

# Starting a New Community Group

## 5. Group Identity and Promotion

Having a recognisable group identity and clear promotional message will make it easier to publicise your services, raise awareness of what you do and build your reputation.

### Planning your group's identity

Your group's identity is any feature that distinguishes the group from other groups, this includes name, logo, mission statement, objectives and ethos. Essentially, it is the personality of your group and how your community see it.

When considering your group's identity you need to:

- Understand your group's values and what is important e.g. working in collaboration, social responsibility, financial stability etc.?
- Know what makes your group unique.
- Consider your community. Do you have a specific demographic or location?
- Understand the qualities you want associated with your group e.g. caring, credible, trustworthy, fun etc.?
- Think about specific colour palettes or fonts e.g. Comic Sans is a very casual font and red is often associated with danger.
- Be aware of language and tone. Will you use professional language or will your identity be more laid-back and conversational?

Planning your identity should not be done in isolation, include your community, stakeholders and members. Test ideas on people who do not know your group, ask them how they feel about the message you are sending and impressions they get of the group.

### Planning your group's promotion

Publicising your group's aims, services and achievements through a well-planned promotional campaign will ensure you get the best and most relevant media coverage. When you start to plan your group's promotional activities consider:

- What is it that you want to say? Being clear and make sure everyone in the group sends out the same message.
- Who are you trying to reach and why? You may have different audiences you want to promote your group to, for example you may work with youth groups and so they would be your main audience however, you may also work with other service providers who would be your secondary audience.
- What is your budget? Good promotion does not need to be expensive, set a budget and concentrate your resources to make the most of it.

- What resources will you use? Promotion can take many different forms e.g. a press release, newsletters, posters and social media posts. The most effective promotion is where a combination of these is used, as this will ensure all the different audiences you are marketing to will 'get the message'.
- What are the timescales of your promotional activity? Is a one-off event or regular occurrence such as a newsletter?

### Newspapers, radio and online news sites

Working with the local press, radio stations and online news sites can help you:

- Build public support for your group or project
- Reach large audiences
- Publicise what you are doing
- Attract new supporters and volunteers

For both local and national press there are a few simple guidelines to get your story into the media:-

- Familiarise yourself with the kind of stories they are interested in
- Build relationships - get to know reporters and photographers who work with the local press. Assess how much prominence they are likely to give to community groups and community activities and what sort of people make up their readership or audience
- Take the time to find individual journalists who may be interested in your group and find out who is responsible for editing news or features - write to them personally, enclosing a brief synopsis of your story, and follow this up with a phone call and an invitation to visit your project or group
- Make it easy for journalists to get hold of you - always include your group's contact details in any approaches you make to the media
- Tell your story from a human interest point of view as it is more likely to be used
- If you are running a national campaign tweak your press release for different areas, using local stories to illustrate the campaign will generate more interest from local media
- Remember deadlines
- Provide pictures – these will help the journalists to tell your story more effectively

### Newsletters

Newsletters are an effective way of keeping your members and local community up to date with what your group are doing, they can:

- Inform people about what you do and how to contact you
- Publicise events
- Report on fundraising and donations
- Showcase the work of other local groups
- Inform people about issues that will concern or interest them

Producing a newsletter requires many different skills and resources from designing 'the look' to writing or the articles; collating content and distributing of the finished document. It is advisable to designate someone as 'editor' to co-ordinate the production and oversee the content of the newsletter.

## A Group Website

When setting up a website you will first need to decide if your group have the skills to build a website or if you will need to employ a professional website designer. Which every way you chose to build your website, the principles to making good website are the same. A good website should enable a visitor to quickly and easily find information and have consistency of design, layout and content.

All websites should have a Home Page that:

- Immediately tells the visitor what your group does
- Gives the visitor a reason to stay on your site
- Have links to Contact, About Us and specific content pages.

Content must be easy to read, accurate and up to date as this will encourage people to keep returning.

- Start with a page headline which summarises the information
- Use short sentences and paragraphs that focus on a single topic
- Remove excess words and only use specialist language if appropriate to your visitors
- Linked text should clearly indicate where the link goes or what it does
- Where possible make it clear when content was last updated or checked

## Social media

From sites such as 'You Tube' to social networks such as Facebook, using social media is an instant communication method that can:

- Raise awareness about your group
- Help with fundraising
- Attract new volunteers
- Share information
- Promote events
- Generate more traffic for your website

Deciding which social media platform to use will depend on who you are targeting, what you want to achieve and the resources you have to manage it. You can use multiple social media platforms however, it is better to manage one platform well than several in effectively, consider:

- Who are your audience?
- How do you intend to engage with them? Use posts they can interact with.
- What tone will you adopt? Ensure the tone you adopt reflects the content or your article e.g. is serious, witty or informative.
- Using images and videos to make your social media more exciting
- How often you plan to post updates. Social media needs to be updated on a regular basis, as people will soon forget about your group if you are not visible.

Document produced March 2020