



Why have a presence on the web? Guidelines for setting up a branch/group website

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Glossary

Introduction – Why have an online presence?

Thank you for volunteering to support the MND Association by developing a branch/group website.

More and more people now use the internet as their first port of call for researching information about MND and the support that is available.

The Association, therefore, is actively working to increase the information that is available online for anyone wanting to know more about MND, the local support that is available, or even how they can get involved and contribute in some way. We are delighted that you are offering your time, skills and experience to help us achieve this.

These guidelines have been produced to help you as a branch/group webmaster with the development of an effective local website – we hope you find them useful.

Section 1: Before you start

Websites provide an opportunity to publicise your branch or group to a wide audience, most of who will have specifically searched for local information.

Ideally, a branch/group website should be treated in a similar way to your newsletter in that it should provide people with MND, their carers and families with additional local information that would not necessarily be available on our website. This avoids duplication of information and effort, however you must ensure your branch/group website signposts visitors to our website (www.mndassociation.org) to ensure they access the most up-to-date information on MND, care services and research.

Before starting work on the website there are a number of things to consider. You may already be part of the branch/group committee, or you might be new to the Association, but whatever the circumstances, we suggest having a specific meeting with representatives from the branch/group committee to discuss the development and content of the website.

You may find it useful to check out ideas from other branch/group websites.

What kind of online presence?

There are two options for a branch/group website:

1. A simple presence on the Association's website

All branches and groups are represented on the Association's website with a basic webpage outlining details of events and meetings, contact details, and latest news.

There are two options for updating your webpage:

- Using the online event creation form to add your forthcoming events and activities, and providing the Volunteering Team with additional information to add on your behalf.
- Having access to the website's content management system (CMS) to make updates yourself.

All webpages are set up with a shortcut url e.g.

www.mndassociation.org/yourbranchgroupname so that you can use the address on your publicity materials etc.

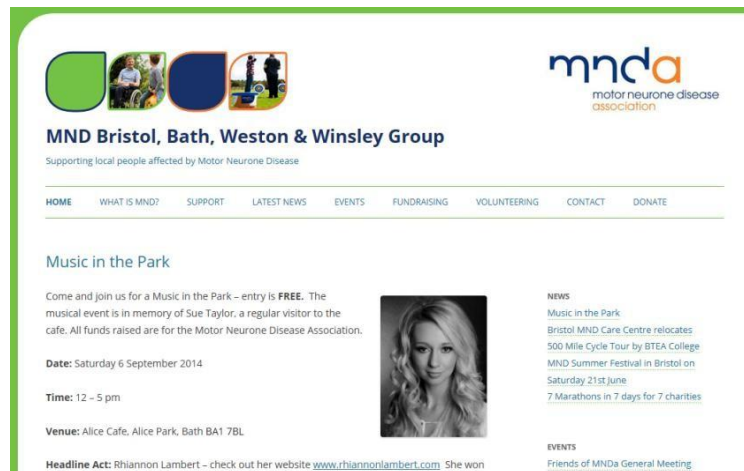
Guidelines about the branch/group webpages and what changes can be made to each section of your webpage are available from the Volunteering Team. Contact 0345 6044 150 or email volunteering@mndassociation.org

If your webmaster stood down or couldn't carry out the role for a period of time, the Volunteering Team would be able to access your webpage(s) and update it on behalf of your branch/group.

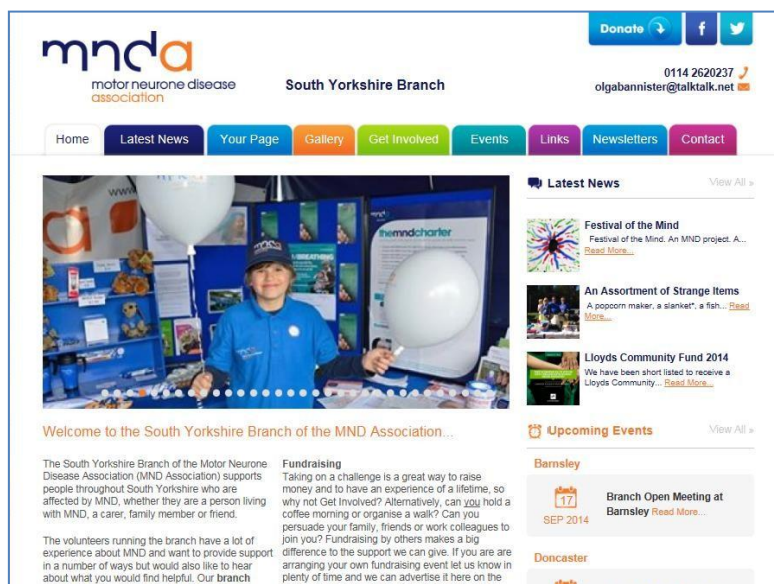
2. A website designed independently

If you have the time, skills and experience to develop a website from scratch, then we are happy for you to do so. We can provide you with the relevant logos. If you do design a website independently, it will need to follow our brand and content guidelines. If you choose this option, it can be accredited if it meets our requirements.

