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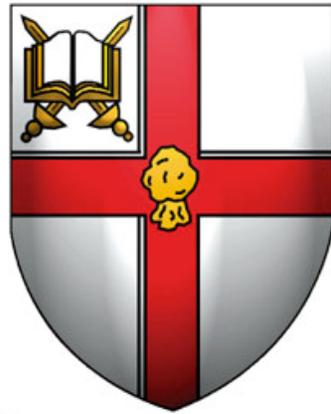
Chester Business School

BUM716 – MBA Dissertation

Establishing acceptable "rules of engagement" to encourage young fathers to access services at Sure Start Children's Centres (SSCS) through social networking sites (SNS).

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Liverpool City Council

A dissertation submitted for the degree of

Master of Business Administration

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Declaration

This work is original and has not been submitted previously for any academic purpose. All secondary sources are acknowledged.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

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Abstract

The need to support young fathers is increasingly becoming a key theme in central and local government policy and practice. Research shows that young fathers can often feel unsupported and disengaged by local services and are most likely to access such support as a result of word-of mouth marketing. In the last few years, the introduction and subsequent rapid rise in the number of people who use social networking sites has dramatically changed the marketing and communications landscape leaving little doubt that local authorities will need to adopt these approaches and engage with citizens on their terms.

However, given that this is largely uncharted territory, determining acceptable 'rules of engagement' for undertaking such as approach presents questions for a local authority. This study sets out to explore the idea and determine key issues and establish appropriate initial recommendations.

The case study approach was adopted focusing upon Liverpool City Council's Sure Start Children's Centres that are now operating across the city. This approach was selected as it provides the opportunity to use existing secondary data sources. A literature review was followed by primary research that consisted of semi-structured interviews with young fathers. The findings were reviewed against the key themes and a series of recommendations were made in response to the conclusions.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the research

The need to engage with young fathers is increasingly a key theme in central and local government research, policy and practice. Young fathers are usually defined by service providers as male parents under the ages of 25. Since teenage pregnancies usually involve 18 or 19 year-old females, most young fathers are in their early twenties (Dudley, 2001).

In addition to statutory obligations for equal treatment of men and women in public services (as is now required by the Gender Equality Duty, enshrined in The Equality Act 2006, which became law in April 2007), local authorities are encouraged to adopt a strategic and joined up approach to fulfilling government policies. This included direction from the government in the Every Child Matters (ECM) framework (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2003) underpinned by The Children Act 2004 that local services must be focused on engaging with fathers and supporting their relationships with children.

Sure Start Children's Centres (SSCC) were set up to serve England's most disadvantaged communities in England with one planned for every community by 2010. The centres aim to improve outcomes for all young children and families thus narrowing the gap between poorest children and those born into wealthier families through improved take-up and effectiveness of services. SSCC evolved from Sure Start Local Programmes and Early Excellence Centres and are service hubs where children under five and their families can receive seamless integrated services and information. SSCC have been developed by the government to improve outcomes for all children. They are an integral part of the government's aim for every child, regardless of their background or circumstances, to have the support to achieve the five ECM outcomes identified as key to well-being in childhood and later life.

Although local authorities have been given strategic responsibility for the delivery of SSCC and are accountable for the Sure Start department's funds, the way individual centres are managed and supervised reflects the different configurations from which they started. Liverpool City Council (LCC) centrally manages eight centres through the Integrated Support for Children and Young People Business Unit with the other 24 centres adopting alternative models of governance and management.

A report from the National Audit Office (2006) on SSCC across the UK measured their progress in making a whole range of services for children and families more accessible, relevant and effective and found that:

"Less progress was being made in improving services for fathers, parents of children with disabilities, and for ethnic minorities in areas with smaller minority population."

(Sure Start Children's Centres, Executive Summary p. 7)

Locally, SSCC are required to consult with local families to gain their opinion on local services, develop an understanding of their perceptions and gain ideas on how they can develop to meet their public's needs more effectively. In LCC, the Marketing Research Team is tasked with this responsibility and commission an annual survey into the needs and opinions of parents/carers across the catchment area of all 26 SSCC. One key objective of this consultation is to provide evidence to inform current and future SSCC development across the city to ensure that provision meets the needs of children and families. In addition to this, the survey also explores the level and pattern of use of the centres by parents and carers, identifies barriers and how they can be overcome and provides realistic recommendations for improvement and information for future communication strategies.

In 2009, the survey returned 1,175 questionnaires. Findings suggested that level of awareness across Liverpool is a key development area for SSCC particularly amongst young fathers who have been identified as a hard-to-reach group. Further discussion

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highlighted the importance of 'word-of-mouth' for spreading information and the important role of parents in signposting others towards services. According to the results, these mechanisms were especially effective in engaging with young fathers.

Marketing Services is LCC's in-house communications team and, alongside the Research Team has a responsibility to deliver a strategic communications strategy for the local authority managed SSCC. Progressively, the targets for the centres have become focused on areas where delivery may be falling short in comparison to more universal targets when the centres were initially launched. This has clear implications for designing specific and measurable marketing campaigns.

Growing demands placed upon LCC by central government have also seen an increase in targets and decrease in budgets overall. The 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSRO7) issued by HM Treasury has set a new challenge for local government to achieve 3percent efficiency savings year on year. Proctor (2007) recently cited a trend within local authorities that has seen an increasing focus on targets and accountability and proposed that marketing skills developed in the private sector should be employed in the public sector to promote and deliver non-profit motivated services. As Parker (2009, p14) argues "slicing existing budgets ever more thinly is not good enough in today's world. An altogether bolder approach is needed, focused on searching out, incubating and sustaining more radical and game changing innovations." The local government White Paper – Stronger and Prosperous Communities presented by the Department for Communities and Local Government (2006) strongly emphasises the central role played by local government and also seeks to empower citizens to be more involved in the design and running of services. This furthermore means that authorities' have to adopt an approach which optimises its resources and increases the methods by which citizens can communicate with the organisation. The Smarter Government and Digital Britain (2009) White Papers have also set out the government's vision to create digitally enabled public services used by a digitally enabled population.

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Running in parallel to these developments has been the dramatic rise in the global use of social networking sites (SNS) and its subsequent colossal impact on the marketing and communications industry. According to Ward (2009 p, 1) at the My Public Services conference in October 2009, Dr Paul Hodgkin called for "public services to use social media tools to reinvent services." SNS enable instant access to individuals and online communities who are in turn able to meet other people to gather and share firsthand information and experiences. They therefore seem to offer a low cost marketing method to build both credibility and connections suitable for the target market of young fathers. In response to the issues outlined above, LCC is developing a policy on the potential benefits of SNS to communicate, engage and interact with citizens for marketing purposes. Potentially, this would include encouraging more hard-to-reach groups such as young fathers, to access services at SSCC.

Using SNS could arguably be classified as a direct extension of word-of-mouth marketing tactics given its inherent reliance upon interpersonal connections that are sustained through conversations with followers, friends and others who read and respond to posts.

Increasingly, marketing professionals are responding to this by developing policies that allow managed access and conversation, with some even employing web ambassadors to maintain the sanctioned company presence on sites and act as a company's "voice." The BBC has recently appointed a social media editor and in the private sector there are many examples of these new roles including Starbucks who now employ 16 dedicated members of staff to maintain dialogue and respond to their customers through these means. These developments in the private sector suggest that such roles are not vastly different from methods employed by more traditional marketing and sales operatives and ambassadors within organizations whose primary role is to engage with existing and potential customers.

However, for local authorities exploring the benefits of SNS is largely uncharted territory and carries inherent risk. Along with considerations pertinent to local government and

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the target audience of young fathers with children, drawbacks may include negative comments, data theft, viruses, online predators and legal issues including copyright and defamation. It is therefore apparent that any local authority looking to adopt such an approach will require a clear strategy on both how the risks will be managed and how any opportunities will be maximised. The role that SNS will play within the overall marketing mix and how online interaction will fit in with other communication channels will need to be clearly outlined. On such sites users will invariably discuss subjects openly and if a local authority chooses to be party to this dialogue, a clear policy will be needed on how this will be monitored, assessed and how both positive and negative feedback will be dealt with. A clear strategy should also outline whether SNS will be embedded into the existing web-presence or whether it will seek to develop separate online brand communities.

The introduction, application and administration of SNS raises clear questions regarding the level of involvement that will be appropriate for young fathers from the perspective of a local authority marketing function. Although it is recognised that it is necessary to engage with users, it is also vitally important that such tactics must not alienate target audiences, negate any credibility that has been gained or adversely affect the local authority's online reputation. Furthermore, it is apparent that each segment of the market such as young fathers will have an individual set of requirements and here informed decisions will be needed to outline how sustainable online relationships can be built and maintained in order to engage with young fathers effectively.

1.2 Research question

Establishing acceptable "rules of engagement" to encourage young fathers to access services at Sure Start Children's Centres (SSCS) through social networking sites (SNS).

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1.3 Aims of the investigation:

Establish perceptions, barriers and patterns of use of SNS amongst young fathers in the context of SSCC.

Provide recommendations, issues to consider and limitations regarding "rules of engagement" for the level of involvement that is regarded as acceptable within this target market from service providers on SNS

1.4 Justification for the Research

The successful implementation and ongoing maintenance of an SNS strategy that encouraged more young fathers to access SSCC would directly contribute to the achievement of LCC's three corporate aims below that are key to the organisation's vision and values. (Appendix 1):

1. Grow the city's economy

2. Develop our communities

3. Empower our residents.

The development of SSCC is integral to the ECM agenda which sets out to improve outcomes for children in five outcome areas:

1. Being healthy

2. Staying safe

3. Enjoying and achieving

4. Making a positive contribution

5. Social and economic well-being.

It is also clear that the web can present cost savings supported by The Society of Information Technology Management's recent analysis of customer service interaction lists: web transactions on average 27p compared with phone transactions of £3.22 and face-to-face transactions at £6.56, (Gibson, 2009).

Two factors combine to present SNS as an appropriate and cost effective quick to market communications solution for young fathers:

> 1) Against a backdrop of growing citizen expectations, decreasing budgets and objectives that are increasingly target-driven the LCC Marketing Services team must adopt approaches to optimise its resources.

