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**BRITISH RED CROSS, RNID AND RNIB CONSORTIUM LEADS BY EXAMPLE WITH ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITY WEBSITE****Sigmer Technologies Redevelops Website Dedicated to the Sharing of Equipment for People with Special Needs**

**London, 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2006** – Sigmer Technologies today announced it has re-developed the Community Equipment Store website ([CommunityEquipment.com](http://CommunityEquipment.com)) to deliver high standards of accessibility and usability and to make it more effective. CommunityEquipment.com is a classified advert website for special needs equipment and is operated by a Consortium formed by the RNID (the national charity for deaf and hard of hearing people), Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB) and the British Red Cross. The site allows store managers to advertise items of equipment to other store managers and occupational therapists. This allows items to be exchanged rather than having to hold unused stock or buy new equipment on every occasion.

The objective of the Consortium is to bring together its expertise across sensory and physical impairments to drive a radical step-change improvement in community equipment services.

The Consortium took over operation of the CommunityEquipment.com website from the Department of Health in 2005 and the new site helps to support their aims by improving the provision of equipment, such as flashing door chimes and microphone systems, for people with special needs.

The Consortium chose Sigmer to redevelop the website due to its extensive experience in designing and developing applications with high accessibility for multiple audiences. Sigmer also has considerable experience in working with the public sector and voluntary organisations, and follows an ethos of providing options and alternatives, to help these organisations demonstrate value for money from public funds.

The Consortium's brief was for a complete redevelopment of the Community Equipment website to improve the ease of use and look of the site. For Sigmer, there were two main challenges in the brief. The first was the provision of a classified advertisement site with an effective information architecture that conformed to the stringent accessibility standards of the RNIB and Website Accessibility Initiative (WAI). The second was to deliver a content management system (CMS) that provided simple work-flow functionality and facilities to allow vendors to manipulate and upload items for sale. The Consortium expects 140 store managers and over 100 occupational therapists to use the new site, which has already been positively received by the initial users.

Jeremy Hollinshead, Stores Manager, Wolverhampton Community Equipment Service, said, "The redeveloped CommunityEquipment.com website is fantastic. It is much easier to use, friendlier and just looks so much better. The process of placing equipment on the site is clearly defined and browsing for items is simple."

"It was very important that the site met our high accessibility standards. This was one of the reasons that we chose Sigmer, as they have comprehensive expertise in this area," said Natasha Knox, Business Development Manager of RNID. "The new Community Equipment website is easy for us to manage and keep updated, and for store managers and suppliers to use. Sigmer worked closely with us throughout the project ensuring that all aspects of the site met our technical and image expectations, and we are very pleased with the site Sigmer has developed."

"Sigmer is excited by the real benefit this project will bring to the Consortium and we are proud to have provided a comprehensive solution to customers as discerning as the RNID, RNIB and British Red Cross," said John Archibald, Director of Operations, Sigmer Technologies. "With our symbiotic approach to design and accessibility we were able to integrate every aspect of the brief from the very start of the project and to meet the Consortium's challenging

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requirements in full. Sigmer has become expert in the development and deployment of high-accessibility sites and the challenges of Community Equipment.com have extended this expertise further.”

The site is managed with Sigmer’s own CMS, Scribe, which works in conjunction with the different databases that support and serve the dynamic content of the Community Equipment website. Scribe enables Consortium staff to easily manage key areas of content and to keep the site up-to-date.

Sigmer is hosting the site and providing ongoing support and development to Community Equipment.com.

**About CommunityEquipment.com**

The Department of Health led a project to start an equipment sharing website ([www.communityequipment.com](http://www.communityequipment.com)) and operation of this was taken over in 2005 by a Consortium formed of RNID (the national charity for deaf and hard of hearing people), Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB) and the British Red Cross. The Consortium was created with the objective of bringing together its expertise across sensory and physical impairments to drive a radical step-change improvement in community equipment services. CommunityEquipment.com allows any statutory authority (e.g. NHS Trusts) or professional with statutory responsibility for providing community equipment in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland to purchase from the CommunityEquipment.com virtual store.

**About Sigmer Technologies**

Sigmer Technologies, founded in 1999, is based at the University of Sussex, Brighton, and has attracted a number of high profile clients, including: British Sky Broadcasting; The International Save the Children Alliance; The British Film Institute; South East England Development Agency and Memorex. Through a carefully balanced team of specialist developers, designers and consultants, Sigmer provides a full range of programming, web design, Internet and IT based services individually tailored to clients’ needs. More information about the company can be found at [www.sigmer.com](http://www.sigmer.com). Press contact: Rebecca Gregory, PR Consultant, Bamboo PR. Tel. 0207 033 9933, e-mail. [rebecca@bamboopr.co.uk](mailto:rebecca@bamboopr.co.uk)

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