

Charity website winner reaps the benefits of a fresh new design

As part of the MK50 celebrations Plexus launched a competition for local charities to receive a new website based on public votes through Facebook

■ BACKGROUND

Ride High is a registered charity that works with some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children in Milton Keynes, and aims to transform them into happy and confident young people. The children are referred by childcare professionals and may be in foster care, suicidal or self-harming or victims of abuse or neglect. Ride High aim to effect lasting change in their attitude, self-confidence and in their future prospects.

As a charity organisation with limited resources Ride High had been reliant upon an in-house website design that had become inconsistent in style, hard to maintain, and users were finding difficult to navigate. Marketing and fundraising manager Helen Dixon spotted the free website competition launched by Plexus and decided to enter which required her to state why Ride High would be a suitable recipient. A shortlist of 5 competing entries was selected and then set out for public vote through the Plexus Facebook page. Helen was delighted to discover that Ride High was the winner having the most public votes.

■ A USER CENTRIC REDESIGN


The brief for the redesign was to focus on five key areas. Firstly the website should have vastly improved visuals to highlight activities undertaken at the riding centre to provide both children and their referrers with a feel for the environment and sessions offered. Children are referred to the centre through both medical and social professionals and this process was managed previously through cumbersome Excel spreadsheets. Going forward the referral process would be captured through web forms with mandatory fields set to ensure key information was gathered at the outset.

A charitable organisation is dependent on donations so the ability to donate funds through the website was a key feature which Plexus implemented with a tidy sidebar link that is present now on every page within the site. The fourth element was to improve recognition for the multitude of sponsors that support Ride High which had been delivered as a scrolling alphabetical list of sponsor logos present towards the bottom of every page.



Client Profile


 **Organisation Name:**
Ride High (Reg. Charity No. 1138260)


 **Location:**
Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire

 **Year Founded:**
2008

 **Website:**
ridehigh.org

 **Number of staff:**
10+

 **Key Activities:**
Structured programmes that include learning to ride and care for horses and associated clubroom projects.

 **Specialisations:**
Helping disadvantaged and isolated children in the Milton Keynes area.

The final element of the brief was to help improve awareness of the Ride High organisation which Plexus advised upon and undertook through techniques and key word placements to greatly improve search engine optimisation (SEO). This element is an ongoing process which is regularly refined based on results from analytical tools provided within the Plexus website package.

■ EASY UPDATES AND MOBILE RESPONSIVE

The outgoing website had been developed using Wordpress which was fairly intuitive for simple textual updates but was a difficult platform to design on and due to the inherent theme based approach it did not lend itself to the creation of a unique and visually impactful website.

The new site delivered by Plexus includes a very user friendly content management system (CMS) which was demonstrated to Helen before the new site went live, however, regular site updates are included within the Plexus website package so Ride High find that they generally pass minor updates through to Plexus which are then implemented in a very timely manner.

With over 50% of internet users today accessing content through smart phones and tablets it was essential that the new site was mobile responsive which is standard for all Plexus developments and rigorously tested by them with tools that emulate access from a multitude of device types and browsers.

Going forward Ride High will continue to work with Plexus to constantly improve SEO through appropriate characterisation of the website, so that search engines are able to read the message they wish to convey merely through the structure of the site. This ongoing advice, combined with a very clear and impactful website design have made Helen and the Ride High team very happy winners indeed.

“We have found the Plexus team very easy to work with and massively helpful with advice on how best to present our content and implement our design, we recommend them highly”

Helen Dixon, Marketing & Fundraising Manager, Ride High.

