

Disability Rights Commission

Learning lessons: Communications and Media

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Executive summary

The Learning Narratives project contributes to the broad legacy strategy of the Disability Rights Commission. It considers what the DRC has learnt through its various activities since 2000 and focuses on specific activities or overarching themes where the DRC has had direct involvement.

Each narrative responds to questions such as 'why did we, the DRC, try to do what we did?', 'what worked?' and 'what didn't work and why?' and draws on a range of data sources, not least of which is the experience and expertise of DRC staff, both past and present.

The objective of this learning narrative is to use the experiences of the DRC in its communications and media work to share some of the learning, best practice and practical advice for colleagues across the public sector and beyond.

DRC communications and media: key lessons

Informing communications:

- An organisation will need to understand its audience, and craft its messages accordingly.
- An organisation will need to explicitly acknowledge that disabled people are not a homogenous group, and market segmentation will be required to maximise the impact of messages.
- Establishing a comprehensive and robust stakeholder management system is key to ensuring consistent messages and approaches are adopted across an organisation.

- An organisation needs to be flexible in terms of its own branding, making bespoke decision on a case-by-case basis.
- An organisation will need to ensure all communications, including publications, are fully accessible. This will include methods such as Easy Read.
- Focusing on ensuring internal communications are appropriately established and delivered is equally as important as external work.

Delivering communications:

- There are core elements to all good communications work: research, segmentation, use of multiple communication methods with messages tailored to different audiences, and evaluation.
- Working with partners to shape and deliver the organisation's message is an effective way of embedding the issues you are trying to get across.
- Communicating through partners has proved effective. For example, using 'figure heads' in the difference sectors was a powerful and effective method of delivering the right message – and is a way the DRC could not have done on its own.
- Not using 'disability' in branding can sometimes be an effective way of engaging hard-to-reach groups, such as younger people who don't perhaps want to be associated with the 'D' word.
- Using innovative and nice channels of communication can be highly effective eg Google pay-per-click.

- An organisation should draw on specialist agencies to support their communications.
- An organisation needs to gather intelligence in order to fully understand the media audience it is trying to use.
- Getting the language and tone right in press releases is critical to a positive impact.
- When portraying disability it is vital to reflect the broadest range of impairments, as covered under the Disability Discrimination Act.
- In all illustrations and case studies, it is important to reflect disability in a positive light. This should not include portrayals of disabled people as 'heroes' or 'exceptions'.
- Evaluation is vital in continuously improving an organisation's communications.

Introduction

Since it was established in 2000, the DRC has informed people of their rights, used its influence to change law and policy, and used its legal powers extensively and creatively to clarify and enforce the law.

During this time, the DRC has also developed many national campaigns promoting rights to disabled people, influencing employer and service providers attitudes and behaviours and encouraging policy debate.

As the DRC comes to the end of its life, and the CEHR takes up the work of the existing commissions, it is hoped the DRC's legacy will be the learning from the seven years it has existed. The objective of this learning narrative is to share some of the learning, best practice and practical advice for communication colleagues across the public sector.

The DRC learnt the lessons outlined in this narrative the hard way. There was often a long process of research and sometimes frankly there was just a process of trial and error. Either way, the most important lesson of all to pass on is that the DRC's end should be any disability campaigning organisation's beginning. This document is provided for that reason. **Member of DRC staff**

Early days

In the early days of the DRC, the communications strategy was faced with a rapidly changing external environment. Where once the plight of disabled people was greeted with pity, in the new climate the response was increasingly likely to be one of indignation. Charity gave way to social justice, and the 'medical model' of disability, which saw physical and mental impairment as a problem to be remedied, acceded to a new 'social model', which discerned in the social, economic and political environment itself the structures that turned impairment into the unnecessary frustration of human potential and the disablement of the individual person. Disability rights had finally arrived, twenty years or more after race and gender rights had been enshrined in domestic law.

Initial communications work was without clear direction – a frantic, formless approach which tried to respond to all the important messages being generated by a rapidly changing political and legislative environment.

Upon reflection, it is fair to say that this approach was ambitious and the aim thus became to reach the perceived target audiences of the DRC: disabled people, people who didn't consider themselves to be disabled, businesses, employers, policy makers, not for profit organisations, parents and carers of disabled people.

We were naïve about what we thought we could achieve, but those were the original audiences. It was huge, and we slowly started to realise we couldn't meet half of these people. We needed to start focusing.

