

Suffolk Mind Partnership – Website

This paper is a personal account about how our website happened. It isn't the only way to end up with a website but it worked for us. I have chosen to write it in first person rather than academic style so no reader forgets that this is just the way we did it, not the only way to do it. If you find this paper useful I am happy to have been of help! If you have a burning question not answered here please email me on jax.devonshire@westsuffolkmind.org.uk.

I start any task with a series of questions. The starting questions for this project were

- 1) Why do we want a website?
- 2) Who will use it?
- 3) What will they use it for?
- 4) Who will benefit from it?
- 5) Where will the funding come from?
- 6) Who will build it?
- 7) Who will maintain it?
- 8) How long will it take to build?
- 9) How much time will it take to maintain?
- 10) How will we publicise it?
- 11) Is it worth the time and cost?
- 12) What do we need on there?
- 13) How best to plan the site?
- 14) How best to organise the work?
- 15) What else do we need to consider?

And here are our answers:

1. Why do we want a website?

People are, increasingly, expecting any organisation which is stable and secure to have a website, just as they expect them to have headed letter paper. Information is the lifeblood of any charity, and a website offers instant access on a 24/7 basis. For a mental health charity, having a website also provides a means for people to seek information in privacy.

We wanted to provide a place where people could investigate what we offered and how to access that information without having to phone us or visit us. We thought that by getting to know us through our website people might be less reluctant to then pick up the phone and arrange to visit us.

We wanted to grow our website into a place where GPs, Link workers and other health professionals could bookmark as a favourite and use regularly when they had a question about what services were available in the area for patients with mental health issues.

We wanted to find a more cost-effective way of sending out our newsletters and notices and people who use websites will often sign up to receive email newsletters. This means we can save money on printing and posting paper and can transfer that money into different services.

West Suffolk Mind and East Suffolk Mind have recently created a working partnership called Suffolk Mind Partnership. The aim of this partnership is to enable us to offer our combined services to people right across the county. A website was a good way to put all the information about us in one place so people could understand what we now can offer.

2. Who will use it?

We wanted three audiences

- a. People in need of information on the services available to them or a loved one
- b. GPs, Link Workers and other health professionals and students
- c. Suffolk Mind Partnership staff, volunteers and supporters.

3. What will they use it for?

We wanted people to use it to find out

- a. How we could help them
- b. How they could help themselves

- c. How they could help us
- d. Where to find further information

4. Who will benefit from it?

- a. We wanted people in need to benefit by finding information and possibly comfort from the fact of the site existing
- b. We wanted health professional to benefit by knowing of a site they could look at to find mental health services in the region
- c. We wanted staff, supporters and volunteers of both East Suffolk Mind and West Suffolk Mind to benefit by knowing where to find answers about our own charity and our partner charity.

5. Where will the funding come from?

We didn't have enough money to fund this ourselves and so we put in a bid to the Mind National Joint Reserve fund. The fund allows for £5,000 per LMA and as there were two of us working together we could apply for up to £10,000. Included in the bid was an element to publicise the launch of the website to raise awareness of the site's name and drive traffic to it. Happily we were awarded the grant.

6. Who will build it?

First we wondered about finding a volunteer, or training one of us to do it but when we seriously considered what we wanted we realised we had to get it built by professionals. We originally asked local companies in to talk to us and give us estimates, but then our Treasurer heard that c27 media had already built for a number of other LMAs. Once I have seen their website and talked with them the decision was made (and has never been regretted).

7. Who will maintain it?

I spoke to Mole at c27 about this. She explained the pros and cons of keeping the maintenance internal or getting someone external to do it. We decided to buy the Content Management System (CMS) that c27 offered. I would be trained by c27, then I would train others to maintain and keep their own sections up to date.

8. How long will it take to build?

C27 sent me an example timescale that showed how much time each of their stages usually took and from that I could create a timescale. We received notification of the award at the end of May 2007 and we set a go live date for 1st October 2007 – so 4 complete months. (The PR company we hired then advised us to slip the launch date until 10th October so we could link the launch with World Mental Health day.).

9. How much time will it take to maintain?

I don't know the answer to this one yet. I am informed that Mind in Croydon spend no more than 30 minutes per week maintaining their website and an extensive online directory of local services. Depending on how many months after October 2007 you read this paper, email me and I can tell you more about how much time we spend on ours. My plan is that once I have received the CMS training I will then identify people throughout the two charities to train to use the CMS. At least once a week I will require them to check their area, test links, ensure information is current and accurate, and once every quarter I will expect them to refresh their area somehow. That is my plan! I can only tell you in the future how the plan has worked out!

10. How will we publicise it?

We discussed doing the publicity ourselves; writing press releases, getting stands in town centres, phoning the radio stations. We then looked back on how successful we had been in the past and admitted that it was not impressive. One of our bank facilitators runs a PR company as her fulltime job so I asked her to convince me (if she could) why I should spend money on professional PR. Within 30 minutes of listening to the contacts she had, the ideas she had and the success rate she expected I knew we would be foolish not to get in the professionals. She has charged us for three days work and so far we have had 4 radio interviews, big case studies in three papers, a stand in a shopping centre and 4 'filler' mentions in papers across the county. My advice would be to talk to some professionals unless you have the skills and contacts in-house.

11. Is it worth the time and cost?

Yes. There have been some highly beneficial consequences, some unintended

- a. In gathering the content for the website I have asked questions about every part of the service of both charities. We have now got all our information in one place. I know the areas where we have more information to display and over time I will add website pages. I know the areas where we need to gather more information to fill some gaps.
- b. Some of the answers I have received have not been what I expected and questioning them brought to light some inconsistencies of information or service provision that we have been able to rectify or clarify.

