

Supporting Each Other Locally



Tidworth Mums

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TIDWORTH MUMS



Mapping the assets of Tidworth Mums during the Unearth Hidden Assets project. Credit: The Glass-House Community Led Design.



Screen grab from Tidworth Mums' Facebook Page. (July, 2014)



Mega Soft Play Engagement Day in February 2014.
Credit: The Glass-House Community Led Design.

Tidworth Mums

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Digital Tools Used

*Facebook,
Twitter.*

Tidworth Mums wanted to support local families and help engage their wider community. They created a Facebook group to share information about local activities and services with other members of the local community.

About

Tidworth Mums are a not-for-profit group in Tidworth (a garrison town in Wiltshire), dedicated to improving the emotional, social, physical and economic wellbeing of civilian and military families in their local area. Shortly after they were formed in March 2012, the Mums set up a Facebook group to share information about local activities and services with other members of the community. They sensed that, in their local area, the majority of people access information through digital technology, often through their smartphones.

Initially, the Facebook group had a handful of members, but this quickly grew and two years later, there are 1,674 members (July 2014). Six admins, all members of Tidworth Mums, monitor the group on a daily basis. The group is active every day with up to 20 new posts added daily. Members post questions such as, 'Does anyone have any moving boxes please?', 'Does anyone know anywhere that does horse riding lessons for 4 year olds?' and 'Does anyone have any recommendations for a good local dentist?'

Key groups within the local community, including council representatives, children, youth groups and other community partners, frequently use the Facebook group to promote their activities and share information such as job opportunities, council meetings and events and opportunities for military and civilian families. Importantly, the group does not allow any advertising of a profitable nature, which was an important decision to ensure the group would serve its intended purpose and not become overwhelmed with spam and advertisements.

What is the impact of the project?

The group has become a fantastic source of local knowledge for the entire community—both military and civilian families. One of the aims of Tidworth Mums was to integrate the two communities, and the Mums have championed this through their Facebook group and the various activities they run throughout the year.

How did digital media make a difference?

With people able to access the group at a time and place convenient to them, making it easier to participate, it enables the Mums to reach far more people than they would be able to through traditional, analogue media.

What next?

The Mums are currently working to build the case for a children's soft play area in Tidworth, they are being helped with this through their past involvement in the research project 'Unearth Hidden Assets through Community Co-Design and Co-Production' in 2013-2014 (with The Glass-House Community Led Design, the Open University, Wiltshire Council and the Army Welfare Service).

What Others Can Learn

Establish a set of rules

Have a clear set of rules for your Facebook group and monitor the activities within the group constantly to ensure that they are followed. It is also important to communicate these rules clearly to members on a regular basis.

Avoiding spam

The Mums set up their Facebook group as a closed group—requests to join are approved by an admin—in order to filter out fake profiles and spam. Their clear set of rules also helps to overcome any issues with inappropriate posting.

Share responsibility

While the ‘admin’ role is an unpaid one (which is the case for most members of voluntary groups), it can take up a lot of time. People are able to access digital technology on a 24/7 basis, which means the group needs to be monitored constantly, and doesn’t fit neatly into the 9-5 box! Having more than one admin will help share the load.

Learn from experience and be adaptable

Rules have been tweaked and updated over time as the Mums observe how things work in practice. Ideas about how things could be done better emerge as group membership grows and Facebook technology evolves. So, while remaining true to the original aims of the group, it’s important to be adaptable!

“The Facebook group has helped a lot of mums to have the confidence to actually come to the toddler groups and other activities through meeting someone online and coming along with those mums.”

*Joyce Stretton,
Army Welfare
Service, Tidworth*