



Growing up in the West Midlands

# G:up Marketing and Communications Strategy 2010-2011

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## 1. Purpose

- To outline how G:up will develop and maintain effective internal and external communications in order to meet its aims and the aspirations and needs of its members and stakeholders.
- To guide G:up's marketing and communications activities for the current year (October 2010-October 2011<sup>1</sup>), with a review after 6 months and one year.
- To ensure that equality and diversity are embedded in all areas of G:up's work and provide a strategy and framework for the delivery of G:XL's Diversity and Outreach Objectives (see page 19).
- To consider the reassessment of G:up's direction and structure, to ensure that these are fit for purpose and enable G:up to meet its core aims, its mission and its members' needs today.
- To develop G:up as a (two way) regional information hub, providing accurate, useful and timely information, via a variety of means, that is trusted and prized by G:up members and stakeholders.
- To raise the profile of G:up, the G:XL project, G:up and G:XL services and opportunities and other G:up projects (e.g. Progress) ensuring that these are understood, valued and utilised by G:up members and the West Midlands CYP VCS.
- To increase the size and diversity of G:up's membership and ensure a vibrant, active network that exemplifies and furthers G:up's objectives, including of increasing connectedness, collaboration and capacity across the sector.
- This strategy will be promoted and implemented across G:up's membership (the G:up network) and will act as a model for marketing and comms good practice for West Midlands CYP VCS infrastructure organisations and other organisations, including smaller organisations.

## 2. Background

### • About G:up

**G:up** is an alliance of organisations working in or with the West Midlands children and young people's VCS.

**G:up** operates in a regional space to strengthen communications, develop capacity and influence policy across the sector.

### • G:up's vision

G:up exists to develop the West Midlands as a region that respects and acts upon the needs, interests and aspirations of all<sup>2</sup> children and young people, and the voluntary and community organisations that work with them.

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<sup>1</sup> This 'G:up year' was established as G:XL went live in Oct 2009 and ends Oct 2012.

- **The key elements of G:up's work**
  - **Engage** - building and strengthening networks and communications
  - **Influence** - shaping policy and strategy affecting children, young people and families
  - **Develop** - building capacity and sharing learning
  
- **Funding and governance**

G:up receives funding through the Big Lottery Fund's BASIS two programme, and NCVYS (Progress project). G:up is governed by a steering group and its accountable body is bayc.
- **G:up's members**

G:up's membership comprises West Midlands children and young people's VCS organisations, including infrastructure support organisations (ISOs) and small voluntary and community groups; as well as regional and national VCS, public and private sector organisations that work with the West Midlands CYP VCS, can help us to deliver our vision and aims, or are interested in our work and agendas.
- **The G:XL project**

G:up launched its three-year, G:XL project, funded through the Big Lottery Fund's BASIS two programme, in October 2009. G:XL was designed in partnership with over 40 organisations to develop capacity in the West Midlands CYP VCS, by improving how infrastructure agencies support CYP VCS organisations. It aims to: Improve information; Increase collaboration; Improve quality; Increase voice. It has 5 work streams: Information and Communications, which is delivered in-house and 4 which are contracted out: Quality standards; Training and workforce development; Voice and influence (strategic CYP engagement, representation and influence); Collaborative purchasing and 'back office' functions.
- **Progress project (ends March 2011)**

Progress is a national, VCS-led project to deliver 25,000 accredited training places to volunteers and paid staff working in the CYP VCS in England. Progress is delivered by a partnership led by the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) under contract from the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC). G:up is the Regional Delivery Agent in the West Midlands.
- **Current position and this strategy**

For a variety of reasons, G:up only had intermittent information and communications support for the 18 months leading up to April 2010. This had particular impacts on a wide range of marketing and communications areas including the dissemination of information, updating of the G:up website,

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<sup>2</sup> Note: I have inserted the word 'all' here, not included in the original text of the Vision, to strengthen inclusivity, this is discussed under 'Reassessing G:up's Mission' below.

holding of events, profile of G:up and development of G:up membership. Since late April 2010 a newly appointed G:up Information and Communications Coordinator has begun to address these issues and undertaken a wholesale revitalisation of G:up's information and communications. This strategy will build on that foundation and provide a strong template for the management and development of sustainable, effective G:up marketing and communications that meet the needs outlined in the 'Purpose' section above.

### **3. The Use of Communications**

Effective internal and external communications are essential for G:up to achieve its aims. Through effective communications, G:up can:

- Promote itself (including membership) and its work
- Promote the work of its members and partners
- Further its vision and aims
- Present a consistent, professional, corporate identity
- Endorse its brand and raise its profile
- Disseminate and share information
- Encourage information flow throughout the sector
- Build and develop relationships
- Meet the needs of its members, partners and the sector
- Increase its reach and accessibility (at and for all levels)
- Reach out to and engage with 'hard to reach' groups
- Provide forums for its members and partners to communicate and collaborate
- Receive feedback on its services
- Improve its services
- Aid and enhance the work of members and others throughout the sector
- Help to build capacity and raise standards in the sector
- Save time and money

### **4. Communications Principles**

- G:up demonstrates openness, honesty and transparency in all communications
- All external communications are as accessible as possible, i.e. use plain, accessible language and consider the needs of particular audiences such as those with visual impairments or those for whom English is not a first language