Member of DRC staff

Developing the thinking

The communications team was tasked with understanding the markets of importance to the DRC and with thinking of the best way to talk to those markets. The approach developed as a result had a stronger emphasis on best practise communications: research, segmentation, using multiple communications channels with messages tailored to different audiences, and evaluation. The updated DRC communications and media strategy was written on this basis and was intended to push the DRC as a whole towards a more strategic and targeted use of both media and communications.

Importantly this strategy included a greater focus on the use of research to understand key customers including an increased use of consultation and involvement.

(There) began to be a slightly more systematic approach to stakeholder involvement although it took a bit longer until market research was really sharpened up.

Member of DRC staff

The most important assumption challenged by this new strategy was the idea that disabled people were a homogenous group, aware of their disabilities and waiting to be communicated with. This needed to be unpacked in order to create a better media communications strategy.

What struck me back then was a totally unwrapped notion of disabled people and who we were trying to talk to. Were we trying to talk to all of them?

Member of DRC staff

It wasn't hitting the target talking about 'disabled people.

Member of DRC staff

Early research conducted by the Department for Work and Pensions showed there was an obvious tension amongst the general public, including the disabled population, in talking about 'disabled people'. Despite the widened legal definition of the word 'disabled', people still equated this word with wheelchairs and white sticks. On the basis of this, and with a view to pursue an advanced understanding of its key audience – disabled people – the DRC conducted some market research.

The 52 per cent

The research was methodologically robust and was the most comprehensive survey of the attitudes of disabled people to disability ever undertaken by the DRC. Twelve focus groups were conducted which cut across the target audience by age, ethnicity, sex, class and type of disability. In addition to the focus groups, 5,000 quantitative interviews with disabled people were also conducted. The important issue was to recruit the full range of disabilities as represented by the Disability Discrimination Act 2001:

In bringing the groups together we didn't want to speak to people who were visibly disabled. We wanted them to be relaxed, and we particularly wanted to hear people's discrimination and antagonism. **Member of DRC staff**

The key finding of the research was that 52 per cent of disabled people don't associate positively with the 'D word' and when the word 'disability' is used these people will move away from the issue it is connected to. It was found that people prefer to talk about specific disabilities such as having Asperger's or diabetes. Importantly it was found that they don't believe they have anything in common with someone who is 'disabled'.

Based on the opinions expressed, the previously

homogenously viewed group 'disabled people' was split into smaller segments, ranging from those who were coping well with their condition to groups of disabled people who were 'hiding' from their condition and wanted support but nevertheless rejected it .

These groups – known as the 'Bothered' and the 'Hiding' – were the groups that the DRC decided were to be their communications priority. If people were unaffected by their disability and dealing with it then there was less of a need to communicate their rights and the support available to them. In a pragmatic way resources would be best targeted on those segments who coincidentally constituted around half of disabled people – the 52 per cent.

Where every previous campaign had spoken about 'disabled people' and was branded and targeted at the group as a whole, it became clear that (in most cases) this would no longer be appropriate. The strategic implication of these findings was that a communications campaign about 'disability' per se would have little chance of reaching its intended audience and that efforts would be best focused instead on the 52 per cent of disabled people who did not see themselves as 'disabled'.

The wider organisational implications of this research were profound because the DRC believed strongly in the language of the 'disabled community' and in the social model of disability. The research contradicted this standing because it said that 50 per cent of people do not even believe that they have been disabled in any way by society, and don't want to be associated with that notion.

You either respond to this by saying that is false consciousness – if these 'disabled' people understood the social model they would be enlightened and realise their rights, this suggests an approach: keep plugging that

message. Or alternatively you go to them and talk to them in the language they understand. **Member of DRC staff**

The DRC responded by pursuing the latter route as far as possible when communicating to those with rights under the DDA.

The 'D word' debate

There is still no absolute consensus on this issue and there will come many points in all disability organisations, including the CEHR, when decisions will need to be made over the use of the 'D word'. If the use of the word 'disability' is looked at pragmatically and is found to be getting in the way of progress then there will be need to be more conversation about alternative approaches such as impairment specific channels.

Should we be talking more about barriers and people getting support to overcoming those barriers? Is there really a safe way of talking about the 'D word' that doesn't... switch them off completely?

Member of DRC staff

A separate learning narrative – Defining, representing and measuring disability – looks at these issues in more depth.

Case Studies

The narrative now turns to look at how the DRC's research helped inform its communications and media work in practice, through a number of short case studies.

