In just three months, we designed and have launched an optimised online presence for Family Support that won resident trust and increased engagement.

Child’s play: Agilisys improves online engagement with Hammersmith & Fulham’s new Family Support service
Family Support, a new arm’s length service from London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham Council, needed an online presence that could compete with the best of the private sector.

We supported the design, build and launch of the organisation’s new website using a Government Digital Service-aligned approach.

The new service was launched within three months from inception to go-live.

**Key facts**

- We worked closely with staff, carers and families to co-design a welcoming and intuitive online space to act as a virtual children’s centre.
- The new service was launched within three months from inception to go-live.

**Challenge**

- Design and deliver a new Family Support website in three months.
- Replace out of date and hard to find content on the council website.
- Build awareness and trust among local residents.
- Make finding information, insights and services easy and intuitive.

**Methodology**

- Undertook detailed user research across the borough.
- Focused on authenticity to build customer trust.
- Applied an agile methodology to iterate and optimise development.
- Enabled mobile and tablet functionality.

**Impact**

- Met three-month deadline to launch in July 2018.
- More welcoming and intuitive online presence.
- Excellent feedback from staff, parents and carers.
- Enabled continuous improvement to meet future needs.
To increase resident engagement, Hammersmith & Fulham Council needed an optimised and responsive online presence for its new Family Support service that could compete with the best of the private sector.

Introduced by Hammersmith & Fulham Council in April 2018, Family Support is a new arm’s length provider of childcare services.

Managing a network of children’s centres across the borough, Family Support offers local families a wide range of options, including play sessions, parenting classes and health advice. However, at launch the organisation had no online presence of its own and relied on the main council website to share information. This meant that relevant content wasn’t easily found.

To drive awareness of Family Support and build trust among residents, an optimised, engaging and responsive online presence was needed that could compete with the best of the private sector.

The Family Support management team had clear ideas about the messages it wanted to convey to residents. However, external expertise was essential to design and deliver a high-quality online presence. Ideally, the team wanted the new website up and running in no more than three months.
The Agilisys team designed and delivered a new online presence for Family Support on an extremely tight timescale, working closely with both staff and local residents to develop the perfect look, feel and functionality.

To design and deliver Family Support’s new online presence as quickly as possible, we followed a Government Digital Service-aligned approach, including discovery, prototyping and delivery phases.

We began the discovery process in May 2018, with the goal of better understanding what local residents wanted from an online service. Our small team of web design experts carried out detailed user research among the families and childminders using children’s centres across the borough, as well as seeking input from the frontline staff engaging with them daily.

To gather the most accurate feedback possible, our team avoided a “corporate” engagement process that would have seemed alien to users of childcare services. Instead, we made the discovery process relaxed and informal, by conducting interviews in children’s centres, dressed-down and sitting on tiny chairs surrounded by children playing and learning.

We discovered that the service’s fundamental issue was gaining the confidence of local families. While everyone already trusted staff at their local children’s centres, they were currently using alternative online platforms like Mush or Hoop to find out about support services. To change this ingrained habit, they needed to be confident that the new online service was a dependable source of information, as well as welcoming, engaging and fun to use.

To meet this challenge, we decided Family Support’s online presence should resemble the physical services families already relied on. The website should feel like a virtual children’s centre, playful, quirky and filled with colourful images. We wanted to capture the messy look and feel of a children’s centre, while still ensuring the site was easy to navigate and manage.

During the prototyping phase, we focused on authenticity to build trust. We turned the notes from our discussions with staff, parents and carers into detailed user profiles and stories to ensure the new website felt genuine. For the same reason, we also decided to use actual pictures of staff, parents and children, rather than stock images with posed models, despite the need for a more convoluted consent process.

Throughout, we applied an agile sprint methodology to iterate and optimise the website during development as new features were added. We also mapped out typical user journeys, allowing us to test the design at each stage of the build to ensure it was intuitive and effective. As the discovery process had also shown us that many families relied on mobile phones and tablets for internet access, we extensively tested the site to ensure it was fast, responsive and easy to use on-the-go.
With the new website up and running, Family Support is now bringing greater benefits to both local residents and Hammersmith & Fulham Council.

Family Support’s new website launched in July 2018 and to date the feedback from both staff and parents has been excellent. The end result is welcoming and intuitive, making it easy to find information, insights and services using any browser or device.

Family Support is also well-equipped to maintain a responsive and enjoyable user experience and continuously improve its online presence, with a great practice approach to website management which is now embedded in the on-site web team. User feedback is assessed on a monthly basis, with necessary changes identified, implemented and monitored for success.

Just six months after Family Support launched, it saw its customer base grow significantly, with more than 60% of visitors accessing the website from mobile devices. It was also short-listed for the prestigious 2019 LGC Awards in the ‘Digital Impact’ category.

For Family Support, our web project has been a win-win: improving the lives of residents, while simultaneously accelerating the success of a brand new council revenue stream.

“With 90% of UK adults now using the internet regularly, there’s no getting away from the power of an outstanding online presence. The Agilisys team really drilled down into what our customers want and need online, making our digital journey fast, seamless and very successful. Today, residents can engage with our services in whatever way suits them best—anywhere, anytime—and we’re excited to evolve with their future demands”.

Peter Watt
Director of Family Support
Hammersmith and Fulham Council
About Agilisys

Agilisys, an employee owned organisation, is one of the UK’s fastest growing and innovative cloud and digital transformation specialists, enabling organisations to adopt technologies, platforms and processes that promote new ways of working. An established partner for both the public and private sector for nearly two decades, we have earned a strong reputation and hold deep domain expertise delivering change and innovation, particularly within local and central government.

We support our customers through a network of offices and centres of excellence throughout the UK, employing over 1,500 staff across the UK.

To find out more visit www.agilisys.co.uk or follow us on Twitter: @agilisys.

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