

**serTA Sweet Sixteen Weekend – 23-25 September 2022**

**Saturday Short Talks  
Saturday 24th September 2022**

**Starting a New Group**

**introduced by Hilary Maidstone with contributions from the floor**



Hilary identified something that many clubs have also experienced post Covid - an aging demographic who were either unable or unwilling to return to dancing after the prolonged break.

Despite some recruitment, results hadn't been wonderful and initial interest by the few dancers that had started waned once they realised some effort was needed to learn SCD.

Suggestions that came from the floor were as follows:

**Advertising suggestions included:**

- An accessible hall with flexible accommodation, a good dance floor and plenty of parking is important
- Spend time on advertising material. Your message should engage by speaking to potential dancers in the 'first person'
- Good quality flyers and posters with a clear and concise message ideally including a photo of dancing displayed not just in the immediate locality, but also in surrounding areas
- Articles in a number of community magazines are usually very successful. Also having a presence on local community Facebook page
- Local radio
- Article in local newspaper

**Suggestions for maintaining a commitment from new dancers included:**

- Creation of a 10 week beginners' course payable in advance can result in more regular attendance
- Give either the first or two weeks free, then obtain commitment by asking them to pay for the remainder of the term in advance
- A ten week course for SCD compared to many other activities is very reasonably priced
- There can be a perception by new dancers that at the end of their initial training their learning is complete, and it is important to make it clear that learning is ongoing

**Other items discussed were:**

- Difficulty in retaining newer dancers
- Don't push through a syllabus too quickly. Accept you may need to scale back tuition and take longer introducing new formations. Maybe access fun, simple ceilidh dances as well to keep people engaged initially
- How to support new dancers once they have completed their initial training. Plan ahead and consider new dancers' progression
- Give consideration to 'How do we inspire people'
- More experienced people supporting inexperienced people is a great way for new dancers to learn

**But necessary to be aware of**

- Some experienced dancers in clubs having concerns over supporting beginner dancers
- More experienced dancers being irritated by teachers/MCs having to give direction to newer dancers during weekly club social dancing

The session didn't have answers to all the questions, but a good discussion was had and perhaps this is a good topic for a future workshop.

Report written by Jan Collings