Reaching SMEs

As well as informing a different approach in the way it communicated with disabled people, research again played an important role in the DRC's refinement of the approaches used to reach another key audience: Those with duties under the DDA.

The research was prompted by the exemption in the DDA for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) where it was felt to be important to promote this exemption to SMEs and to develop a robust communications strategy to do so.

A literature review indicated that in terms of communications, the Federation of Small Businesses, Chamber of Commerce and accountants were the best route to reach small businesses by, but in media terms it made much more sense to shape interesting messages for SMEs themselves. This was one of the first times the DRC had talked to an audience and worked out how to communicate with them through market research.

If you understand why it is that SMEs have reservations about employing disabled people you can start from this point and address those concerns: find out why they are worried and target messages accordingly.

Member of DRC staff

The market research – which included focus groups and 1,000 surveys with owners and managers of SMEs – provided

information about what small employers want, think and need as well as detailed market research about their opinions of the DRC and disability. The outcome of this research was a wealth of knowledge which informed a new, more effective approach to communicating to SMEs.

The research also showed that there were people who wanted to make changes but were resisting doing things because they were so overwhelmed by what they had to do. In addition, a strong fear of litigation came through from employers which impacted on the tone used which became more reassuring and clarifying than previously used.

The tone of the communications was ... changed to communicating that (employers) may be employing people covered by this law already, and that (reasonable adjustments) to help them be more effective employees were not very complicated and could be easily done... (This) was counter-intuitive to what commissioners expected of us and a big change from the finger-wagging reprimanding tone we had used before.

Member of DRC staff

Promoting the Disability Equality Duty through the use of Figure Heads

As part of the wide-ranging and varied approach taken to communicate the Disability Equality Duty (DED), one specific approach focused on influencing key stakeholders and relying on them to influence those within their organisations to make a change. This approach, rather than promoting the DED as a blanket awareness raising exercise, was developed through consultation with the target audience. It was uncovered that few, if any, public sector employees were interested in the DED per se except for equality and diversity officers. A culture of complacency

within public sector organisations was identified with respect to disability so it became clear that in this instance they would need to convey messages differently in order to get people to realise that disability was central to everything that they did.

To achieve this, key lever points were identified in the form of 'figure heads' within the public sector – figure heads being individuals it was thought people would listen to. This was intended to give the message of the DED authority and credibility.

People were taking parts of the DED very lightly so the answer was to power up the most influential people in the organisation to understand more about the DED and the benefits of it as a management tool so they could then interrogate people within their organisations to understand what they were doing.

Member of DRC staff

Electronic briefing documents were written specifically for the relevant figure head and sector. This text was agreed and an HTML e-mail was designed and sent directly from the figure head to their top teams. This therefore had the clear advantage of reaching very senior management teams within the public sector that the DRC wouldn't not have otherwise been able to contact and had vastly increased credibility and sense of priority as the message came directly from the most senior person in their organisation.

The mechanics are simple but effective: They pay attention because it is from their boss.

Member of DRC staff

Communicating to young disabled people – the Gojo campaign

Communicating to young disabled people is particularly challenging. As with all disabled people, research had shown that young disabled people were relatively disinterested in issues labelled as being for 'those who are disabled'. This effect was found to be even more pronounced in younger people due to issues such as peer pressure or lack of understanding around disability. Again, however, younger people did relate to having specific impairments.

These communication challenges were faced head-on by the DRC's Gojo campaign – a transport campaign aimed at young disabled people to increase their confidence in using public transport.

Gojo presented us with a real communications challenge. How do we communicate general and specific (impairment related) information to encourage an audience that, either do not consider themselves to be disabled or do not want to be associated with disability, to engage with Gojo and use public transport more?

Member of DRC staff

The DRC worked with a specialist agency in order to try to make the campaign 'trendy and sexy' and to attune it to the sensitivities of young disabled people. The DRC was aware that the audience they wanted to reach had poor transport experiences due to their impairments, but didn't want to be spoken to as young disabled people, but rather just as young people.

Disability is a very personal word – you are talking about something so sensitive that people will switch on and off

depending on the way you handle and deal with that.

Member of DRC staff

A balance therefore had to be struck between developing a cool social marketing campaign that all young people could relate to and would engage in on the one hand, but also conveying specific information about disability on the other.