Examples of independently designed websites:



Bristol Bath, Weston and Winsley Group – visit <http://mnd-bbww.org/>



South Yorkshire Branch – visit <http://www.mndsouthyorkshire.org/>

Costs

If you utilise your webpage(s) on the Association’s website, there will be no hosting/domain costs for your branch or group.

There will be costs associated with developing an independently designed branch/group website, and it is important that any costs are agreed in advance with the branch/group committee.

Website hosting

If you wish to have an independently designed website then hosting costs vary depending on the type of package purchased, but on average it would cost £60 per year.

Whilst there are some Internet Service Providers (ISPs) that offer free webspace, we do not recommend these as they do have some disadvantages including:

- Long-winded addresses
- Limited choice of domain name
- Some limitations on what you can do on the website
- Some advertising on the screen
- Concerns about how they track visitors to the websites hosted by them

Domain Names

You will need to purchase a domain name for your website. These cost approximately £10 per year.

If you are finding your own hosting package and wish to purchase your own domain name, we recommend you use the suffix .org as this is associated with charitable organisations, and use one of the following formats for the address:

- www.mndbranchgroupname.org
- www.mndassociationbranchgroupinitials.org

For example

- www.mndnorthhertfordshire.org
- www.mndassociationnh.org

Software

If you are designing an independent website, you will need to use a specific software program. There are a number of packages available for free; however others such as Adobe Dreamweaver may need to be purchased at a cost.

Training

Many local voluntary sector infrastructure organisations offer free or low cost training for volunteers. There may be an opportunity for you to attend a website development training session to either gain or brush up on the website development skills.

Maintenance

It is important that the website is kept up-to-date and therefore it is essential that plans are in place before the website is developed to ensure this happens.

As webmaster you may have volunteered your time to set up the website and ensure it is kept up-to-date, or you may have simply volunteered to set up the website and then pass on maintenance to someone else, in which case we suggest a hand over meeting with whoever is going to be responsible for updating the site.

If you have set the website up and will be responsible for updating it, it is useful to agree a procedure for keeping in touch with the branch/group on a regular basis in order to ensure you get all the information needed. This may be easier if you are on the committee, but if not, some branches/groups communicate via email. It is worth thinking about what would work best for you, as in some cases branches and groups may only meet bi-monthly or four times a year as a committee, so you would need to communicate between meetings.

All contact information, telephone numbers, email addresses, etc should be checked regularly and updated as a priority, as too should any information that is date sensitive. Otherwise we recommend a maintenance check at least bi-monthly, but the more regularly the site is updated the better (this also helps with getting more hits via the search engines; otherwise they will stop visiting the site). Don't forget to change the date on the front page when an update has taken place.

In accordance with the 1998 Data Protection Act consent should be sought annually for any quotations or photographs that appear on the site. Ideally, they should be changed after one year.

We recommend that the log in details to enable editing access to the website is shared with at least one other branch/group volunteer. This will mean that changes can be made should you be unavailable for a period of time.

Webmaster

You may already have a volunteer who would be happy to take on the role of webmaster, but if you don't and you would like help with recruiting a new volunteer to this role, contact the Volunteering Team or your Volunteer Development Co-ordinator (VDC). A role description is available on the Volunteer Zone.

Support available

If you or your webmaster have any questions about the options available to you, website development, or the accreditation process, please contact the Volunteering Team.

Section 2: Getting started

What next?

Please contact the Volunteering Team, to let them know which option you wish to pursue and they will help you with getting started.

Content guidelines

In order for your independent website to be included in our new accreditation scheme launching in the near future, it will need to follow our independent website content guidelines. These will be available separately from our website and the Volunteering Team.

Section 3: Now it's complete

Accreditation

In order to ensure all branch/group websites are accurate, up-to-date and follow the content and brand guidelines, we ask that all websites are submitted for accreditation before being launched.

To submit your website for accreditation, email the link to the Volunteering Team at volunteering@mndassociation.org.

The Volunteering Team will co-ordinate the accreditation of your website by submitting it to the accreditation team who will review the website in terms of design, content and functionality.

If any amendments are required, you will be notified of these and asked to advise once they have been made.

