



# Community & Voluntary Service

Mid and North Bedfordshire

## How to Create Effective Publicity Materials

### **1: *Why do we need publicity?***

Publicity materials are a way of getting your name known. What would be the point of having excellent services, if no one knows about them? Posters and leaflets can be a good way of persuading people to support your organisation. That's not to say you should make your leaflet into a begging letter for funds or donations. It should send a positive message about the wonderful things you do so it will make people (including potential funders) want to get involved.

### **2: Leaflets**

These can be produced (fairly) cheaply and quickly. Obviously if you've got money to spend, you can go for something really snazzy and eye-catching, but if funds are low, then there is nothing wrong with a simple A4 page with black ink as long as you include all the relevant information!

Often the temptation is to put everything about your group in - don't! Give details about your activities and services and put your organisation in a positive light, but don't overwhelm the reader with too much information.

Increase the shelf life of your leaflets, by avoiding the use of dates. If your leaflets include prices e.g. room hire, bear in mind these things change quite often. Think about whether you'll want to update your leaflets regularly, especially when you're about to have 10,000 copies printed.

But don't forget to include the contact details for your organisation.

### **3: Posters**

The principles of putting together a poster are generally the same, whatever the subject matter. To illustrate the point imagine a poster for publicising a Summer Fun Day. Here are some that you might want to include:

- *When?* Date and times
- *Where?* Venue, nearest car park and public transport details
- *Why?* Just for fun? To raise money?
- *Who?* Is the event aimed at families? Children - what age group?
- *What* is your main selling point? Celebrity guest? Brilliant prizes?

What should the poster look like? Test yourself first - go to any notice board in a doctor's surgery or community centre and think about which poster catches your eye first. Why is that? Is it the colour of the paper? The pictures? The large print? If it works for you it will work for others.

#### **4: Newsletters**

These are an excellent way of keeping in touch with people. These could be your:

- Funders
- Members
- Service users

Keep these people in mind when you are writing your newsletter and write the newsletter according to what they might be interested in. If you have a newsletter aimed at a wide range of different audiences, then make sure that there are articles and information included to interest all of them.

#### ***How often should you publish?***

This can be a difficult decision. Groups might think a newsletter is a great idea, and start out with a publishing schedule of once a month. The first issue might go really well, until people realise they have to start work straight away on next month's issue. So be realistic - once a quarter is enough to keep up the momentum and make sure people remember who you are and what you do, without being too much of a workload!

#### ***Don't leave it all to one person!***

It makes sense to have a couple of people to share the task and an extra person to proof-read. Getting contributions from others is a great way of making people feel involved with the newsletter, and lightens the overall workload.

#### ***Your message***

Even though you want to get your message across, don't make your style too heavy, or people will be put off. Short, snappy articles are best, especially if you can get some nice photos to go with them. Write in a reader-friendly way - making each subject relevant to the reader. For example in a health-related article about stress - instead of a headline "*All About Stress*" say "*Is Stress Making You Ill?*". By making the reader the most important thing, rather than the subject, you already have their interest.

Simple design ideas:

- Don't use all capital letters - IT IS MUCH MORE DIFFICULT TO READ
- Don't use too much underlining it is less legible for people with visual impairments
- You can use a variety of fonts to create interest. Try using bold text and *italicised text* for emphasis
- However, be careful of using too many different fonts - this can be too busy
- Think about a house style. A simple masthead like newspapers use and one or two basic fonts will go a long way to making your newsletter recognisable
- Don't cram your text into any space available. Increasing the use of white space makes your newsletter more readable
- Write in short paragraphs. Use bullet lists (like this one), checklist and numbered lists
- There are a number of paragraphs styles you can use:

*A paragraph that runs equally between the left and right hand sides is called justified. This paragraph is justified.*

*A paragraph style that looks more natural is called ragged right. This means the text is straight on the left hand side, but not on the right. This paragraph is ragged right.*

*A centred paragraph is often used for emphasis. This paragraph is centred.*

*You can use indented paragraphs to make your blocks of text easier to read. The first line of each new paragraph is indented, whereas each subsequent sentence starts at the left hand side as usual, like this one.*

## **5: Websites**

Having an attractive and potentially useful website is not enough if no-one knows it's there. Nor can you guarantee the continuing success of your website if you don't continually review its content. Users expect new and up-to-date information each time they visit your website. They expect everything to work: no broken links, no missing images, and no typos. You want them to leave the site having had a positive experience.

To achieve all of the above you need to:

- Design a user friendly website
- Keep content up to date
- Ensure your site is ranked highly on search engines
- Link with as many other websites as possible and ensure those websites link with your website
- Measure your success through web statistics (i.e. 'hits' and 'page impressions')

For more advice contact CVS – Mid and North Beds

## 6: Follow-up

As with any piece of work, publicity should not be done in isolation. What would be the point of producing a leaflet, getting no response from it and then distributing the same leaflet next year? You need to monitor how you use your publicity and the effect it has. Resources are precious and you shouldn't waste money on ineffective publicity materials.

## 7: Further help

### **CVS – Mid & North Beds,**

43 Bromham Road, Bedford, MK40 2AA.

Tel: 01234 354366. Fax: 01234 347503.

Email: [info@cvsmidandnorthbeds.org.uk](mailto:info@cvsmidandnorthbeds.org.uk).

Website: [www.cvsmidandnorthbeds.org.uk](http://www.cvsmidandnorthbeds.org.uk)

Reg. Charity No. 1091423; Company Limited by Guarantee No. 4312967

**The Media Trust** - helping charities communicate - [www.mediatrust.org](http://www.mediatrust.org)

**Community Newswire** - is a free service run by the Media Trust and The Press Association, the national news agency of Britain and Ireland, to help community and voluntary groups gain coverage in the media - [www.communitynewswire.org](http://www.communitynewswire.org)

### *Reference Books:*

- **The DIY Guide to Public Relations for Charities, Voluntary Organisations and Community Groups** – Moi Ali – [www.dsc.org.uk](http://www.dsc.org.uk) - £16.95
- **Promoting Your Cause** – Karen Gilchrist – [www.dsc.org.uk](http://www.dsc.org.uk) - £14.95
- **A DIY Guide to Charity Newsletters** – Chris Wells – No longer available to buy, but can be loaned to your organisation

*CVS – Mid & North Beds have some of the aforementioned books in our reference library & these can be loaned to CVS members*

### **See Other Related CVS – Mid & North Beds Information Sheets:**

- **How to Market your Group Effectively**
- **How to Write a Press Release**

*This is one in a series of fact sheets produced by CVS – Mid & North Beds, on subjects of interest to voluntary and community groups. It is intended for guidance only and is not a comprehensive statement of the law.*