> 2) National and local research carried out to date suggests that young fathers continue to feel largely disengaged by public services and are most likely to access such services as a result of word-of mouth. Additional research exists to suggest that given usage statistics, SNS would be a fitting medium to communicate with this target market.

However, these channels are still emerging and largely uncharted territory for local authorities. Entry on to such platforms should be undertaken in a way that understands and responds to each segment of the market in a transparent manner, especially given that debate surrounds the application of social networking, with acceptable "rules of engagement" still in the process of being established. A careful approach could measurably improve real-life outcomes for young fathers, their children and the citizens of Liverpool. This also raises clear questions regarding the extent to which a local authority should monitor and converse with users. This piece of research will explore the views of young fathers and attempt to identify key considerations regarding the use of SNS before such a strategy is implemented.

1.5 Methodology

This study opens with an introduction to the intersection relevant issues and outlines the framework within which LCC is currently operating whilst considering external environmental factors pertinent to the themes.

The literature is subsequently analysed to identify key areas and current perspectives on the central themes. Initially, an examination is made of the research on young fathers and the increasing information that is available on factors specific to these target audiences including their propensity to respond to word-of-mouth marketing. This fundamental function of marketing is then examined further within this context before an analysis of the rapid rise of SNS as an extension of word-of-mouth tactic is completed. The role that SSCC may play, barriers and how young fathers may be engaged credibly by these marketing communications tactics draws the literature together to create a backdrop for further research.

The methodology will justify the reasons why the philosophical stance adopted will be interpretive epistemology. The research findings have been categorised and are presented with each of the key themes before conclusions and limitations indicate any further issues. The research concludes with a series of recommendations.

1.6 Outline of the MBA dissertation

1.6.1 Chapter 1 - Introduction

The first chapter introduces the key theme of engaging with young fathers within the context of marketing and communications to encourage them to access SSCC and subsequently outlines the objectives from central and local government that this may meet. Consequently, through the available research, this situation also inevitably raises word-of-mouth marketing as a tactic and the more recent phenomenon of social networking media. This is set against a backdrop of internal and external issues facing LCC and explores how social networking may be implemented as an effective method of

engaging with young fathers. The research question and justification for the area of study explores the intersection of these areas with consideration for the objectives and requirements of marketing within a local authority context.

1.6.2 Chapter 2 - Literature review

The literature review opens by exploring existing research on young fathers including their needs and through this and usage statistics suggests how they may be encouraged to access SSCC via word-of-mouth marketing and SNS in particular. The review examines this further before debating the rules of engagement and varying degrees of involvement that is deemed to be acceptable by organisations on such platforms. Factors pertinent to LCC's current position are also considered.

1.6.3 Chapter 3 - Methodology

The chapter outlines the reasons why the methodology was selected. These include the philosophical position of interpretive epistemology that has been adopted. An outline of the various strategic approaches and contexts is investigated and the most appropriate methods of data collection are discussed, including the need to identify and then sample the relevant group. Finally the importance of a rigorous approach to ethics and how this is applied is outlined

1.6.4 Chapter 4 - Findings

The research findings are presented and duly discussed in chapter four. The key themes highlighted within the introduction and literature review are explored and a narrative account of responses based on content of the discussion, emerging themes is provided.

1.6.5 Chapter Five - Conclusions

This chapter reviews the research methodology and evaluates its ability to answer the research questions effectively. The findings are discussed and evaluated against the literature presented in chapter two. The research's limitations are also explored to ascertain any issues which should be considered and identify any opportunities for further research.

1.6.6 Chapter 6 - Recommendations

A series of recommendations are presented relating to each of the key themes that form the basis of the study.

1.7 Definitions

Abbreviation	Term used	Definition
	Connexions	Connexions is a modern public service and young people aged 13-19 living in England and wanting advice on getting to where they want to be in life. It also provides support up to the age of 25 for young people who have learning difficulties or disabilities (or both).
	Facebook	Facebook is a social networking website that is operated and privately owned by Facebook, Inc. Anyone who confirms themselves to be over the age of 13 with a valid e-mail address can become a Facebook user. Users can add friends and send them messages, and update their personal profiles to notify friends about themselves and join networks organized by workplace, school, or college.
	Hit the Ground Crawling	The workshop aims to prepare men for the early stages of fatherhood with the intent of increasing confidence in their ability to care for their baby and partner, navigate changes in their lifestyle, integrate their new identity as a father, and form a lasting bond with their child.

LCC	Liverpool City Council	Liverpool City Council is the governing body for the city of Liverpool in Merseyside, England. It consists of 90 councillors, three for each of the city's 30 wards
SNS	Social Networking Sites	A social network service focuses on building and reflecting of social networks or social relations among people, e.g., who share interests and/or activities. A social network service essentially consists of a representation of each user (often a profile), his/her social links, and a variety of additional services. Most social network services are web based and provide means for users to interact over the internet, such as e-mail and instant messaging.
SSCC	Surestart Children's Centres	Service hubs where children under five years old and their families can receive seamless integrated services and information.

1.8 Summary

This chapter has outlined the area of study and rationale that will underpin the research. A brief outline of each chapter has also been provided.

2.0. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will review the literature relevant to the research questions. Firstly it will look at the available research on young fathers, defined earlier as males under 25.

2.2 Young fathers

Theorists have long recognised that young fathers require specifically designed and well targeted support with De Lissovoy (1973) proposing that their knowledge of infant development tends to be deficient and unrealistic. Marsiglio and Cohen (1997) theorise that developmentally these young men are very likely to need much different support and intervention than young women with Rhein et al (1997) expanding on this to offer the explanation that where young fathers express disinterest, this is mainly associated with financial insecurity or confusion about how to take care of babies and young children. Later Guterman and Lee (2005) put forward a view that young fathers generally face lack of preparedness for fatherhood both cognitively and emotionally.

The earliest studies of young fathers assumed them to be psychologically unstable (Futterman and Livermore, 1947; Reider, 1948) and went on to suggest that largely they offer little support or concern for young mothers (Vincent, 1961).

These assumptions continue into the present to an extent, as stereotypes of irresponsible young fathers define popular perceptions and discourse (Robinson, 1990). However, additional studies conversely suggest that although some may struggle, many express a strong wish to provide support including work by Rouch (2005) who finds that the majority of subjects within his study claim that early fatherhood has given their lives meaning, as well as protected them from involvement in a range of negative activities. The same piece of work also suggests that the vast majority are keen to be involved and stay connected to their children, subsequently supported by Osborn (2008) who proposes that many young fathers who are not engaged with their children are mainly anguished

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by the situation and this is echoed again by Mcdonnell et al (2009) who suggest that most are delighted by parenthood where involvement with their children is ongoing. In turn, Kiselia (2008, p53) calls for local support services to bear in mind that the target market in question is essentially "young men trying to navigate a complex array of difficult life circumstances that place them at a tremendous disadvantage." Furthermore, according to Cazenave (1979) their situation may also render them unable to support their children financially. Since young fathers are less likely to have broad experience in caring for or being with young children, their needs will often differ significantly from the needs of young mothers with respect to parent education and support (Lero, 2008).

The fact that young fathers tend to recognise their unsuitability to parent can make many very receptive to support with their parenting according to Rouch (2005). This, combined with the increasing amount of support services on offer raises a question as to where the barriers to accessing services may exist.

A view proposed by Knitzer and Bernard (1997) suggests that young fathers tend to believe they are unwelcome by services and inadequate as parents. Later, Quinton, Pollock and Anderson (2002, p3) also found that young fathers described their experiences as being "mostly ignored, marginalized or made uncomfortable" by local services, despite their desire for information, advice and inclusion. Lyra (2004) points to a near universal focus on adolescent mothers leading from conceptions about young men as reckless and irresponsible, and generally absent. In this same study Lyra found that support is also most often centered on prevention of reproduction rather than the needs of young fathers and concludes that almost no research in the area of adolescent pregnancy includes information about the specific needs of young fathers themselves.

It is noteworthy too that Sherriff (2007), who examined several relatively long-standing UK programmes found some groups for young fathers to be very effective but highlights that they are reaching only a small minority. Lemos (2008) more recently adds to this line of argument with information that presents young fathers as persistently feeling excluded by health and youth service professionals who support young mothers.

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Recent guidance by the government (Department for Education and Skills 2005, 2006 Department of Health, 2004, Social Exclusion Unit 2005) seeks to strengthen policy for the target group, acknowledges the need to develop personalised services for young fathers and presents clear considerations for the design and delivery of support services. The Sure Start Children's Centre Practice Guidance issued by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (2006) called on services to be responsive to supporting young fathers and to consult them regularly on whether existing services are accessible and meeting their needs and made a case for better local support and publicity.

This would seem to suggest that SSCC should seek to remove any barriers that are clearly identified by the target market via targeted and closely aligned communications and marketing.

2.3 Word-of-Mouth Marketing

The factors outlined above present a framework within which the barriers may be addressed by the design of the marketing mix for this part of the target audience. Thus far, local research on SSCC has replicated national findings suggesting that young fathers are likely to access such services as a result of word-of-mouth marketing or referrals. This echoes research presented by Kiselia (1995) which produced results to suggest that engaging with young men's peers may prove valuable, with some young men more likely to engage with services if they can bring a friend. There is a large body of literature on word-of-mouth marketing and the tactic has been of interest to marketers since the 1960s (Rogers, 1995). Riesman et al (1950) propose that the value of a product is determined by the enthusiasm derived from the product amongst peers as opposed to its marketing value. Much later, Silverman (2001, p6) develops this to propose that "getting people to talk favorably and often to the right people in the right way about your product is far and away the most important thing that you can do." Balter and Butman (2005, p8) further support this and describe the concept as "honest, genuine sharing of real opinions and information about services." More recently again, Lee et al (2007) develops this theory even further to announce that word-of-mouth has evolved into a specific marketing

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tactic. However, this has been contested by some theorists including Trout (2008) who suggests that the method of marketing in question is largely overrated and can't be relied on alone but must instead be expertly integrated with other elements of the marketing mix in order to be effective.

2.4 Social networking sites (SNS)

Since some of the earlier views there is an increased amount of mechanisms that are available for word-of-mouth marketing to take place including the growth of SNS into daily lives especially amongst young people. Lavenda (2008, p, 1) describes the situation as "the 'irreversible' social networking revolution"

2.4.1 Definition of SNS

Numerous definitions have been put forward including one by Boyd (2008, p119) who describes SNS as web based services that allow users to:

- Construct a public or semi public profile within a bounded system

- Articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection.