- G:up transmits its information via a range of methods to maximise impact and accessibility
- Information is always accurate, timely and useful
- Good communications are the responsibility of all staff
- External communications are professional, promote a favourable image of G:up and endorse G:up's brand(s) and where applicable, G:up's outlook
- All correspondence (including electronic, postal and phone) is dealt with adequately and in a timely manner
- Communications with all customers may be a two way process (i.e. we value feedback and seek collaboration and information exchange)

## 5. Key Audiences

- G:up members
- Organisations working in or with the West Midlands CYP VCS, including:
  - VCS Infrastructure Support Organisations (ISOs)
  - Other VCS organisations
  - Public and private organisations
- Organisations working in or with the West Midlands CYP VCS and more broadly, that work with diverse and 'hard to reach' groups and agendas
- National organisations e.g. NCVYS (National Council for Voluntary Youth Service), CWDC (Children's Workforce Development Council) and Children England

## 6. Key Partners

- G:up members (which include numerous representatives from each of the following categories)
- The G:up Steering Group and bayc (G:up's accountable body)
- Regional ISOs and information services supporting the West Midlands CYP VCS or VCS.
- Councils for Voluntary Youth Services (CVYSes) or equivalents in each local authority area in the West Midlands
- Local ISOs that work in the West Midlands CYP VCS or can support our aims and agendas.
- Key regional strategic and decision-making bodies that influence CYP policy or sector e.g. Government Office West Midlands (GOWM)
- Key regional CYP VCS leads e.g. Children England's West Midlands RDM
- Organisations working in or with the West Midlands CYP VCS and more broadly, that work with diverse and 'hard to reach' groups and agendas

- National partners representing or engaged with like agendas to G:up's e.g. NCVYS (National Council for Voluntary Youth Service), Play England, BRAP (formerly Birmingham Race Action Partnership), Voice4Change England

## 7. Key Stakeholders

- All of those listed above under key partners, plus organisations working in or with the West Midlands CYP VCS; and children and young people and families in the West Midlands.

## 8. Key Messages

- G:up's vision: G:up exists to develop the West Midlands as a region that respects and acts upon the needs, interests and aspirations of all children and young people, and the voluntary and community organisations that work with them.
- G:up's remit includes the following sectors: children and young people (age 0-19), play, families.
- G:up actively advocates and promotes inclusion and equality and diversity and ensures that these are considered and embedded in all areas of its work.
- G:up is a (two-way) regional information hub for West Midlands CYP VCS organisations and others interested in the sector's agendas and G:up's vision.
- G:up provides infrastructure support for West Midlands CYP VCS organisations.
- G:up advocates on behalf of the West Midlands CYP VCS, increasing voice and influencing policy and strategy.
- G:up is committed to increasing collaboration, networking and information-sharing across the sector.
- G:up membership is free and offers numerous benefits including: receiving regular email updates, receiving a login to post events, news and comments on G:up's website, being connected with organisations across the sector and that can support and enhance how VCS organisations deliver their services, being part of a wider alliance that advocates on behalf of CYP and the VCS.
- G:up strives for a membership that truly represents the diversity of the CYP VCS, the West Midlands region and all children and young people, including by reaching out to and advocating on behalf of diverse, 'hard to reach' and under-represented groups.
- G:XL is three-year project within G:up, funded by the Big Lottery's BASIS two programme and designed to improve how infrastructure organisations support the West Midlands CYP VCS. G:XL commissions CYP VCS infrastructure organisations to deliver a range of work streams designed to: improve

information, increase collaboration, improve quality and increase voice and influence.

- There are numerous opportunities for the sector to get involved in the G:XL project and its 5 work streams and G:up encourages and seeks input to ensure that G:XL genuinely benefits the sector and CYP across the region.
- G:up is the Regional Delivery Agent for the Progress project in the West Midlands. Progress is a national, VCS-led project, through NCVYS and CWDC, to deliver 25,000 accredited training places to paid and volunteer CYP VCS staff.
- You can find out more about G:up on the G:up website: <http://growingupinthewestmidlands.info/about>, about G:XL at: <http://growingupinthewestmidlands.info/gxl> and about Progress at: <http://growingupinthewestmidlands.info/progress>. Note: a new G:up website is currently being built and will go live in early Dec 2010, the new URL is: [www.gup.org.uk](http://www.gup.org.uk)<sup>3</sup>.
- G:up's accountable body is bayc.
- G:XL is funded by the Big Lottery Fund and Progress by NCVYS.

## 9. Branding and a Consistent Identity

### Logos

Fundamental to enforcing G:up's name and brand in the sector and beyond is using G:up's logo. G:up's logo is distinctive and often appeals to people due to its smileys and lighthearted (even anti-corporate) look. This increases the chance that it will stick in people's minds, making its use and reinforcement the more important.

- The G:up logo should be used on all external documents.
- The G:XL logo should also be used at all available opportunities and certainly be used on all external documents relating specifically to the G:XL project.
- The logos of G:XL's funder (Big Lottery) and accountable body (bayc) should also appear on all external documents, but be given less prominence than the G:up logo or, when used, G:XL logo.
- All appropriate Progress logos and the G:up logo should be used on external Progress documents, according to the procedures stipulated in the marketing and communications guidelines from NCVYS.
- The G:up Info and Comms Coordinator will produce guidance on using all logos for internal and external users, to ensure that they are used appropriately and never re-proportioned etc. to maintain the integrity of G:up's brand identity.

