

# Marketing Suggestions for Infant Massage Teachers

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Over the last several months the Guild has been receiving an increasing number of calls from Infant Massage Teachers who are a little concerned about the best approach to market their classes. Some find they are in an area where infant massage is still viewed with a certain amount of scepticism; and others have discovered that there is already a high level of well established Infant Massage Teachers running classes locally, and are unsure of how to break into the market themselves. If this applies to you, the following information may be of some help.

## 1 Devise a business plan

Include in your plan everything that will help you concentrate on what you want to achieve as an Infant Massage Teacher. This helps you get started and, when the going gets tough a plan can help you stay focused. Consider including in your plan:

What you need to run your classes, for example:

- the venue

- the materials needed to make the classes run smoothly (e.g. baby change mats, oil, nappies, kettle etc)

What is your budget to get your classes up and running

What are you going to charge

Are you going to teach individuals or groups, or both

Do you want to teach privately, or through an organisation such as Sure Start Projects

How many classes do you want to run a week

How do you want to run the classes (e.g. as a weekly drop-in, or as part of a course etc)

How are you going to market yourself

- Who are you going to approach

- Where are you going to advertise

- Where are you going to give talks/presentations

Are there any professional development courses/study days you want to attend

## 2. Develop a network

Don't assume that the local competition is necessarily hostile.

There are people who enjoy sharing knowledge and you may have something to offer, just as much as the next person.

There are also people who might be interested in a joint venture. For example:

- Another infant massage teacher who is interested in running larger groups with a co-worker

- Postnatal exercise teachers or baby yoga instructors who would like to be involved in offering a more rounded service – their skills and yours combined.

## 3. Have a plan of action

Gather information about the area you plan to run classes in. Consider:

- What is around to support parents with babies locally

- Most importantly – are there many parents with babies in that area

- Are there already infant massage classes running – If so, how are they run – by a Health Professional, or a Complementary Therapist. How much do they charge?

- How often do they run classes?

- Are there many places to advert/promote your classes

Find a suitable venue that is within your budget. Consider church halls, community centres, health centres

Develop a marketing pack. You may want to include:

- Posters
- Leaflets
- Complimentary slips
- Business cards
- Writing paper

Contact the 'gatekeepers' to the parents you hope to teach:

- Health Visitors
- Midwives
- Paediatric Nurses
- GPs
- Sure Start Programme Managers

Offer to give talks and presentations to:

- NCT
- Mother & Toddler groups
- Postnatal exercise groups
- Antenatal groups
- The 'gatekeepers' (see above)

Use your marketing material

Put up posters in community centres, health centres, village halls, libraries, maternity units – anywhere you can find parents with babies

Distribute leaflets wherever you find parents with babies

Keep and maintain a professional portfolio, both as a reference and as a tool to market yourself

Keep abreast of current research and keep salient articles in your portfolio – helpful when dealing with professionals who wish to see 'research based evidence' concerning the benefits of infant massage.

Advertise in the local paper – try to get the local paper to do an article, contact the local radio – if they have talk show they maybe interested in covering infant massage.

#### **4. Be prepared to be flexible.**

If necessary be ready to revise your plan. What might work in one area, may not in another.

#### **5. Most importantly do not give up at the first hurdle**

It is often tough to get started and established. Keep plugging away and you will get there in the end. When I started out over seven years ago I felt as if I was banging my head against a brick wall. It was so new to UK society then that many Health Professionals I approached viewed it with a good deal of suspicion. I often felt disheartened and was ready to give up after many weeks of giving talks and getting no where, but little by little the barriers dropped and more and more parents and professionals became interested.

I used to remind myself, when I was ready to give in and stop trying, that what we offer as infant massage teachers is so beneficial to both parent and child and makes it is well worth the fight.