

Case study: effective networking

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It took 18 months for us to turn some of the contacts we made into referral sources.

We started with a marketing plan where we listed all the organisations we could find. We then split the list and started contacting them to arrange either a visit or a leaflet mailing. We also made sure we collected information about services they offered. Some organisations wanted to visit us to see what we could offer their customers and meet advisers to discuss individual cases. It then took time for suitable customers to be identified and referred to us.

This was the point where we were able to identify organisations that offered specific services for 50+ customers. We checked exactly what services were on offer and how they could be accessed.

We added all contacts and actions to a marketing plan so we could evaluate the effectiveness of what we were doing. It enabled us to keep a count of the number of referrals from each source. We started with a list of over 300 organisations and local community groups. Some were not interested and others were no longer in operation. We also went outside our immediate geographic area and spoke to national organisations to see what local groups they could signpost us to.

We also make sure that new course information and staff/premises changes are communicated quickly to everyone.