

LOCSU Comms forum: September 2024



Overview

In September 2024, two comms forums took place to facilitate sharing of **LOCSU** knowledge, networking and exchange of ideas. This was the first time these sessions were held with one session taking place during the evening and the other during lunch.

The sessions consisted of an introduction by LOCSU and comms update, followed by a focused session on managing websites - chosen by attendees during the registration process - and ended with an open discussion for attendees to exchange ideas and ask questions.

LOCSU comms update

The LOCSU team introduced themselves with Chessie Hobbs, Comms and Engagement Lead, and Lisa Stonham, Data Insights and Information Officer, attending both events. On the first session they were joined by Sid Maher, LOCSU Advancement Lead and Comms Lead for Gloucestershire LOC, and the second session was joined by Steve Roberts, LOCSU Advancement Lead.

LOCSU updated on National Eye Health Week which took place from the 23rd – 29th September 2024. LOCSU produced a toolkit for LOCs to use which is available on the members area of the website [here](#).

LOCSU gave a reminder regarding the ROCs in November and encouraged anyone who has not yet registered, to visit the website and sign up to their region.

Website training

Following feedback from attendees during the registration process, LOCSU held a short, focused session on how to manage your website.

A toolkit has been developed which covered this everything discussed in the session in detail, which you can find [here](#), however the session covered:

- **Things to consider with your website:** what's your purpose? Who is your audience?
- **Managing the website:** how much time do you have to spend on your website? Ideally you should have a lead and at least two members of your committee who are able to update the website.

- **How to keep the website up to date and engaging:** ensure that content is up to date and relevant. Try to add regular news stories to keep it fresh and interesting, as well as providing you with social media content. Make sure that you remove out of date content or events.

Website discussion:

1. Lack of confidence updating websites

LOCSU recognised that it can be challenging and mentioned the how-to guides provided with LOC Online, as well as offering 1:1 support with training on the website.

2. X integration

There was a query around the X integration on LOC-Online and updating the X logo on LOC-Online. The developer is looking into this – LOCSU will follow up.

3. Keeping websites up to date

One LOC explained that they add everything to their website first and then send links to the website in their comms. This way, people know where to find the information and how to pass it on to other people. They explained that they recently moved to MailChimp to manage their mailing list as it is more secure and people are able to easily subscribe or unsubscribe, making it more GDPR compliant. They then send a weekly bulletin of all the news stories that have been added to their website that week.

Another LOC explained that they have created a log of their website, which includes how regularly each area needs updating and who is responsible within the committee for updating it.

Another LOC explained that they were the lead for their website and that all website content went through them, but that they had admin support from two other members.

Comms discussion:

1. Social media

The group discussed how social media had benefits in that it reached a different demographic than the website and that often people go to social media first to find out more about an organisation. By posting on social media, you could reach people who otherwise may not have seen anything about your LOC.

There was discussion around different channels, particularly LinkedIn. One person said that they found LinkedIn a good channel as it meant that they could share a post from another account, such as LOCSU, and put their comments on it. You'd need to do this alongside your own content, but it is a way to share on social media without taking too much time. You can also do this with X and Facebook.

The group discussed the benefits of LinkedIn in reaching a professional network. LOCSU explained that LinkedIn has the highest engagement rate of all LOCSU social media channels at the moment.

There was a suggestion that LOCs could reach out to their members and ask which social media platforms they use the most and which they consider would be the most beneficial for the LOC.

LOCSU will develop a comms toolkit for some awareness events, however agreed that they would add a section in the bulletin which gives suggestions and guidance on potential social media activity over the coming month. This would, where appropriate, include toolkits for awareness events, such as National Eye Health Week.

There was also a discussion around a list of awareness days and events that LOCSU will add to the members area and share with LOCs.

There are a number of social media management tools online that you could use to schedule and post on your social media channels. Most of these are at a cost but some have a free version (with limited access), that may be useful to LOCs. These include Buffer and Hootsuite (paid only).

2. Writing copy for communications

LOCSU suggested that, if you have a similar piece of comms that has been shared previously and received well, to use that as a template and follow a similar structure, making sure to clearly lay out the message and any impact. It was also suggested to run any comms past other members of the committee for their input and feedback.

3. Design work

Canva is a website which allows you to create quick, eye-catching designs in a range of formats. There is a free option, or you can pay for the premium account, however both options provide a number of potential templates that you could use or you can design your own. A few LOCs explained that they use this for designing content for social media or posters for events.

4. Reaching people not engaged with their LOC

One LOC explained that they carried out a physical mail drop to every practice in their area, along with a short letter which explained what their LOC is and what they do. From this, they then had an influx in people signing up to the LOCs newsletter. They last did this 18 months ago and are considering doing this again soon.

Another LOC explained that they did similar with a physical maildrop, but sent them to individuals, rather than practices. While this did have good results, it took a long time to organise and orchestrate.

One LOC attended their local university's student fair to promote their LOC, and this was discussed within the group. LOCSU mentioned the release of the student resources toolkits which are available on the [members area of the website here](#). Another LOC mentioned that they link with their local university and offer a prize for the student who has achieved a lot during their studies, as well as having a presence at their graduation. It was mentioned that while students may be leaving the area after they graduate, it's still a good way to get them to engage with LOCs.

Close

The next comms forum will be held in January 2025 – details to follow shortly.

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