**Marketing your provision**

**Step 1 - Getting to know your service users**

**Why do people attend?**

Talk to your service users and give them an opportunity to chat about what they like about the service and how it could be improved.

**Why don’t people attend?**

*Not interested in activities?*

Find out what activities they would enjoy partaking in? Seek funding to introduce new activities. Ensure they are aware of all the activities you provide.

*Unaware of service*

Develop marketing strategy

*Too expensive*

Ensure service users are aware of any discounts or alternative payment methods you can offer (i.e. are you able to take weekly payments?)

*Wrong opening times*

What time do they need? Is it possible to adapt opening?

*Wrong place*

Do they need help with transport? Investigate the possibility of providing this or linking up with existing transport links. Are service users aware of the physical suitability of your premises? Service users may not know if/how the environment has been adapted to fit with their particular needs. Can you offer an opportunity to view it the premises, for example an open day?

*Perception of staff*

Do service users know about the staff’s experience, qualifications and the fact

that they hold enhanced DBS clearence?

*Perception of service*

Do you know what your local reputation is? Is it positive?

Are there any myths you need to tackle?

*Competition from other providers*

Are your rates competitive? Do you have a unique selling point?

Can you work other service providers to enhance what is on offer to users?

**Step 2 - Developing a marketing strategy**

*Create a brand*

Make sure that your marketing materials are easily recognisable by creating an image – choose a logo and specific colours and use them for your letterhead, flyers, posters, staff uniform, signs etc.

*Identify your Unique Selling Point*

What makes your service particularly attractive to your target market? Think about your location, the quality of your provision/service, any additional activities you provide or any extra value added e.g. purpose built facilities/specifically designed resources.

*Explore potential partnerships*

Engage with other service providers and groups involved in a similar field. Could you share advertising streams e.g.Websites/social media?

Would your local services e.g. children’s centres, doctors surgery, library, school etc. allow you to have a poster up on their notice board?

Think creatively about your marketing materials posters, flyers, stickers, badges, rear window stickers.

*Setting a budget*

Make sure you include all costs – printing, postage, paying for advertisements. Your budget has to be realistic so think carefully about what will have the greatest impact. Adverts in the local press for example can seem like an easy option but you could possibly get better coverage by holding a charity event and inviting the local press along! However, sometimes the cheapest option is not always the best – poor quality flyers for example could have a detrimental impact.

**Advertising ideas**

**Local Press**

*Place an advert*

Could be a one off or a long running one.

Think carefully about where will have the most impact – do they have a section specific to your service? Think carefully about what you include – make sure you promote your Unique Selling Point.

*Write a Press Release*

Write and distribute press releases that are newsworthy, and send them to newspapers, magazines, and television and radio stations. If only one media outlet airs the story, you’ll have free access to thousands of people. Design the headline to grab readers’ attention in as few words as possible. Use active verbs. Get to the point quickly, with a lead sentence that will draw the reader into a convincing piece.

*Organise news worthy events*

An opening day is great but you can also follow it up with a regular open day every year to celebrate your anniversary. Invite a local celebrity – the mayor, local councillor, the oldest resident, for example and make sure you invite the local press. Celebrate events creatively so you can invite the local press or send a press release.

**The Internet**

Establishing a home page for your business is relatively inexpensive and can reach many people. Use newsgroups that focus on areas similar to your line of business to draw attention to the site. Always include a phone number or email address so that interested visitors can contact you. Discuss the possibility of adding a page to another organisations website.

**Direct Mail Out**

Direct mail results depend largely upon how much you’re willing to spend on finding your target market and delivering quality materials to them. The per-customer cost is much higher than you’ll pay for print ads. It can be useful as a follow up to other marketing activities – for example if prospective service users attended an open day you could follow it up by sending them service/provision details. Direct mail out via email is much cheaper if you can!

**Public Service**

This is a great chance to do well by doing good. Sponsor the local carnival or summer fete, organise a stall at the school jumble, plan some charity fundraising events. All of these are terrific ways to position your business in a positive light in your community.