

Attracting People to your Group

The elements to consider include:

- Methods for publicising your group
- Targeted recruitment for those with time, specific interests, or useful skills
- Selling the benefits of being in a group
- Overcoming the barriers people can put up to being involved

Publicising your group

You can affect how people feel about your group (and therefore how likely they are to join) through communications they can see before they call you. How does the group seem from your publicity? What does the website suggest? Are the contact details correct? Is it obvious that new people are welcomed and valued, but not overwhelmed? Do you seem like a busy and exciting group?

Brainstorm: What first attracted you to your local group?

- Meaning to get in touch for a while
- Meeting similar people – being social – and I was interested in the issues
- Already active in various groups
- Interested in a cycle group based in the same building – socialising

Discussion: How did you find out about your group?

- Address in the back of a book
- Poster in the library
- Belonged to national FOE – didn't really know about groups – saw an ad in a paper for a meeting
- Publicity about a quiz they were running
- Contacts with another group

Publicity methods:

Raise awareness of your local group locally, making sure you cover things like what the group cares about, what you do about these things and who you are. Be creative and inventive – work with other people and organisations e.g. putting GM flyer in organic veg box.

Web – have an informative, accessible website with campaigns, pictures, information (anyone under the age of 40, and some over, will look on-line for information) Friends of the Earth have free webspace for every group which you only need to be able to write an email to update.

Posters – create an eye-catching poster that makes the group sound dynamic, successful and busy. Put it in basic contact points: libraries; web; local papers; local magazines; citizens' guides; local authority database.

Newsletter/Leaflet – Much the same as for Posters except you can add more detail; though short and snappy is better. If it is a newsletter, remember that the point of it is to put across campaign 'news' i.e. things that you have done or are doing.

Visits/meetings – go to other groups working in similar fields, or with interests in similar issues

Media – get some coverage in local press, on local radio/TV

Public meetings – identify a key issue in your community/region, get speakers in, invite your supporters, national supporters, other organisations with similar interests in your area, community groups, advertise in local media

Mailing to national supporters – contact all national supporters in your area via Underwood Street: invite them to a special evening or a public meeting where you can tell them about the group, the work you've been doing, how they could help out with their time. BUT be warned – the response rate varies from 5-25% of those mailed.

Targeting your recruitment more carefully

Why might people be interested in joining your group?

Time to spare: students, unemployed, retired, parents at home with young children etc.

A specific interest because they are directly affected by something you may campaign on: roads, landfill, new developments.

Already active in local community: people already involved with other groups e.g. Oxfam, Fair-trade, Amnesty.

Where can you find people to join your group?

Their reasons for being interested are also clues as to where you might find them

Generally: Community centres, volunteer bureaux

Retired people: Saga magazine

Students: colleges, universities, job fairs, libraries, pubs, environmental departments and courses, freshers' fair, vegetarian society

Unemployed: job centre

Parents of pre-school children: pre-school clubs, sure start

Parents of school children: outside schools

Where to find people with specific interests?

GM/Real Food: health food shops, organic cafés, garden centres

Transport: cycle shops, bus shelters

One big group that you know already have a commitment are your supporters, but some aren't getting active yet. Make sure you let your outer circles of members know of your plans, successes and what you are doing, via your newsletter/ website. Also ask them for more active support on specific issues, and you may find some of them decide to take a more active part than just paying their membership subs.)

What about finding people who have skills that you need or could use?

Where could you find someone to set up your website?

- Local college
- Internet cafés
- Computer shops
- On-line
- Volunteer bureau
- Millennium volunteers
- Friend of a friend

Selling the benefits of being in a group

Brainstorm: What are the benefits of being in a Friends of the Earth local group

- Get out more
- Getting discounts in shops (e.g. Manchester FOE)
- Getting to know people with similar interests and commitments
- Being able to 'do what you can' (every little helps)
- Being empowered through a group
- Group has access to resources (internet, etc.) that individuals don't have
- Local knowledge – sharing
- Access to training for free (knowledge and skills)
- Access to information from FOE – a reputable, respected, trusted organisation
- Local to global element makes FOE unique (and not many people know that)
- Making changes locally and seeing things happening
- Sense of pride

When people do join your group, they will learn lots, be supported by experienced campaigners, given training on issues they are interested in, not asked to do things they don't feel able to do. You might even put together a package for your members like Manchester FOE (discounts at cafes, shops etc.)

Overcoming the barriers that people put up to getting involved:

1. I'm too busy
 - If you're already working on this we can help you and share the work
 - However much time you want to spend would be useful for us
 - Our ... campaign needs someone to ... which will only take 30 minutes a week for 4 months
2. Bad impression of environmental groups
 - Join, get to know the people (us) and give help when you feel you have time
 - Get them along to just *one* action, stall, meeting etc.
 - Help them see that you are like them: friendly, dedicated, fun, normal people
 - Show them magazines or materials that would give a different impression
3. Don't like the idea of campaigning
 - We will support you with whatever you want to do
 - Our group has lots of tasks aside from face-to-face campaigning: website, publicity, secretary
4. Very specific interest e.g. wildlife
 - Make the connections between their interest and the group's work
 - Invite them to come and talk to the group about their interest – others in the group may be interested to work on it too