

PUBLICITY, RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

Posters

Should highlight group venue, meeting day and time, even an A-Z location reference. A logo (*national and/or group*) should be prominent and if possible in colour. Include contact names with telephone numbers and if available include e-mail addresses plus the web site address. The contacts should be group Chairman and PRO, if they are willing. Do not refer to their sex (*e.g. display as J Smith as opposed to John or Jane*) if it is felt that 'funny phone calls' would be encouraged.

Put them in shops (*esp. post offices and supermarket community boards*), libraries, health, leisure and community centres, colleges and universities, tourist information centres, and employers' noticeboards.

If reduced to A5 size then posters make ideal leaflets, that can be handed out in busy shopping areas (*check with your local council before doing this!*), at community fetes, in free local newspapers or via targeted leaflet drops.

Make sure every couple of months that the posters are still there or are not out of date. If your committee changes after a BiAGM then always update your posters.

When highlighting times, think about when most of your members arrive. An empty room won't make a good first impression! So don't say 8.30pm when most people turn up at 9pm. At least one committee member should be down early.

News Releases

Most local newspapers have a community 'noticeboard', or like to carry stories and pictures on local clubs and societies. These newspapers are essential to successful publicity for any group.

Call the newsdesk and make yourself known to the news editor/chief reporter. By creating a good working relationship there is more chance your group will get in the paper. Do not however bombard them with calls – they are very busy people! Every three to four weeks is enough. Send them a programme through the post as well.

Find out their weekly deadlines. The earlier you send releases during the newspaper's working week, the more chance there is of their inclusion. Leaving it too late leaves the risk of it being 'buried' beneath the more important stories.

Releases should be clear, concise and to the point. The more wordy and incoherent they are the more chance of them being thrown in the bin! Report on your recent successful events or forthcoming events. Explain what 18 Plus is, what it does, where the group meets and on which day and time plus contacts (*see 'Posters' above*). Eye catching headed News Release paper and a prominent headline are also crucial. Always fax releases, and e-mail them as well.

Do not send newspapers photographs of an event, unless they are of an exceptionally professional standard. Newspapers tend to ignore sent-in pictures (*and always cheque presentations*). Invite them to cover your event, but make sure it is likely to be original and newsworthy (*such as a charity event*).

Advertising

Paid adverts can have success but can often be expensive to place. Target local newspapers, 'What's On' guides, and other local/community publications.

Make sure your group can and wants to fund the advert and check its size and location. Haggle over price if there is scope to do so.

These are usually best used to highlight new members nights, at particular times of the year – summer and autumn are best.

Electronic Media

Becoming increasingly popular. A number of groups are now attracting new members through the 18 Plus web site – put www.eng.warwick.ac.uk/18plus on all your publicity. Make sure the web site co-ordinator Mark Hewson receives details of your programme and committee by e-mailing him at mark.hewson@talk21.com. You may want to set up a web site especially for your own group, which can be linked to the national web site.

Please remember that not everyone has access to the web and e-mail yet and so this should not replace the traditional printed media – still the most powerful form of communication. But don't fail to exploit it either!

Broadcast Media

An organisation such as 18 Plus is more likely to get attention from local radio than TV. But don't let that stop you trying TV – you never know what they might be interested in on a particular news day!

Look through the schedules and see what stations and programmes are likely to be listened to by your target public. When are potential members most probably listening to the radio? The breakfast commuter zone (8-10am) and drive time (4-7pm) are peak times. The evening (7-10pm) is also worth targeting for coverage.

Send a news release, or if you are after more dedicated coverage send the programme producer or presenter/DJ a letter and programme. If you feel confident enough, ask to go on the programme and talk about 18 Plus – many members have done this in the past and can be sought out for advice.

Responding to Interest

Answer all enquires promptly. Use a friendly and enthusiastic tone when calling them back. Take their name, address and phone number. Send them a letter, a programme and a copy of Plus News in the post. Don't blind them with 'science' in this first call.

Stick to the 'who we are and what we do' basics, drawing out their interests and highlighting forthcoming events you think they might like.

You may want to offer them a lift to the group night/event if they have no transport. This helps overcome their 'first night nerves'. It is not recommended males offer potential new females a lift – instead find a female member who is willing to do this.

For those potentials making their own way down, make sure there is a sign or poster outside your venue telling them they are in the right place. Send them a map of 'how to find us' through the post. Have programmes and Plus News readily available and an up to date notice board. Let them relax and enjoy the first night, introduce them to members they are likely to get on with. Include them in activities, let them know how many weeks are free and how much membership will cost, and take them through your group scrapbooks. Don't overwhelm them, though!

Encourage them to attend weekend events. Let them know how many people are going and offer them a lift (*or get someone else to do so*).

BiAGMs are of course not the best night for a newcomer's first visit. Let them know what to expect and don't have a new member's night the week prior to a BiAGM!

Enquiries via head office take time to come through so make sure they have some SAE's, these will then reach you quicker.

Remember

The worst thing you can do is nothing at all. New members can't come through the door if they don't know you exist. The media talks about the 'oxygen of publicity' – this is especially true for 18 Plus to continue to thrive.

Don't be frustrated if the publicity doesn't show immediate results. Keep going – it will pay off eventually. Some potential members just need time to pluck up the courage to come down!

People feel appreciated if you ask about them – why they haven't returned, or haven't been for a while. Keep an eye on things, everyone has to decide to join or renew their membership at some point. Make sure they do it with you!

GOOD LUCK!