

## Guidance Sheet 4

### Researching & understanding your market & selling your service

The micro-care market place is wide and varied. To help make your micro-care business as success, and to maximise all opportunities, you need to understand potential customers, and your competitors. If you know what your customers want and need, it will help you to develop your services so you can fulfil their needs. Equally, by understanding your competitors, it will help you to understand what they offer, how you can improve on it and give your business an advantage.

1. Product/Service - Be clear about what you are offering; selling to your customers/clients.

Micro-carers can support people with a variety of things, which could include:

- Domiciliary care services
- Respite for carers
- Holidays and short breaks
- Activities that bring people together
- Leisure, wellbeing, and social opportunities
- Cleaning
- Assistance with bills
- Pet care
- Befriending/companionship
- Help with gardening
- Provide meals for people in their own home
- Shopping for one or more people

2. Place – Where are you selling your service?

Where in your community will you be providing your service? Things to think about:

1. How far are you prepared to travel; how do you travel to reach your customers/clients?
2. Do your customers/clients come to you to access the service you provide?
3. Do you provide your service in the customers/clients own home?
4. Do you require a room or community hall to provide your service?
5. Do you require transport to provide your service?

3. Customers/Clients – Who are you selling your service to?

Your customers will all be different. They will be people from all walks of life, and generations, where are they, and what do they need or want? As the old proverb says, “*don’t put all your eggs in one basket,*” it means, don’t be dependent on just one type or source of customer/client. Things to think about:

1. What do people need or want?.
2. What can you offer to people of different ages?
3. What can you offer people with different needs e.g. people with a learning, physical or sensory disability, older people, lonely people, people struggling with poor mental health etc.
4. People talk about “*a gap in the market,*” this means seeing an opportunity to provide something that is not yet available, but your customers/clients want or need. This may be true, **but** think carefully, why is there a gap? Is what you are offering really needed? Do the research.

Target customers	What they need/want
Customer type 1	
Customer type 2	
Customer type 3	
Customer type 4	

#### 4. Price

Price is important to both you and your customers/clients. Things to think about:

1. How much does it cost to purchase your service?
2. It does not have to be the cheapest service available **but**, is the cost of your service good value for money and affordable?
3. Customers/clients are usually happy to pay a reasonable price if the service is high quality, and reliable
4. Does the cost of your service cover your costs to provide it? This is broader than just the time you may spend with your customer/client. Take into account everything it takes to provide your service e.g. travel time and cost of travel, products you need to buy to provide the service etc.

#### 5. Competitors or Collaborators

Other Micro-carers in the business world are traditionally your competitors. But think laterally, there is potential that the same Micro-carers could also be your strategic partners and collaborators, you will share common goals. Careful partnering and collaborations can serve well to strengthen your business, help to grow your income, and strengthen capacity. Things to think about:

1. Who are your Micro-carer competitors?
2. What do they offer, what service do they provide?
3. Is what you provide, and what they offer compatible?

4. Is there potential that you could work some of the time with this Micro-carer(s)?
5. Good collaboration starts with talking together and exploring the concept and potential of working together e.g. supporting each other when you are unable to work such as when you take time off or have a personal crisis, or being part of a wider collaboration of Micro-carers.
6. Could you learn from each other?
7. Think carefully how a collaboration would work, you may need to consider a Collaboration Agreement which will set out very clearly things like, names of all partners/collaborators, what the collaboration will do, duration of the agreement, agreed standard all partners/collaborators will work to, liability, communication between all parties, review period, administrative duties and finances, any changes, and ending the agreement.

Competitors	What they offer	Could you collaborate with them? YES/NO
Competitor 1		
Competitor 2		
Competitor 3		
Competitor 4		

#### 6. Promotion – Letting people know you are there, and what you offer?

You need to let people know about the service you are providing. The more you promote your service, the more potential customers/clients will know about you and what you offer. Things to think about:

1. How are you going to promote your service, this could be adverts in newspapers, posters in doctors surgeries, community halls, local shops, adding your service to local directories etc.
2. Leave your business card or leaflet with people you talk to or places you visit.
3. Let local professional services know what you providing and where you provide it e.g. Social Services, Social Workers, other support services, G.P. surgeries, you will share many of the same customers/clients.
4. Think about social media e.g. Facebook, WhatsApp groups etc.
5. Network with other micro-care providers and support networks to keep yourself up-to-date with current needs and trends and emerging themes.
6. You may like to think about joint-promotion with another micro-carer, or group of micro-carers.

#### 7. Reputation is everything

Your reputation as a micro-carer is critical to the success of your business. People judge people easily. A good reputation will help to give you credibility and instil trust in the people you provide a service to, their family and friends. A good reputation takes time to build, but a single bad incident can bring a business down very quickly.

*“Great customer service costs you nothing.  
Poor customer service can cost you everything”*

Things to think about:

1. Are you really **listening** to the needs and wants of your customers/client and able to provide it?
2. Are you delivering your service in compliance with legal requirements and standards e.g. Micro-carers Quality Framework?
3. **Are you reliable** e.g. do you arrive on time, if you are going to be late are you able to let your customer/client know?
4. If someone else will be arriving instead of you because you are taking a holiday, a break or have a crisis, are you letting your customer/client or their family know?
5. Do you explain what you are doing, and why?
6. Are you smart and clean in your appearance?
7. Are you fully equipped with the appropriate PPE (personal protection equipment)?
8. Do you portray a positive, can-do attitude?
9. When you are with your customer/client give them your full attention, they are paying for you to help them, **don't** make or answer telephone calls while you are with them unless the call is about your customer/client.
10. Make sure you have a professional but friendly answer message on your telephone to let a caller know you are busy with a customer/client, ask them to clearly leave their name, telephone number and a short message and you will call them back as soon as you are free. That call could be a new customer/client.

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