- View and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

SNS allow users to create a profile for themselves and share ideas, activities, events, and interests within their individual networks through personal computers or mobile phones and build networks of connections of either people they already know or have met online.

2.4.2 Usage Statistics

According to Ofcom (2008) SNS are part of the wider Web 2.0 content that is enabling self expression, communication and user interaction online. Facebook is the UK's most

popular SNS and now has over 19 million active users. Other popular SNS including Bebo as the second most visited (8.5 million users), then Windows Live Profile (6.9 million users) and MySpace (6.5 million users). Twitter has also grown 3,000 percent over the last 12 months with site visitor numbers of 2.7 million in May 2009.

The use of SNS seems particularly prevalent amongst groups that include the target market in question (children and under 34s). A report cited by Gadsby (2009) revealed that 80 percent of all of the UK's online population visited an SNS in May 2009 with user engagement greatest amongst the younger age groups (15-34 year olds), with monthly usage averaging 5.4 hours. Teens are heavy users of both offline and online media, spending nearly 1.5 hours per day on computer social networking (Hempel and Lehman, 2005). According to a study by the Office for National Statistics, men were more likely to access the internet than women (71 percent compared with 62 percent respectively), and 31 percent of women had never used the internet compared with only 23 percent of men.

The most popular activity of recent Internet users was searching for information about goods or services at 86 percent. This was carried out more by men (88 percent) than women (84 percent). Women's most popular activity was using email at 85 percent, which was men's second most popular, also at 85 percent. Of the activities surveyed, there were only two where women carried out the activity more than men. These were seeking health related information and looking for information related to education, training or courses. Forty percent of recent Internet users stated that they posted messages to chat sites, blogs and newsgroups (up from 20 percent in 2008). There was an increase from 24 percent to 40 percent of recent Internet users who stated they uploaded self created content.

The means by which citizens access the internet is also evolving. According to Text It (2008), 17 million people accessed the Internet on their phone in December 2007. This equates to 23percent of mobile users in UK. Table 1 (Comscore, 2010) illustrates the

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amount of unique visitors and also shows Facebook to again be the most popular site, accessed through mobile media.

Table 1: Top 10 UK Mobile Internet Sites January 2010 (Comscore/GSM 2010)

Top 10 UK Mobile Internet Sites January					
ComScore/GSMA Mobile Media Metrics, January 2010					
Total unique visitors (million)		Total pages viewed (million)		Total minutes (million)	
Facebook	6.3	Facebook	4,049	Facebook	3,077
Google	4.1	Google	1,367	Google	728
Vodafone	3.9	Orange	264	Microsoft	220
Orange	3.6	Apple	230	BBC	150
Telefonica/02	3.5	AOL including Bebo	197	Orange	147
Yahoo!	2.5	Vodafone	149	Apple	140
BBC	2.4	Microsoft	139	AOL including Bebo	127
Apple	2	BBC	137	Vodafone	100
Microsoft	2	eBay	128	Yahoo!	68
Nokia	1.4	Yahoo!	111	Flirtomatic	66
Source: ComScore/GSM, January 2010				via: mobiThinking	

Perhaps most relevant though, was the number of people who readily share brand-related information with others. Forty four percent admitted that they have recommended

product via SNS and 39percent stated that they have discussed a product specifically on Twitter. However, Facebook users seemed to edge out Twitter, with 46percent of respondents talking about or recommending products on the 225 million strong social network. A large scale study by Ipos (2006) places this notion in the wider context of the referral process with indications that 60 million Europeans would be more inclined to buy a service if they had read positive comments about this service on a blog or a SNS.

Consequently many marketers see SNS as the next media frontier and the question of what is the best way for marketers to react to the ensuing threats and opportunities is being posed. Work by Stroud (2008) points out that SNS are complex with many different interactive and competing sites with overlapping functions and applications. Anecdotal evidence suggests that entry on to social media platforms can result in a wider range of strategic and operational benefits and suggests that by inviting feedback, or simply observing conversations, an organisation can learn about customers' needs. An organisation can involve members of the community in the co-creation of value through the generation of ideas (Constantinides and Fountain, 2008, p 231).

However, we are still in the early stages of a somewhat unpredictable arena meaning that there is no clear model from which to work. Gibson (2009, p5) professes "we are only just beginning to see what is possible" in determining how SNS can be integrated successfully within the marketing mix. Thus far, emerging examples of early undertakings from local authorities reveal how publicity can be generated from employing cutting-edge technologies in themselves. These examples include the local authority in Staffordshire Moorlands District Council which was awarded the Beacon Status for Digital Inclusion for community engagement for social networking and Barnet City Council which has developed a tailored website, blogging, micro blogging, picture and video sharing to maintain a dialogue with residents. In recent months, Barnet has placed increasing emphasis on its use of sites such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter and residents are now able to post questions directly to officers on the borough's Facebook page, watch videos highlighting new initiatives such as cashless parking on

YouTube and keep up to speed on events such as school closures using its Twitter message page. Kirklees Council and Essex County Council were among those who set up a Gritter Twitter giving 24-hour updates on road gritting during 2010's bad weather. Somerset County Council have also started a menu-feed on Twitter updating parents on what their children are eating in school.

However, some bloggers are sceptical and Owyang (2008) warns that many organisations are going to do it wrong, by wasting resources, or embarrassing their brand with a campaign that doesn't fit the needs of a community. Another warning note comes from research by the British Library (Manchester, 2008) which found that the skills and enthusiasm for Web 2.0 tools amongst the "Google generation" had been highly overrated, because while the respondents were prepared to use SNS for personal activities, they were sceptical about their relevance to the business world. Godin (2008) expands this further and notes that organisations have to be remarkable to succeed in the marketplace today, which comes down to getting talked about virally both online and offline. He is critical of organisations that attempt a quick fix by bolting on new forms of marketing communication to structures, processes and culture which have yet to evolve from their deeply embedded preoccupations of the mass marketing era.

2.4.3 Maintaining a dialogue

A pertinent issue is the extent to which different segments of local authority citizens may be receptive to using SNS. Li (2007) has coined the term "social technographics" to describe the different ways in which consumers may behave online, which determines how they will respond to approaches from organisations via social networking channels. Some authors suggest that offline identities very much carry over to online behaviour (Boyd, 2001; Smith and Kollock, 1999). Research has demonstrated that people often use SNS to connect with those in their existing networks, rather than to seek out new friends and acquaintances (Ellison et al, 2007). Since it has long been known that people tend to socialise and spend time with others like them (Marsden, 1987), it is reasonable to expect that young fathers from similar backgrounds might migrate toward the same

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services. The experiential focus on community is evident in the suggestion that consumers seek products less for their personal value in use than for their linking values to other "tribe" members (Cova and Cova, 2002, p 595.) Conversations online are assumed to be sincere and honest according to Kaikati and Kaikati (2004) and Thomas (2004) agree by presenting findings to suggest that when information is from a friend, there is an implicit level of trust and credibility awarded to the recommendation.

It has been noted that peer-group and emotional support, as well as a sense of social identity are often a more prominent motivation for participating in online communities than information seeking (Burnett, 2000). Some organisations have embraced the internet to develop "viral" marketing, in which a message can be spread quickly from one person to a handful of friends, who each in turn inform a handful of their friends (Ferguson, 2008).

There is support that messages received through online communities are more believable and trusted than messages received through conventional media (Gillin, 2007) as seen in the prestige attached to bloggers whose comments are widely read, and have on occasions been cited by mainstream media (Edelman and Intelliseek, 2005). Wells (2004) professes that the influential teen is credible, trusted by friends and willing to talk to friends about services and can ultimately serve as a brand ambassador. At the same time, discussion of "brand communities" has formed when individuals become interdependent because of collective identity, shared rituals and moral responsibility to members (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). For example, a person defined as a "critic" is likely to comment on blog postings whereas a "spectator" is not, and someone categorized as "inactive" is unlikely to respond to any type of new media communication. Li (2007) highlights the importance for companies to understand how their customers use new media, establishing what that means for how they should communicate with them, and agreeing on how best to handle the possible loss of control associated with public display of negativity about the business on social networks.

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As indicated, the impact of social network media lies in the interaction between consumers and the community and in the facilitation of "asynchronous, immediate, interactive, low-cost communications" (Miller et al, 2009, p. 306). Relating the phenomenon back to application of word-of-mouth marketing for young fathers, arguably social networking is not about technology but about people relationships and conversations with the sites merely acting as enablers. In turn, this suggests that for a site to remain relevant, it would rely on a continuous dialogue that is valid and involves two-way communication. However, maintaining interaction via SNS requires time effort and stimulation from either content that is generated by users or local authority representatives and an ability to adapt and respond to comments to maintain relevance for the sites.

Staff-generated content, leads us on to Silverman (2001) who warns this approach may negate the benefits of SNS. SNS users depend on information originating from people who are perceived to have little commercial vested interest in persuading someone else to use the service and thus no particular incentive to distort the truth in favour of the service.

There is further evidence that individuals may be resentful of corporate intrusion into what is perceived to be their own community space (Croft, 2008; Hitwise, 2008). A widely publicised incident involved marketing of Cillit Bang cleaning fluid and demonstrated this where a fake blogger named Barry Scott was set up as a marketing vehicle and left positive messages in blogs and posts on other web sites thus creating a realm of bad publicity when he was found to be working on behalf of the company (Johnson, 2005). Similarly, it is reported that when Sony covertly implemented a viral marketing campaign for its Play Station, consumer trust was undermined when they realised that the company had fabricated apparently independent user comments (GamesBlog, 2006; Graft, 2006).

Consequently, this present issues for consideration as to how a useful and relevant dialogue can be stimulated. Mike Freer, Leader or Barnet Council (as cited in Wayne

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2009) has been using social media tools for over two years and believes in the use of the "authentic voice" rather than having "ghost" posts and tweets. Further evidence suggests that when comparing professional and personal services providers, customers prefer to be guided by information from friends and other personal contacts rather than an organisation's formal promotion mix (Harrison-Walker, 2001. These findings may be particularly pertinent to local authorities and young fathers if we pay consideration to proposals from Poh, cited by Miller (2005) who suggests that young males are as media savvy as they are media wary and subsequently highly selective of services. For SNS, some commentators have noted the confusion in users' minds when commercially provided material is mixed with anonymously submitted amateur material, sometimes using adaptations of previously published material (Keegan, 2007; Wilson, 2007).

