

Solva Care: a communications strategy



Part 1 - websites, hosting and email addresses

Our website

We consider that our website is our 'shopfront', for those who want to know about us and may have an involvement in our growth, but may never meet us. It is important that it is - and looks - professional, is hosted properly and has good quality content that changes on a regular basis.

The website is not used operationally, and we know that most older people receiving support from Solva Care don't use it. However, it is an important resource for showcasing our day-to-day work, our on-off projects and our organisation's aims. It is also useful for transparency as documents such as our constitution, policies and minutes are located on it.

Website design

We initially employed a local website design company who created a website using the online website creation tool WordPress¹. We worked with them to develop the menu and content, and provided them with text, our logo and images. They registered the domain name i.e. the name of the website – solvacare.co.uk – for us.

Websites in WordPress have an advantage as once it is set up, those with limited IT skills can post news items – known as 'blog' posts – quickly and easily. It is 'open source' so no expensive software programs are required, and it is currently the market-leader for what is known as 'content management' website design. It also works across all the devices that people will view your website on: desktop computers, tablets and mobile phones, so, literally, one size fits all – and remember most websites are now viewed in portrait format on mobile phones.

It is also flexible enough to change with us as we grow. For example, we could add an online shop for merchandise, or an online 'booking' facility – we are very aware that as our tech-savvy over-50s become our new customers, they may prefer to engage with our Coordinator online rather than over the phone.

¹ wordpress.com/start/about/uk



Email Addresses

When we first set up our website, we didn't set up email addresses related to the domain name e.g. contact@solvacare.co.uk, but used one linked to the Community Council, as we were initially part of it. We now have our own general one – contact@solvacare.co.uk – and one for our Coordinator – coordinator@solvacare.co.uk. We also have research@solvacare.co.uk and chair@solvacare.co.uk. We have kept them anonymous, so they stay usable when employees and Trustees change. The hosting company set them up for us and they can change the passwords if required, for example, when a member of staff leaves.

Since GDPR (the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679²) became enforceable in the United Kingdom in May 2018, we have begun to take greater

² More information can be found on en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_Data_Protection_Regulation

care when collecting and using people's email addresses. So, remember that an email should always have 'email back with UNSUBSCRIBE in the subject line' at the bottom of your emails when you are emailing groups of people on spec, or about future events. Mailchimp³ - an established service used for email mailshots – is fully GDPR-compliant, although we've not looked into using it in any detail.

Hosting

Hosting of a website simply refers to where the digital files that make up a website are located.

Our original website design company hosted our website, until they ceased trading. Our website is now hosted by another local website design company Webzer⁴. We considered hosting by a faceless organisation, but strongly felt that this option provides assurance for us that if the website is hit by a virus or hacked, we know the person/s who can investigate and get it up and running quickly. WordPress's payoff for ease of use is that it has a poor reputation for succumbing to attacks. The hosting package includes maintenance of the website. i.e. updates to WordPress and it keeps an eye on security.

Another benefit of having the hosting done by a company that also does website design, is that as regulations change, they can adapt the website accordingly. For example, Webzer have recently added a 'translate' button that helps us with compliance with Welsh-language legislation and ensures that the website is accessible to non-English speakers (in response to the recommendations of the Auditor General for Wales' 2018 'Speak My Language'⁵ report).

They also updated the website so that it is compliant with GDPR; this appears as a 'this site uses cookies' notification to viewers. We have found these one-off costs are quite reasonable as they have an ongoing relationship with us, and their service is exemplar.

Website Updating

Initially, the Coordinator and one other Trustee updated the website. After 3 years we engaged a website administrator on a consultancy basis to do that. She is sent stories and events by the Trustees or Treasurer to post on the site, and also – as she lives locally – takes photos of events to post. She also liaises with

³ mailchimp.com

⁴ webzer.co.uk

⁵ audit.wales/system/files/publications/speak-my-language-2018-english.pdf

the hosting company and briefs them on statutory changes that need to happen to the website design.