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<sup>3</sup> A shorter URL, easier to remember and market was deliberately chosen and a .org.uk domain, due to its charity/not for profit associations and familiarity in the sector. Website development is described on page 9 below.

### Style guide

- The G:up Info and Comms Coordinator will produce a style guide delineating organisational style conventions to be observed by all staff. This will help to present a consistent, professional approach to internal and external contacts.
- However, the following general conventions should be observed to maximise accessibility. All communications should contain a minimum font size of point 12 in Tahoma, Arial or Verdana, text should be unjustified and as far as possible, left aligned and the text colour should contrast with the background colour.

### Email straplines

Email can be an effective means of establishing and enforcing an organisation's brand, especially via the inclusion of the logo and organisational strapline in signatures, but it can also be used a vehicle for promoting 'rotating' corporate messages, or time-limited opportunities to get involved, attend events etc. via temporary straplines.

- The G:up Info and Comms Coordinator will design an email signature that presents a professional, consistent image of the organisation whilst promoting the logo(s) and brand(s).
- The G:up Info and Comms Coordinator provide the signature to all staff and oversee that they adopt and do not alter it.
- The Coordinator will also regularly provide new temporary straplines to employees, which they can insert into their signatures themselves.

### Standard document templates

- The G:up Info and Comms Coordinator will ensure that standard templates are available for all key documents, and that these contain the appropriate G:up logos, appropriately arranged and look professional and up to date, to produce a distinctive, consistent organisational identity.

## 10. Types of Communications

### Website

An organisation's website provides a public 'face' for an organisation which should enforce its brand, key messages and ethos. Even if finances or capabilities preclude a slick or attractive-looking website, at the very least organisations must ensure that the information and branding is right to represent them and their interests effectively.

G:up is currently building a new website which will go live in Dec 2010. The existing G:up website (built in 2005) is no longer fit for purpose as its software is

outdated and it cannot support G:up's current needs, including new functionality required for G:XL. However, useful features such as G:up's automatic email updates (from the website), which are valued highly by members, will also feature on the new site.

The G:up Info and Comms Coordinator reviewed the existing G:up website and future needs, consulting members and relevant parties, and produced a brief for developing the new site which can be viewed or discussed on request. Three web design firms produced proposals based on the brief and, one was chosen to develop the new site.

The below points about website content relate equally to G:up's current and new website:

- 'Live' information (i.e. current news and events) must always be accurate, timely and useful and relevant to G:up's audiences.
- To keep the site fresh and highly regarded as an information resource, G:up staff should post at least two news or event items daily (or equivalent over the course of a week if it isn't possible to post information on some days).
- G:up members have logins and access to post news and events but rarely do so currently (a consequence of G:up's relative inactivity prior to October 2009 or as a regularly updated news portal, prior to May 2010). This must be promoted dedicatedly in order to increase the number and diversity of postings, make the website more relevant as a resource for the whole sector, re-engage members and stimulate collaboration.
- G:up provides simple instructions to posting information and offers any support required in getting started, but more could be done to promote this as well as the concept and benefits of members posting.
- When posting information, especially news, consider 'writing for the web' best practice, i.e. the first sentence should summarise the main points of the story, each paragraph should be no more than a sentence or two and language should always be snappy and inviting.
- 'Fixed'/long term information must be reviewed regularly to ensure that it is relevant and not out of date.
- Any out of date information on the site should be edited, or if it is no longer relevant, archived or removed in order to keep the website dynamic and uncluttered.
- The G:up Info and Comms Coordinator will closely monitor how the site is being used, what's working or could be improved, via Google Analytics and Drupal (the site's own) statistics and will keep colleagues informed.

- **Launch of new G:up site:**
- G:up is already marketing its new website and new online resources, but this activity should reach its height before, during and after the site goes live in Dec 2010.
- A launch event should be considered to give profile to the new website and resources, this could also double as a membership drive and wider marketing opportunity (e.g. of G:XL and Progress). G:up has held or is holding a series of events at this time: Progress briefings on 30<sup>th</sup> Sept; Infrastructure Round Table on 28<sup>th</sup> Oct; 3 Progress Familiarisation Training dates in late November. Therefore a launch event in January 2011 will be pursued, allowing time to bed the website in and eliminate teething troubles and arguably having more impact than it might in December when people often have lots of things in their calendars and start breaking up for holidays.
- The launch will include a training or at least demonstration element, but running training on the new site (how to upload info as well as make use of its resources) for members and would-be members will be essential. This could be used to market new resources including the training calendar, signposting database and self-assessment toolkit, as well as G:up membership.

### **RSS feeds**

The G:up website generates an RSS feed based on items posted on the site (link: <http://growingupinthewestmidlands.info/rss.xml>). There is a link to this on every page of the website.

- G:up could promote this more to partners to ensure that more partner sites are linked to G:up's RSS feed, as well as generally to all customers.

The G:up website has an aggregator which gathers stories from selected, relevant news (RSS) feeds, publishing them on the site and in G:up's email updates.

- These must be reviewed regularly to ensure that the information is relevant to our members and stakeholders.

### **G:up Email Updates**

These emails, automatically generated by G:up's website and sent to registered users, provide a daily digest of, and links to, postings and RSS feed stories, on the G:up website. These are highly valued by our members and an important source of information for the sector, which is particularly important in rapidly changing political times.

- As part of the development of the new G:up website, the G:up Info and Comms Coordinator has designed a number of improvements to the updates to allow users more possibilities and choice in the information they receive.