As the literature and experience of social networking has developed, it has become apparent that entry into the social networking arena is not without risk. According to Leadbetter (2008, p4) "you are what you share" but he also notes: "The optimists describe the web as a conversation. Yet much of the web seems raucous and unruly. More like a bar-room brawl than a moderated discussion." Keen (2007) holds the view that social media is wreaking havoc by allowing self expression to dominate professional content. Given that users of sites can remain anonymous and communicate with each other and not only the administrators, it is clear how bad publicity could also be generated.

Yet, this drawback is challenged by many including Lindsey (2009), who conversely maintains that a bigger risk is not being engaged given that the conversations will or are taking place already. Accepting there will always be "negative' people", Gibson (2009, p5) furthermore suggests that "if councils don't use these tools, the citizens will do it for them and bypass the council entirely."

A key challenge when engaging customers through these SNS therefore will be establishing how to give away power and control while at the same time avoiding embarrassment. Possible issues that may be seen as drawbacks especially for

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organisations who are accountable to the public according to Gibson (2009) include the fact that bad news can travel faster, embarrassing stories can leak out and that staff may say the wrong thing.

Godleman (2009) from Barnet Council suggests that this dichotomy can be addressed by applying "light control" and goes on to explain this as being in control without being controlling. He further states that as experience goes on, it is easy to identify where posts have crossed the line and suggests that constructive criticism should produce constructive well thought out responses.

For a local authority perhaps, nurturing this process is likely to involve striking a fine balance between using pressure to steer the community in the direction that would be in the brand owner's interests, and relinquishing some degree of control of the brand to the community (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001) in order to control the message and manage the online reputation. According to Gibson (2009, p27) "The media have always been a difficult place to navigate and SNS will just need to be treated as another aspect of reputation management. "Successful online brand communities need to include a variety of interests that have a direct, but non-intrusive connection with the brand to generate a sense of belonging to a group and shared interests." (Brown et al, 2007, p 17).

As such, debatably every attempt should be made to reconcile the desire to dominate and control an online community, with the community's desire to retain autonomy as a member-driven community that fosters self-expression. Kozinets (1999) argues that if a local authority takes a step back, it allows the online communities to self organise and in turn groups of virtual communities that explicitly centre upon consumption related interests start to gather. He goes on to profess that it is therefore important that marketers do not try to control the information flow but rather follow, understand and work with it. Bagozzi and Dohlakia (2002) build on this to suggest that the group rather than the product must be the object of nurturance for virtual community builders. According to Solis (2009, p1) "any anthropologist or sociologist will tell you that before attempting to

join any online society, we must conduct initial fieldwork to observe and document the culture, behaviour, communication, customs, traditions and habits of its citizens."

2.5 Conceptual model

The body of information that is available poses several theories for why young fathers may feel disengaged by local support services such as SSCC. There is an agreement that word-of-mouth is an effective marketing tool for this target audience and a large amount of evidence that presents SNS as both an extension of this tactic, and one that cannot be ignored by LCC and other local authorities. There is nonetheless a scarcity of research that reaches an agreement on the particular role that SNS can play for services and acceptable rules of engagement especially for this target market. To address this gap in this literature, explores the perceptions of young fathers and to looks at their experiences and perceptions of these new marketing mediums.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has explored the literature and other relevant information that is available on the key themes that the research question raises and outlines the conceptual model for this study.

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes and explains the methodology used in this study and the methods which informed the choice of instruments, a crucial element in the research process (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004). So far, the literature review has examined the key issues to be researched. To answer the research question and fulfill the research aims, the research philosophy adopted was the principle of interpretive epistemology. Finally the appropriate strategies which were adopted to investigate the research questions and the methods that support the data collection needed are examined carefully within this section.

3.2   Research philosophy

The philosophical perspective should be addressed explicitly as it shapes the choice of research instruments. This project adopted an interpretive epistemological stance to allow for thinking based on the young father's knowledge of the world and inherent layers of meaning formed by their thought, perception and understanding. This perspective also allowed exploratory and explanatory approaches with an understanding that situations are a function of both the individual and circumstances at that time. Given the technology-related discipline of the research question and the unprecedented rate of developments in the area of SNS, this stance also enabled the research to gather data at a particular point with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions (Cohen and Manion, 1994).

3.3 Research strategy

The research strategy adopted a multi-method approach (Saunders et al, 2003). By using two or more methods, the weakness of each method could be minimised and would allow the research to benefit from their corresponding strengths. A multi-method approach also

allowed for the tactic of triangulation (Denzin, 1978) by allowing different methodological viewpoints. Consequently, the project adopted a combination of deductive and inductive research. The literature review and background to the study presented a large body of information that pointed towards several intersecting theories and issues pertinent to the current position of LCC and SSCC and these were subsequently tested by the primary research. However a semi-structured approach also allowed the qualitative answers to generate theories in relation to this specific segment of the market.

3.4 Qualitative and quantitative research

Using qualitative data alongside secondary information shows that the study of SNS is a relatively new discipline. The literature emphasises an epistemology where experiences are constructed via an interaction of technical, objective data, and social and personal ideas.

Relevant quantitative data had already been obtained from the results of 1,175 questionnaires received from the 2009 Liverpool Sure Start Children's Centre consultation. To tackle the research question more specifically it was necessary to gain an understanding of the intersection of word-of-mouth marketing, the application of SNS and issues relating to acceptable "rules of engagement" for young fathers.

An in-depth literature review evaluated secondary sources of information for relevance to the research question. Along with the body of academic sources, further material including policy documents and guidance notes from central government departments and LCC including the Social Networking Policy (a working document) were drawn upon. Trade marketing publications including Marketing and Direct Marketing and regular bulletins from the Chartered Institute of Marketing also contributed towards illustrating the position of the local authority in relation to trends and advancements in the industry.

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A personal account on both Facebook and Twitter and an increasing amount of research and commentary that has become available on the subject of social networking via blogs and websites were utilised along with attendance at several seminars and networking events on the subject including "Make the Most of Facebook in 60 Really Useful Minutes'" at the Liverpool Chamber of commerce on 30 October 2009, Technology for Marketing and Advertising Exhibition at Earls Court, London on 23/24 February 2010 and Social Media for Public Sector Communications and Engagement at the Manchester Digital Agency on 12 March 2009.

3.5 Research Design

3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

The primary research took the form of semi-structured interviews in support of the view that upholds "a major advantage of the interview is its adaptability" (Bell, 1999, p.135). Although based on the same questionnaire schedule, each interview differed according to the responses of the respondents involved, their set of circumstances and SNS usage patterns to allow for generalisations to be made (Bluff, 1997). Polit and Hunglar (199) propose that the semi-structured method offers the researcher flexibility in gathering information from the participants. In support of this, each interview was a conversation with a purposeful and adaptable way of finding things to modify lines of enquiry and follow up responses.

The semi-structured method allowed the interviewer and respondents to build upon answers and construct an effective picture of their viewpoints. It was also selected to gain an understanding of the specific issues amongst young fathers and their perceptions, experiences and willingness to use SNS in relation to services provided by local authority SSCC. This allowed the interviews to proceed with no preconceived view of the content or flow of information in order to elucidate the participants' perceptions of the world without imposing any of the researchers view, therefore avoiding bias to the greatest possible extent and achieving increased reliability. This approach also allowed the young

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fathers to express their views, concerns or opinions freely thus emphasising the focus of qualitative research (Polit and Hunglar, 1995). A questionnaire-based approach was rejected as it may have raised literacy issues for the respondents and resulted in other household members completing the answers negating its validity and reliability.

An interview conducted over the telephone was selected based on convenience given that young fathers are generally busy and dealing with multiple commitments and demands upon their time. The chosen method meant that the interview could be completed at a time and place to suit each interviewee and aimed to minimise external interruptions such as telephones ringing, unexpected guests and childcare problems. If this occurred, it could be paused and re-convened. Furthermore, from the respondent's standpoint, it aimed to tackle any discomfort in the hope that respondents would feel more comfortable disclosing personal views over the phone rather than face to face or in a group. The means of communication was also more comparable with interaction on an SNS than face-to-face interviews or questionnaires. The average length of the interviews were 30 minutes but efforts were made to keep them succinct where possible paying consideration to the fact that long interview periods may have resulted in a reduction in the number of persons willing to participate.

A tape recording of the interviews meant that the researcher could concentrate solely on the process of the interview. However, further explanation and assurance was provided to interviewees to prevent them from feeling anxious which may have led to them being less likely to reveal confidential information

3.5.2 Sampling

Jankowicz (1991, p2) states that sampling can be defined as "the deliberate choice of a number of people about a larger group, the population whom these people represent." As the semi- structured interview was utilised to facilitate in-depth exploration, a purposive sampling technique was adopted due to the need to reach a targeted group. Jankowicz

goes on to suggest that even if a proportion of respondents reply in a certain way, there is an assumption that the others would have replied identically.

Considering early research and work undertaken within my job role as LCC Marketing Product Manager I identified that the Liverpool Connexions Service employs a Young Fathers Project Officer to whom young fathers (expectant and existing) are referred through a number of routes including SSCC. The Connexions Service works in partnership with the Fatherhood Institute to offer a group-mentoring method of supporting young fathers. The "Hit the Ground Crawling" workshops aim to prepare men for the early stages of fatherhood with the intent of increasing confidence in their ability to care for their baby and partner, navigate changes in their lifestyle, integrate their new identity as a father, and form a lasting bond with their child. The group is facilitated by a lead officer, meets regularly and is signposted to relevant services at SSCC where appropriate.

I approached the officer via an initial email followed by a telephone call where I provided background information about what I aimed to achieve with the research and he requested permission from the young fathers to access their contact details for me to carry out telephone interviews. Because this group had already engaged with local support services, it was felt that further respondents should also be accessed to ensure that the views of those who have not accessed or engaged with this particular service were represented. This additional group of respondents was accessed using snowball sampling. Here, one subject gives the researcher the name of another subject, who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on (Vogt, 1999). This process is based on the assumption that a link exists between the initial sample and others in the same target population, allowing a series of referrals to be made within a circle of acquaintances (Berg, 1988, as cited in Kotz and Johnson,).

