

**YHA Local Groups
in England and Wales**



**A review of their membership,
group activities, management,
marketing and finances.**

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Introduction

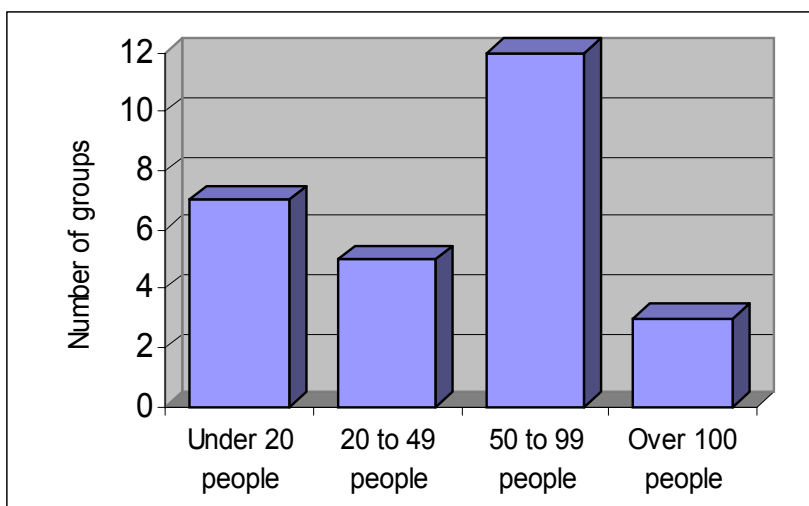
Local YHA Groups, whether they are formally affiliated with National YHA, or not, are and are made up of a diverse mix of people. They are run independently of National YHA and are not accountable to anyone, other than their own members. Their activities, how they are organised and how they are financed are not well known or understood.

There is little or no forum to benchmark a Local Group against. Accordingly, a short questionnaire was devised by Leeds YHA Local Group, which was sent to all 56 affiliated Local Groups in England & Wales. Replies were received from 28 groups, although some of them did not complete all sections of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire can be found at the end of this report. The results are based on the position as at 30th June 2004 and the financial amounts are drawn from the last year-end accounts of each group. All amounts, ratios and percentages are based on the 28 groups that replied, unless stated otherwise.

Membership

The average number of members in a local group is 54. Membership age bands are shown in the graph.

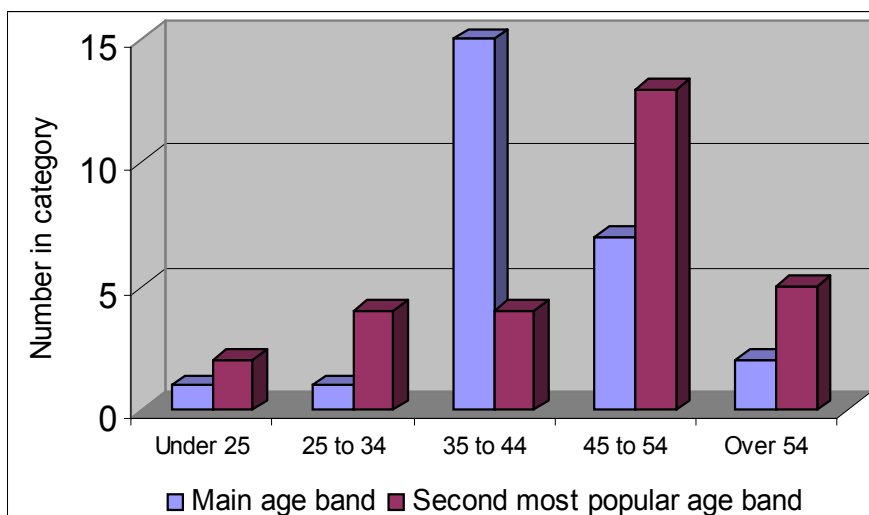


The smallest group has eight members, with the largest three groups having 100, 120 and 188 members.

37% of the groups reported an increasing membership; 33% a decreasing membership and 30% of groups had no reportable change.

3,000 people are estimated to be members of YHA Local Groups in England & Wales.

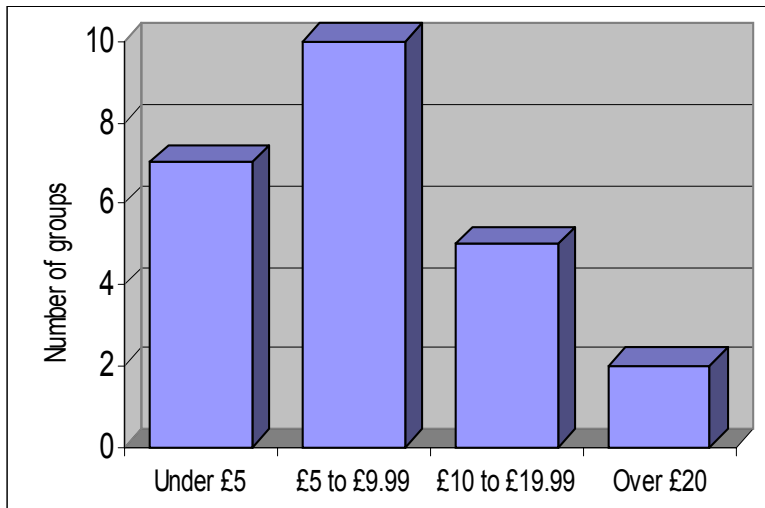
All the groups, except for three small ones charged a subscription. 50% of the groups charging a subscription had more than one category of subscription.



