

THE BIG AMNESTY SKILL SHARE



HEALTHY GROUPS 4

RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS

What's the secret to finding new members? Simple. Every time you take action you are recruiting – or should be. Every group event is an opportunity to bring new people on board. Here we share some tips...

FIRST THINGS FIRST. DO YOU REALLY NEED NEW MEMBERS? THINK AGAIN... WHAT DO YOU REALLY NEED?

If all you do is ask people to come to your meeting, you will turn away everyone who dislikes meetings but might have something else to offer, including many who:

- **love action;**
- **have key contacts in the community;**
- **can do things**, such as design a website, organise an exhibition, perform music, run a stall, write letters from home.

So you don't necessarily need to recruit members for your group meeting, you need to make contacts.

GET NOTICED!

It's important to make your group visible and seen by the community: hold a street stall, organise a public letter signing, show a film... There are lots of ideas for special public events at the back of this leaflet. See what would suit your group.

Always have copies of your group leaflet (see over). Use other events (theatre, films, public meetings, rallies) as an opportunity to recruit. Hand out flyers, get AI mentioned or announced, speak on their platform.



The Cardiff group standing tall

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ADVERTISE

Is your name out there? Can people find you? Get on the listings and the noticeboards to make sure.

- **Listings** can be found in libraries, community centers, volunteer bureaus and umbrella organisations.
- There are all sorts of **directories** around – telephone directories, eg public ones like BT, Thompsons and also private ones held by local councils. The *New Internationalist* magazine has a great listings section; so does Amnesty Magazine.
- There are **noticeboards** in colleges, voluntary organisations, churches, businesses and community centers. Also find them in cafes, bookshops, internet cafes, drop in centers and corner shops.
- Try the **'What's on'** listings – you will find them in local event publications, on local radio, announcements in churches and societies.
- Remember that you can be seen widely using **new technology**, eg group website, blog, Twitter and Facebook groups.



The Foyle Amnesty group advertise themselves with a billboard



The Bristol Amnesty group website

MAKE YOUR OWN GROUP LEAFLET

An up-to-date leaflet is a great way to publicise your group to new members. There are all kinds of formats you could try – an A5 flyer, a postcard, a wallet-sized card or a business card.

Make sure you include:

- A sentence which explains what Amnesty International is all about – something like: *Amnesty International is a group of ordinary people around the world who stand up for human rights.*
- Contact details – phone, email, website address.
- Where you meet and when.
- A little bit of info about your group – activities and campaigns you work on.
- The Amnesty colours – bright pink or green or yellow, as well as the iconic candle design.

The Central Birmingham group devised a postcard sized leaflet



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HIT THE HEADLINES!

- **Approach your local media** to see if they would be interested in an Amnesty column.

The Berwick group write a regular column for their local paper the *Berwick Advertiser*, and the Taunton Group manage to generate media coverage every month on a different campaign issue.

'A local radio interview was played six times on the day of our walk for our Burmese prisoner'
Aylesbury Group

- **Write letters to your local paper** to start a debate – one person writes a 'devil's advocate' letter, another responds with the Amnesty line. You can keep this going over a number of weeks and it's all good publicity.
- **Speak on the local radio or TV.** Local radio stations are often delighted to have someone to interview – you are doing them a favour by giving them a different story to follow-up.
- **Invite the press to all of your events** – if they attend one in three, you're doing well. You never know when they are going to have a slow news day and need to fill some space, so always ask. Include your group's contact details on all press releases and invites.

GET IN TOUCH WITH NEW NATIONAL MEMBERS

High Wycombe group sent a mailing with a calendar of their group events along with a questionnaire asking:

- **What would you like from your local group?**
- **What could you offer, eg making cakes for stalls, garage space, IT skills?**

Amnesty has new individual members signing up all the time – most never come to meetings, but maybe that's because they have never been asked. Or maybe they aren't 'meeting' types but have other skills to offer. Time to find out.