By employing personal networks, I initially contacted a few potential respondents to ask if they knew any young fathers and generated three respondents. This method of

sampling therefore enabled me to access to respondents who may not engage with services.

3.5.3   Data analysis

Respondents accessed through the support group were classified as GP1-7 and those through the snowball sampling method for SB1-3 to code responses. The interviews were transcribed and the central themes identified within the literature review were used to develop a content analysis method to categorise, group, and compare the responses to allow for an analysis of emergent themes. Content analysis is described by Berelson (1952, p14) as "a research technique for the objective and systematic description of manifest content of communications" who furthermore cites it as a product of the electronic age. Using a directed approach the transcripts were each coded to determine and group the common themes for the findings chapter.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Before starting any research, it is important to consider research ethics. Cohen and Manion (1994) remind us that issues relating to ethics could materialise during any stage of a project.

Given that the research involved participants (and their children); the main considerations were consent, confidentiality and anonymity to protect safety and dignity which resulted in the application of a rigorous approach to ethics throughout the study.

Due to the sensitive nature of the subject and the relationships with young fathers that have been carefully developed over time with personnel from a number of partner agencies, I was very aware of the risk of damaging this work and endeavored to engage the respondents with honour and respect at all times and adopted an open and honest approach without discrimination or preconceived ideas. The respondents were informed about the study and what their participation would entail at the point that they agreed to take part in the research. At this point, all respondents could refuse to take part and were

also given a verbal explanation about the interview process. Consent was not only obtained for the interview but also to tape record the conversation and take notes. All respondents were also assured that the interviews would be entirely confidential apart from to the researchers, that the results would be published anonymously and that the data would be destroyed. All interviewees were also informed that they could to withdraw at any time during the interview and to feel free to ask for further explanations. Along with this, all respondents were also invited to receive a copy of the study.

All source material was acknowledged and I strove for validity, accuracy and honesty in the recording of the information and objectivity in the data analysis, conclusions and recommendations. Throughout the research, I obeyed relevant laws and institutional Government guidance including compliance with the UK Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

3.7 Summary

This chapter has outlined the philosophical perspective of interpretive epistemology and research strategy before explaining how the research tools and sampling methods were selected. A summary of the framework that was chosen to analyse the transcriptions of the semi structured interviews is also provided and ethical considerations have also been noted.

4.0 Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the research findings from the semi-structured interviews. Each of the answers provided by the respondents will be analysed against the research aims and key questions and themes identified thus far within the context of the literature review. This chapter will not attempt to draw any conclusions from the data as this will feature in chapter five.

4.2 Respondents

Ten semi-structured interviews on the telephone were conducted. Of these seven had been referred by the Liverpool Connexions Service and SSCC and a further three were accessed by way of snowball sampling. All the interviewees were young fathers under the age of 25 from the Liverpool area.

4.3 Qualitative research

As outlined in chapter three, the primary research method was a semi-structured interview using a qualitative research approach. The data was analysed using a content analysis method and is presented below using a narrative structure based on the themes that emerged during the interviews.

4.3.1 Perceptions, barriers and patterns of use

The responses demonstrated that all but two of those interviewed are aware of the support that is on offer for young fathers. All respondents indicated that they were very receptive to support that was on offer; this is demonstrated by the comment: "We have had a lot of support from all kinds of places" (GP6). All respondents were aware of SSCC and all but two of the respondents had accessed services at SSCC or Hit the

Ground Crawling: "We go the Sure Start, my girlfriend takes the baby to the Young Mums Groups while I am at work" (GP2).

Of the two respondents who had not accessed support, the comment "I didn't know that dads could go" (SB3) and "We are not working at the moment" (SB2) did not explicitly imply that the respondents feel excluded by local services.

It is worth noting that almost half of those who do access SSCC continued to refer to the services as Sure Starts as branding from the Department for Children, Schools and Families has sought to re-brand local Sure Starts as Sure Start Children's Centres since 2003

From the group that had accessed the Hit the Ground Crawling project all cited this specifically as a source of support. Responses relating to the support were very positive, with one respondent expressing disappointment that the pilot period will finish shortly:

- "I have been to meet the other dads a couple of times" (GP4).

- "We go the Sure Start and Chris has helped me loads" (GP3).

Respondents were asked for comments on ways that they may find out about this type of support from their experience. This line of questioning produced varied results pointing towards word-of-mouth referrals from their peers. Half of those interviewed cited friends as their primary source of recommendation: "If I hear about things from my mates, it makes me more likely to give it a go" (GP3) and "I listen to my mates cos we are all on the same wavelength" (GP5). Two interviewees also demonstrated an understanding of how this process works in practice. "I recommended my cousin to go along and he goes to the group now" (GP1) and "Getting the word out is how it works. I would like to encourage more dads to go along and would be willing to go along with them the first time as the more we get the better it will be" (GP3). These two particular respondents were very enthusiastic and willing to encourage others to come along with one expanding on his explanation that he is willing to do voluntary work in this area to benefit both

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himself and others. Other answers included "Probably the Health Visitor" (GP2) and "My girlfriend first got me to go along" (SB1). One interviewee commented that they would initially begin a search for support on the internet.

Each interviewee was asked where their first point of call would be if they needed help on parenting issues. It was clear from the comments that all of those who have engaged with the Hit the Ground Crawling group and SSCC have had very positive experiences. Within these responses, it is important to note that of all of the interviewees who listed this source of help referred to the group leader by name rather than by the service and made positive comments about the personality of the leader and relationship that they had formed. Examples of actual responses included "I would go to group leader, he is sound" (GP1) and "Phone Chris straight away" (GP4). The comments made seemed to suggest that trust is an imperative issue "If I needed support I would phone Chris. He is sound and I know that I can trust him" (GP4). Comments such as "He even helped me when I wasn't happy at the 6th form and wanted to get a job" (GP3) also suggested that the support extends beyond parenthood.

To an extent, it was felt that the source of support would depend upon the nature of issue but one cited their partner. "Obviously I would speak to my girlfriend" (GP3). Others included the health visitor, SSCC, doctors and hospital. Only one of the interviewees mentioned their parents in response to this question. "I would talk to my mum if she was here" (GP3) and one respondent cited specifically that make an effort to not seek support solely from their parents; I don't like bothering my mum all the time (SB1).

Except for one response, it was evident that although the respondents interviewed seek the opinions of their friends on some matters, they do not view their friends as their primary source of support on parenting issues. One interviewee pronounced this as "My friends who haven't got kids are not going to want to sit and listen to me go on about my daughter for hours and hours" (GP3) and "I ask my mates for advice but none of them have got kids at the moment so if I needed help, I would go to the health visitor or Connexions" (GP2).

However, an interviewee who had engaged with the Hit the Ground Crawling project illustrated that spending time with other young fathers was an effective source of support. "Being with other lads with kids helps you to understand" and "We went on a mini-break to Lakes and it was great" (GP7). A similar response demonstrated the role that other fathers can play when the interviewee cited their older brother as a provider of support "cos he has got two lads" (SB1).

Respondents were not very forthcoming about their relationships with the mother of their children. However, one statement on the subject of SNS "I only use it to inbox the baby's mum cos I know that she will get the message on there" (GP4) was revealing.

4.3.2 Rules of Engagement

There was a common lack of clarity around the term Social Networking Sites for the interviewees when questioned until several examples were listed by the interviewer suggesting that the websites are known by and referred to by brand. "I didn't know what you meant by social networking sites but oh yes, I use the Facebook" (SB1). It was evident from the range of comments that attitudes differ widely amongst the interviewees. Interestingly, of all those interviewed, Facebook was the only social media platform used.

Amongst these responses, habits and level of usage varied widely from no usage to one respondent (GP3) who described themselves as "on Facebook all the time!" and one who even commented that he was logged into Facebook during the telephone interview (GP6). Another respondent replied that he accesses the site "every day, sometimes more than once" (GP1). Others chose to quantify their use in time such as "I am on there about an hour a day" (GP3).

Reasons for non-usage included some responses that alluded to multiple time demands, for example, "Don't have as much time with the baby, since we had the baby, my life has gone nuts, I would rather use my phone credit for texting" (SB2). Within this response

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and others there was some sense of the interviewees' current life circumstance influencing their choice to refrain from SNS; "Can't be doing with it cos when I can get on the internet my girlfriend goes off her head cos she doesn't trust me" (SB3) and "I have just moved in so I am still trying to get the internet up and running and the only thing that I am bothered about at the moment is looking for a job so if I went on the internet it would be for that" (GP7).

Several respondents expressed a lack of interest in computers and SNS in general; "I am not really a computer person" (GP2). Another respondent has a more overarching view that "this generation are on computers too much and are forgetting how to talk face to face. I just prefer picking up the phone or actually going to see people, I know that sounds weird. People are on them well too much in my opinion" (GP5).

In the same vein, without prompting five respondents who are both users and non-users voluntarily commented that SNS are used heavily amongst their peer group and suggested that in their opinion this may be to their detriment:

- "I know it sounds mad cos I am young lad and that but I am just not into it" (GP5).

- "Most of my friends are face book mad" (GP4).

- "All of my mates are on there" (GP7).

- "Yes, everybody is on it" (SB2).

- "I am not an addict like some of my mates." (SB1)

Interestingly, one respondent pointed out that they only use Facebook as a means of email communication and use this platform given that the mother of his child uses it demonstrating that he is modifying his behaviour according to that of his peers. Another response also demonstrated this effect; "I am on there, mainly cos everyone else is but I don't use it (SB2).

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When those who had responded to say that they use SNS (Facebook) were asked about what functions they use, all responded to say have set up their own personal profile "I have got my own page" (GP6) and most commented that they talk to friends whom they already know and comment on statuses. "I upload photies, updates my status and comment on others" (GP1). All respondents were asked if they use SNS to talk to existing friends or make friends online. With one exception, all of those interviewed only talk to people that they know already. "When I am chatting with my mates, you get talking to people and start having a laugh" (GP3). Further comments made by this interviewee on the subject of making friends online were very clear that he only talks to friends of friends within their circle of friends. None of the respondents reported that they discuss parenting issues online although the majority do use the sites to upload photographs; "I put photos of the baby on there for my brother to see cos he lives away in the army" (SB1).