Despite the word 'Youth' in YHA, the most popular age range of Local Groups' members is 35 to 54, with 72% of people falling into this range.

The average age of members of the 28 groups surveyed is 42.

Subscriptions



The average full subscription rate was £7.94, but they ranged from £1 to £27 per member.

Subscriptions of £9,137 were raised from those groups replying, with over £18,000 estimated nationally.

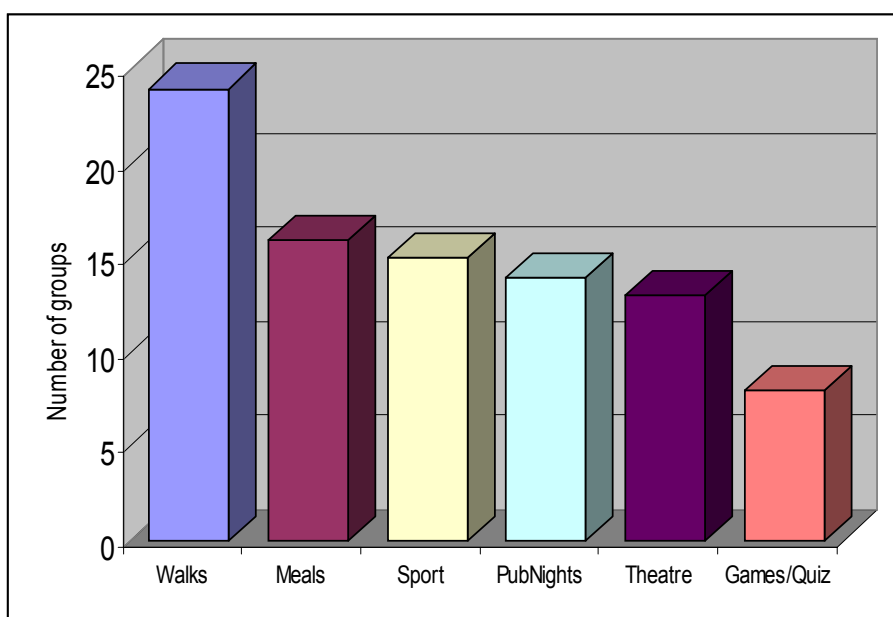
Categories of membership, and the number of people falling into each category, based on those replying to the questionnaire were as follows:

Full	Low income	Family/household	Associate	Child	Honorary life	Total
1078	56	56	7	2	2	1,201

Of the total 1,201 members in the 28 groups, therefore, 90% are full members. Subscriptions for the low-income category tended to be approximately 50% of the full rate. Family/household rates were approximately one and half times the full rate.

Group activities

Mid-week summer activities

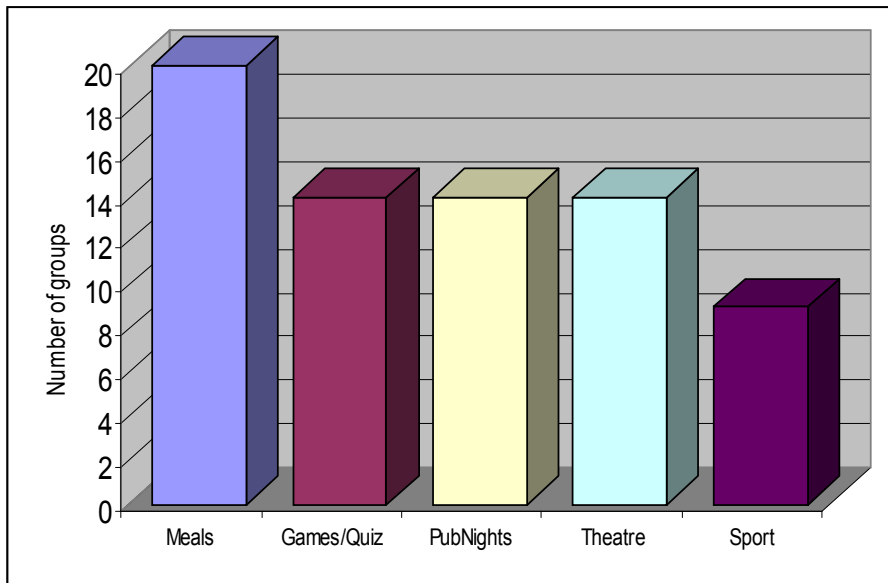


Mid-week evening walks proved to be by far the most popular activity undertaken by local groups during the summer evenings.

Apart from those stated in the graph opposite, other mid-week summer activities included visits, talks, cycling, cinema, music and concerts, though only one or two groups noted these.