Get sticky labels printed with all the new national members in your postcode area from the Activism Team. The team can also send an email to individual members in your area on your groups behalf, eg your programme of events, an invitation to a specific event, a questionnaire or an appeal for help. Unfortunately we cannot directly give you the email contacts for data protection reasons.

Some groups contact all the national members in their area once a year. They list the events people can take part in, eg street collections, and have another box for 'I cannot take part but enclose a donation of £...'

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

Hold a new members evening but make it special. Some ideas include:

- **a display on boards or walls** – use eye catching info on cases and campaigns, photos of group events, copies of letters sent and received;
- **information** – offer material to read and to take away, to include details about the group: current campaigns and actions, forthcoming events, contact details, meeting place and times;
- **informal session** – a chance to meet and talk;
- **refreshments** – a drink and a nibble helps everyone socialise;
- **feature** – a talk, film, performance (music, poetry, etc);
- **focus** – keep it brief and interesting;
- **special guests** – invite a trainer or your regional rep along to do an 'introduction to Amnesty' talk.



SPECIAL EVENTS WILL ATTRACT POTENTIAL SUPPORTERS

Remember that every event is a chance to recruit – whether it's a dance, plant sale, poetry reading, charity auction or car boot sale. Try something new from this list below.

1. The Sheffield group held a **comedy and poetry night** where the group posed for a photo action for Ibragim Gazdiev who 'disappeared' in his home town of Karabulak in the North Caucasus republic of Ingushetia in August 2007. It raised £184 for Amnesty.
2. Hold an **'Any questions' evening**, or organise a debate on human rights. Your panel could include someone from AIUK staff, a local MP or someone from a local campaigning group such as refugees, women's organisations or environmental groups.
3. **Plant a tree**. Have a focal point in your community in a public place such as a tree around which the group can lobby, demonstrate, arrange street theatre, start processions, etc. Or plant a human rights garden. Groups in Aberdeen and Edinburgh persuaded their local authorities to plant a jasmine bush to honour Burma's best known human rights defender Aung San Suu Kyi.
4. **Combine an 'activity' with a social event**. The Bath group combined their Greetings Card writing session in a local pub with a celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. 180 cards were signed.
5. The York group gave out **free Valentines Day gifts**, including roses, beer mats and sweets. This provided the opportunity to talk to members of the public about the Stop Violence Against Women campaign, and collect over 300 signatures in support of the Women's Campaign for Equality in Iran.
6. Hold a **theme evening based on an individual case**. It could be food, music, dancing or poetry/readings linked to the campaign or country.
7. Organise a **cabaret of local talent**. They get exposure; you raise money and have a shop window for Amnesty; everyone has a good night out. Include a five-minute talk about Amnesty featuring a success story.
8. The Waltham Forest group teamed up with the McGuffin Film Society to host a **'Secret Policeman Revisited'** night. They screened the original Secret Policeman's Ball film, first released in 1981, followed by the premiere of the recent 2008 show.
9. Use a cage, electric chair, chains, etc, at your public events – **catch people's attention**. Human statues dressed up and sprayed standing on plinths in a public place will do the trick.
10. Use a silhouette for a disappeared person. A life-sized cutout, a 'shadow' of someone who should be there, acts as a **powerful visual statement**. Or you could chalk the outline of a body on the ground (check if you need permission) or have shoes, hats or bags as the aftermath of a disappearance.
11. **Run a stall at a local show or fete**. One group raised £200 selling Amnesty bookmarks at a pre-Christmas Dickensian evening.
12. **Book exhibition space** in your library, town hall, church, etc. Feature your Amnesty case or campaign. Clearly display contact details.
13. **Celebrate anniversaries**. The Cartmel & Grange group's 30th anniversary year of special events included a poster and poetry competition at Cartmel Priory Secondary School, a guided walk across Morecambe Bay which drew some 250 people and a recital of English music by soprano Mary Hitch and pianist David Sutton. Total funds raised added up to a remarkable £5,000.
14. **Get into the festival spirit**. The Wells Amnesty group had a stall at Glastonbury Festival and camped quite conspicuously next to the famous Pyramid Stage. They had a terrific response from the festival crowd.