Respondents cited that they access the sites mainly from home and their mobile phones; "I go on it on my phone cos I get the internet free" (GP1). One respondent uses the computer at the college where he attends a course and one accesses Facebook at work.

Privacy and safety were common concerns amongst both users and non-users:

- "Everyone can get on and everyone can see everything about you" (GP5).

- "Well, you hear all these horror stories about how people can use your details" (GP3).

- "You have to be careful cos you don't know who you are talking to online" (GP5).

Two interviewees clearly stated that they do not use SNS as a result of trepidation around these issues. "They are a big danger, they are just bad. There are young girls being groomed online. I have seen it in the Echo." (GP7) and "Paedophiles and pervs go on Facebook." (SB2)

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The increasing number of software applications and the changing functions of Facebook were cited as area for discussion:

- "There is so much on there that you just get distracted, you click on something and it just takes you somewhere completely different" (SB1).

- "There is loads of advertising on there now" (SB2).

- "I don't understand that Farmville game and it is all over the Facebook now" (GP4).

- "I heard that they have changed the privacy settings so everyone can see all kinds of your stuff that is on there" (SB1).

Opinions on the role of support service providers setting up SNS appeared equivocal, echoing research from the British Library (2008) around the vagueness of the role it can play. "I would go on to a page to have a look at what was going on but would not talk about anything private" (SB1). "I am not sure if I would go on something like that, yes I suppose, I might have a look" (GP5). For those who had already expressed clear views on why they do not use SNS, their standpoint remained clear; "No, it's just not my thing" (GP7) and "I am just not into it" (GP2). However, intriguingly, on this subject the two respondents who had vocalised enthusiastic opinions in support of the process of word-of-mouth referrals and had furthermore expressed a desire to help were irrefutably in favour of the establishment of a presence on SNS. "I think it's a good idea." (GP1) and "Facebook pages would be good, It would be good if you could go on there and have look when the classes start and when the group meets up cos I am always forgetting" (GP3). The same respondent also went on to declare enthusiastically "It is just one more way and the more people we get the better."

Further exploration of this issue to discuss who would keep conversations flowing suggested "If anyone came to talk to us they would need to make it clear who they were." (SB1) "It would be good if Chris was on there, cos we already know he is sound" (GP6).

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This comment suggests that trust and the importance of building personal relationships (as identified earlier in relation to the provision of support) may lead to positive attitudes to using SNS and participating online.

For the topics of conversation that would be acceptable, respondents expressed views that they should not be for the sole purpose of parenting support. "Facebook pages would be great but nothing too deep. We would wanna go on and have a laugh" (GP3). One respondent who had welcomed the introduction of a site was also quick to note that he would not personally use the site to directly discuss parenting issues "Oh no I just wouldn't feel comfortable talking about anything to do with the baby on there"(GP1). Those who were more reticent also expressed concerns about speaking about sensitive issues and privacy "I would rather speak to someone face to face" (GP2).

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

The immense impact of SNS on the world of marketing and communications and its subsequent entry into the daily lives of so many people means that it can no longer be ignored by local authorities. The medium presents itself as a low cost and immediate communication channel at time when pressure is growing to maximise resources. Research continues to find that young fathers feel largely disengaged by local support services including SSCC, a segment of the market for whom SNS and word-of-mouth is relevant according to available statistics.

However this is new territory for marketers and many seek to establish ways to successfully harness the new methods whilst taking care not to alienate segments of the market or damage corporate reputations.

There is a volume of academic work both research and national on the factors pertinent to young fathers and the ways that word-of-mouth marketing can work in practice. However, although commentary on SNS and its application to the business world is growing, it remains limited and does not apply directly to this segment of citizens, thus giving rise to the research question:

Establishing acceptable "rules of engagement" to encourage young fathers to access services at Sure Start Children's Centres (SSCS) through Social Networking Sites (SNS)

An evaluation of the methodology, conclusion of the research question and limitations of the study are outlined below.

5.2 Critical evaluation of methodology

An evaluation of the research methodology was undertaken before the start of the research project. Here the main considerations were the challenges of accessing young

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fathers and the multiple demands upon their time. A method was required which could utilise existing material and support new research. Yin (1984) defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context and this method was therefore selected for this piece of research.

Within the sampling process it was critical that the data came from respondents that would represent the wider population accurately and a review of the various sampling methods was undertaken. It was concluded that a purposive non random sampling technique would be selected. Based on early research and work undertaken within my job role I identified that the Liverpool Connexions Service employs a Young Fathers Project Officer to whom young fathers (expectant and existing) are referred. The Connexions Service works in partnership with the Fatherhood Institute to offer a group-mentoring method of supporting young fathers called Hit the Ground Crawling in connection with SSCC. A further group of respondents, who had not engaged with the group, were also accessed by means of snowball sampling to identify hidden groups. However, the sample sizes were relatively small and although the research was useful, for this reason should be viewed as an initial survey that provides potential avenues for research for a larger project, rather than being conclusive in and of itself and should not be generalised to the whole population of all young fathers.

A semi structured interview was selected as the most appropriate research method to give the interviewee free licence to talk about whatever came up in the conversation. This was selected to elicit the interviewee's responses without leading the discussion and allowed the interviewer to build a rapport with the respondent. To facilitate the data collection a discussion guide was developed (Appendix 2).The method was successful and broad open ended questions allowed respondents to provide their views freely. Although the themes were common, each of the interviews was very individual given that some of the respondents do not use SNS. The interviewing technique used probes to explore issues and asked for explanations and examples where appropriate. At some points, silence also

proved to be an effective instigator for further discussion. Some disadvantages included the potentials for participant bias, interviewer bias given that researcher was asking questions relating to their own organisation. Reliability is a concern with qualitative research in general and an interviewer needs to be cognisant of the type and form of data generated during the conduct of the interview given that information was flowing freely. Other challenges were interruptions during the telephone calls which led to one of the interviews being reconvened and the inability for the results to record non verbal gestures, or body language. Several of the respondents also spoke rather quickly which resulted in the action of transcribing the interviews being labour intensive.

At the data analysis stage, the taped interviews were transcribed and content was analysed for key themes that emerged. Weber (1990, p12) notes: "To make valid inferences from the text, it is important that the classification procedure be reliable in the sense of being consistent." Care was therefore taken to minimise ambiguity that may have arose from different word meanings and inferences. It was also important to bear in mind that the researcher had been working closely on the project and may look for meaning in responses pertaining to intrinsic factors and their individual perceptions

5.3 Conclusions about the research question

Establishing acceptable "rules of engagement" to encourage young fathers to access services at Sure Start Children's Centres (SSCS) through social networking sites (SNS)

The research collection was carried out using the key themes identified in the literature review through various lines of questioning, using the discussion guide according to differing responses. The content was analysed against the body of information already available outline in chapter two. The findings set out to establish initial 'rules of engagement' that would involve LCC establishing presence on SNS through an initial informal referral process that would stimulate and mirror real life experiences and behaviour.

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5.3.1 Perceptions, barriers and patterns of use

During the discussions, respondents spoke freely about their role as a father and indicated a clear willingness to be involved with the parenting of their young children and readiness to engage with available support. Interestingly, none of those interviewed cited experiences of specifically feeling excluded from services or mentioned negative experiences which contests studies by Knitzer and Bernard (1997) and Quinton et al (2002). Encouragingly, this suggests that the support that has been taken up to date by the group at SSCC and through the Hit the Ground Crawling Group within this study has had a positive effect. For interviewees who have not accessed support services, the barriers could be tackled by modified communication messages given that they did not know they could go or only thought it was for working parents.

To an extent it was apparent that the interviewees do not necessarily view fatherhood as a distinct element of their lives but rather a role that is integrated with their other functions as a young adult. However, responses did illustrate that some interviewees are dealing with complex situations and problems that include unemployment, financial insecurity, relationship issues and challenging living arrangements, echoing a study by Kiselica (2008) that reminds services to make concession for the fact that young fathers are inevitably navigating complicated life circumstances. Comments such as "He helped me when I wanted to leave the sixth form and get a job" (GP3) and "I don't get the chance to see my friends as much anymore" (GP2) illustrated how fatherhood has disrupted their previous trajectory towards adulthood.

The results also revealed that the young fathers view themselves as somewhat set apart from their peers who do not have children with regard to discussing their children and seeking support. It was also interesting to witness that only one interviewee mentioned their parents as a first point of call for support with one citing specifically that they prefer not to seek the advice of parents. This again alludes to a willingness to accept responsibilities and emphasises the need for the provision of continuing ongoing professional and targeted support, a view underpinned by Rouch (2005).

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Although the young fathers may not largely seek support from their peers on parenting issues, the research demonstrated that word-of-mouth can be regarded as the primary mechanism that encourages uptake of general services for this group. These results reinforce national and local research presented by LCC to suggest that young fathers trust recommendations, and directly upholds findings from Kiselia (1995) that some young men are more likely to engage with services if they can bring a friend. However this in turn highlights a clear need for young fathers to connect with others in the same situation.

Most respondents cited that they would be most likely to access services as a result of recommendations and some even elaborated on this by expressing an understanding of how this process works. One interviewee was very enthusiastic and described a desire to increase his involvement and accept responsibility for contacting and engaging with other young fathers. Here we are reminded of a very early suggestion on word-of-mouth made by Rieseman et al (1950) that the value of a service is determined by the enthusiasm derived from the service amongst its peers. It can be concluded therefore that any such enthusiasm by an existing service user should be harnessed where possible.

From the comments made regarding sources of support on parenting issues, although it was clear that professional organisations such as SSCC are crucial to the interviewees, relationships with individual professionals are of paramount importance. The initial responses to the question named the Hit the Ground Crawling group leader by name rather than by the service and others cited their health visitor. Further probing on the significance of these relationships revealed trust and respect to be the basis upon which they are formed. One respondent expressed his disappointment the Hit the Ground Crawling group is due to end; underlining how short term programmes may damage fragile relationships that take time to build.

