

BASINGSTOKE & OLD BASING U3A MARKETING STRATEGY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This strategy has been produced in response to the weak financial position of the organisation, and forms part of its committee's planning for change. A reduction in membership numbers is felt to be the major cause of difficulties, and has resulted in increased membership fees in summer 2019. This in turn may well have exacerbated the decline in numbers. Timing is key as memberships are due for renewal in August.
- 1.2 A range of reasons for the drop in numbers has been identified, including a recognition that the current marketing is poor, both in terms of substance and reach. This strategy sets out to address these weaknesses, raise the profile of what the local organisation can offer, and identify actions that should be achievable within the required timescale. This may include widening the diversity of the organisation at some stage.
- 1.3 Advertising expenditure must be kept to an absolute minimum.

2. MARKETING OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The objective of the marketing programme is to recruit an increased number of members by August 2020. This may involve broadening the mix of participants, which in time may result in an improved offer to other potential recruits.
- 2.2 To ensure initial marketing has the greatest reach possible per expenditure.

3. COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 These are:
 - to increase knowledge of the organisation and the wide range of group activities it has on offer;
 - to highlight the key advantages that membership brings for target participants;
 - to highlight other strengths of the organisation compared with local competition.

4. MARKET FACTORS

- 4.1 The organisation exists to enhance the lives of the retired, and those nearing retirement. Generally the greatest loss of membership has been amongst the Under 70s, who are facing increased pressure from pension age rises and

grandchild care. Other losses will be due to increasing infirmity and house moves.

- 4.2 Other U3A organisations exist in nearby areas, generally villages with the advantage of more vibrant marketing, backed by effective community settings.
- 4.3 Nevertheless in an aging population within an expanding town, there is still considerable scope to replace losses with new participants from central Basingstoke. Targeting these central areas may also enable the organisation to increase the diversity of its offer in due course and provide some 'unique selling points' to retain membership levels.
- 4.4 Methods of communication are evolving rapidly and the relevant expertise may not currently be present within the organisation.

5. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

5.1 To focus primarily on the advantages of the organisation's offer to the Under 70s and the marketing methods most likely to attract them. There is likely to be considerable overlap with the other target groups we have identified.

5.2 A U3A membership survey revealed the following reasons people gave for membership. To:

Improve my social life	82.2%
Broaden or enhanced my interests	72.3%
Increase my knowledge and understanding	69.5%
Give me new interests	67.8%
Improve my physical or mental health	42.9%
Give me new or enhanced skills	40.2%

5.3 The strengths of our organisation are:

- A varied range of groups (Annex 1)
- Proximity to the town centre
- A good balance between vocational/practical and academic groups.
- The wide range of active/creative groups leading to better socialising
- Current groups well attended, with members enjoying the above benefits. (Is this right? Do we need more groups as well as more members? Does increasing our diversity need to be moved up the agenda?)

5.4 Communicating these strengths and outcomes, together with the opportunity to contribute to the wellbeing of others, should form the focus of our marketing materials.

6. MARKETING STRATEGY

- 6.1 Direct contact with potential members is the most obvious means of ‘selling’ the organisation’s offer, but there is a range of “influencers” who can act as channels of distribution for information as well. They include GP surgeries and dentists, churches, Basingstoke Voluntary Association (BVA), Citizen’s Advice Bureau (CAB), Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council (BDBC), Community Centres, other Over55s groups etc.
- 6.2 Whilst there are some bespoke messages which can be directed at specific groups, the main messages from all the marketing tools must be consistent. Appropriately placed, positive case studies can go a long way to encourage people to join a group and know they will be welcome.
- 6.3 Groups which currently appear to be unique to us in the area (and can be used as a focus in some areas) include Croquet, Quizing, Ballroom, Badminton, Environment, Film Studies and Flower Arranging. And our very popular Science & Technology group is only replicated in Odiham.
- 6.4 We should ensure that our organisation figures as prominently as possible in the nationwide U3A day on 3rd June, to take advantage of any general increase in awareness in the Basingstoke area.
- 6.5 **Googling U3As in the Basingstoke area places us in Hook. A move to a more central location will have the added benefit of capturing any enquirer who may be looking for more central activities.**

Target Groups

6.6 These are:

- Those looking for life enhancement
- Semi retired
- Under 70s
- Fully retired
- Bereaved

Identified Marketing Methods

6.7 These include:

- Direct Contact
- Social Media
- Website
- Distribution of Posters, and Business Cards/Postcards
- Use of Community Magazines

- Paid Advertising

Direct Contact

6.8 As well as taking advantage of the U3A Day this year, direct contact could include presentations to groups such as the Over 55s Forum; Viabes Over 55s Club; and the Proteus Over 55s Group. Actions needed: production of a presentation; and handout with further contact details eg postcard/business card.

