Wolverhampton Local Offer
Communication Strategy

December 2014
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Introduction

Changing Our Lives (COL) is a rights based organisation that works in co-production with disabled people of all ages to achieve equality, good health and social inclusion. Changing Young Lives (CYL) is a branch of Changing Our Lives, which works with disabled children and young people aged 8-25.

In September 2014, the Government introduced the Special Education Needs & Disability (SEND) Reforms and as part of the reforms local authorities must provide a Local Offer. The Local Offer will inform disabled children and young people and their families about what services and supports are available to them including education, health, social care, preparation for adulthood and community inclusion.

To ensure the Local Offer is co-produced and includes young people’s views, Wolverhampton Council have funded CYL to work with children and young people with a range of disabilities and SEN to develop a Local Offer Communication Strategy.

“It is so important to work in co-production with us young people. Our unique views on what should be done will shape the Local Offer website and our contribution to decision-making will enable us to build our confidence, self-esteem and empower us to make decisions about our own lives.”

“Raising aspirations is vital if we young people are to achieve our life ambitions. The Local Offer must be informative and accessible to empower us to make informed choices about our own lives.”

Young Leaders, CYL
2.0 Who We Are

“Hi! I’m Kashmire Hawker, I’m 17 years old and I’m involved in a number of things for CYL in Wolverhampton. I’m the Chair of the ‘We Have a Voice’ network, part of the ‘Rights for All’ BME leadership programme and I am currently helping to develop a National SEND Reforms Training Pack for young people with the Council for Disabled Children.

It has been great designing the questionnaire for young people to complete to ensure that their views are heard and the Local Offer is truly co-produced.”

“Hello, I am Lesley Acford, I am 18 years old and I am currently doing a traineeship at Wolverhampton Central Library. I have done many things with CYL from practice development with professionals to meetings about the new Education, Health and Care Plans. Very soon I will begin doing audits with CYL, as part of the ‘Quality Crew’.

“I really enjoyed looking at the completed questionnaires and bringing the opinions of young people together to form the communication strategy.”

“Hello, I am Hayden Kallay. I am 18 years old and study at Penn Hall School. I am a very vocal and passionate young man and I am an excellent self-advocate for the rights of young people with disabilities, as I have faced some of the challenges myself!

I really enjoyed designing and running my own workshop and also having my own input into the communication strategy.”

“Hello, I am Franco Montana, I am 16 years old and I currently study at Westcroft School. I am part of the ‘We Have a Voice’ network, where I get to meet with other young disabled people to work on transition and bullying, our themes for the year!

This is my first bit of paid work with CYL outside of school and I have really enjoyed it! It has been very interesting hearing the different views of young people.”
3.0 What we did and how we did it

The aim of this Local Offer Communication Strategy is to establish what young people want from their Local Offer and how this is best communicated to them. We looked at:

- Design
- Advertising
- Social Media

In order to achieve these aims we decided that we would create an accessible questionnaire to find out what young people want the Local Offer to look like and how it should be communicated to them. Lesley and Kashmire designed the questionnaire for young people to complete in community youth centres. This provided us with a challenge as we found that traditional youth groups for young disabled people had closed and we struggled to find young disabled people in universal youth provision. From this challenge we decided to take the questionnaires into schools to ensure we heard the voices of as many young people as possible. Please see appendix to see the full outcomes from the questionnaires.

Franco and Hayden used the questionnaire to create an accessible workshop to establish how young people want the Local Offer website to look and how it should be advertised to them. We agreed that Franco would facilitate his workshop at Westcroft School and Hayden would facilitate his workshop at Penn Hall School.

We made the workshops as fun as possible to make sure all the young people were engaged and to support us to get the best feedback possible. Below is a photograph of Hayden facilitating his workshop at Penn Hall School.

![Photograph of Hayden facilitating workshop](image)

We began the workshop by asking the young people to complete the questionnaire. This helped to identify how a website for young people should be designed and what features attract young people to use a website. The survey also gave the option to record their reasoning.
Once the questionnaires were completed we played a fun quiz around social media to identify what social media young people use. Social media is a great way to attract and access young people. Wolverhampton Council interact with the community through social media and produce the Local Offer website, so it was important for us to find out what types of social media young people currently use. This exercise helped to identify if the Council are using the best types of social media to connect with them.

The final part of the workshops asked young people what they thought was the most effective way to advertise the Local Offer. This gave them a chance to explore different ways of promoting the website, voice their ideas and decide which methods they thought were most effective.

4.0 Who we worked with

Young Leaders Franco Montana and Hayden Kallay facilitated two workshops in their schools, Westcroft and Penn Hall. Young Leaders Lesley Acford and Kashmir Hawker sent their accessible questionnaires to the Orchard Centre and Heath Park School.

