



## The Members' Pathway: *Level 3*

PLAN > Membership Action Plan > *Where New Members come from*

### POSITIVE PUBLIC IMAGE

This document outlines the link between the promotion of Freemasonry, increasing public awareness and how we can attract new members.

Research into membership organisations confirms that most people join because they were asked by an existing member. Very few approach the organisation themselves without first knowing that they are likely to receive a warm response. While a positive public image may generate some approaches from highly motivated potential candidates, this alone is unlikely to be sufficient to sustain Lodges in the future.

However, if a person when approached already has an awareness of local Freemasonry, and sees it in a good light, he is more likely to respond positively when approached by a member, express some interest and want to know more. His interest is likely to be enhanced if Freemasonry is perceived as attractive, reported to be enjoyable and rewarding, and if it offers the benefits we know people seek when they volunteer or join a membership organisation.

Prior to the Second World War, Freemasonry in England & Wales was visible to the public. We enjoyed a good reputation and we were highly respected. We were invited to take part in public events and took a leading role in many. Our proceedings were reported in the local press and many of our members were proud to be identified as Freemasons. With the threat of Nazi invasion, Freemasonry and Freemasons withdrew from the public eye. We then remained unseen. It was not long before we became the object of suspicion and accusation. When we did not respond to such attacks our detractors suggested we had something to hide.

Today most members of the public know very little of Freemasonry because until recently we have told them next to nothing. With a membership of under 200,000 we are only a small part of society. Most of the adult population think or care very little about Freemasonry. If asked what they do think about us they are likely to repeat what those who have spoken out have said. If the loudest voices are those of our detractors that is what the average adult will repeat; rumours, speculation, accusations.

If we want prospective candidates to give a positive response to an approach about their possible membership, we need to replace the voices of our detractors with those of our members speaking openly, accurately and with confidence about their experience and enjoyment of Freemasonry.

However, the tools needed to create a positive public awareness of the Craft are not the same tools we use when we are speaking to a friend or contact about Freemasonry; they are the tools of communication, marketing and public relations. UGLE and your Metropolitan / Provincial / District leaders are working hard at raising public awareness about Freemasonry. However, as research into patterns of volunteering has shown, most existing members of organisations did not step forward to join or give their time, even when the organisation was well known and highly regarded. Most members of organisations joined because someone asked them. The positive public awareness simply made it easier for one person to ask and for the other person to express an interest.

If we want to attract new members, we must be visible and attractive, both nationally and locally. The national and local organisation is doing all it can. We now need local members to have the confidence to speak about their experience of Freemasonry and to know that it is appropriate for them to do so.

Building a positive public image is the necessary foundation upon which the Members' Pathway is built but is not part of it. UGLE and our Provinces have other initiatives to develop a more positive public awareness of Freemasonry.