Group activities (continued)

Mid-week winter activities

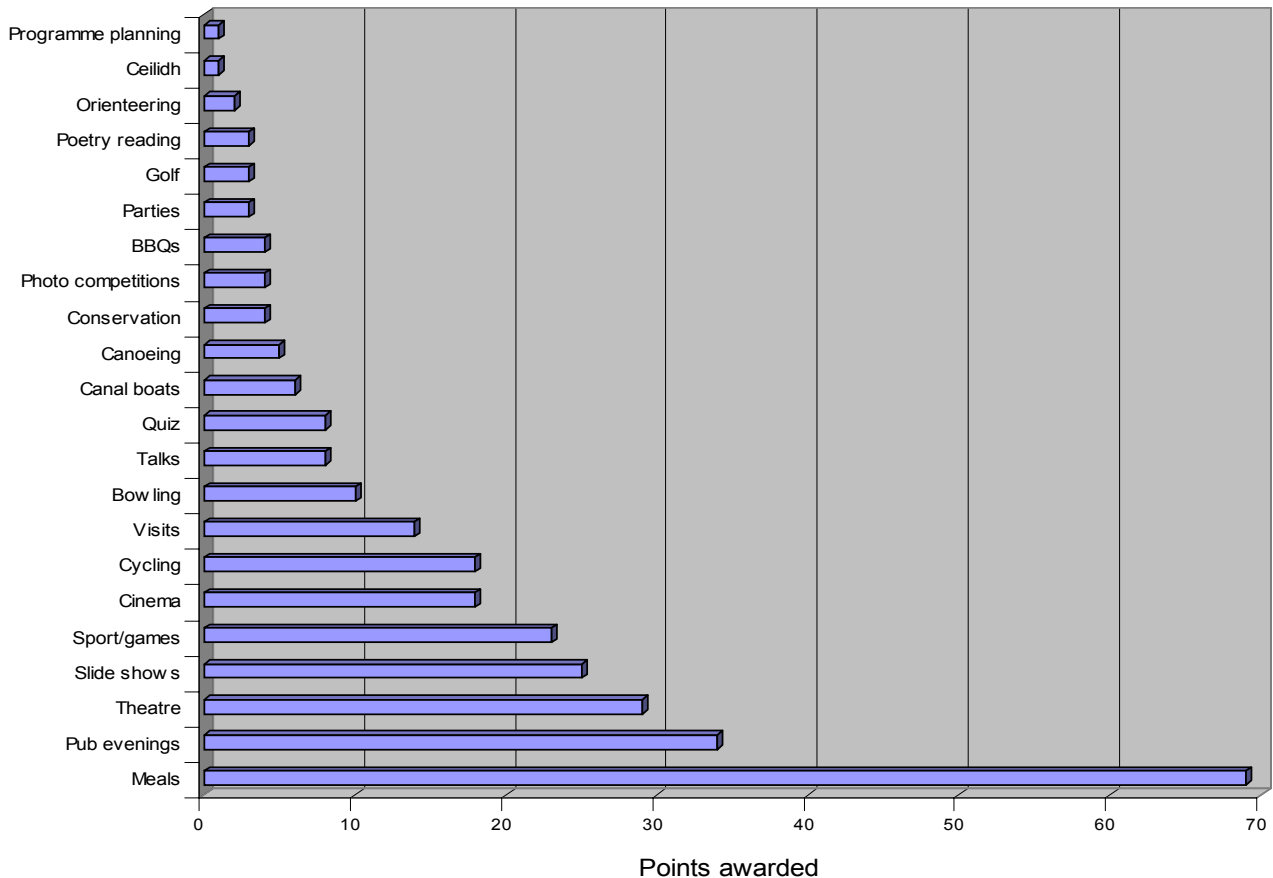


The most popular replacement for evening walks in the winter months was meals, with games/quizzes nights, pub nights and theatre trips coming a close second.

Other mid-week winter activities not shown on the graph, included slide shows, talks, videos, cinema nights, photo competitions, concerts and marmalade making.

Social activities

Groups were asked to indicate their top five social activities, and to rank them. Five points were awarded for the most popular activity and one point for the least popular.



It is clear from the above graph, that meals are by far the most popular social activity.

Group activities (continued)

Walking related activities

Groups were asked what their main walking related activities consisted of.

