



GROW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

A guide for sport and physical activity clubs and organisations.

www.thinkactive.org



CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Barriers and Motivations
3. Useful Information for Potential New Members
4. Example of first session information
5. Places, Spaces and Networks to Promote your Club
6. Social Media and Websites
7. Club Development Plan
8. Further Support and Guidance



1. INTRODUCTION

Sport & physical activity clubs and organisations play an important role in building fulfilling places to live, work & socialise, whilst supporting local people & places to thrive.



They aim to provide great experiences for their participants, workforce & supporters, in high quality, safe and sustainable environments.

This guide has been designed to help support community clubs, groups & organisations to attract or maintain new members or participants, whilst providing a range of useful resources & practical tips.

2. UNDERSTANDING BARRIERS & MOTIVATIONS

Starting something new can be daunting for some people. Some may worry that they won't know where to go or what to do when they arrive, that they won't fit in or that the other people that go aren't like them.

The information below might be helpful to think about when promoting your opportunities and the information that you share. This could help to put people at ease when they are coming along for the first time.

BARRIERS

- Cost
- Commitment
- Logistics
- Lack of information
- Fear of judgement ... I'm not fit enough / skilled enough / I don't belong
- Kit / equipment / facilities
- Lack of encouragement
- Social confidence
- Long term health conditions
- Cultural or religious barriers

MOTIVATIONS

- Positive outcomes on physical, mental & social health
- Structured activity
- Skill development
- Competitive opportunities
- Purpose & accountability
- Social connections
- Family bonding
- Personal & professional development
- Volunteering opportunities
- Gaining qualifications
- Employability

Recognising & understanding these barriers and motivations can help clubs and groups to develop a person-centred approach. Thinking about the messaging and imagery that you share can be a great way to start to address some of these barriers and motivations.

RELEVANT LINKS:

[Working with Different Groups](#)

3. USEFUL INFORMATION FOR POTENTIAL NEW MEMBERS

Here are some suggested topics of information that you could share to help potential new members decide if your activity is right for them, and so that they feel reassured to come along and give it a go.



TYPE OF ACTIVITY

- Be clear about the type of activity involved
- Is the session suitable for beginners?
- What level of intensity is the activity - light, moderate or high intensity?
- Does your activity cater for people with additional needs?

CONTACT DETAILS

Providing at least 2 different ways of making contact eg an email and a phone number gives people the option of making contact to find out more information about an activity in a way that they are comfortable to do so and suits their lifestyle.

TRAVEL / PARKING

Awareness of public transport routes or availability of on-site parking can help with planning and may help people feel less anxious about what to expect.

EQUIPMENT & CLOTHING

- What should a potential new member wear and bring to their first session?
- Is there a specific dresscode?
- Is there equipment and kit that can be borrowed?

ACCESSIBILITY

People with additional needs may wish to get in touch to discuss if/how the activity might be suitable for them. This might include information such as:

- What facilities are available for people with additional needs? For example, is there is a hearing loop at reception, disabled changing/ toilets, ramps, disabled parking?
- Details of training coaches & leaders have completed to equip them to support people with disabilities and additional needs.

COST & COMMITMENT

- Be clear about all costs associated with the activity.
- Consider payment & cost-reduction options. Some suggestions could be:
 - Free taster sessions
 - Reduced cost memberships for people who have been referred from Health Care Professionals
 - Pay and play options
 - Options to purchase a block of sessions
 - Hardship Funds
- Free, or heavily subsidised sessions might attract new members, but could impact long term sustainability. Financial contribution can bring an enhanced level of commitment & attendance.



SESSION LEADER

- Knowing the name of the session leader can help put people at ease.
- Staff/volunteers could wear uniforms, name badges or lanyards so that they can be identified by new participants
- A buddy-system could be used to offer support to new attendees from existing members.