Although one cited his girlfriend, the weight of opinion was that the interviewees would not look to their peers. It would appear to be intrinsically recognised by the young fathers that they are in a unique situation and may need to look outside of their immediate circle of friends and family for advice. One interview framed this well: "My friends who

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haven't got kids are not going to want to sit and listen to me go on about my daughter for hours and hours" (GP3). However, further explanation demonstrated that meeting other young fathers has provided an excellent source of support including events when they have met up through services and where respondents have male family members including cousins and brothers who are parents. It therefore seems that word-of-mouth mechanisms which service young fathers well in other areas of their lives function less well for parenting issues; again highlighting a gap which supports Sherriff"s comments that young fathers need to be connected to each other (2007).

5.3.2 Rules of Engagement

When the discussion moved on to SNS, Facebook was the only social media platform accessed by the group of interviewees with more than half commenting that they access it. This reflects figures produced by Ofcom (2008) which state that Facebook is the UK's most popular site. Although the interviewer initially posed a general question on the subject of SNS, the respondents were not familiar with the term social networking sites and following prompts knew the concept only by the brand name of Facebook. The implications here for the design of marketing and communications for this group may be such that any campaign should initially direct efforts at Facebook and refer to the site by its brand name. Similarly, respondents used terms including "inbox" to suggest emailing, a term used by online communities which could be adopted by marketing campaigns to be used in messages. This also supports work that describes young fathers as "media savvy" a factor recognized by Poh, cited by Miller (2005).

At the point at which the subject of SNS was raised, it was intriguing to note that more than half of the respondents voluntarily offered a negative opinion on the level of use by their peers. Similarly some even made comments to suggest that they experience guilt if they use the sites. This included users and non-users alike and here their comments indicated that fatherhood sets them apart from others by restricting their usage or preventing them from using SNS, given that it is not meaningful compared to their other priorities as parents. This points towards a sense that fatherhood has removed them from

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their former way of being. These statements also present an interesting perspective that underpin comments made by Rouch (2005) that propose that young fatherhood can limit involvement in negative activities, in this case SNS.

There seemed to be a dichotomy amongst those respondents who have embraced SNS and subsequently integrated it into their daily lives and those who self-classify themselves as 'non-computer people'. Those who make a conscious decision not to use SNS were again keen to set themselves apart from their peers by offering views on the excessive use of computers and information technology.

Fears pertaining to privacy and the protection of their children present barriers to engaging with SNS for this particular group. Annotations regarding fears of paedophiles illustrate that additional concerns are borne as a result of becoming a parent. Given the direction from central government regarding increasing the number of citizens can access to services online, LCC will need to address this issue thoroughly and accordingly through training and support. Although it would appear that the concerns will ultimately be prohibitive for some accessing the site for their own benefit, it could plausibly be argued that they should be equipped with online safety skills to pass on to their children.

The majority of respondents have access to the internet at home and most also access it through their mobile phone, reflecting published national statistics charting the increase of mobile internet usage. For those who do access SNS, high levels of usage again reflected statistics to show a fairly high average amongst this age group. However, barriers to accessing the internet identified by the research including relationship issues, living arrangements and time constraints echo proposals that young fathers will ultimately transfer constraints from their lives to how they behave online (Hargittai , 2007) and marketing campaigns should factor in these possible disruptions that may result in intermittent internet access by integrating the use of SNS with other mediums.

Ellison (2007) theorises that most users of SNS speak to existing friends and the results supported this view with all but one of the Facebook users only talking to existing friends

online. For the other respondent, who meets friends of friends online, it was interesting that the only respondent was keen to help initiate contact with other fathers, suggesting that personalities and existing character traits are played out online. (Boyd, 2001)

It was clear that parenting is not a subject of habitual online conversation and some made it clear that they felt that this was not appropriate, challenging theories for this group from Burnett (2000) and (Wellman 1994) that emotional support is sought through online communities. It seemed apparent that the respondents were unsure as to the value of a service specific or support page: although it was clear again that personalities and relationship are as important online, with some of the respondents suggesting that it would be a good idea to have a page to connect young fathers and the group leader. The popular view was that respondents would only want to talk to people online whom they already knew, confirming findings from Croft (2008) that individuals can be resentful of corporate intrusion into their personal space whilst contending a view from Kaikati and Kaikati (2004) that people automatically trust people online in this case. A particular interesting comment stated that there should be "nothing too deep on there" (GP3) and others noted the value of having listings and meeting times on a particular page.

Li (2007) used the term "social technographics' to describe how different consumers behave online and for the young fathers when the concept of pages were suggested, those who professed to being non-computer-users maintained their standpoint that they would not access such a page. This challenges theories that present social networking as the next frontier and cements the need to ensure that it compliments other elements of the marketing mix for SSCC.

This research can therefore conclude that SNS cannot be ignored given its exponential growth. In the context of young fathers it would appear that an organic and non-intrusive approach would be appropriate and advisable. Given the responses regarding service specific support, the results point towards Kozinet's (2009) recommendations that organisations should take a step back. In line with theories, online users are guided by friends and this study produced information to suggest that young fathers value

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relationships with their friends and with professionals from service providers more than the service itself. The support services on offer are being met with positive reactions amongst this group and this enthusiasm could be harnessed, as proposed by Well (2004), to create brand ambassadors. To begin, perhaps volunteers who benefit from services and actively seek new friends on SNS could be invited to establish pages that list dates and times of relevant support and talk to young fathers through their friends and extended networks of friends of friends. Professionals who gain the trust of the group could also be invited to become friends online.

Initially, at least the recommendation from this study would be to proceed with caution using an unbranded approach. It would seem that the need for young fathers to be connected to each other is a higher priority than establishing an LCC branded presence on SNS and is more likely to increase access to services and achieve overall targets rather than establishing a series of service led pages. Furthermore, the uncertainty amongst the respondents of the role of SNS for services, already summarised by Gibson (2009) as "We are only just beginning to see what is possible" suggests that a strategy should be implemented carefully. Besides this, it would be imprudent to assume that we understand how this segment of the market will behave online given that we are developing our understanding of SNS and indeed, young fathers. Using an informal approach to connect young fathers and professionals would allow LCC to witness how dialogue develops and understand needs whilst encouraging more young fathers to engage with services. In turn, this method would also minimise risk in that it would not be LCC branded should any negative situations arise.

As a result of the findings, it is also important to remember that although Facebook is the most popular site and used for the activities listed currently, this may change. A particularly illuminating statement "that Farmville game and it is all over Facebook now." (GP4) refers to the increasing number of games online that may attract and repel some segments of the market suggesting that any SNS strategy must maintain agility to be successful. Finally, the findings also concluded that the tactics adopted should be

monitored closely given the unprecedented changes within this sector that are adapting the face of communication. As Wooley (1998, p1) warns "if you think what exists today is permanent and forever true, you inevitably get your head handed to you."

5.4 Limitations of the study

The study was limited for several reasons. It is acknowledged that it will only serve to partially describe the situation in a local area. To improve this, further research should be carried out and segmented for various markets to obtain a more accurate picture of the implications for local authorities. This could include a larger sample size and further research for comparison purposes with other groups that may include older fathers and mothers and young men of the same age who are not parents. The study did not ask for information on the ethnicity of the young fathers which may have produced an area for further study. The interviews were also time bound which had an impact on upon the amount of information that could be collected.

All of the interviewees live in the Merseyside area. Given that this area is urban suggesting to an extent that young fathers live within close vicinity of their peers and other young fathers, a different set of results may have been produced from a sample that lived in a rural area. Equally, the study did not examine how long the fathers had lived in the local area that may have sought to explore the extent to which established networks have an effect.

Furthermore, the sampling method may have introduced some bias as purposive sampling, can potentially "open the door" to additional sources of bias (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994) and to an extent relies on the interviewees' willingness to be interviewed. A further source of bias may also have been introduced to an extent given that the interviewer works for LCC.

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An approach to answering the research question which may have produced interesting responses would have been to conduct an observational experiment by establishing a trial SNS to monitor behaviour online over time.

Social networking is such a complex and rapidly evolving subject and even throughout this study and during the interviews, sub-themes emerged. For this reason, attempts were made to ensure that the research remained focused on the question specifically and as a direct result of issues arising during interviews, further research would be recommended on the perceived risks of using the sites, motivations for choice of sites, and the value of relationships online. Further investigation would also need to be made into the practicalities of administering the sites by LCC employees and a study would need to examine the implications of introducing and mainstreaming these methods for the information technology team and infrastructure within LCC.

5.5 Summary

The chapter has recapped upon the key themes and research question within the context of the findings and presents a series of conclusions. The limitations of the study have been analysed and opportunities for further related research have been identified.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

The following recommendations have been made in relation to the research question, aims of the investigation and key themes that emerged during the primary research.

6.1.1 Perceptions, barriers and patterns of use

<u>Short term</u>

- LCC Marketing Services to design a marketing mix that takes into account the perceptions discussed in particular that young fathers may:

    Face complex life circumstances

    Feel isolated by their peers in respect of parenthood but may not necessarily define themselves as a fathers

- LCC Marketing Services to design sub campaigns with the following messages:

    Fathers can access support

    Fathers who are not working can access support

    Not a Facebook person? Sign up for updates to your mobile

- Continue to closely align all SSCC branding with the Sure Start guidelines given that it is widely known and understood.

- Throughout access with all young fathers, continually encourage them to refer other young fathers through their personal networks and investigate ways to incentivise this process.

Medium Term

- Central and local government to provide extra capacity and longer term funding for programmes that are specifically designed to support young fathers.

6.1.2 Rules of engagement

Short term

- SSCC invite "brand ambassadors' to volunteer to a link that lists timetable and updates to their Facebook pages. At the point at which local services become aware of a young father (expectant or existing), he should be given the volunteer's Facebook page and details. Members could then encourage others to join in turn through their networks. Agility should be maintained by adding live information and updates on meetings, timetables and local services. It is recommended that the site should not be branded or modified but professionals working closely with the young fathers or have gained trust should request to join. The volunteer should receive informal guidance and the page should include a Charter of Respect to which members sign up to upon joining that requires members to identify themselves online.

- Refer to and market Facebook as the brand name Facebook rather than social networking sites and identity and use relevant language to encourage young fathers to sign up e.g. inboxing.

Medium term

- Establish training and offer sessions for young fathers to safeguard themselves online and on SNS. This could also be marketed to young fathers within their role of protecting their children when they go online

- Undertake detailed consultation of young fathers including focus groups, observations and reports on the SNS sites to develop a sophisticated

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understanding of how they behave off line and online Detailed plans should then be drawn up for identifying and engaging with groups.

