

Hints and Suggestions for (standard) Letters used in contacting Outside Agencies and Professionals.

In many respects there is no right or wrong way to write a letter.

Experience shows that the most beneficial approach is to send your letter to a named individual (with job title etc) and to end the letter in a positive way by saying '....I/we will contact you next week/two weeks/next month, with a view to arranging a meeting to discuss the benefits AA can offer your organisation...', or something similar. The recipient, whether they want it or not, knows someone is going to call them and please do remember to do this. If you don't call, it can cause ill feeling and reflect on AA. It has been proved however that the results from this style of approach far outweigh the extra initial research.

It is a sad fact that most letters not addressed personally are pushed to one side, become mislaid or are binned. Therefore to a certain extent they are a waste of money and time. It can be argued that these mail shots do plant a seed. Unfortunately the results are few and far between. In fact the positive response to these letters has proved to be as low as 5% and very rarely, as high as 12%.

Consider for a moment your own reaction to a letter addressed to you personally and one that is addressed to the 'Occupier', 'Manager', 'Sir/Madam' etc. Generally speaking the personal format gains the best reception while the standard mail shot will be pushed to one side or unceremoniously thrown away.

The extra research required in the beginning, finding out the individual names and titles etc does take time. The more thorough this is, the greater the response. Also it is not necessary to mail out to so many people, knowing that a few carefully directed letters should hit the right spot. Believe it or not this approach will save time in the long run. After all it is quality not quantity that gains the best results.

Finding the right names will involve the use of the telephone but you do not have to speak directly to the person concerned as they are the ones receiving the letter. It has been found that organisations, hospitals and professional bodies etc, are quite willing to provide the correct details. It means less work for them and most of the people you need to contact will not take calls anyway. Occasionally you may find yourself talking directly with the person you were going to mail so the best policy is to try and arrange a meeting as soon as convenient. That way you do not waste their time and you have your foot in the door with a firm contact.

It is possible that contact by letter might be denied which leaves the telephone as the only means of communication. A phone call will always save time and it is considered the most immediate form of contact, but nothing can beat the 'face to face' meeting. It is only from this position that you begin to build the trust and rapport needed to pass the message.

To summarise then:

- Do the research
- Be positive
- Write to a named person
- Remember to make the call
- Arrange a meeting