- Due to their value for the sector (frequently attested by users) G:up's email updates should be actively marketed as a means of attracting and gaining new members.

## Email

### • General

- As described under 'Logos', emails should be used as vehicles to reinforce G:up's brand and messages. To be managed by the G:up Info and Comms Coordinator.
- All staff must ensure professionalism, politeness, openness, and good spelling and grammar (always use spell checker) in all emails to maintain G:up's reputation and further its aims.
- As discussed above, G:up Info and Comms Coordinator to produce style guide to ensure consistency.

### • Emails to networks

This is a very important means of raising G:up's profile and establishing G:up as a valuable information source (in addition to original contacts, emails might well be forwarded and generate interest from new contacts) as well as achieving the ends listed under 'Uses of Communications' above.

- All contacts must always be BCCed to preserve privacy.
- Information must be accurate, timely and relevant to audience – if it isn't it will diminish the effectiveness of the communication and G:up's reputation for providing useful information.
- Information should be posted on the G:up website first, then forwarded so that the link to the information on the G:up website can be included in the email. The G:up Info and Comms Coordinator has developed a template for network mailings which ensures that the G:up website and its services such as the news section and events calendar are also promoted while G:up promotes G:up or partners'/others'/general information.
- Whilst network mailings must be relevant and useful and one wants to avoid 'information overload' where sending too many emails can harm G:up's reputation and make recipients less likely to pay attention to them, network mailings are a significant way of achieving G:up's communications and organisational goals and must be utilised more – perhaps a target of at least 3 emails a week should aimed for.

## Media

G:up frequently promotes its events and news to partners and sector news outlets for exposure via their websites and broadcasts; and fosters and develops such relationships.

- This activity is essential so G:up's messages and interest in its activities reach wider audiences.

- G:up has not traditionally produced media releases for other media outlets (e.g. general local media). Whilst this might not always be appropriate, this should be considered with certain, high profile, G:up or member-related 'stories', especially if they may have mainstream media appeal, in order to raise the profile of the sector and its work, with all the possible benefits this could bring.

### Reports and publications

- G:up recently released its Collaboration report, produced in partnership with NCVYS. Download at: <http://growingupinthewestmidlands.info/collaboration>
- Various resources have been produced for G:XL, by G:up and G:XL contract holders Midlands Youth, for example: the reports on the sector audits on quality standards and training needs respectively and the regional and sub-regional training action plan for the West Midlands CYP VCS; the guide for ISOs to engage with "diverse and 'hard to reach'" groups and the sector info and comms audit report. All are available for download via: <http://growingupinthewestmidlands.info/gxl>
- This marcomms strategy will be promoted and implemented across the sector and is available at: <http://growingupinthewestmidlands.info/marcomms>
- All reports should be fully branded and present a consistent look, as directed by G:up Info and Comms Coordinator.
- All reports should maintain excellent standards of quality and be reviewed by appropriate groups and individuals e.g. G:up and bayc staff, G:XL Learning Clusters and G:XL Project Advisory Group etc.

### Newsletter

G:up regularly posts news about its own work, successes and events etc. on its website, and ensures this goes out in its daily email updates, which members often refer to as G:up's 'newsletter', but G:up has not traditionally produced an official newsletter.

- Even if produced infrequently a newsletter can be valuable, G:up has a lot to publicise and offer so will begin producing a quarterly newsletter. Amongst their many benefits, newsletters can be:
  - Simple and cheap to produce, yet be attractive (there are many open source design and publishing programs, whilst it could simply be produced in Word or Powerpoint – PDF creators can also be downloaded for free)
  - A useful outlet for promoting key messages, work, good news, forthcoming opportunities etc.
  - Documents that can be downloaded from and look good on one's website and can evidence work and be forwarded even in the future.

### **Social Media**

G:up has not had a social media presence before, but recently set up a Twitter page in conjunction with building the new G:up website. This is linked to the site, so will be updated automatically when the new website is updated, negating any capacity concerns about maintaining more than one portal effectively.

- G:up has reviewed the potential of social media e.g. through forums such as the G:XL Info and Comms Learning Cluster (LC) and whilst it can offer organisations new opportunities and audiences, especially if engaging directly with CYP, inevitable drawbacks are capacity issues involved in utilising it, which has held G:up back till now.
- Free VCS social media training is frequently available across the region and G:up promotes this and is commissioning some for members in early 2011.
- G:up will try to maximise the potential of its new Twitter presence and monitor its effectiveness and report on this via appropriate channels, e.g. LC meetings.

### **Telephone**

- All G:up staff will be courteous and helpful on the phone at all times and phone messages will be dealt with adequately and in a timely manner.

## **11. Images**

G:up has a severe lack of images of children and young people and has no image library. This is a real problem for marketing and comms, especially when producing documents e.g. a flyer for an event, as the same pictures have to be used repeatedly. This has been discussed at various forums, including the G:XL Info and Comms Learning Cluster and the issues of a lack of images and a lack of images that represent diversity, are widespread in the sector.