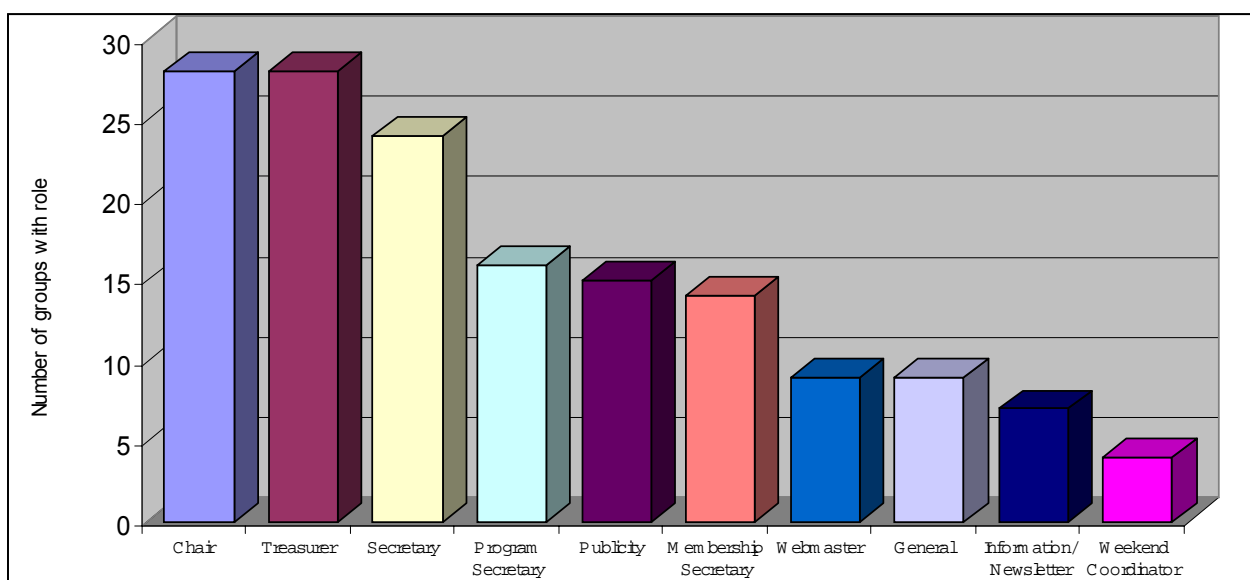
All 28 groups organised weekends away, where the primary activity was walking, except for one special support group.

22 groups (84%) organised weekend day walks, with the same number also running mid-week evening walks. Two groups, (8%), i.e. Over 50's and The Posteller's were nationally run groups, which only do walks during weekends away.

Other stated walking related activities were the Cadbury Cup, Roding Rally and Navigation Skills.

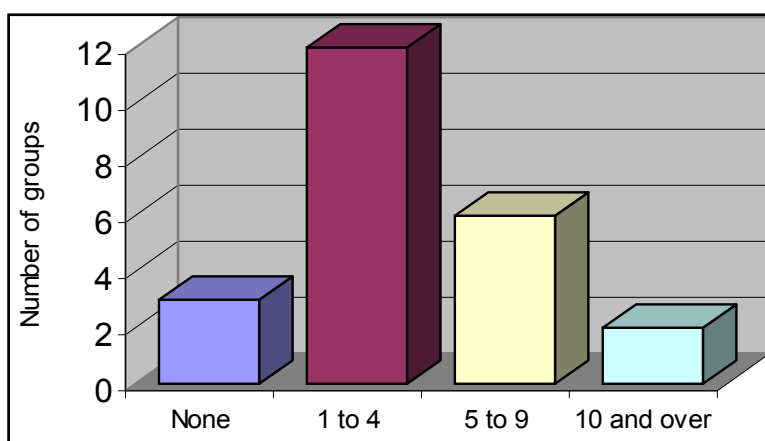
Management

Unsurprisingly, all the groups stated that the people on their committees had separate roles.



Most groups only had one person for each role, which was always the case for Chair, Treasurer and Secretary, although 4 out of the 28 groups replying had no formal role of Secretary.

Two people shared the role of Program Secretary in nearly half of groups. Groups had on average 2 to 3 people on their committee with no designated role.



Number of committee meetings

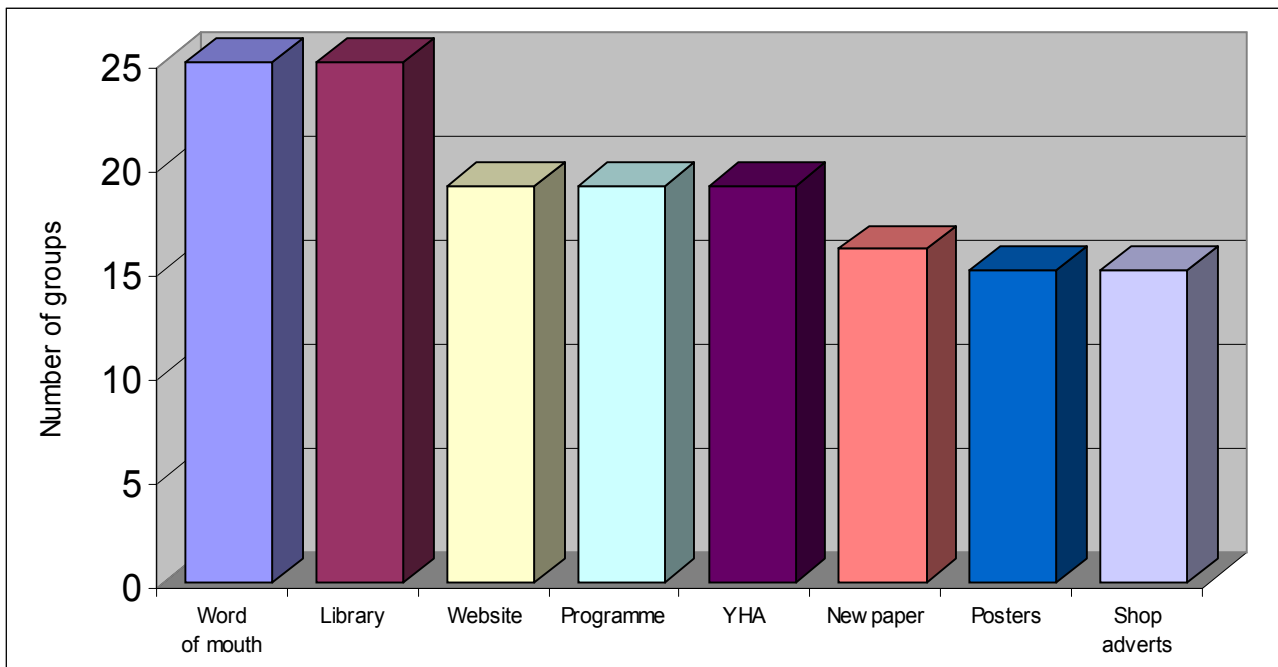
On average, local groups held four formal committee meetings per year.