The website has links to our social media accounts, so a blog post can also appear on Facebook or Twitter. We don't use them as currently Facebook doesn't like content posted by a third party and our Twitter account is managed by one Trustee. But, it is a good timesaver at the start as you are finding your way with social media. Your website designer will need to install this plug-in (simply a bit more software) and will need to know your social media account passwords to do so.

Your news posts need to follow some simple rules to get noticed by the search engines. Read our one-page guide to writing successful blog posts.

Some recommendations

1. Register the website's name – the domain name – as soon as you have agreed on the name of your project (and checked out the availability of social media handles/names – see **Part 2** of our **Solva Care: a communications strategy**) with a Nominet-registered company such as getdotted.com⁶. Think carefully about what the suffix should be; social enterprises or charities in the United Kingdom generally use **.org.uk**.
2. If there is going to be a period of time between organising for a website designer to design your website and host, you could put up a 'holding page'. Companies that register domain names usually host and often have their own relatively simple website-building applications for a small monthly fee, so you could put up a one-page website that says who you are, what you do – or will be doing – any contact names, email addresses and phone numbers.
3. As soon as you register your domain name, sign up for Google Analytics. You'll need a Google account; don't be tempted to use a personal account, set one up in the name of your organisation (e.g. ourorganisation@gmail.com) – **Part 2** of our **Solva Care: a communications strategy** will explain why! This gives you control over it if you move hosting companies. Your website designer will then embed the details on your website. Google Analytics gives you statistics on what pages and blog posts perform best. Your 'landing page' or home page is likely to be the most seen page so make sure that it gives an overview of your organisation, contact details and some enticing links to interest visitors in exploring further pages.

⁶ getdotted.com

Check out which pages get the most visits, and the numbers of new and returning visitors.

4. Obtain quotes for a website design (we recommend WordPress⁷) and hosting. Remember to take into account monthly or yearly on-going costs and the renewal of your domain name every 2-5 years.
5. Choose a website designer whose examples of previous work you like. You should also feel comfortable talking to them and that they talk to you on the same level that your technical knowledge is at. It will be an extremely unsatisfying relationship if you find it is hard to communicate – remember there is no such thing as a stupid question and if they make you feel that it is, find another company!
6. Make sure you have some training included. I would suggest 2 sessions, an initial one for familiarisation, then a second once you have used it for a couple of months and have specific questions. A successful website is far more than its appearance. There is a lot of 'background' information – called metadata – that you need to know how to add to your posts and photographs that mean that it is visible to the search engines such as Google. For the same reason, be suspicious of a very cheap website design quote. You probably won't see much difference, but the visibility to search engines will be adversely affected. A good website designer will add a plug-in such as Yoast which will allow you to edit how it appears to search engines and will add key words to the webpages to help them get noticed by search engines.
7. Keep an eye on changing legislation, and make sure that your website is kept up to date by budgeting to pay for occasional updates.
8. Be as professional as you can – your website will be your 'shopfront' to potential funders who will never visit your community. So, don't use slang, check your spelling, be respectful when using photos of people or their names, don't breach copyright restrictions – see **Part 2** of our **Solva Care: a communications strategy** – and don't collect data through Google Analytics (cookies) without informing people. It is worth taking a look at what established charities in our field do.

⁷ wordpress.com/start/about/uk

9. Follow our **one-page guide to writing successful blog posts** to get your website noticed by search engines.
10. Set up your email addresses at the same time as your website goes live – if not before. GDPR places more onerous requirements on organisations now so respect and safeguard people's personal data. So, from the start, emails should ideally be organised on a web-based email client (such as Yahoo or Gmail) and password protected – ideally double-password – rather than on the hard drive of individuals' personal/work computers. Change passwords when staff or Trustees who have access to the emails leave.
11. Make sure you allow people to unsubscribe from email mailshots – a simple line at the bottom – 'email back with UNSUBSCRIBE in the subject line' – will suffice. Or use an established service such as Mailchimp.

Social media and more...

Your website is only one part of your online presence. Read **Part 2** of the **Solva Care: a communications strategy** which looks at social media and how it is interlinked with your website.