- Images of CYP used must represent diversity, i.e. all CYP should be represented and none excluded, considering gender, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, age etc. (Every image or a document with very few images can't genuinely depict "all children" and this could appear tokenistic, but diversity must be demonstrably considered).
- The G:up Info and Comms Coordinator has produced a robust photo consent form and G:up staff will be encouraged and given guidance to take photos when possible at events or members' sites where CYP are present.
- G:up will run a competition asking members and the sector to enter photos of CYP with completed consent forms. The winning photos will be used on the new G:up website and the winning organisations receive vouchers as prizes (e.g. to buy equipment for their CYP). An added incentive will be that all non-winning photos will be placed in a new image library that all G:up members will have access to. This idea was received warmly by the G:XL Info and

Comms Learning Cluster, increasing collaboration possibilities, but G:up will not have a budget for this until next year.

- Other strategies should also be devised to overcome this chronic lack, perhaps by wider marketing of requests for members to send in photos for the library, with the incentive that they can use the library.
- Images for G:up's new website, were selected and purchased from an online image library. Please contact G:up if you'd like more information about this.

## 12. Events

Events are excellent opportunities to promote G:up, its work and key messages, engage with and develop G:up's membership and facilitate networking. G:up holds events:

- Around particular themes relevant to members and the sector e.g. the Be Inspired event, 12<sup>th</sup> August 2010, focusing on the impact of cuts and the current politics on West Midlands CYP VCS organisations and their strategies and actions to combat them. We received extremely positive feedback about this event.
- To promote and engage members and the sector in G:up projects e.g. G:XL Where it's at event, 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2010, promoting G:XL and involving attendees in particular aspects of it and G:up's Progress Briefings on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2010, offering training providers an introduction to Progress and how to take advantage of it.
- On strategic themes e.g. the Infrastructure Round Table on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2010, in partnership with Children England and bayc, bringing together CYP and play ISOs from across the region to discuss the position of infrastructure in the region and current climate, share expertise and encourage networking and collaboration.
- In the current 'G:up year', (October 2010-October 2011) it will be important to continue to hold a series of events to maintain and increase the profile of G:up and its projects, engage membership and react to change and sector need. Events clearly offer meaningful opportunities to further G:up's aims and achieve the ends through marketing and communications described in the 'Use' section above (page 5).
- Whilst holding and marketing events can do powers for an organisation's profile and reputation, well designed events should have lasting benefits for G:up and the sector, through generating important/useful notes (whether in a raw form or in a report), actions and ongoing networking and collaboration. A successful event and relevant outcomes should also be marketed as soon as possible after the event.

### 13. G:XL Tools on G:up's New Website

- **Training and events calendar**

Unlike G:up's current calendar, calendar items posted on the new site will be categorised as either events or training and appear in different colours accordingly on the calendar. Those posting training will also be able to add a tag, marking what type of training it is, selecting from a list generated via the training audit, as well as writing their own tags. The calendar can also be set to show just training, just events or both.

- This added functionality will make the calendar more useful, especially as a regional training resource and this must be marketed strongly to the sector. This includes to general users and training providers. G:up and G:XL contract holders, Midlands Youth, must encourage providers to join G:up and post their training events on the site themselves. This action is recorded in the G:XL training action plan, mentioned above.
- Such a potentially useful resource, if well marketed and widely adopted could produce large and sustained traffic on the G:up website – which could be directed to other services and information via strategically placed info and links etc. – and an increase in G:up membership.

- **Quality self-assessment toolkit**

This interactive toolkit will allow smaller and larger organisations to assess their levels of quality in different areas, outlining necessary standards for different types of organisations. This will also advise users of any quality assurance schemes that could benefit them and provide information of any training providers and upcoming training events (by being linked to the training calendar) in the region.

- Again this must be marketed as widely as possible throughout the sector and is particularly useful as it considers and has relevance to all different types of organisations.

- **Signposting database**

This will be an accessible service enabling CYP VCS organisations to address gaps in their infrastructure, to search for organisations specialising in given services, to search for training providers and be linked to the website's calendar to display any relevant, upcoming training available.

- Once again this service could have very wide appeal and relevance and should be marketed appropriately.

### 14. Audit

G:up is conducting an audit of info and comms issues, barriers and solutions in the West Midlands CYP VCS as part of the G:XL Info and Comms work stream. The G:up Info and Comms Coordinator devised qualitative research, specifically in depth interviews with ISOs across the region to allow a detailed examination of these diverse and complicated subject areas and to better understand the

complexities of different local situations. Conducting interviews also offered a welcome opportunity to meet with G:up members across the region, excellent for networking and renewing relationships.

- As the findings of this research could profoundly influence the direction of G:up's work in the coming year, particularly in terms of the nature of its info and comms support to members, it is recommended that the audit be assessed as part of the 6 month review of this strategy.
- As explored below, G:up also has no baseline data for awareness and use of its services, so this piece of work will offer an insight into this area.

## 15. Reassessing G:up's Mission

G:up's vision (see 'Background' section on page 3) remains entirely relevant and valid and provides a strong summary and snapshot of what G:up represents. As indicated via a footnote on page 3, one word has been added to the original vision text to increase inclusivity, but it remains a bold statement that members can unite under and which can attract interest from new parties. Similarly, the key elements of G:up's work: Engage, Influence, Develop, remain relevant and powerful and in fact have recently been cited as a model of infrastructure good practice by NCVO's (National Council for Voluntary Organisations) Value of Infrastructure Programme (VIP):

[www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/vip-draft-impact-framework](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/vip-draft-impact-framework). However, G:up's relative inactivity before October 2009 and in certain areas still until April 2010, as well as the lack of any recent review of mission or member needs meant that this was an area of priority.