We worked with a total of 57 young people aged from 12-19 years old, from the above schools. The young people we worked with had a range of disabilities and SEN:

- 35 – Special Educational Needs
- 9 – Learning Disabilities
- 4 – Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities
- 5 – Physical Disabilities
- 1 – Mental Health
- 1 – Sight Impaired
- 1 – Hearing Impaired
- 1 – Autism
5.0 Outcomes

5.1 Design

We received a very clear view from the completed questionnaires about what a website should look like through the eyes of young people. Out of the 57 young people we asked, 55 said that they like bright and colourful websites. By incorporating colour, websites become visually interesting, engaging and young user friendly. This outcome is also met through the introduction of images. 33 young people said that it is important to use pictures as well as text to show information on a website.

51 young people said that they like websites that are interactive.

“Having a website that’s interactive makes it fun and enjoyable.”
Young person, aged 14

“Some people may need film or music to focus on information provided”.
Young person, aged 14

It is important to keep young people engaged with the Local Offer to ensure that they use it. Using film and audio will keep young people interested in the website, making them want to use it more. 45 young people thought that using film and audio, as well as text was a good idea.

“It adds a sense of understanding and it is good to be interactive as possible.”
Young person, aged 15

“It is good for people who may not be able to read.”
Young person, aged 14

Young people told us that another way to make a website interactive is to include a way that they can communicate their thoughts. Young people said they would like a ‘feedback/comment box’, where they could ask questions or comment on the Local Offer.

Some young people thought it would be a good idea to have a login system to the Local Offer, where they could ‘favourite’ sections that are of most interest to them. For example, if a young person is interested in what opportunities they have post 16, they can prioritise the ‘Moving onto Adult Life’ section.
These ideas provide a clever way of monitoring what young people are looking at on the website. They are simple, but effective ways to engage with young people, enabling them to co-produce the Local Offer.

With regards to the layout of the website, we received a very mixed review about the size, colour and layout of the text. This evidence shows that a single design won’t suit everyone, however, there is also strong view that there needs to be a Local Offer website that works for young people. A way to overcome differences in opinions in relation to text is to have an accessibility tool bar. This will enable young people to change the size and colour of the text and colour and contrast of the website.

Results from the questionnaires provide evidence that young people want a website that is accessible. It is essential that the Local Offer website is made accessible for disabled users. A useful resource for guidelines around an accessibility tool bar can be found on the ‘Web Accessibility Initiative’ website. COL have developed a guide called ‘Making Written Things Easier to Understand’, which can support you to make the Local Offer website easy read.

RECOMMENDATIONS

• Make the website bright and colourful

• Include images to support text with pictures to the left and text to the right

• Film clips should be embedded on the website, that include young people talking about what the Local Offer is

• Have an accessibility toolbar at the top of each webpage.

• Refer to the COL guide ‘Making Written Things Easier to Understand’, which can be found at www.changingourlives.org
5.2 Advertisement and Social Media

Out of the 57 young people asked, 49 had never heard of the Local Offer. It is clear to us that Wolverhampton Council need to prioritise communication of the Local Offer to young people so they know what it is. It is essential that young people with SEN and disabilities know about the Local Offer to ensure they use it and can benefit from it.

We asked young people ‘how do you find out about what is available to you in your local community?’ to help us to find out the best way to advertise the Local Offer. The most common responses were to promote it via schools, social media and the internet.

In order for the Local Offer to be successful and widely used by young people, Wolverhampton Council must use schools to their advantage. Schools could have the Local Offer website as a ‘favourite’ on their internet browser, learning platforms and online learning systems. Wolverhampton Council could ask young people to design posters to put around schools informing people about what the Local Offer is and how it can be used. Using schools to advertise the Local Offer is a guaranteed way to communicate with young people with SEN and disabilities. There are a number of different ways that schools can get involved in promoting the Local Offer, such as:

- Local Offer workshops teaching young people how to use it effectively
- Promotional stands at school events
- Posters, leaflets, flyers
- Advertise on existing schools TV screens that are in communal areas. These currently show news, information etc.
- Promotion on school transport

During the process of this work we faced challenges when trying to communicate with young people with SEN and disabilities within youth provision. There is almost no youth provision left in the city and these young people do not access what is available. This is a further area that we have started to tackle! We will be working closely with the strategic team developing the new ‘Youth Zone’ to ensure that it is a truly a universal and accessible facility. The Local Offer needs to encourage young people to use universal youth provision outside of school. This will help to ensure that young people are a part of their local community and living ordinary lives.

The use of social media is growing rapidly, so it is essential that Wolverhampton Council use it effectively to promote the Local Offer. It is important to establish which sites the target audience use to prevent missing out on promotional opportunities. Wolverhampton Council currently uses Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to communicate to the people that it serves. To identify which means of social media is the most effective to use to attract young people, CYL asked which social media sites the young people use. They were given the options of; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, You Tube, What’s App and Pinterest. The young people were given the option to highlight other means of social media that they use too.
Wolverhampton Council already has a positive following on social media with, 35,649 Facebook ‘likes’ and 9,181 Twitter followers and it is evident that YouTube is also being used. YouTube can be linked through Facebook and Twitter to promote the use of YouTube further and reach young people, families and carers. The young people suggested that films should be used to explain ‘What the Local Offer is’ and ‘How to use it’. These short films can be promoted on YouTube as well as the Local Offer website.