4. EXAMPLE INFORMATION FOR POTENTIAL MEMBERS

The example below shows a series of graphics created for social media by the Active Partnership in Wiltshire for a new event that they were running. The graphics include lots of clear information about the sessions.

Women's Recreational Football Sessions

Date, Time and Location

- Every Monday (Excluding Bank Holidays)
- 6.30pm - 7.30pm
- Stanley Park Sports Ground
Chippenham
SN15 3RW

Where to find us

Stanley Park Sports Ground

Directions

Drive all the way down the lane and you will find the main reception building in the car park (parking is free)

Welcome to Stanley Park

Sign in and pay £3 at reception

Go back to the front of the building and down the path at the side - this will take you to the football sessions, we are on the first part of the pitch as you walk in

What to expect from the session

- Fundamental techniques
- Phases of play
- Moving the ball effectively
- Basics of defending and attacking
- Finish with a short, fun match

Who to meet when you arrive

Let me introduce Chloe, our dedicated coach, who is passionate about empowering players through the fundamentals of football

With her focus on building strong foundational skills and fostering a supportive learning environment, you're in excellent hands

Meet Chloe on the pitch after you have registered at reception

"We aim to support women to overcome barriers to being physically active and we are looking forward to a long-standing partnership with Lit Fibre to help Chippenham get moving."

What kit to bring

- Comfy clothes
- Appropriate footwear:
 - Trainers
 - Astroturfs
 - Football boots (moulded studs only)
- Plenty of water



5. SPACES, PLACES & NETWORKS TO PROMOTE YOUR GROUP

There are many different marketing channels & recruitment opportunities that can be used to promote your club.

Deciding which channels to use will involve a consideration of cost, skills, and the time available. Many clubs find that using a mix of both digital and physical channels can work well.

POSSIBLE MARKETING CHANNELS

- Posters / leaflets
- Activity finders
- Health Care Providers
- Website
- Social media
- Partnerships
- GP's, Pharmacies and Health Centres

POSTERS / LEAFLETS

Posters and leaflets should be eye-catching with important information for potential new members (see section 3. [Useful information for potential new members](#)) and imagery that connects with the target audience.

Places to share your posters / leaflets might include:

- School Newsletters
- Library Notice Boards
- Supermarket Notice Boards
- Community Centres
- Community Noticeboards
- Parish Council Newsletters
- Health Centres

ACTIVITY FINDERS

Some local authorities host an activity directory or virtual noticeboard, where clubs and organisations can register their details and the public can search the directory for activities.

A list of the activity finders for the regions within Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire can be found in the [Club Hub](#) on the Think Active website.

HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

Most GP surgeries have Social Prescriber Link Workers, Health & Lifestyle Coaches, Physical Activity Champions or similar, who will refer patients to physical activity groups within their local community to help support their physical and mental wellbeing. These healthcare professionals are often keen to expand their knowledge of local opportunities to signpost their patients to.

Consider contacting your local GP surgery to provide them with information about the opportunities within your club or organisation.



PARTNERSHIPS

Developing partnerships with other community organisations or businesses can help clubs & groups reach potential new members. Partnerships can enhance sustainability, whilst also addressing inequalities & supporting communities to thrive.



The knowledge, networks or resources of partners can increase:

- participation & memberships
- volunteer recruitment
- financial sustainability through sponsorship & new participants
- access to different venues, facilities, or different groups of people

A club or organisation's existing membership network can provide a wealth of connections, skills & resources, so when considering community partnerships, reaching out internally can often be a great place to start.

Have a think about the partnerships that could be useful to your club or group.

RELEVANT LINKS:

[Creating Community Partnerships](#) on Buddle



6. DIGITAL MARKETING

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR ALL DIGITAL MARKETING ACTIVITIES:

IMAGERY - Images of your members & activities are a powerful way of promoting & celebrating your club or organisation. Images can showcase your club's culture & values which can help a potential new member decide if it's the right group or environment for them. Images should be representative of your target audience. If you are sharing images of club/group members, you must ensure that you have their consent to do so.

