



3 Marketing & Promoting your service

Marketing and promoting your group is really important, although this isn't always the easiest thing to do. This Guidance Sheet offers some thoughts on ways you can market your group, and some tips to think about when pulling your marketing campaign together.

What's the current challenge?

As with volunteers, your users may have moved on. Some children will be off to more formal or different settings as they get older. This may leave you with a depleted user group, but take heart, babies have been born and those who were too young before are now perfect for your group!

Ways to Market your Group

Social Media

During COVID social media has become even more active than before, as a result there may have been groups formed online that are now looking to meet up in person. Parents/carers might start searching through social media for groups to attend, such as Facebook (remember groups can be private so make sure you share on the local community pages about your group). Keep your parents/carers updated regularly about your plans to re-open and how to join.

Leaflet Drop

If you are in a high density area where you know there are a lot of families, you could use the old fashioned leaflet drop way to get people interested. Printing is pretty cheap nowadays and you can design something professional looking using free online software.

Banners

Consider using an outdoor banner to advertise your group on local park railings, it may only cost £20 to £30. Remember to ask permission first before you put it up!

Posters

These can still be effective to use in doctors surgeries or on community notice boards. Ask if the poster could be put up in the Health Visitor waiting room and consider speaking to the local Health Visitor, who will be the first to know of any new parents in the area. Give them some leaflets to put in new mum packs or hand out at visits.

Rewards for Friends

Offer existing members vouchers or rewards to bring a friend such as free tea and coffee vouchers, discounted membership or a free week. Try to engage with families that are hard to reach (yes we know they are hard to reach for a reason), this will bring a diversity to your group and benefit everyone all round. Consider that some families may not be able to afford to pay for sessions or membership so offering discounts and free joining weeks means that everyone can feel included.

Get Peoples Attention

Go for a walk around your local community with a big teddy bear or an attractive toy and approach parents with your leaflets. Bring something official where you can, and of course don't approach children on their own!

Open Event

Hold an opening event – make a song and dance about it and ask any local people if they have any skills they can donate such as local singers, magic tricks, photographers, food. Promote your group at the event and maybe make some money at the same time by selling raffle tickets! Showcase your group by having a stand for sign ups, with lots of photos of playing children and quotes from previous users. Some families will come to an event in the local park for example, see how friendly you are and sign up to your group.

Local Radio or Newspaper

Do you have a local radio station? Even mainstream stations sometimes have a slot to promote local groups, it's worth asking. Or, get yourself interviewed on the radio about your event, and talk about the benefits of supporting parents and children to play, then share about the group you run. Supporting health and wellbeing through play whilst recovering after a difficult year makes attending local groups so important. Local papers too are always looking for good interview and stories.



Icons made by [Freepik](https://www.flaticon.com) from www.flaticon.com



Get a fresh new look!

Look at your logo and fonts again, consider if maybe it needs a refresh. Sometimes if we see something often enough, we stop noticing it - a new look/colours might just catch people's attention. Why not get input from your current service users and group members. Speak with local Health Visitors for early years groups, and if you work with older children, engage with nurseries, schools or youth groups. Then advertise your group where these activities take place.

Remember your volunteers

Call out for volunteer help on social media as there may be lots of marketing students looking for some experience and have new ideas fresh from college or university. There may also be some marketing experts who are looking to give a little back to the community and do their bit to support people to recover from restrictions, again it's definitely worth asking. Refer back to our Volunteer issue for more help on how to recruit and support volunteers.

Top Tips for advertising

- Make sure you keep it attractive but simple.
- Tell your audience what they need to know – where and when you operate (days, times, for how long), how to join (come along, register online, etc.) and any cost to join or take part.
- Include a link to your Facebook group and/or website (consider using a QR code).
- Consider a fun strapline such as 'Sunny days Toddler Group' – get together with your little one and meet new friends, all welcome!
- If you have space, use a quote from a previous user – "Love 'Sunny Days', we can't wait till Thursdays come around".
- If you are a registered charity make sure you quote your charity number.

Who should your marketing target?

The following list offers some suggestions of groups you may want to contact, remembering the power of word of mouth:

- The local community/potential users of your service
- Your Local Authority
- Strategic groups such as childcare or community partnerships
- Health visitors, social workers and other professionals working with and supporting local families
- Voluntary organisations/community groups – you could maybe team up and do some partnership work
- Potential funders - local businesses/charitable trusts

Sustaining Interest

In order to stimulate awareness in your group it is a good idea to implement a rolling marketing programme. This could provide regular updates to the local community. Below are a few ideas to consider:

- Annual/monthly advertisement in the local press
- Open days/play events
- Stalls at an annual festival
- Regular leafleting and promotion through social media

Further Information

QR Code Generator:
<https://www.qr-code-generator.com/>

Leaflet & marketing materials design tools:
https://www.canva.com/en_gb/
<https://about.easil.com/>
<https://getstencil.com/>
<https://crello.com/>

Smart Play Network Members Support

Member you have access to telephone and email support. For more information about the topics covered in this guidance sheet, or any other queries you may have about your project, please contact us using: 0131 554 2620 or admin@smartplaynetwork.org