If half of our audience don't think of themselves as disabled then lets not talk to them about disability. Lets talk to them about their problems in using public transport and that Gojo has information and some solutions that may be relevant to them – and in any case is a cool, fun thing to engage in. **Member of DRC staff**

The campaign thus avoided use of the word disability and instead asked two key questions:

- Do you want to get out more, take control, have more independence and freedom?
- Do you have any difficulties, problems or fears about using public transport?

The emphasis with this work was trying to think in more detail about what the end point of communication was likely to be ie to get more young people to travel on more public transport. This was a reversal of what had happened previously and for the first time there was more weight given to the effect the campaign was having on young disabled people's lives than to conducting the campaign 'the DRC way'. To this end little of the work was branded as being by the DRC.

For more information on the Gojo campaign, a full evaluation of the different communications mechanisms it used and the campaign as a whole is available.

Niche marketing channels

Niche channels have proved particularly useful for reaching the 52 per cent of disabled people who didn't identify themselves as 'disabled'.

One example is 'Google pay per click'. Using this tool, organisations can sponsor specific words that people search for in Google. Once the results have been displayed, Google will display a 'sponsored link' for the organisation related to the specific words they have sponsored. For the DRC, this presented an opportunity to reach diabetes sufferers who, in common with the majority of disabled people, often don't realise they are disabled and have rights under the DDA. The DRC therefore sponsored specific words, such as 'Diabetes + help', thinking that, once diagnosed, people with diabetes may Google the condition and can be drawn towards the DRC at this point. Niche channels such as this are felt to have worked particularly well for health conditions because it is more private.

Another niche channel used by the DRC to reach those with health conditions is the 'Pharmacy Channel'. This is a TV channel that runs in pharmacies and is replicated throughout Great Britain. Though the adverts run by the DRC on the Pharmacy Channel didn't reference the DRC by name, they advised people to look into their rights. The advert campaign was backed up by unbranded resources (including a dedicated website), and again proved to be a valuable approach since it was private and did not rely on the individual approaching anyone for help.

Both of these examples also illustrate an important shift in thinking. Using the portrayal of medical settings in disability communication wouldn't have been

acceptable 10 years ago as it would have been branded with being the 'wrong' model of disability, and based too much in 'medical' terms. There has been a recent thawing of this idea, however, and a more pragmatic approach has prevailed.

Knowing the media

The barrier remains in the media industry that some disability strands do not make good copy and the issue of 'disability' as a whole is extremely hard to get across.

A year ago I was talking to an experienced journalist on a National newspaper who said that the editor was not interested in people with mental health problems. A lot of journalists and media are still very under-whelmed by this stuff – this is going to be a challenge for making that work in the CEHR (and beyond). **Member of DRC staff**

Research, used so successfully to augment communication strategies and campaigns across the DRC, was therefore also applied in order to refine the approaches used by the media team.

The key objective of this research was broadly equivalent to that of the communications-based research: to 'know the audience'. It was imperative to understand who, in terms of specific journalists and publications, were currently writing about disability in the media and what they were focusing on.

The wider aim of this work was to try and forensically analyse the way in which stories or subjects were covered in the press. This went down to the detail of which papers covered certain stories, which correspondents were writing them and which journalists are quoted, respected, have the biggest syndication and get printed. Broad questions were asked about disability and people who talked about disability in their work were targeted.

It allowed us to think about the best route for which to promote our ... stories, and the best way of bannering

them. The research usefully conveyed some of the barriers and challenges to getting disabilities covered.

Member of DRC staff

The research provided a great deal of useful information about how disability was reported and covered in the newspapers and specialist press. The research also highlighted that highlighting the failure of organisations to deliver disability rights was not going to sell a story to a journalist alone. The DRC media team therefore needed other 'hooks' to hang disability on.

The market research conducted provided a strong compass bearing for what media stories should 'look' like. As a result, the language used in press releases was significantly changed, with an increasing focus upon people with long-term health conditions and people with specific conditions. It enabled the DRC to identify 'sexy' disabilities as it became clear which stories would run and which wouldn't.

You have to be very aware of what stories will work and which ones won't – they were never going to take an access case in the media against a corner shop for instance. **Member of DRC staff**

Key learning points

The power of external research

People don't take notice of research until they have done it themselves. **Member of DRC staff**

This narrative has highlighted the importance of external data and research and the importance of getting hold of it, reading it and using it. The DWP research highlighted the fact that half of disabled people would not relate to the term 'disabled' and this went on to strongly influence the future research and strategy of the DRC. But this evidence was not fully understood until further internally directed research was undertaken.