The G:up Info and Comms Coordinator did some work in this area once in post in May 2010, liaising with colleagues and consulting members, doing research, reviewing the G:up website etc. formulating forthcoming G:XL Info and Comms work stream work, including writing this strategy and considering G:up's direction and priorities, its needs and the needs of its members. At this time, G:up's principal area of work was G:XL, which had a clearly defined three-year programme of milestones, objectives and outputs. However, the arrival of the Coordinator provided capacity for and an officer whose role specifically included the core G:up functions of managing membership and the website. The Coordinator conducted a membership review, produced new membership documents including a flyer advertising membership and welcome pack. Increased G:up activity, notably through increased information output, the growing momentum of G:XL and the holding of events, has produced new members. Membership is a priority area, see separate section below.

G:up is currently in a relatively strong position: G:XL is booming (e.g. much and varied activity, successful learning clusters and events, several reports and resources already released or about to be released); G:up is the West Midlands contract holder for the prestigious, national, Progress project; G:up is regularly holding successful events; G:up's new website and online tools are about to go live; G:up is much more strategically engaged and able to support its members than it has been for some 18 months-2 years and continues to grow; G:up's profile is greatly elevated. However, there are some important issues to address:

- For various reasons, including sector redundancies, some G:up Steering Group members have left and recruitment is a priority. This is being addressed by the Steering Group.
- G:up's constitution needs to be reviewed as parts of it are now out of date and it no longer matches G:up's programmes of work. As it was written in 2007 it is certainly due a review and in many ways it relates to a different era of G:up, before G:XL and when an entirely different staff team was in post. This review could be informed by this strategy and other current G:up work. The Steering Group should conduct the review when it is returned to full capacity, with support from the G:up staff team as required, represented by the bayc CEO, who sits on the Steering Group, if necessary.
- G:up currently has no baseline data for recognition of its identity and services, member satisfaction, desires or needs etc. Research to investigate these areas and generate baseline data is urgently needed. The G:up Info and Comms Coordinator will address this, tying it in to work to review this strategy and measure its success. It is recommended that research to generate baseline data be carried out ASAP and repeated towards the end of the period of this strategy to measure its impact. The research will gather data on a number of key areas of G:up's work, for example, levels of recognition and involvement in G:XL and Equalities and Diversities. Note: data about what members want is gathered through general contact and informal consultation, feedback at events and work such as the info and comms audit, but dedicated and comprehensive research is required.

## 16. G:up Membership

- G:up staff must be available to assist with member enquiries or requests for assistance and deal with these (in any form) in a courteous, proactive, helpful and timely manner.
- G:up staff are privileged to serve a vibrant, diverse and well connected network and should strive for excellent communications (including via information dissemination, developing relationships and events) to enhance these qualities and deliver G:up's aims of increased collaboration, information-sharing, capacity and voice for the West Midlands CYP VCS.

- Maintaining and building strong relationships with members and other partners is important for achieving G:up's aims, e.g. via the above activities as well as networking and being proactive in supporting and turning to members.
- Increasing the size and diversity of G:up's membership is an ongoing objective and opportunities to achieve this should be sought by all staff e.g. by networking, contacting newly discovered organisations and via dedicated research.
- Large-scale research and a membership drive, focusing on "diverse and 'hard to reach' groups" will be conducted by the G:up Info and Comms Coordinator as part of the G:XL Diversity and Outreach Targets as outlined below.

## 17. G:XL

G:XL has its own clearly defined delivery schedules and procedures which are managed by the G:up Programme Manager. However info and comms responsibilities and priorities are as follows:

- As defined in G:XL frameworks, the G:up Info and Comms Coordinator will provide ongoing, high quality, info and comms support to external G:XL contract holders.
- To ensure that G:XL is as effective and successful as possible, it is vital that the sector is aware and involved. There is a need to promote the brand, work and opportunities of G:XL to the sector to increase recognition, understanding and support for G:XL. The G:up Info and Comms Coordinator already enforces procedures such as promoting G:XL opportunities and developments via G:up and partners, and using the G:XL name and logo as well as key explanatory phrases and information when doing so and as much as possible, but will devise and execute a dedicated marketing campaign.

## 18. G:XL Diversity and Outreach Objectives

These objectives cut across all 5 G:XL work streams and are to be delivered over the course of the 3 years of G:XL. See in Fig 1 on the following page, the delivery framework (detailing what is required) for these objectives, as it appears in the G:XL paperwork and contract with Big Lottery Fund. The delivery schedule for these objectives appears at the end of the 'Actions and Timescales' section, on pages 24-25 below.

(Unfortunately Fig 1 is presented in Arial font size 10 due to formatting problems. If you are viewing this in the original pdf – rather than hardcopy – you can increase the magnification/zoom to enlarge the font, or G:up can provide this in another format on request).