Once everyone is happy, the site will be officially accredited. The Volunteering Team will also ensure the link to your website from the Association's main site is in place.

There are many benefits for your website by being accredited. The link from the Association's website will increase the numbers of people who visit your website and give it the authority of being affiliated to the national website.

Branch/group websites will be re-accredited every year. This will ensure that all websites are up-to-date and are following the brand and content guidelines. Webmasters will receive an email to notify when the website is due to be re-accredited.

Launching and promoting your website

Once the website has been accredited, you are ready to publicise the website and ensure as many people know about it as possible.

Here are some ideas of how to launch and promote the website:

- Send a press release to your local newspaper
- Depending on the time of year, launch the website at a branch/group event such as your AGM, at an open meeting, or Christmas party
- Put an article in your newsletter promoting the website
- Include the website address on all your correspondence

Remember that when your website has been accredited, a link will be made from the Association's website to your branch/group website – this will support the promotion of it.

The Association's website is regularly updated on most search engines by the Digital Team, this will also help people to access your branch/group website. However, we recommend that you register your website with them as well.

The websites below send your website's details to lots of the most popular search engines, such as Google, Bing, Yahoo etc, simultaneously to save you time:

www.addme.com
www.entireweb.com/free_submission/

Section 4:

For more information contact the Volunteering Team or the Digital Team:

Abi Stafford (Volunteering Information & Communications Co-ordinator):

Phone: 01604 611756

Email: abigail.stafford@mndassociation.org

Website: www.mndassociation.org/volunteerzone

Simon Hoggarth (Website Administrator): Phone: 01604 611874

Email: simon.hoggarth@mndassociation.org

Adam Belson (Digital Media Manager): Phone: 01604 611892

Email: adam.belson@mndassociation.org

Glossary

Attachment – a file that is sent along with an email message.

Browser – a program installed in a computer that reads (or browses) web pages. A full Internet connection is needed to browse the web. Most common browsers include Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, Safari and Firefox.

DHTML – Dynamics Hyper Text Markup Language. This is a method of changing a web page in the browser to create animation and activity, such as menus and rollovers.

Domain name – each server has its very own IP (Internet Protocol) address, which is a long string of numbers and dots. Since we have trouble remembering all these numbers, an alphabetical name was created. The domain name in www.mndassociation.org is mndassociation.org, and it acts as a substitute for the IP numbers.

Downloading – when you copy a file from another computer to your own, you're downloading. It can be done through a web browser or FTP programme.

FTP – File Transfer Protocol is a simple way of transferring files from one computer to another.

Hits – measurement of how often a website has been visited.

GIF/Gif – short for Graphics Interchange Format is a type of graphics file. It is a popular image format used widely across the web because the image size is small. It can often be seen used for animation effects on social media.

Homepage – the front door or entry page of a website.

Host – a computer that allows users to communicate with other host computers on the network. Individual users communicate by using client programs such as e-mail, Telnet and FTP.

HTML – Hyper Text Markup Language. The universal language of the web, in which pages are written.

HTTP – Hypertext Transfer Protocol. Most URLs follow this format. It is always followed by a colon and a double slash. (<http://www.website.com>)

ISP – Internet service provider. A company that sells connections to the Internet.

JPEG/jpg – short for Joint Photographic Expert Groups, and is the most popular image format used on the web.

Links or hyperlink – acts as a bridge between separate web pages. By clicking on a link you are taken to another web page. Links can be indicated by a small graphic icon or by underlined text, usually of a different colour to the rest of the text. If you move your mouse pointer over a link, the arrow will turn into a pointing finger. To move to the linked page, just click on the link.

Modem – a piece of equipment that connects computers to each other for sending communications via telephone lines.

Rollover – a button on a web page that changes as the mouse passes over it. It can change again when clicked on.

Search engine – websites that contain powerful search facilities, which let the user find other pages on a specific subject.

Server – a computer that makes services, such as a website, available over the Internet or within a local organisational network of PCs.

SSL – Secure Sockets Layer. A powerful encryption system used to send data and information, such as credit card details over the internet.

TLD – Top Level Domain. The part of the web address after the second or third dot that denotes the site owner's status (.com for commercial entity, .org for non-profit making organisations such as charities), or country where site is based (.uk for UK, .fr for France).

Uploading – the process of transferring one or more files from your computer to the Internet, usually achieved through the FTP program.

URL – Uniform Resource Locator. The address of the website and takes the form www.mndassociation.org. Type it in the browser address bar to go to the website.

Webcam – the web interface for displaying live digital images.

Webmaster – The term given to the person responsible for looking after a website.