Use external research and use external resources and look internationally for this as well as domestically.

Member of DRC staff

Flexibility in branding

The DRC branding has historically been quite rigid, and there have been some key discussions which have sought to move it to be more flexible. As a result, there has been an increasing shift towards dropping parts of the DRC branding, including the strap-line 'making rights a reality' or the DRC logo.

The DRC brand has been better understood since the more nuanced approach to communications has been in operation. By considering the existing brand name in light of the research carried out, the DRC started to acknowledge some problems with it. For example, as well as the 52 per cent of disabled people who do not identify with the word

'disability', others felt that the word 'commission' made the organisation sound too governmental – almost like a legal body.

Indeed, in many of the examples outlined in this narrative, there is often a tension about the DRC's profile and branding. The conflict is between those situations when a brand adds value and when it detracts. This is particularly the case when communicating to those people who would not consider themselves disabled and is further complicated by those who wish to present a consistent brand throughout all communications.

The key learning for the DRC is that we realised we didn't always need the organisation brand to send out our message effectively. In fact, it could act as a barrier.

Member of DRC staff

This was certainly the case with the Gojo campaign where, for all external communications, the DRC logo was removed completely and only the Gojo brand was used. This was a significant step forward for the DRC and crystallised a change in thinking and movement away from the shores of traditional corporate safety towards creating completely uncompromised communications designed to have resonance with a particular target audience.

Consistency

The DRC never achieved what it would call a comprehensive communications strategy across the entire organisation. Within the Commission, there was so much going on simultaneously that it was difficult to get consistency of message across all activities. There are three main reasons for this, and therefore three lessons to help avoid it in future.

The first reason was the physical location of the communications and media teams. Media was based in London whilst Communications was based in Manchester, as well as dedicated DRC offices in Wales and Scotland. Whilst electronic communication went some way to minimising the effect that physical location had in the conveying of a consistent message, co-location still had a noticeable impact.

The second reason was the lack of any stakeholder management system. The implementation of software that logs all contact with stakeholders and includes details on what was communicated at each contact would have brought great advantages across the organisation. The resistance to a system such as this was felt to be primarily about cultural inertia within the DRC. Relatively new organisations have a great opportunity to ensure such a system is in place.

The consistency of message within the DRC has also been hindered by the fact that there has never been anyone solely employed to do internal communications in the DRC – there is a need to 'communicate about communications' so that everyone knows what is going on. The internal communications function of the DRC has traditionally been spread across a number of teams, which has made the task of consistent internal communication all the much harder:

'Its unfortunate, and all too regular a recurrence, that in any communications campaigns, internal communications are 'always a good idea' but are the first casualty when resources become stretched.

Member of DRC staff

Accessible publications and events

The DRC has, by its nature, always had a commitment to making its publications widely accessible, whether in relation to sensory impairment, learning difficulties or community

language audiences. The challenge for the DRC has been to balance the need to provide what is necessary against what is cost effective, and therefore to assess what the need is.

Improvements in technology and access to technology mean that assumptions about how people want to receive information may need to change.

The Welsh Language Act says you have to provide the same information in Welsh as you would in English, but not through the same ways. It has to be available somewhere, but not necessarily in printed format. The answers going forward in accessibility are electronic.

Member of DRC staff

On the other hand, however, recent research has shown that disabled people access the internet significantly less often than their non-disabled counterparts. This is partly related to the accessibility of websites for disabled people – a DRC formal investigation into website accessibility found that most websites are inaccessible to many disabled people and fail to satisfy even the most basic recommended accessibility standards. Other non-electronic channels must therefore remain available to meet the needs of individuals, even if it should be possible to reduce the volume of that non-electronic material that is produced.

From a financial point of view, it is important you don't have a lot of formats sitting there not being used... There needs to be more background research done about what people's requirements are. **Member of DRC staff**

Initially somewhat ad hoc in its approach, post-2001 the DRC developed clear, standardised procedures for ensuring accessible publication provision. Publications are produced through the business arm of the organisation, and at the start of the process it is established whether or not Easy Read

format or translations, for example, are required. The role of the Publications Manager was to receive the information, negotiate and manage expectations of what can be produced. A particular challenge here has been the necessity to work with public sector stakeholders internally and the private sector externally, managing relationships with design and print, translation and transcription agencies.