12. What do we need on there?

We agreed we wanted to tell people the basic facts first; who we are, what we do, how we can help them, how they can contact us and whether it is free or not.

Because this was the first joint venture between two separate LMAs it was important that we made it clear which services were already county wide, and which ones were currently only available in one part of the county or the other.

Once the 'need to know's were sorted we thought it would good to have some 'nice to have's and so we added newsletters, Annual reports, and photo galleries.

We have a list of things we want to add on in the future such as we plan to have an entire section for users of our service to have a voice. We want podcasts, downloads, user edited forums, blogs, message boards and video clips. When I start working on this next phase I shall start with similar questions; Why do we want these? Who will use them? What will they use them for? Who will benefit? Where will the funding come from? Who will build it? Who will maintain it?

13. How best to plan the site?

Everyone obviously has their own preferred way of working. I like making order out of chaos! This worked for me, it may not work for you, but I suggest;

- 1) Use Post-it notes and a blank wall to get a good idea of the idea about your site content and layout.
- 2) Look at the other LMAs sites (lists at the bottom) to see what others have done, decide if you want to do something similar or different.
- 3) Look at the various Mind branded templates that c27 have already made http://www.c27media.co.uk/lma_templates.asp
- 4) Then go to <http://www.c27media.co.uk/estimate.asp> and work your way through their check boxes and lists.

14. How best to organise the work?

This plan worked for me

1. Agree a launch date that has meaning (your anniversary, World Mental Health Day etc). Try and give yourself no longer than six months for the entire process. We did it in just over 4 months, but I did dedicate entire days at a time to it which I appreciate is not always possible.
2. Allocate one Project Manager, of some seniority and try and clear their desk of other tasks as much as is possible (I do know this is difficult).
3. Try and make time for the content collection, collation and preparation to happen in one concentrated burst if at all possible. If you spread it out over too long the first collected items will become out of date, which means re-working it.
4. Decide on the website name, web hosting and redirection. If you are using an external IT company make sure you let them know you are building a website so that

any DNS redirection or similar can be done in good time. C27 will advise on this if you aren't an IT expert.

5. Agree to whom the Project Manager should go to for various bits of content. Ensure they all understand the importance of giving the PM what information is requested, within the deadline, and in the requested format not some variation of same!
6. Keep a logical record of everything because even a moderate sized website gets confusing fast if not nailed down! I used
 - A spreadsheet to show the pages, their content, where they linked to and from and who was responsible for providing me with the content. (I can email you a copy if you want to see it).
 - One ring binder containing hardcopies of the content on each page – and nothing else. If our website had to be recreated from that one folder by a complete stranger it would be possible to do so. Capturing a website in a ringbinder helps to pin it down to a 'real world' size.
 - One ringbinder containing everything else.
 - When the time came to send the content to c27 for them to put in the website it was sent in one big hit in a numbered series of emails, the first of which contained a table showing
 - a. Date & time email sent
 - b. Subject Line of the email
 - c. Title of document included in email
 - d. Which page the content was to go on
 - Once the first build was done all amendments I wanted were sent in one go on a table showing
 - a. Page URL
 - b. Presently shows
 - c. Amendment requested
7. Work with c27 to pencil out the days when the site needs to be proof read, this is best all done in one hit.

15. What else do we need to think about?

- **Publicity.** Not much point in having a website if no one knows its address and never visits it. We added a cost into the bid to pay for some professional publicity. We found the money well spent. Karen, our publicist, advised us to gather real life case studies of people who had used our services and benefited, she also advised us to slip our launch date from the 1st October to the 10th to tie it in with World Mental Health day. Her advice was that the three elements together would all support each other and give the media a choice of ways in.
- **Branding.** Have you got all your logos in the right format? We spent a little with designer who sorted out all out logos in different layouts and sizes. Money well spent as we now have them all.

16. "Where to start?"

This question at the end? Yes, this is the start of your process and the end of mine. My advice would be that the first place to start is on the website of c27. I cannot stress how much easier this company made my task from start to finish.

If you take nothing else from this paper please take these two points:

- 1) **Content collection, collation and preparation will take longer than you think** and is ideally done in a short concentrated burst – no matter how painful or impossible this may seem at first. The longer you stretch this process out the more times you will have to revisit the same pieces of information and so waste time double handling information. My advice would be bite the bullet, concentrate on it even though it will be time consuming and painful and get it done. Without a tight deadline this task can become like herding cats.

- 2) **c27 media will make your life easier.** I whole heartedly and unreservedly recommend this company to any LMA who wants a website built for the following reasons:
- They have a variety of Mind National branded templates to choose from – all ready to rumble.
 - They will provide you with information sheets to guide you through the whole process: from commission right through to launch. Just ask and they
 - For a variety of reasons they are very sympathetic to the work we do
 - We are the 13th LMA they have built for and, being used to working with LMAs they understand the pressures we are under
 - They are absolutely used to people like me (non IT people) having the task of building a website.

Reference sites

I have included below links to our site and all other LMA websites and/or directories c27 have built (accurate 9.10.07)

www.suffolkmind.org.uk

<http://www.brentmind.com/>
<http://www.ebmind.org.uk/>
<http://www.haveringmind.org.uk/>
<http://www.islingtonmind.org.uk/>
<http://www.kcmind.org.uk/>
<http://www.mertonmind.org.uk/>
<http://www.mindincamden.org.uk/>
<http://www.mindincroydon.org.uk/>
<http://www.mindinharrow.org.uk/>
<http://www.sheffieldmind.co.uk/> (directory)
<http://www.tgmind.co.uk/>

<http://www.c27media.co.uk/>

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Karen at Jelutong Marketing Communications, Bury St Edmunds, <http://www.jelutong.co.uk/>

Ryan Davey, Grants Administrator and the Mind National Joint Reserve Fund Board