**Fig 1: G:XL Cross Work Stream Diversity & Outreach Objectives**

<b>Progress will be monitored and reported in alignment with other milestones and reporting periods</b>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The needs and capacity of infrastructure organisations championing engagement with vulnerable groups will be a priority for the project</li> <li>2. The cross-cutting approach to diversity and inclusion will mean the identification of stakeholders who are currently not part of or engaged with VCS CYP infrastructure</li> <li>3. The commissioning process will promote collaboration and the inclusion of smaller organisations, and will match the skills and expertise of network members to identified need and delivery methods</li> <li>4. Improving reach and diversity, particularly the engagement of hard to reach<sup>4</sup> groups and communities is a cross-cutting theme which all work streams will be measured against</li> <li>5. The generation of appropriate information and identification of effective communication channels will develop new connections between hard to reach or marginalised groups and infrastructure organisations</li> </ol>		
<p>Developing diverse representation and inclusive mechanisms for “voice” and influence is a primary function of the work streams which engage organisations and users in affecting decision-making.</p>		
<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Output</b>
Small and under-represented groups in need of support will have been identified, collated and have access to network support.	<p>The G:up Info and Comms Coordinator will identify and audit hard to reach groups through infrastructure organisations and their networks, with GOWM, Children’s Trusts and other key bodies.</p> <p>Through the delivery of work stream 1 [Quality standards work stream] a signposting service will be developed to enable VCS CYP organisations to address gaps in their organisation’s infrastructure.</p>	Produce a regional database of groups with low infrastructure engagement and their associated needs. These groups will be encouraged to access the G:up signposting service (work stream 1 [Quality standards work stream]).
Infrastructure organisations will report links with new hard to reach groups across all Local Authority areas.	The G:up Information and Communications Coordinator will inform hard to reach groups of G:up, G:XL and wider infrastructure opportunities. These groups will be followed up and their involvement tracked.	Produce information about contact with new hard to reach groups, update and share this with G:up network members and G:XL work stream sub-contracting agencies.
Infrastructure organisations will increase reach and involvement of hard to reach groups within local networks <sup>5</sup> .	G:XL work stream sub-contracting agencies will actively engage hard to reach groups and encourage links with infrastructure networks.	Work stream contracts will incorporate engaging with hard to reach groups.
Infrastructure organisations will report improved connectivity with and between hard to reach groups and sustained engagement in network and democratic mechanisms.	G:up and network members will encourage hard to reach groups to engage in network discussion, events and collaborative activities, and encourage larger VCS organisations to pursue collaborative approaches.	Hard to reach groups will be participating and contributing to network activities, strategic discussion and collaborative activities.

<sup>4</sup> Hard to Reach groups include small groups with limited infrastructure and voice, groups that specialise in delivering equality and diversity services to the children and young people sector and groups that have limited access to infrastructure support. This list is not conclusive and will be developed and specified to meet the ongoing demand of the project and its beneficiaries.

<sup>5</sup> Local networks is an inclusive term that describes all groups that fall within an infrastructure organisation’s membership or remit.

## 19. Actions and Timescales

Note: actions which form part of the existing core role of the G:up Information and Communications Coordinator (G:up ICC) or are seen as basic comms functions for all staff, e.g. ensuring that contacts are BCCed when sending network mailings, or being courteous and helpful on the phone, are omitted here, but are covered under 'Communications' below, which states that awareness of and adherence to this strategy and moreover, good communications, are the responsibility of all staff.

### This strategy

Activity	Delivery date	Lead
Launch marcomms strategy	Oct/Nov 2010	G:up ICC
Brief all staff fully on marcomms strategy	Nov 2010	G:up ICC
Promote marcomms strategy across sector	Nov 2010 and ongoing	G:up ICC
Provide specific training to members on implementation of this strategy and 'writing a comms strategy for your organisation', including production of brief 'how to guide' to go on website and for dissemination, following the template of this strategy	Dec 2010 and ongoing	G:up ICC

### Communications

Activity	Delivery date	Lead
In addition to receiving full briefing, it is the duty of all staff to be familiar with the strategy and its policies and to ensure good communications – effective communications are essential for G:up to achieve its aims and are the responsibility of all staff	Immediately/in part current practice and ongoing	All staff

### Branding and a Consistent Identity

Activity	Delivery date	Lead
Write G:up style guide	Nov 2010	G:up ICC
Manage email signatures and use by all staff	Immediately & ongoing	G:up ICC
Manage/renew email marketing straplines	Immediately & ongoing	G:up ICC
Develop standard document templates	Mostly in place, to be reviewed Oct/Nov 2010	G:up ICC

**Website**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Delivery date</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Promote new G:up website	Underway, push around launch (Dec 2010) and ongoing	G:up ICC
Plan and deliver launch event, perhaps combined with training	Jan 2011	G:up ICC
Provide training on new website for members/would-be members (also use to promote membership and G:XL tools)	As above and other dates TBC (/ongoing)	G:up ICC
Market and encourage use of new website resources incl. training calendar and signposting database (can also be used to promote membership)	Underway, push around launch; ongoing	G:up ICC
Promote G:up's RSS feed including via personal contact with organisations requesting they link it to their websites	Dec 2010 and ongoing	G:up ICC
Promote G:up's email updates especially as a major benefit of membership	Immediately and ongoing	G:up ICC
Critically monitor site use and stats and inform colleagues	Ongoing once site live	G:up ICC
News and events must always be accurate, timely and useful	Current and ongoing	G:up ICC
Ensure that at least 2 useful, relevant pieces of information are posted on the site per day or equivalent per week	Immediately and ongoing	G:up ICC

**Media**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Delivery date</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Contact sector information services/portals and partners individually about promoting appropriate information via their websites and channels	Current practice and ongoing	G:up ICC
Seek opportunities for promoting G:up's/members' work to wider audiences and produce media releases for mainstream media if appropriate	Ongoing	G:up ICC

### Reports, publications and newsletter

Activity	Delivery date	Lead
Ensure all reports are fully branded and display consistency	Current practice and ongoing	G:up ICC
Ensure all reports maintain excellent standards of quality	Current practice and ongoing	All staff
Produce G:up newsletter quarterly	Nov 2010 and quarterly	G:up ICC

