

## Looking for new members? Try some of these ideas!

Gaining new members for any 'retirement' club is not an easy ask these days and word of mouth remains a most effective mechanism so please keep telling your friends of the benefits of belonging to your branch. In our case we emphasised the:

- Friendship among our members
- Monthly meetings with a variety of visiting speakers or activities organised by our own members
- Regular outings to local and beyond places of interest
- National membership benefits

After being asked in 2015 to act as a Publicity Officer (a role created to specifically try and attract new members) for my local branch I began scouring the Internet as the initial source of information. I searched for all the Parish/Town Councils, HomeWatch (Neighbourhood Watch) organisations, local area Print Publications, Medical Centres/Practices and Church organisations within our group catchment area. I then contacted each and every one by letter, phone, email or via their listed preferred contact details. Wherever possible I attached a targeted article (designed to attract new members) publicising our group with the emphasis on what we had to offer.

Through personal contact I have subsequently cultivated a working relationship with a number of the organisations and that has then allowed us to regularly submit updated articles for their magazines, newsletters and noticeboards. This is especially useful for promoting specific events (e.g. NHS/NHSRF anniversaries) or the NHSRF itself. Wherever possible we take photographs at events to support the text articles that are subsequently submitted to the local publications.

Try contacting your local radio stations – we have featured on BBC Solent and Radio Wimborne.

A constant challenge is to get more publicity and better promotion within the NHS itself so please use and work together with your NHSRF development officer and local area representative. It took a long time but our branch now has very good communication links established. I have

met with area Clinical Commissioning Groups and helped to establish contacts within our local NHS Trust that has subsequently allowed us to participate in e.g. retirement seminars and workshops facilitated by the Trust. You may also find that your local surgery Practice Managers put you in contact with other welfare and community organisations – an opportunity to promote our group.

Talk to other successful branches about what works for them – share ‘best practice’!

We also now incorporate a ‘feedback form’ into our new member welcome packs that asks where exactly our new members heard about us and this should enable us in the longer term to better assess our prime methods of targeting to attract further new members.

Equally important is the retention of members. Listen to what your membership wants from your own group and always try to make everybody feel welcomed and included. Utilising key branch members to act as ‘welcomers’ can help in this regard.

I was asked to write this article as we have managed to sustain and grow the membership within our branch **but please persist and don’t be put off by apparent initial inertia – ‘drip feeding’ can eventually bring some success, even if it is only of the modest rather than the spectacular variety.**

Good luck!



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