Social Media and Website

6.9 These have the advantage of reaching the largest audience at minimal cost. Actions needed: new website; collection of photos with relevant permissions; production of case studies; creation of Whatsapp/Facebook accounts.

Distribution of Posters and Postcards

6.10 This material could be used to raise awareness amongst influencers (6.1 above), and placed in community magazines. **It could also be used for door to door delivery by volunteers.** However print has the disadvantage of requiring expenditure, as might placement in magazines. However some influencers such as BDBC may offer a free service on their websites. Action needed: creation of adverts and/or postcards; collection of photos with relevant permissions; identification of free website and advertising opportunities; **possibly the creation of delivery networks?**

Use of Community Magazines

6.11 Delivered to homes by volunteers, these have the advantage of reaching those not comfortable with technology or who are not actively looking for an interest. Although most magazines will charge for adverts, some may accept articles for free, especially if they have a local context. Action needed: identification of suitable magazines and creation of articles/case studies; collection of photos with relevant permissions.

Paid Advertising

6.12 **Cost per person reached is probably currently a major drawback for this type of marketing. However once the organisation has developed banks of articles and photographs, this could be considered when funds permit.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

6.13 **The organisation focuses on the website and organisation of the U3A Day, in collaboration with other local groups where possible.**

Annexes

Our Groups by Popularity

Other Local U3A Groups

Community Centres and Magazines

Our groups by popularity	No of members
Science+Tech	92
History	80
Bridge Dup.	76
Croquet	66
Art Appreciation	59
Rummikub	54
Spanish	54
Family Hist.	45
Folk+country	45
Needles+Pins	43
Line Dance 2	41
Line Dance 1	40
Quizing	39
Photography	38
Ballroom	37
Bridge imp	37
Table Tennis	37
Music+Words	35
Classical Study	34
Singing for Pleasure	30
Badminton	29
Art4all	27
Environment	26
Mahjong	26
Circle Dance	23
Patchwork	23
Art+Craft	21
Scrabble	20
Thomas Hardy	20
Film Studies	19
Board games	17
French High	17
German intermediate	17
Computing	16
Flower Arr.	15
Italian	14
Bowls	13
Latin Beginners	11
Simply Sewing	11
Calligraphy	7
Latin Imp.	7
French basic	6
Strings+	6

Local U3A groupsOverton

Advanced French	Lunch Clubs
*Art History	Mahjong
Bridge for early learners	Military History
Canasta	*Miscellany: (themed poetry, prose, plays)
Cinema Outings	Ontology
Computing 1-1 training/not a group as such	Opera
Crafts	Pilates
Cribbage	*Play Reading
Family History	*Reading
French Conversation	*Scrabble
Gallery/Exhibition Visits	Scrapbooking
*Garden Visits	*Singles Holiday Group
History	Spanish Conversation
Inter-Knit Cafe	Theatre
Italian One	Walking
Line Dancing	

*Full with possible waiting lists

Tadley

Acoustic Guitar	Latin
Art	Lunch Group
Birds and Wildlife	Mah Jong
Bridge	Nordic Walking
Bus Pass Trippers	Petanque
Calligraphy	Photography and Photoshop
Caravan & Camping	Poker
Chess	Quilting
Circle Dancing	Reading Circle
Computing	Recorder
Country Dancing	Rummicub
Country Music	Scrabble
Craft	Spanish
Cribbage	Sunday Plus Group
Croquet	Table tennis
Cycling	Ten Pin Bowling
Discussion Group	Theatre Group
Exploring with bus passes	Travel Group
Family History	Ukulele
French	Ukulele(beginners)
History	Visits Programme
Italian	Walking
Jazz	Wine Appreciation

Odiham

Arts & Crafts	MOTO
Ballet for Fitness	Music Appreciation
Book Groups (3)	Nordic Walking
Bowls	Painting
Bridge	Pilates Groups (3)
Briefer History of Time	Play reading
Considering Art Groups (2)	Poetry
Creative Writing Groups (2)	Poetry Too
Current Affairs	Recorder
Exploring Towns/Villages	Science and Technology
Family History	Scrabble
Gentle Yoga	Shakespeare Uncovered
History	Simply Singing
History of Civilisations	Table Tennis Groups (2)
History of Odiham	T'ai Chi
History of Philosophy	Tennis
IT/Computing	Walking for Pleasure
Ladies Barbershop	Wildlife
Line Dancing	Wine Appreciation Groups (4)
Mah Jong	