

## Resources for small groups

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### Communications

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This factsheet looks at how to let people know about the work that you do and how it can help them. Communication is just as important for established groups as for new ones, if they are to ensure that they reach everyone that could benefit from their services.

#### Identify your audience

The methods, style and content of publicity used by groups will vary considerably depending on who your target audience is and what you want to tell them: Key audiences, and the type of information they need, include:

- users, both potential and existing, e.g. practical information about the service;
- funders or potential donors, e.g. numbers of users and management information;
- other related organisations, professional staff, etc., e.g., referral routes;
- potential volunteers, committee members or paid staff, e.g. training provided, time commitment.

You need a clear idea of whom you are aiming the material at before you start preparing it. You should also think about how you will publicise your services amongst people who cannot access information easily, e.g. people whose first language is not English, or people who are blind or partially sighted. Your publicity materials should also demonstrate how your group welcomes people from minority ethnic communities, or people with disabilities. By doing this, you will be more able to achieve your aim of promoting the widest possible access to your services.

#### What methods work best?

Different publicity methods work for different groups in different circumstances. The range of methods is huge, but a small selection of the ones used often by small groups could include:

- Publicity leaflets: useful for providing basic information on your group or service (e.g. who we are, what we do, where to find us, etc.);
- Emails and letters: to target information at people who might be interested in your group;
- Social media: Facebook, Twitter and other social media are useful for promoting interaction with members and users;
- Posters/ Flyers: useful for putting across a fairly short message, e.g. a request for volunteers or publicity for an event. They need to be eye-catching, with a limited number of words in a fairly large font size;
- Website: useful for giving information on your group and its activities which can be easily up-dated.
- Newsletters/e-bulletins: many groups produce a regular newsletter which can publicise issues of interest to its users or members and let people know about forthcoming events. These can be printed or distributed electronically;

- Directories: MVSC produces a directory of local voluntary and community groups which is a useful way of getting the name and work of your group publicised within the local voluntary and statutory sectors. Various other directories are available;
- Local press: useful for advertising a specific event or raising awareness of a particular issue connected with your group.

## Keep it short and simple

Whichever method you use, you need to:

- keep the content relevant; think about what your audience needs to know;
- make it easy to read; try keeping to short sentences, use simple language and break up the text by using bullet points or including pictures.
- get someone (preferably from outside your group) to look over the materials before you use them. MVSC's small groups service would be able to help with this.
- think about who you want to send them to, e.g. your members, service users, GPs and health professionals, council officers, other voluntary groups, etc. In some cases, MVSC can provide labels for local mailings.
- make a note to review them in the not too distant future (out of date publicity materials can give a poor impression of your group).