Five groups did not specify whether they held any formal meetings.

Publicity

Popular methods of publicity

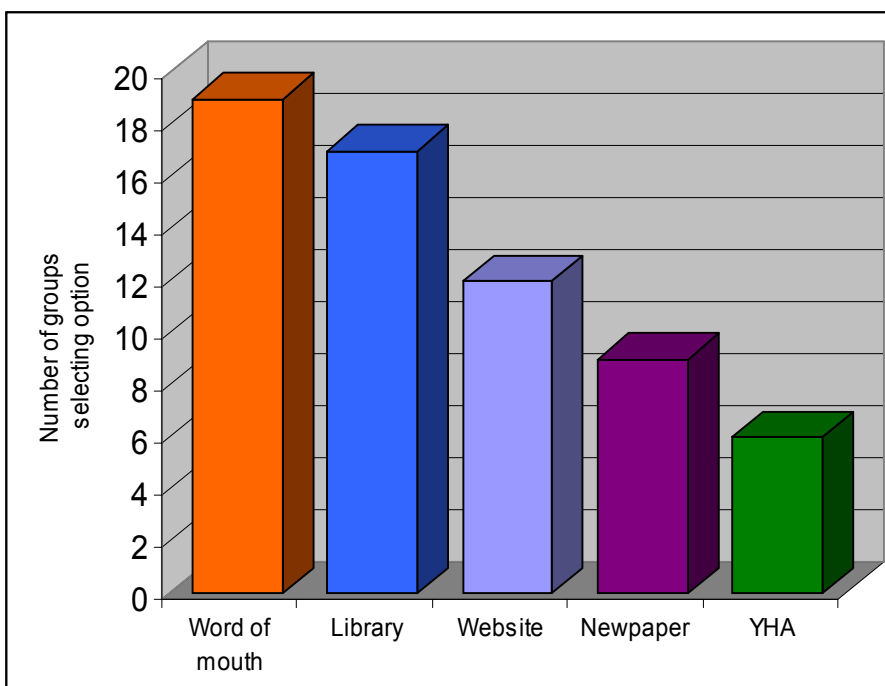
Twenty-five groups said that they actively marketed their group. The most popular methods were:



Other methods, used by one group each, were local employers, council database, leaflet drops and the intranet at work.

Best methods of publicity

Groups were asked to choose their best three methods of publicising their group, which were.

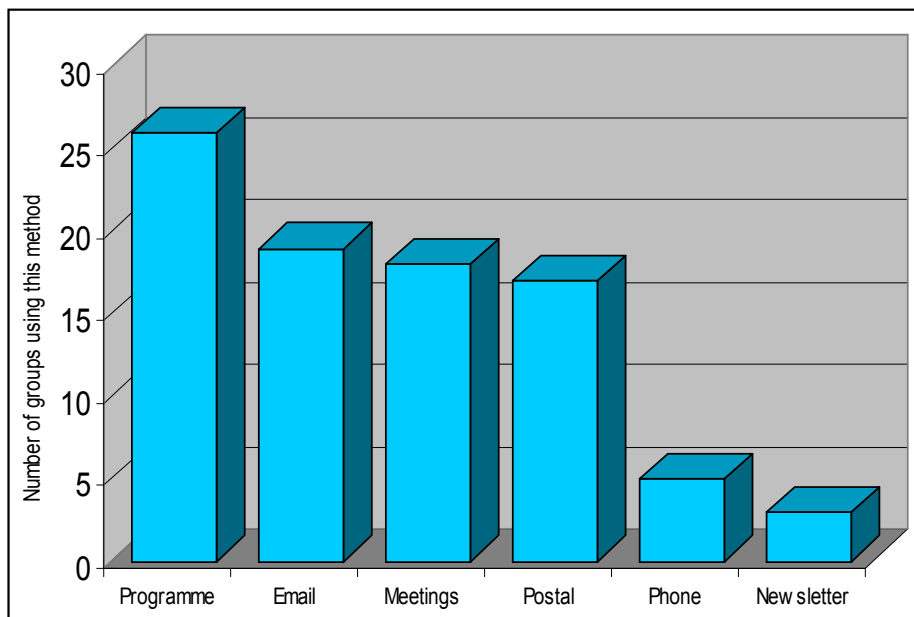


Despite modern electronic methods of advertising, the traditional methods proved to be the most popular, with personal recommendations being the best.