- Review statistics, functions and usage of SNS to ensure that Facebook remains the SNS of choice.

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Appendix One

Liverpool City Council – Our Vision, Aims, Values and Principles

Our vision

Liverpool City Council is committed to working in partnership from a basis of sound financial and strategic planning to achieve a thriving international city that can compete on a world stage as a place to live, work and visit.

To do this we will pursue three long-term aims, to be underpinned by ten priority themes reflecting the ambition, challenge and complexity of Liverpool.

Aim 1: Grow the city's economy

Make Liverpool a first choice for investment and growth by working with the private, not-for-profit and public sectors quickly and effectively, with an emphasis on quality of infrastructure.

Promote enterprise, trade and jobs.

Exploit the city's wider cultural advantage to attract and retain visitors, workers and residents.

Aim 2: Develop our communities

Provide sustainable communities through access to decent homes and best practice in environment management including, recycling, street cleansing and environmental enforcement against dereliction and environmental detractors.

Challenge crime and antisocial behaviour, safeguarding young people from becoming perpetrators or victims.

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Increase peoples' sense of influence in decisions affecting their lives and communities through an open, fair and accountable neighbourhood-driven processes.

Aim 3: Empower our residents

Ensure safeguarding and inclusion of the most needy and excluded groups in the city providing equality and real opportunity for improvement and enhanced quality of life.

Confront barriers to employment and training through lack of access, deprivation, discrimination and poor health to increase the proportion of the city's labour force in employment.

Developing first rate education and training from early years to increase the skill base of our workforce and further position Liverpool as a prime destination for graduate retention.

Our values and principles

We have a new set of values to guide staff and members in our day-to-day work.

We take **pride** in our city and our achievements and are committed to **working together** for the benefit of citizens, customers and the residents of Liverpool.

We are committed to providing the **best services** we can.

We recognise diverse viewpoints and will **communicate clearly and openly** about our decisions and actions, including the reasons for those decisions and the outcome of any consultation.

We will work in a manner that reflects **integrity** and a sense of **corporate and environmental responsibility**.

We will act with **respect and courtesy** at all times and this will be demonstrated in our actions and our communications. We will strive to resolve issues at the earliest opportunity.

We will promote these principles through **leadership and example.**

Appendix 2 – Semi-structured interview discussion guide

Turn on recorder

Introduce myself, check that the time is convenient and my project (research questions; objectives; how information given will be used), thank the interviewee for taking part

Ethical issues:

Advise interviewees that their contribution to the interview will act as their verbal consent to participate in my evaluation project

Advise interviewees that information given will be anonymised and their participation will be kept confidential and destroyed following analysis

Explain that interviewee is free to ask at any time for access to the information they provide and may withdraw at any time.

Ask if they have any questions or comments about the above and how their contribution will be used

Ask interviewee to verbally confirm willingness to participate and have their contributions used in my project

Explain that the questions are used as a guide and that they should feel free to talk about any of the subjects.

Questions

What local support services for parents do you access?

If not, why?

How do you get to hear about these types of services?

If you were looking for support with any parenting issues, where would you go and why?

Do you use SNS such as Facebook, Twitter, MSN?

If so,   Which ones?

                        How often do you access them?

                        What for?

                        How and where do you access SNS?

                        Online, do you talk to people you know or make friends online?

                        What do you talk about or post about online?

If not, why not?

What do you think of the idea of a social networking site (Facebook page) that would connect young fathers?

How would you see such a page remaining interesting and live?

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Appendix 3 - Key research findings coded by themes

<u>Access to SSCC and Hit the Ground Crawling</u>

GP1   I go to the Connexions

GP2   We go the Sure Start, my girlfriend takes the baby to the young mums groups while I am at work.

GP 3   We go the Sure Start and Chris has helped me loads. I think it's a real shame that the funding has stopped. He even helped me when I wasn't happy at the 6th form and wanted to get a job.

GP4   I have been to meet the other dads a couple of times

GP 6   We go to the Kensington Sure Start. I wanna go the dads group at Dingle too but so far it has only been on a Saturday when I am at work

GP7   Yes I have had advice from the Sure Starts

SB1   I take the baby to the crèche

Negative

SB2   I didn't know that dads could go.

SB3   We are not working at the moment.

<u>Word-Of-Mouth</u>

GP1   I recommended my cousin to go along and he goes the group now too.

GP2   Probably the health visitor

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GP3	If I hear about things from my mates, it makes me more likely to give it a go. Getting the word out is how it works. I would like to encourage more dads to go along and would be willing to go along with them first time as the more we get the better it will be.
GP4	I am not sure if I would go along, I like to suss things out for myself.
GP5	I listen to my mates cos we are all on the same wavelength.
GP7	Being with other lads with kids helps you to understand. We went on a mini-break to Lakes and it was great
SB1	My girlfriend first got me to go along.
SB3	I look for things on the internet. Start off by putting a search in Google
SB2	Don't know really

Support with Parenting Issues

GP 3	I would talk to my mum if she was here. Obviously I would speak to my girlfriend.
GP6	We have had a lot of support from all kinds of places.
SB1	My brother cos he has got two lads, I don't like bothering my mum all the time.
SB2	Don't really feel like we need that much cos we are both still at home
SB3	I am not sure really.

Friends

GP5	Of course I would talk to my mates as we are all on the same wavelength

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GP3   My friends who haven't got kids are not going to want to sit and listen to me go on about my daughter for hours and hours so I would ask Chris or ask at the Sure Start.

GP 2   I ask my mates for advice but none of them have got kids at the moment and I don't get the chance to see my friends anymore so if I needed help, I would want it face to face and straight away. Would go to the health visitor or Connexions

Other

GP7   If the baby had spots or anything like that I would go straight to the hospital or the doctor. Our health visitor has been really good as well.

Support from Hit the Ground Crawling

GP 1   I would go to group leader, he is sound.

GP4   If I needed support I would phone Chris straight away. He is sound and I know that I can trust him.

Basic Patterns

SB1   I don't know what you mean (by SNS followed by prompt), oh yes I use

Facebook

SB2   I used to go on it.

GP1   I am on Facebook.

GP3   Facebook, yes

GP4   Yes I have got a Facebook.

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GP6   Yes….Facebook

<u>Why Not?</u>

GP2   No I don't go on the internet. I just find the internet boring, flat and I
                 don't see the point in Facebook at all. I have never been in to them and I
                 am not a computer person. I just prefer picking up the phone or actually
                 going to see people. I know that sounds weird

GP5   I don't go on the internet. I know that sounds mad cos I am a young lad
                 Everyone can get to know everything, there is no privacy. Everyone can
                 see everything about you and I just don't like the idea of it. People are on
                 computers these days way too much and are forgetting how to
                 communicate with each other

SB2   Don't have as much time now. Since we had the baby my life has gone
                 nuts. I would rather use my phone credit for texting.

SB3   Cant be doing with it cos when I can get on the internet, my girlfriend
                 goes off her head cos she doesn't trust me

GP7   I have just moved in so I am still trying to get the internet up and running.
                 The only thing that I am bothered about at the moment is looking for a job
                 when I can get on the internet it will be for that …They are a big danger,
                 they are just bad. There are young girls being groomed online, I have seen
                 it in the Echo

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References to Friends

GP4   I have got a Facebook but it doesn't really bother me but most of my friends are on Facebook, they are Facebook mad. I don't really get the time

GP7   All of my mates are on there though

SB2   Yes everybody is on there

SB3   I am on there mainly cos everyone else is but I don't use it

SB1   I am not an addict like some of my mates

Functions

GP1   I upload photies, update my status and comment on others.

SB1   I put photos of the baby on there for my brother to see cos he lives away in the army

GP3   When I am chatting with my mates you get talking to people and start having a laugh.

GP4   The only time I go on is to inbox the baby's mum cos I know she will get the message on there

GP6   I have got my own page and use it to chat to my mates

GP3   I wanna check that my mates are all right and see what has gone on in their day.

<u>How often</u>

GP1   I go on Facebook everyday (laughs) sometimes more than once. I use it to get in touch with friends and make new friends. They are friends of friends; you get chatting and start having a laugh.

GP3   On Facebook all the time

GP6   I am on it now

SB 1   All the time cos I have got it on my phone, that's bad isn't it?

<u>Access</u>

SB1   On my phone

GP1   I use it on my phone, mostly cos I get free internet

GP3   On my phone, at home and sometimes at work

GP4   I have the internet on my phone but I use my credit for texting. I use the computers at college

GP5   I can get the internet on my mobile phone but I don't bother

GP6   At home.

<u>Concerns about privacy</u>

GP3   Well you hear all these horror stories about how people can use your details

GP5   Everyone can get and everyone can see everything about you. You have to be careful cos you don't know who you are talking to online

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SB1   I heard that they changed the privacy settings so everyone can see all kinds of your stuff that is on there.

SB2   Paedophiles and pervs go on Facebook.

GP7   They are a big danger they are just bad. There are young girls being groomed online. I have seen it in the Echo

Other Issues

SB1   There is so much on there that you just get distracted and forget what you went on there for. You can click on somewhere and it takes you somewhere completely different

SB2   There is loads of advertising on there now.

GP4   I don't understand that Farmville game and it is all over Facebook now.

Rules of Engagement

Positive

GP1   I haven't seen any businesses on there but I think it's a good idea and I would definitely go on and have a look…but just to find out when things are and updates like the opening times. I think that people should definitely identify themselves online. I haven't really seen anything about businesses but I would go on. I would never talk about the baby online, I would not feel comfortable.

GP2   No, I don't think so I am just not into it. I would rather speak to someone face to face

GP3   Facebook pages would be great but nothing too deep cos we wanna go on there an have a laugh. It would be good if you could go on there and have

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a look when the group next meets up cos I am always forgetting. It's just one more way and the more people we get the better

GP5   I am not sure if I would go on something like that, yes I suppose, I might have a look

GP6   It would be good if Chris was on there cos we already know he is sound

GP7   No, It's just not my thing

SB1   I would go on a page to have a look at what was going on but I wouldn't talk about anything private. If they came to talk to us they would need to make it clear who they were.

SB2   I prefer to know who I am talking to, if there was a page, I would have a look if I got the chance.