

Older People Network – Web Focus Group 7/6/06

Two focus groups were held with members of the Older People Network to discover their thoughts and views on the website. This information has and is being used to improve the ways in which the Cheshire County Council website functions.

Key learning points were as follows:

- Pages should be designed in a way so they are accessible to people with reduced eyesight. This means ensuring that pages are still usable once the text size is set to large. It also means ensuring other elements on the page such as buttons change in size as well.
- The new home page was seen as a marked improvement on the old version.
- The focus groups liked the interactive features on the site such as book renewal, interactive mapping and fault reporting but these were not always designed in a user friendly way.
- Pages need to be checked to ensure that they are understandable and relevant to the layperson i.e. feature non-technical terms.
- The A-Z requires serious editing to ensure, firstly, that there are no double entries and secondly, that the links go to relevant pages.
- The ability to self-assess for social care services was seen as useful although the pages still needed some work.
- News items on the home page were poorly chosen and were not made relevant to an ordinary member of the public.
- Information available on the site should be thought through in order to ensure that relevant useful information is available e.g. the example of a lack of information on residential homes.

Older People Network – Web Focus Group AM

Accessibility

Three points were raised on this topic during the session:

- The importance of designing pages so that they can be read by the elderly easily. This means ensuring that text size can be changed without difficulty and that other elements on the page (e.g. buttons) are adjusted to the same scale. One focus group member reported that the CCC homepage is 'virtually illegible' unless zoomed to a 200% size screen.
- It was commented that people with arthritis would want to get to information with a minimum of clicks.
- It was felt that the web pages should be accessible by other browsers besides Internet Explorer (Netscape, for instance).

Homepage - <http://www.cheshire.gov.uk/>

News items on the home page were often seen as uninteresting, too corporate (e.g. Corporate Plan) and often chosen at random with significant items alongside insignificant items. They were also not written up in a way to appeal to the public. For instance, the Local e-Services Take-Up Campaign should have focussed on what you can do on the site rather than on the Government campaign.

It was commented that there was no statement of what the Council is or where it is in England on the home page.

The group did not understand the headings on the right hand side of the screen but thought the ones on the left hand side of the screen were clear.

The new home page design was seen as a real improvement on the current one.

DCLG: Take up Campaign Links -

<http://www.cheshire.gov.uk/takeupcampaignlinks.htm>

The group thought the list should be alphabetical and that each link should start with the subject that it concerns e.g. bins instead of 'Find our about Domestic Bins'. They also thought the content of the list should have been determined by the popularity of the interactive pages rather than items being arbitrarily chosen. They also did not know or have an interest in what the 'DCLG' is but were merely interested in being able to use the interactive services.

Highway Fault Reporting -

<http://www.cheshire.gov.uk/roads/FaultForm/frepfault.htm>

The group felt that it was unclear as to what fields were mandatory on this form. Although a '*' is used to indicate this fact, there is no explanation of this until the very bottom of the page. There is also no reference to a privacy policy despite the fact that personal details are asked for.

The focus group found the form cumbersome to fill in but one member did acknowledge the fact that they'd used this particular form in the past and it did work.

One focus group member discussed the fact he preferred the convenience of using the website as compared to a telephone conversation which would not guarantee a quick response.

Domestic Bins - http://www.cheshire.gov.uk/waste/common_queries.htm

The group had a number of problems with this page including why terms were used such as 'pink and green' recycling which were only relevant to Chester and unknown to people from other districts. They also queried why phone numbers for each district Council were repeated 3 times when each group of numbers was exactly the same. A further comment was that this section could be cleverer – if the computer recorded where the user lived, it could list details which were only relevant to their area.

Cheshire Library Catalogue - http://libcat.cheshire.gov.uk/cgi-bin/viewpoint_server.sh

The group discussed the fact that quite a few pages needed to be worked through to get to the essential information of whether a book is available at a particular library. They felt the buttons that you need to press for more details were rather small (these did not resize if you increased the general page text size). They also had difficulty in understanding both what the pin number was and the user number. However, they did deem the facility to be very useful.

Older People Network Pages - http://www.cheshire.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/adults/older_peoples_network/home.htm

Firstly, they were unsure of the description given of the OP Network as they didn't feel it genuinely reflected the role Network performs. They also would have liked to have seen dates for meetings or if not a contact name and number for where these could be obtained from. It was felt a forum might be a useful edition although it was recognised that it might be difficult to find someone to moderate the page.

The group did not like the download page which allows you to download the Older People Network newsletter. They thought the PDF icon was small and was not enlarged when text was enlarged. It was suggested that past editions of newsletters could also be made available.

Self-Assessment Page - <http://cheshireauth/Apps/Inter/CheshireCC.SSSelfAssessment.Web.Internet/Public/Introduction.aspx>

There were a number of points raised over details on this set of pages:

- The group did not understand the distinction between meals prepared and meals cooked
- A person might only be in a state of needing help temporarily but there was no box on the form to take account of this.
- They felt the question 'How often do you get out?' was unclear because going out could mean social activities/shopping or merely stepping of the front door. It was suggested that 'How often do you get out of your house?' would be better wording.
- A drop down for the question 'What help do you get' might be useful with possible options being from a health visitor or warden.

- There needs to be a box on the form to collect other comments.
- There should be an option to print out answers that had been given or for them to be emailed back to the user.
- Psychological factors were not mentioned anywhere on the form e.g. depression.
- There was no indication of what the information would be used for, if it was recorded and whether it was a theoretical process or part of an assessment procedure. The group felt that it should not be necessary to give the same information again at a face to face assessment if the information is given here.
- The email address of both the person completing the form and the person who the form concerns should be taken.
- Tick boxes and radio buttons on the form were small and did not increase in size with the adjustment of text size.
- There was also no privacy policy.

Overall, the group felt that too much information was asked for on the form and that there could be short cuts in the process. For instance, answering yes or no to certain questions might automatically trigger the completion of the application.

Cheshire Account

The focus group were asked their views on the idea of being allocated an electronic account with Cheshire which would allow them to look at things such as payments to the Council, services received etc.

The group thought this idea was worthwhile if the money it saved covered the cost of setting the system up. They also liked the idea of this being able to offer them a much more local website experience. However, they were keen to stress that there should be no presumption that everyone must use this system.

Additional Comments

These comments are drawn from notes that one of the focus group members provided:

- It is difficult to predict if a link will open in a new window or not on the Cheshire site. There is a lack of onscreen guidance.
- The Press Releases section is not designed in a user friendly way, for instance, each months press releases are presented as a long list.
- The mapping section available from the right hand navigation bar is very powerful but not at all user friendly, for instance, the zoom buttons do not work.
- There were concerns over the fact that signatures were clearly visible on some documents which might lead to fraud.

Older People Network – Web Focus Group PM

Homepage - <http://www.cheshire.gov.uk>

A number of points were raised about the home page:

- As novices the members of the focus group would have appreciated some kind of guide to navigating the Cheshire website (perhaps via an obvious link from the home page). This would focus on basic skills such as clicking on page elements etc.
- They did not like the Emergency Information graphic on the new home page as they had no idea what it represented.
- They thought the translation facility was a useful feature.
- They looked for information initially by Department rather than subject.

A-Z - <http://www.cheshire.gov.uk/AZListing?Letter=A>

The group firstly questioned how obvious it was that the A-Z was there. The group then moved on to make several comments about the contents of this listing. They didn't like the fact that some headings were repeated several times. They also had a question over how applicable some of the headings were as for instance the link to graffiti did not take the user to a relevant page.

Domestic Bins - http://www.cheshire.gov.uk/waste/common_queries.htm

The group commented on the fact that 'pink bins' are mentioned which are not relevant to other Boroughs of Cheshire. They also found the transition to the Borough Council websites difficult - they were not aware they had moved out of the Cheshire site.

Social Care and Health Site - <http://www.cheshire.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/>

The group firstly attempted to find information on accessibility of buildings in Cheshire. They tried the A-Z and looked under Accessibility and then under Disability until they eventually found the link for Cheshire Disabilities Federation. The group felt this type of information should be more easily available and preferably on the Cheshire site.

The next set of information the group tried to find was information on registered care homes. They did find this information but only in the form of a listing in a PDF. The group felt that more information should be available on these homes and that they should also have a link to their inspection reports. The general layout of the page which linked to this information

(http://www.cheshire.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/adults/care_homes/RegResNurseHomes.htm) was thought to be too technical, spelling out legal distinctions which were meaningless to the layman.

Cheshire Library Catalogue - http://libcat.cheshire.gov.uk/cgi-bin/viewpoint_server.sh

Once again the facilities on this section of the site were appreciated. However, they found the 'more details' button small and thought that it might cause access problems. Like the previous group they were confused by the concept of the 'PIN' number and were unaware as to how this could be obtained.

Self-Assessment Page -

<http://cheshireauth/Apps/Inter/CheshireCC.SSSelfAssessment.Web.Internet/Public/Introduction.aspx>

The group made a number of comments concerning the test version of this section of the Social Care and Health site.

- There should be a bigger space between the radio buttons and text.
- There should be larger tick boxes and radio buttons.
- They wanted to know the repercussion of giving a yes or no answer on certain questions.
- This group like the expert group raised the possibility of the person needing help only temporarily.
- They wanted cost information on receiving a particular service
- They didn't like the level of detail required by the form.
- They did not like the phrasing of the question 'Do you manage to organise daytime activities?'. They preferred the word 'access' to 'organise'.
- They wanted the facility to print out the form once it had been completed. They also wished to know where the form would go to and how it would be used.

Other Points:

They thought the website needed more publicity as there seemed to be a lot of useful information on it which most people would be unaware was available.

They liked the Corporate video feature on the site and thought it could be implemented in other areas for instance, video advice on how to get out of the bath safely.