MESSAGING - Language should be positive and inclusive, using clear and easy to read sentences.

SKILLS AND CAPACITY - Consider the skills within your club, there may be individuals who are confident on social media or website building that would be keen to help.

SAFEGUARDING & CODE OF CONDUCT POLICIES - the management & use of social media channels and websites should be considered within your organisation's Safeguarding Policy & Code of Conduct. Go to 8. Further Support and Guidance

KEEPING INFORMATION UP-TO-DATE - Ensuring that information is up-to-date and relevant on your social media and website will avoid confusion and it will be clear that your sessions are still running.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media can be a great way to showcase your club and create a sense of what it is like to be a member of the group.

Benefits:

- it's free, apart from your time
- it can create a sense of community as users can engage and comment on content that you share

Disadvantages:

- potential negative comments on the content that you share - this is something that should be considered in your safeguarding policies.
- you need to commit to monitoring the social media platforms for comments and messages as individuals may use it as a way of contacting you

Choosing a social media platform:

- Think about who you are trying to target, and which platforms they use. For example, if you were targeting younger people TikTok may be more relevant whereas if you were targeting people over 40, Facebook and Instagram would be more relevant.
- Use one or two platforms well, rather than trying to use all the platforms and not having the capacity to run them properly.
- Consider who is going to be running the platforms and the skills and experience that they have.

Social media Profiles

Ensure that you complete your social media profiles with the relevant contact details and if relevant your website.

Pinning Content

On Facebook and Instagram you can 'pin' posts to the top of your page, this means that you can keep the most important and relevant information easily accessible for those who might be visiting your page for the first time.



WEBSITES

- A website can be ideal for promoting your group, showing who you are, what you do and how to get in touch with you.
- If you already have a website, take a look at the content through the eyes of a new member - does it have all the information that would be helpful to someone unfamiliar with the group? See section 4. [Useful Information for Potential New Members](#)
- Developing and maintaining a website can incur costs, including domain registration and hosting fees. Additionally, it is important to ensure that content is continually updated.

RELEVANT LINKS:

[Using Social Media Safely](#) on Buddle

[Making the most of your Social Media](#) on Buddle

[Creating a website](#) on Buddle

[The Digital Marketing Hub](#)

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7. CLUB DEVELOPMENT PLAN

A development plan is a strategic document that sets out your organisation's vision and aims for the future and the actions you'll take to achieve them.

When thinking about growing your membership, it may help to think through and formalise some of these topics.



A development plan can:

- Help identify your vision and aims.
- Provide a strategic plan to help achieve your short and longer-term goals.
- Help you plan for the future by identifying your current position and opportunities for improvement.
- Provide a clear direction and purpose for everyone to work towards.
- **Help set out how you'll attract and retain participants and volunteers.**
- Demonstrate to stakeholders (including funders) that your organisation is well-run and plans to grow.
- Help secure your future sustainability.
- Help ensure the efficient and effective use of resources.
- Help you develop plans to mitigate foreseeable challenges and risks.
- Improve links with local partners.

RELEVANT LINKS:
[Creating a Club Development Plan](#)

8. FURTHER SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

Think Active - The Club Hub - www.thinkactive.org/guide/club-hub

The Club Hub is a collection of information and resources for groups who offer physical activity. The Club Hub has been developed to help our local groups to grow and thrive.



Buddle - www.buddle.co

Sport England's information hub providing free learning and support resources to inspire and strengthen clubs and community organisations offering sport and physical activity.



- [Safeguarding Essentials](#)
- [Being Inclusive](#)

The Digital Marketing Hub - www.digital.cimspa.co.uk

The Digital Marketing Hub, is a free online resource and learning hub helping anyone involved in sport, fitness, health and physical activity in England to improve their digital marketing.



Local Voluntary Action Groups

Your local voluntary action groups provide support to volunteers, groups, organisations, enterprises and charities who are working to strengthen communities.

