

Community Outreach and Warm Welcome toolkit



The Good Practice Mentors (GPM) programme is a national partnership, providing support to organisations who wish to strengthen and develop their engagement with local communities.

We support organisations who want to:

- make improvements and changes to their services
- learn more about co-production
- find, reach or involve more people in their local community.

This resource has been produced by the GPM team to support organisations to engage with people through activities and events in local communities.

This toolkit includes learning and 'top tips' derived from Age UK Camden and Leeds Older People's Forum around how to engage with people perceived as 'harder to reach', and ensure that activities and events are welcoming and accessible.

Tips for producing comms as a tool to engage ‘harder to reach’ people

Often the people we most want to reach and engage have commonly held ‘it’s not for me’ barriers and preconceptions about groups, activities, services and support.

It can be useful to produce a piece of comms specifically as a tool to find and engage ‘harder to reach’ people. This is likely to look quite different to materials produced for wider marketing purposes.

- **Avoid references to specific populations that may trigger assumptions and preconceptions.**

‘Elderly’ / ‘older people’



‘50+’ / ‘55+’

- **Think about your social ask. Set people’s minds at ease by describing the group and atmosphere.**

‘Make friends, have fun and socialise’



‘It’s relaxed, easy-going and informal’





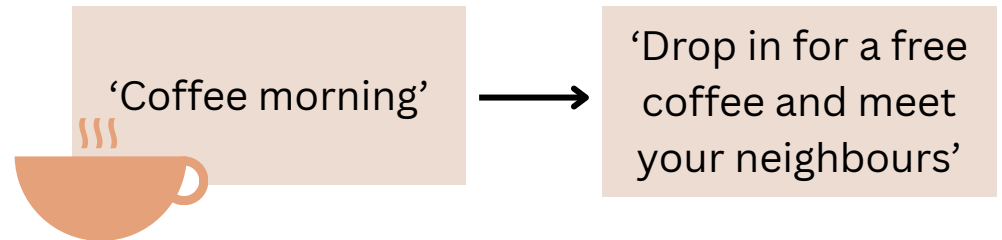
- **Describe the benefit rather than the group/service aim.**

‘Falls prevention’



‘Improve balance
and flexibility’

- **Use clear transactional (says what it is on the tin) language to describe the activity/opportunity.**



- Keep it simple, resist the temptation to list everything that’s on offer in your space. This can feel overwhelming or result in people discounting themselves from your offer based on a preconception about something mentioned in your comms.

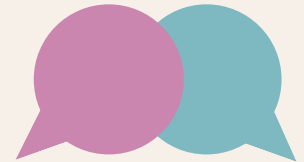
- Include accessible information on communications, such as a map, image of the location, and contact details (plus a phone number for those who don't use email!).

- Provide images of the activity location (inside and out) and a map with clear travel directions. Providing this information can also overcome barriers for people with literacy issues, ESOL speakers etc.



- Keep the tone of your comms casual and informal e.g. 'drop-by', 'drop-in'. Avoid references to formal sounding clubs or groups.

- Anticipate questions – what, why, where, when, who?



- Be mindful of the impact of images/representations of people – if your audience don't self-identify with the people represented, this is likely to trigger 'it's not for me' preconceptions.

How and where to use your comms

- Consider street outreach in the local area. This can have a significant impact on attendance and engagement with groups, including older men.

- Include tear-off telephone number slips and provide your first name for those without internet access.



- Make the most of your informal community assets – the spaces and places people pass through and visit as part of their daily lives. E.g shops, cafés, hairdressers and launderettes.

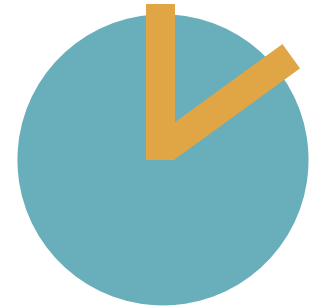


How to create a Warm Welcome

- **Brief all members of staff, volunteers and building staff about greeting people.** Include reception staff and check that they have the capacity to welcome people when they enter the building and walk new members to the right place in the building.



- **Use the ‘3 second’ rule** when people are arriving – make sure staff and volunteers know that they have 3 seconds to politely excuse themselves from the conversation they may be having to personally greet a new member on arrival.



- **Use clear and friendly signs** to guide and direct people into the building and to the specific room being used. For internal signs, use large, easily readable font and be sure to also use them for directing people to and from the toilets.

- **Keep an eye on new people** throughout the session, use volunteers as ‘buddies’ and ask them to be with new members so they don’t become left out.

- **Get staff or volunteers to accompany people to get themselves a drink and have an introductory chat** with new members. Be sure to then have them introduced to another volunteer or member in time to greet the next person.

- **Sign people in and provide them with a badge** if you use both of these things.

- *Note: the ‘volunteers’ referred to don’t have to be official or formal volunteers, they can be regular members of the group who are happy to support new members.*



Things you can do to prolong the impact of individuals attending a group

- **Use group introductions** – get people to introduce themselves and ask the group to answer a question or provide information about a topic.
- **Provide refreshments** – this can provide space and time for people to build connections and have informal conversations outside of the activities.
- **Ensure there are enough staff/volunteers** to look after the number of people – this helps to make sure people don't feel rushed or ignored.



- **Use name badges** – this offers discrete support to newcomers and anyone with memory issues.
- **Arrange the seating** – use different arrangements for different sessions to reduce the incidence of cliques developing. Use a circle when possible so everyone is included and visible. Place volunteers or table hosts on individual tables if using them to make introductions and keep everyone engaged..





If you would like to discuss how GPM could support you to reach, engage and connect with your community then please drop us an email:

✉ GPM@syha.co.uk

For more information and resources please visit our website:

[GPM Website](#)

Please see our Eventbrite page for our upcoming workshops

 [GPM Eventbrite](#)