The Easy Read format has been a particularly important aspect of the DRC's accessible materials armoury, and is characterised by careful spacing of words, a limited volume of text on each page and the integration of illustrations. Developed over time through consultation with learning disabled people, the format represents a benchmark in the field and fits neatly into the DRC's corporate brand.

That the audience for Easy Read stretches beyond people with learning disabilities is significant in itself, reflecting the belief of some that all corporate documents should be easier to read anyway. People with neuro-diversity conditions have voiced a preference for Easy Read documents, as have those for whom English is not the first language. This should be considered when commissioning publications and targeting specific audiences.

The portrayal of disability

The way 'disability' and disabled people have been portrayed has long been a subject of debate within the Communication and Media teams of the DRC.

When portraying disability it is vital to reflect the range of disability as covered under the DDA. The major challenge here is to portray hidden impairments accurately, with respect and with impact.

You don't have to settle for the person with the white stick or the person with the wheelchair – it is the cliché people fall back on because they can't be bothered to think about it. **Member of DRC staff**

In the most simple sense this can be achieved through the use of a combination of visuals and text. For example in the Taking the Dis campaign the phrase

Tell my boss I've got a mental health condition: you must be crazy!

... was used next to a relatively straightforward image to portray a hidden impairment.

When thinking about including some illustrative examples in publications, the order and prominence in which types of disability are presented in publications should be considered. For example: providing an example of reasonable adjustments should never start with physical access, because that is what readers would automatically think of first. Instead, it is more desirable to focus firstly on a hidden impairment to widen the readers' preconceptions of what a reasonable adjustment could be.

Just as not all disability can be seen, not all communications are visual. Radio is a very powerful tool for putting forward a better understanding of hidden impairments.

It is also vital to try and reflect disability positively on balance and try to ensure that disabled people aren't portrayed as recipients of care. Realistic examples of disabled people should be used and can help to break the links between disability and negative connotations and therefore 'mildly' challenge stereotypes. At the same time, it is important not to turn disabled people into heroes or to portray positive images of disabled people as 'exceptions'. Portraying disabled people as peers will be more likely to have an effect.

At the same time, it is important to realise that there is a critical mass of expertise in the public and private sector about these issues. Bodies such as advertising agencies, government departments and disability arts organisations have all contributed to this expertise and can be consulted or contracted to assist with fair, positive and progressive portrayal of disability.

The DRC didn't learn well enough from those that went before and people who come after should not repeat that.

Member of DRC staff

Evaluation

The importance of evaluating what you do cannot be underestimated. The wealth of time and money that is invested in both media and communications means that with no evidence to validate the impact of this work, the money directed towards it will soon dry up.

The benefit of evaluation is that messages and methods became much more attuned to the audience and market and that with each campaign or project an iterative step of overall improvement is achieved.

A big part of maximising the worth of evaluation is having the right people in role. People who want to learn and encourage a culture of using evaluative research to drive improvement will make for more effective communications, rather than those who simply commission an evaluation and then shelve it. This is a subtle goal, but one that will reward any organisation greatly.

As the DRC progressed and developed evaluation, self-improvement and learning grew in importance in the communications team. **Member of DRC staff**

A parallel system of internal evaluation can foster this sentiment amongst the team and make sure that lessons are openly discussed. Honesty, consistency and transparency are the key to this and this has been a lesson the DRC has learnt through its life.

A lesson for future organisations is that whilst the DRC evolved its approach to evaluation and got better at measuring individual campaigns and breaking them down in terms of effect, it is debatable whether it would have been more effective to have assessed the overall communications practice of the organisation earlier on.

Concluding remarks

The DRC's Communications and Media functions have developed many national campaigns and ways of communicating, aiming to promote rights to disabled people, influence employer and service providers' attitudes and behaviours and encourage policy debate.

Understanding the audience the DRC sought to communicate with was vital to the successes of the DRC's communications, and research was vital to developing this understanding. Work with, for example, SMEs, young disabled people and senior figure heads in the public sector, as well as the general approach to disseminating news through the media, was all informed by such research.

At the same time, a willingness to be flexible in the DRC's branding – focusing on the message instead of the organisation behind the message – has helped the DRC communicate more effectively with its various audiences, whilst accessible publications and ways of communicating have ensured that as many people as possible have been able to access the DRC's work. Finally, evaluating this work has ensured the DRC has been able to learn what worked and what didn't from each key piece of work it has undertaken, and has sought to use this learning in all its future work.