

## A CIVIC CONNECTION FOR LOCAL KIDS



TELECOMMUNICATIONS

There are plenty of government-run websites aimed at collecting feedback and generating involvement among residents of a particular city or town, but we hadn't seen many aimed directly at local youth until we came across [Derby KidzTalk](#). Operated by Derby Homes, a non-profit property management organization established by the Derby City Council, the site is geared toward kids between 9 and 16 living in Derby, offering them local information and ways to express concerns and get involved. The site was originally motivated by a government requirement that Derby Homes involve users in the development of its services. "We are expected to include everyone—young and old, representing the broad spectrum of ethnicity—and this site helps us talk to young people who don't really like coming to formal meetings that adults feel more comfortable with," explains Mark Crown, tenant involvement manager for Derby Homes. But Derby KidzTalk quickly took off beyond Derby Homes' expectations, reaching 80 registered users and 3,000 hits per month soon after its launch earlier this year. "KidzTalk is bigger than we anticipated for what was a step in the dark," Crown explains. The company is now scrambling to create a marketing plan and approaching other social landlords about the possibility of sharing and co-funding the site. It's also considering selling the format to other organizations. Our advice? Add 2.0 functionalities as featured in our posts on [Love Lewisham](#), [Amsterdam's Google Maps mashup](#) and [Neighbourhood Fix-It](#). Take a playful approach to civic awareness by creating scavenger hunts with an online component: find a broken streetlight, report a pothole, etc. Spotted by: Amy Leung

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