Out of the 57 young people asked, 46 use YouTube, 38 use Facebook and 19 use Twitter. Other social media were mentioned but YouTube, Facebook and Twitter were by far the most popular. It is so important that the Local Offer is promoted using these means, as it will not only tell young people about it but their families and carers too.

Finally, the majority of the young people we spoke to about using the Local Offer suggested that it have its own application (app). Creating an app for the Local Offer will make it more accessible. Young people said;

“I would rather use apps, as it is quicker and easier than a website.”

“I use apps on my phone to find out what is available in the area.”

Young people, Local Offer workshops

Young people can access the app whilst they are out in the community, which may encourage greater access to the services and supports that they need. Most young people have a smart phone or tablet and many schools now provide tablets within their setting to support learning. By ensuring that all schools downloaded the App on to their devices would help to encourage young people to download it on their personal devices too. This would provide yet another promotional tool for Wolverhampton Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

• Advertise the Local Offer throughout schools using a number of different promotional tools.

• Increase the use of YouTube through short film clips to engage with young people aged 9-16.

• Promote the Local Offer through YouTube, Facebook and Twitter.

• Develop a Local Offer App to encourage young people to use it easily and more frequently.
6.0 Conclusion

It is essential that the Local Offer be promoted across schools in Wolverhampton. Using this approach will guarantee that young people across the city are informed about the Local Offer. It will also allow Wolverhampton Council to connect with young people that may not use social media or even the internet.

To promote the Local Offer further, social media such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter must be used effectively. Social Media is fun and engaging and Wolverhampton Council already has a positive following through social media. This will allow communication of the Local Offer to many young people across the city.

CYL understand that Wolverhampton Council has a corporate website and will face restrictions in terms of these recommendations, but young people want and need a more interactive and engaging website.

In order to ensure that Wolverhampton’s Local Offer is truly co-produced and effective, a separate Local Offer website and application should be developed. This will ensure that the website is accessible and attractive to all children and young people to promote usage and support the needs of young people with SEN and disabilities in Wolverhampton.

Co-producing a separate website and application will create a sense of ownership and empower us to use it. This is essential, as it will support and increase the number of children and young people making informed choices and decisions about their lives.
7.0 Appendix

Local Offer Questionnaire
Changing Young Lives have been asked by Wolverhampton Council to see what young people would like a website to look like. They also want to know the best way to tell young people about what is going on in Wolverhampton. This questionnaire will help Wolverhampton Council design a local offer for young people with special educational needs and disabilities to tell them about what is accessible in Wolverhampton.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>12-19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DISABILITY</td>
<td>35-SEN / 9-Learning Disability / 5-Physical Disability / 4-Profound and Multiple Learning Disability / 1 – Autism / 1-Mental Health / 1-Visual Impairment / 1-Hearing Impairment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question
List 3 things you require when visiting a website e.g. Large Font

Main Outcomes
• Bright and colourful and eyepopping!
• Easy accessible information and website
• Interesting content
• Adjustable font, colour, text and background
• Good and relevant pictures
• Interactive
• Clear headings and writing

Do you prefer a website with lots of text or more pictures to explain?

Text - 4
Pictures - 20
Little of Both – 33

Comments
'Some people need pictures and text to understand the information’
young person aged 14
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Do you like interactive websites that include film, social media, audio, music etc.? | Yes - 51  
No – 5  
Unsure - 1 |
| Comments                                                                | ‘Interactive websites are fun and enjoyable' young person aged 12  
‘Films teach me when I don’t have to read' young person age 15  
‘Some people may need film or music to help them focus on the information' young person aged 14 |
| What colours do you like to see on a website?                            | Bright – 55  
Plain – 2 |
| Comments                                                                | ‘I don’t think the youth of today would lie a plain website' young person aged 14. |
| How do you find out about things available for you around Wolverhampton? | Main Outcomes  
• Internet  
• School  
• Social Media  
• Newspaper, radio and T.V  
• Parents and friends |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes -</th>
<th>No -</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you think video or audio explanations for each section of a website is a good idea?</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>‘People will understand better with film and audio’ young person aged 17</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘It makes it accessible to everyone’ young person aged 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘I would not like video and audio on everything as it would be annoying’ young person aged 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you think of anything else that makes a website interesting?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Main Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Discussion and feedback area</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• App to use on your phone or tablet</td>
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<td>• Pictures</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Videos</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Log in account so we can have our own account</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Easy information</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Age appropriate</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Up to date information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know what the local offer is?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>No Answer - 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Main Outcomes**

- Discussion and feedback area
- App to use on your phone or tablet
- Pictures
- Videos
- Log in account so we can have our own account
- Easy information
- Age appropriate
- Up to date information
How would you like to find out about what’s going on in your community?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Outcomes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• School via posters, leaflets, letters and workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Internet via websites and emails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social Media</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which social media do you use?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facebook – 38 users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YouTube – 46 users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter – 19 users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram – 16 users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other social medias mentioned:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flickr / Tumblr / Snap Chat / Vine / What’s App</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you, for completing the questionnaire!!