### Social media

Activity	Delivery date	Lead
Maximise use of Twitter and monitor uptake/use	Ongoing from Nov 2010	G:up ICC
G:up to organise social media training for members/sector	Jan/Feb 2011	G:up ICC

### Images

Activity	Delivery date	Lead
Ensure images represent diversity (always consider E&D)	Current practice and ongoing	All staff / G:up ICC
Initiate G:up photo library	Nov 2010	G:up ICC
Take photos of CYP and get consent forms signed when possible	Ongoing from Nov 2010	All staff
Run photo competition and build image library which can be opened to members	Jan-Mar 2011	G:up ICC
Market benefits of building collaborative image library for members	Jan-Mar 2011 and ongoing	G:up ICC

### Events

Activity	Delivery date	Lead
Continue to devise regular events to encourage networking and information sharing and on various themes such as sector 'hot topics', G:up projects, strategic areas	Current practice and ongoing	bayc CEO / G:up PM / G:up ICC
Design events to have benefits and relevance that outlast the event itself	Current practice and ongoing	bayc CEO / G:up PM / G:up ICC
Produce notes, outcomes etc. in timely fashion	Current practice and ongoing	All staff

**Reassessing G:up's Mission**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Delivery date</b>	<b>Lead</b>
G:up Steering Group to recruit new members	ASAP – currently being addressed by G:up SG	G:up SG
G:up Steering Group to review constitution with support from G:up staff as required	As soon as G:up SG vacancies are recruited	G:up SG
Conduct research to gain baseline data of G:up and G:up service recognition, use and need (see 'Evaluation' below)	Nov 2010-Jan 2011	G:up ICC
Repeat research as part of process of measuring impact of this marcomms strategy	Aug-Oct 2011	G:up ICC

**G:up Membership**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Delivery date</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Observe excellent communication and be proactive, courteous and helpful in supporting, informing, networking and developing relationships with members and partners	Current practice and ongoing	All staff
Promote membership to new contacts and seek opportunities to recruit new members and increase membership size and diversity	Current practice and ongoing	All staff

**G:XL**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Delivery date</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Provide ongoing, high quality, info and comms support to G:XL contract holders	Current and ongoing	G:up ICC
Promote G:XL brand, work and opportunities as much as possible and encourage other staff to do so in their work	Current and ongoing	G:up ICC
Devise and execute a dedicated marketing campaign.	Jan-Mar 2011	G:up ICC

**G:XL Diversity and Outreach objectives**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Delivery date</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Identify and audit 'hard to reach' organisations (HTROs) through ISOs and other key bodies	Nov 2010-Feb 2011 and review every 3-6 months	G:up ICC
Produce database of HTROs and their needs	As above	G:up ICC
Inform HTROs on database of G:up, G:XL and infrastructure opportunities	Nov 2010-Feb 2011 and ongoing	G:up ICC

Follow up HTROs and track their sustained involvement, probably via a short survey delivered by phone and email	Dec 2010 onwards	G:up ICC
Produce info about contact with new HTROs and share with members and G:XL contract holders	Jan 2011 (PAG meeting) and ongoing	G:up ICC
Support G:XL contract holders to actively engage with HTROs and encourage links with infrastructure networks	Feb 2011 onwards	G:up ICC
Encourage HTROs to engage with G:up network discussions, events and collaborative activities and ask members to do the same.	Nov 2010 onwards	G:up ICC
Encourage larger VCS organisations to pursue collaborative approaches and ask members to do the same	Feb 2011 onwards	G:up ICC

**Key:** G:up ICC = G:up Information and Communications Coordinator  
 G:up PM = G:up Programme Manager  
 G:up SG = G:up Steering Group

## 20. Evaluation

Activity	Delivery date	Lead
As stated above, initial baselining research into recognition and use of G:up, member wants and needs, to be carried out	Nov 2010-Jan 2011	G:up ICC
Review this strategy after 6 months: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess effectiveness of implementation and if actions have been/are being completed and timescales met</li> <li>Incorporate any aspects of info and comms audit and baselining research that might inform new policy</li> <li>Rewrite and rerelease strategy in revised version and promote to sector</li> </ul>	Mar 2011	G:up ICC
Repeat recognition, use and needs research and use to measure impact of marcomms strategy	Aug-Oct 2011	G:up ICC

## Let us know what you think!

- It is hoped that this strategy can benefit the West Midlands CYP VCS. Please feel free to follow the framework of this strategy or adapt any of the text for your organisation (using the Creative Commons licence below if you do so). If you would like any advice about writing a communications strategy or would like to discuss any aspect of this document, please don't hesitate to contact G:up via the contacts below.
- We would really appreciate your feedback about this strategy. If you have any comments, please contact G:up via the contacts below.

## Join G:up

**G:up** is an alliance of West Midlands, children and young people's, voluntary and community sector organisations and networks, as well as public sector and national partners.

**G:up** works in a regional space to develop networks, communications and collaboration, build capacity and shape policy and strategy.

**Joining up** is free and offers many benefits including G:up's email updates, a login to G:up's website, the opportunity to be better informed about what's happening in your sector, connected to a large network of organisations that can support and enhance your work and advocate on behalf of CYP and the VCS and be positioned to influence policy at all levels. For a membership form please contact G:up via:

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