Interestingly, advertising on employer databases and work intranets proved for some groups to be one of their best methods of introducing new members to their group and its activities.

Communication with members

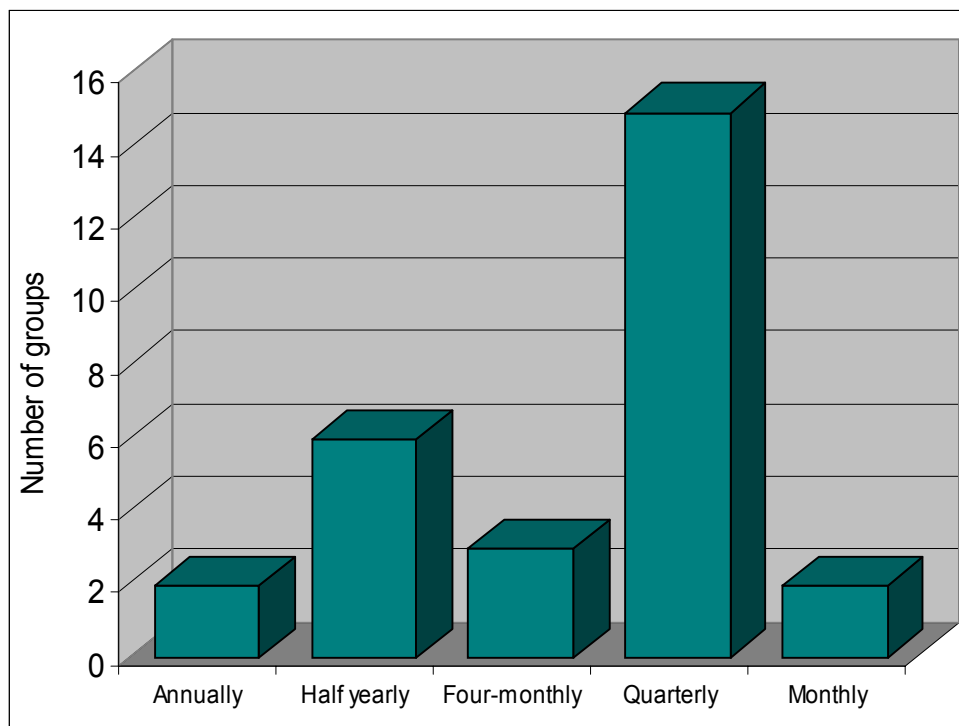
Sixteen groups out of the 28 replies had a website, with 12 having a group email address for contact.



Although websites were considered to be the third best method of publicising the group (see the bottom graph on the previous page), the use of email proved to be the best way of communicating with most members, once they had actually received their programme and joined the group.

Programme printing

After weighing up the time and costs involved in producing a programme of events, a quarterly programme was the best format for over half of all groups.



Whether programmes were printed monthly or annually, the costs of printing tended to fall into two discrete cost bands, those at around £200 pa and those at around £20 - £70 pa.

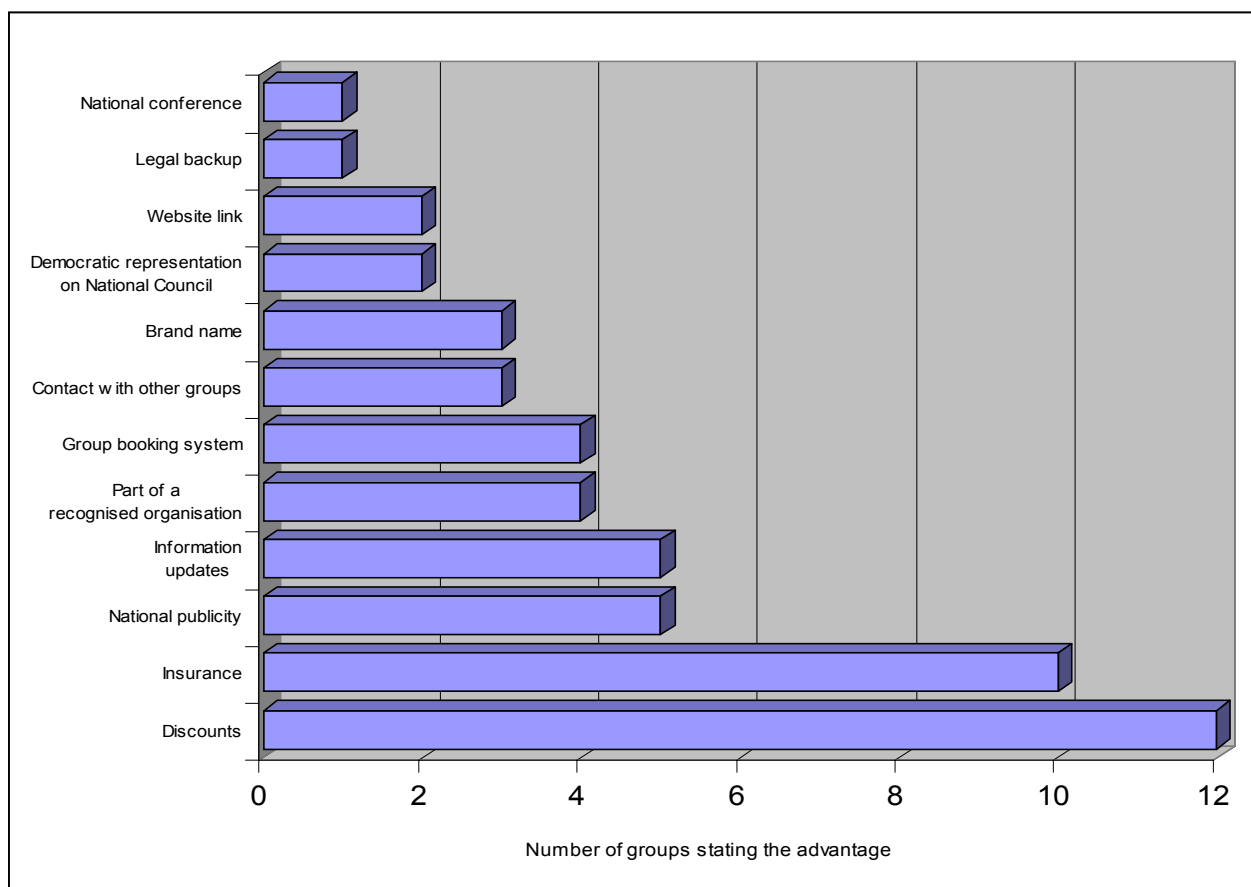
One group even spent £1,000 pa, though this group also had the highest subscription income of £3,500 pa.

