand and house style guidelines
- increase the use and uptake of volunteers managing the branch and group pages on our website
- ensure that our information is accessible for all volunteers, providing hard copies for those who do not have online access and video formats where appropriate.

### 3) Volunteer engagement

*We want staff and volunteers to have an open and transparent dialogue. We actively seek input from volunteers with decision making and want to communicate and engage effectively with our volunteers.*

Over the next 3 years we will:

- lead and contribute to conversations on social media, engaging with and promoting branch and group events
- actively facilitate the forum on the Volunteer Portal, promoting discussion and collaboration between volunteers

- enable and encourage volunteers to write for our online channels, such as our volunteer blog or e-newsletter
- survey our volunteers to hear their open and honest thoughts about their experience and future volunteering with us
- explore the use of video conferencing (such as Skype) in communicating between staff and volunteers communicate.

#### 4) Volunteer development

*As emerging technology and new digital platforms come to the forefront, there is potential to upskill our staff and volunteers. Currently our volunteers can access learning materials online via the Volunteer Zone and our e-Learning platform.*

Over the next 3 years we will:

- increase the uptake of volunteers using our e-Learning platform
- explore the option of having an e-mentoring scheme, pairing up new and experienced volunteers
- provide a broader range of digital resources for volunteers
- deliver webinars to volunteers as a method for learning
- empower volunteers to use digital tools, such as social media, to grow their local MND communities and the support they offer.

#### What does success look like?

- **Recruitment:** We are reaching a wider external audience of potential future volunteers and utilising digital platforms to bring prospective volunteers on board.
- **Information:** Staff and volunteers are equipped with the digital skills and resources they need to most effectively perform their roles.
- **Engagement:** We are sharing and communicating between staff and volunteers in a more open and transparent way and providing a live, real-time source of data and information.
- **Development:** Increased use of volunteers accessing digital tools to not only aid their learning and development as individuals, but also to develop their local MND communities and the support they offer. We continue to learn from what we do so that we can improve our service.
- **Overall:** Increased awareness amongst our volunteer network of the benefits of a digital presence for our cause, including raised awareness of the services they provide for people affected by MND.

#### The future

There are so many digital services currently available, but digital is in a constant state of change. It's difficult to predict the digital future, so we will need to be agile and flexible in our approach and priorities.

With digital embedded into our working culture, and operating in a more joined up, we will make better use of the digital channels we decide to prioritise.

## Appendix 1:

Below are the digital principles that MND Association staff and volunteers should consult in relation to their work. Read the [principle descriptions](#) to find out more.

Digital Principles
1) Start with user needs, and keep them involved
2) Understand what's out there first
3) Build the right team
4) Take small steps and learn as you go
5) Build digital services, not websites
6) Be inclusive
7) Think about privacy and security
8) Build for sustainability
9) Collaborate and build partnerships
10) Be open

Source: <https://betterdigital.services/principles/>