

Tick box as applicable and send to Simon Bannister

I would like to become a member of Ashford Community Network (membership is free).

Name of organisation:

Name :

Address :

Phone number:

Email:

Tick box as applicable

CASEKent serves and supports voluntary & community organisations and advises on set up, funding, training & business planning.

Please send me more information

Ashford Volunteer Centre provides volunteering opportunities for all and support & advice to volunteer-based organisations.

Please send me information about volunteering/volunteer support

#### RETURN TO:

Simon Bannister  
Ashford Community Network (ACN)  
7th Floor, Charter House  
Park Street, Ashford  
TN24 8EQ

01233 330 814 simon.bannister@goashford.com



## BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

### FOR VCS:

- Make contact with and influence local decision makers
- Network with a wide range of organisations
- Receive and share information and best practice
- Publicise your organisation and its work
- Build relationships with partners, commissioners and funders
- Find out about important initiatives and developments
- Get involved in Ashford's Future
- Work together to deliver sustainable services
- Have your say!

### FOR PUBLIC & PRIVATE SECTOR:

- Access a wide range of voluntary & community organisations
- Consult and engage communities and groups
- Joint plan projects and policy
- Improve understanding of the VCS and its services
- Commission more public services from voluntary organisations
- Get closer to neighbourhoods, their needs & issues
- Volunteer opportunities for personal development, team building & training

Company number: 5647835 Charity number: 1114696

#### CONTACT DETAILS

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Ashford Community Network (ACN)  
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## WHAT IS THE VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY SECTOR?

The voluntary & community sector (VCS) is described as the glue that holds society together. In Ashford borough over 850 organisations deliver a broad range of local services to young and old, able and disadvantaged alike. Voluntary and community groups also provide many of our cultural, sport and leisure opportunities. Most organisations are charities, some employ specialists, but many are informal volunteer-based groups. All are reliant, in whole or part, on the time and goodwill of local people.

The VCS plays a crucial role in our quality of life and in strengthening the fabric of our communities. What would you do without the Citizen's Advice Bureau, the church youth club, the community hall, the elderly drop-in, marriage guidance, the amateur drama group, your local sports club?

## WHY IS THE VCS IMPORTANT IN ASHFORD ?

### NOW:

The VCS in Ashford is well-established and makes a major social and economic contribution to the borough.

- Its services, volunteer time and assets total £150 million\* p.a
- Over 12,000 people regularly volunteer\*
- It employs almost 3,000 people\*
- It runs many of our local community and sports facilities
- It often serves the most vulnerable and hardest to reach
- It enables people to get involved in local life and build up their skills

*\*Habitus Associates: The VCS in Ashford 2006*

### FOR THE FUTURE:

Ashford is a key partner in Government's Communities Plan for growth in the South East. We are challenged with building 31,000 homes and creating 28,000 jobs over the next 30 years. Voluntary & community organisations have the potential and expertise to deliver many of Ashford's future public services and social infrastructure. Ashford Community Network believes that the VCS is key to truly 'sustainable' development in Ashford because it is:

- a key grass roots service provider
- a catalyst for social networks and enterprise
- at the heart of local neighbourhoods and facilities.

## ASHFORD COMMUNITY NETWORK

Ashford Community Network was originally formed in September 2004 from a core group of VCS representatives. We are now established as a limited company and have applied for charitable status. We are led by an independent board comprising representatives from

- Citizen's Advice Bureau
- Ashford Volunteer Centre
- Stour Valley Arts
- BTCV
- Find-A-Voice
- Urban Community Forums
- Ashford Borough Council (co-opted)
- CASEKent
- Relate
- Ashford Mediation
- Churches Together in Ashford
- Ashford YMCA

### WHAT WE DO:

ACN is a 'family of networks' bringing together key voluntary organisations and community leaders from across the borough. We meet regularly on a variety of subjects. One of ACN's key roles is to act as a single point of contact for public and private partners, and the media.

### OUR AIMS ARE TO

- act as a strategic decision making and consultative body
- co-ordinate and represent local VCS interests and views
- build the sector's capacity and infrastructure
- develop a more enterprising and sustainable sector
- enable front line services to meet growing community needs

ACN also works hard to raise the profile of the VCS so that partners and the public understand how important voluntary and community organisations are. We also organise events to support the sector and its development.

## THE BIG ISSUES

ACN is working in partnership with Ashford Borough Council, Ashford's Future, the Ashford Partnership and Department for Communities & Local Government to

- Ensure there are a wide range of community facilities and services in Ashford's new neighbourhoods
- Enable the VCS to deliver more quality public services
- Build the sector's capacity to manage more community/cultural assets & facilities
- Deliver a VCS Resource Centre with affordable offices and hot desking
- Relocate voluntary organisations affected by town centre development
- Sustain and build the sector through new collaborations and partnerships
- Create a positive sense of place, community and belonging across the borough.

Research shows that our VCS needs to grow by an additional:

- 400 organisations
- 3,000 volunteers
- £50 million p.a.

to meet the needs of Ashford's population by 2026.

**WORKING  
TOGETHER  
TO BUILD ASHFORD BOROUGH'S  
VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR**