

Broadcasting Get ready for television's D Day



Damian Radcliffe
is head of
broadcasting
for CSV

I admit it: I am excited about television's digital switchover. That's not because I want to bring the digital channel BBC Parliament to the masses, but because I fervently believe that the switchover has the potential to transform society – not just in terms of how media is consumed, but also through narrowing the digital divide and building stronger communities. The very opposite could happen, however, if the process isn't handled correctly.

I should admit a vested interest here. CSV, Age Concern and a number of other voluntary organisations recently applied for funding from Digital UK, the organisation leading the digital TV switchover process in the UK, to run an outreach and support programme for those at risk of being left behind by the switchover.

My passion predates any funding bid, however. I've long argued that the switchover will define our society – just as decimisation did in 1971. This time, there is no single switch day (and, mercifully, no Max Bygraves record to reach the parts other publicity materials cannot reach), but the risks for exploitation and creating a vulnerable underclass are just as high, if not higher.

In 1971, there were numerous examples of unscrupulous shopkeepers diddling the elderly and the confused of their correct change.

This time, there's a real risk of people being encouraged to buy new televisions, aerials and technical paraphernalia they don't need.

Arguably, the people most at risk are those whom the voluntary sector interacts with every day. So we need to ensure that our staff and volunteers understand the switchover and are able to support their friends, family and clients accordingly.

You may not see this as your responsibility, but if your beneficiaries wake up after the switchover to blank television screens, you can be sure that they will be distraught. They might even ring you for help. As a result, it's worth investing time and energy now to prevent this scenario from happening hundreds, if not thousands, of times over.

Of course, this will mean that some home visits will take longer and staff and volunteers will need training so they can advise on an area that is outside their primary expertise. Funders will also need encouragement to understand and support the real cost of the switchover.

If we don't act now, the switchover may reinforce the social exclusion that many vulnerable people already feel because they either don't have or can't properly use the technology they need to survive in a post-analogue world.

Medium and message

The Community Channel recruited a 22-year-old journalism novice to report on last month's G8 summit



The kid stays in the picture: McConville on location

Lee McConville is a 22-year-old from one of the most disadvantaged areas of Birmingham. Until recently, he had no journalism experience, but last month he reported on the G8 summit in Germany for a documentary made by the Community Channel. *Summit About the Boy*, the programme featuring McConville, was screened on 30 June. McConville was put forward by youth charity Fairbridge and was mentored by Philip Webster, the political editor of *The Times*.

The two were matched as part of a youth mentoring scheme launched by the Community Channel's parent charity, the Media Trust. The programme brings young people from socially excluded backgrounds into contact with media professionals.

Katie Simpson, head of youth media for the Media Trust, says *Summit About the Boy* focuses on the relationship between mentor and mentee. "We really want to show how mentoring is a valuable thing for people who might not have had role models like this," she adds. Simpson says that McConville, who had previously viewed politics as irrelevant, was prompted by the experience to suggest that "politics should be incorporated into the education system".

The documentary was chosen to launch Charge, the Community Channel's new interactive platform for young people. Adam Perry, head of programmes at the Community Channel, says: "Charge will be *YouTube* with a conscience."

Dan Mich

Site Visit www.arthritiscare.org.uk

Organisation **Arthritis Care**

Agency **Jamkit**

Spend **Not disclosed**

Accessibility **AA**

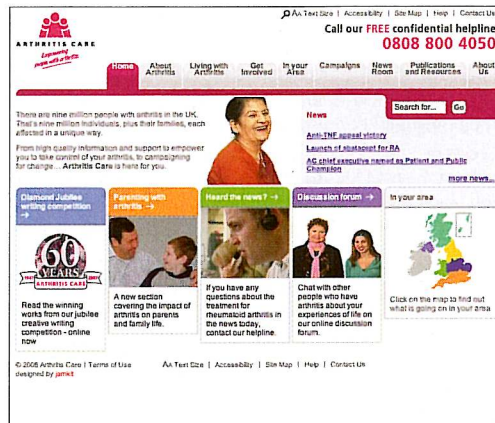
Arthritis Care redesigned its website last year.

Development

The site was developed in consultation with the charity's volunteers. The organisation held face-to-face sessions with groups representing a broad range of people affected by arthritis to help build a clear picture of what service users wanted.

Design and content

The site is designed primarily as a tool for people with arthritis, their families and health professionals. It is easy to navigate and full of information to help visitors learn how to manage the condition. There are downloadable fact sheets on subjects such as diet and exercise, types of arthritis and the different treatments available. All the information has been approved by medical experts. A 'living with arthritis'



section provides advice on how people with the condition can better manage their lives.

Special features

The discussion forum is far and away the most popular section of the site. It encourages users to "chat

Navigation **4**
Accessibility **4**
Innovation **3**
Content **4**

15
20

with other people who have arthritis about your experiences". The forum's 'living with arthritis zone' features more than 20,000 contributions. Visitors discuss issues that range from campaigns and fundraising events to the side effects of Prednisolone, drug used to ease the symptoms of arthritis.

Alternatively, visitors can discuss more personal questions with someone at the charity privately, using a free email service.

Arthritis Care says:

"People with arthritis often feel cut off. Our website sets out to provide a way for them to communicate with one another, as well as giving access to free information about all aspects of living with arthritis. Most sites showcase the organisations responsible for them; ours puts the service-user first."

Graham Willgos