More than one in five groups had no group cost of programme printing. This may be due to programme sponsorship. In some cases individual group members do the printing for free, or possibly local employers are financing the cost.

Relationship with National YHA

Advantages of affiliation

Groups gave the following as the main advantages of being an affiliated group of National YHA.



The 10% discount for group hostel bookings, as expected, was the main advantage of affiliation. Whilst there may be ambiguity concerning the exact nature of the insurance cover for local groups, this was also shown to be one of the major advantages of affiliation.

Disadvantages of affiliation

Groups also were asked to consider the disadvantages of their group's affiliation.

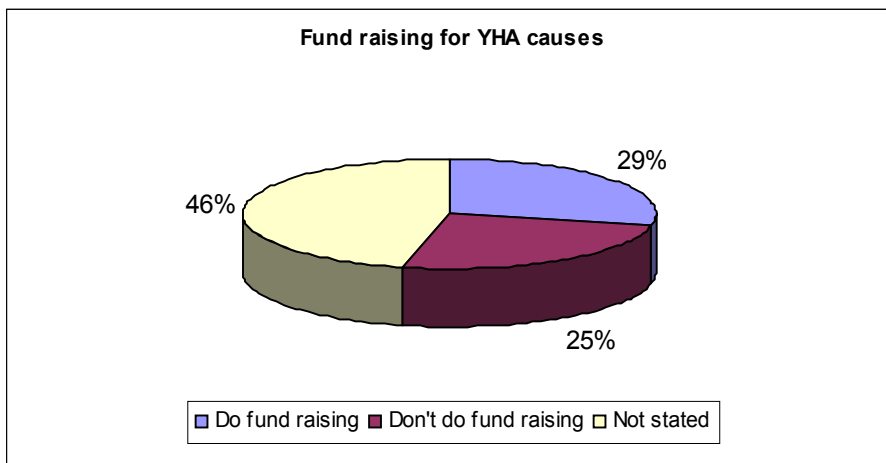
The most popular quoted items were: -

1. The poor Corporate Image of YHA (5 groups)
2. The image that YHA is only for youths (3 groups)
3. Restrictions of how groups can act and their onerous duties (2 groups)
4. That all group members must also be members of National YHA (2 groups)

Whilst not specifically disadvantages of affiliation, one group also cited fear of interference from National YHA management, the fact that the National Conference is organised by the National YHA rather than the local groups, and the poor venues for conferences.

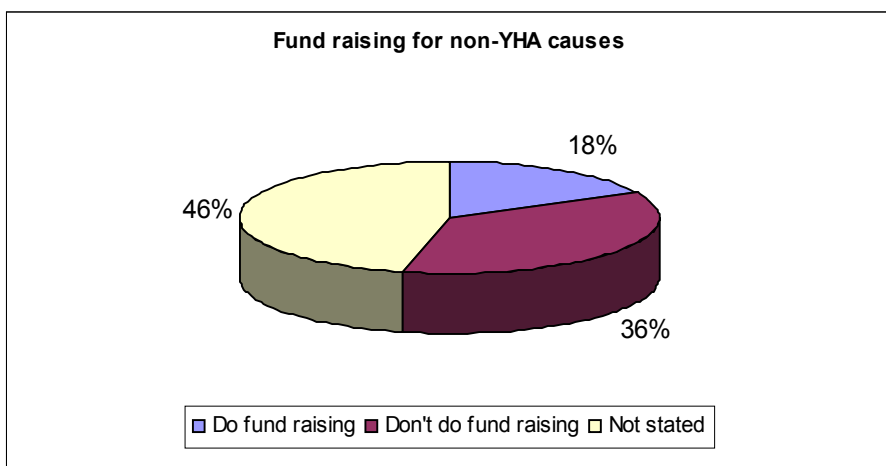
Fund raising

Local groups were asked if their group participated in any annual fund raising.



Eight groups collected for YHA causes.

Eleven groups confirmed that they do fund raising events each year, with six groups collecting for YHA causes, three for non-YHA causes and two groups for both causes.

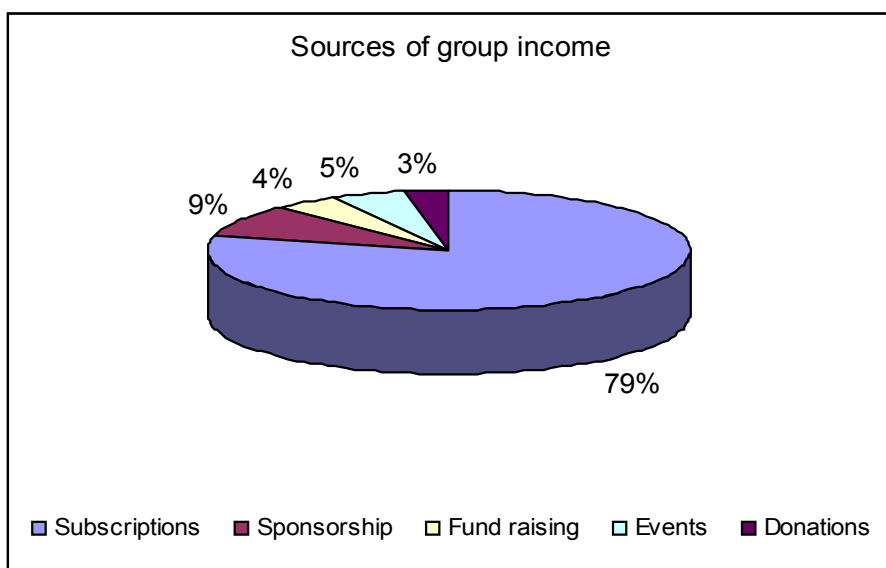


Five groups collected for non-YHA causes.

It is estimated that last year £2,850 was collected by local groups for all causes.

Group finance

Group income



Over three quarters of group income came from subscriptions.

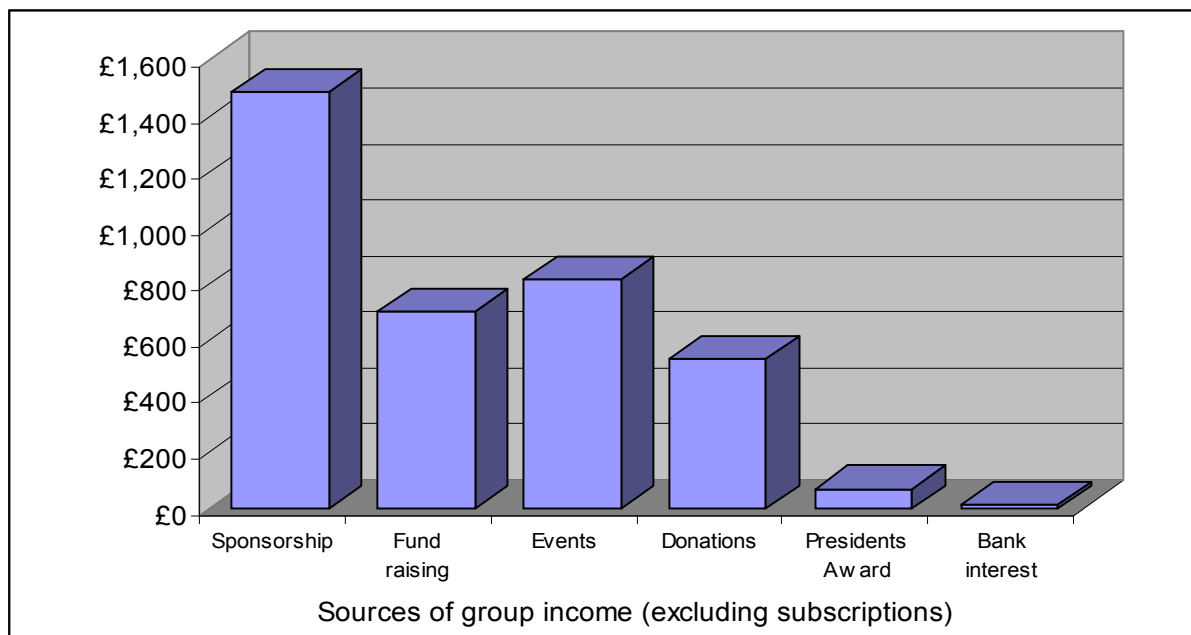
Based on the 28 groups replying to the questionnaire

- £13,230 was received in subscriptions.
- Total group income from all sources amounted to £17,093.

Group finance (continued)

Other group income

21% of group income (£3,634) was received from non-subscription sources, and made up as follows.



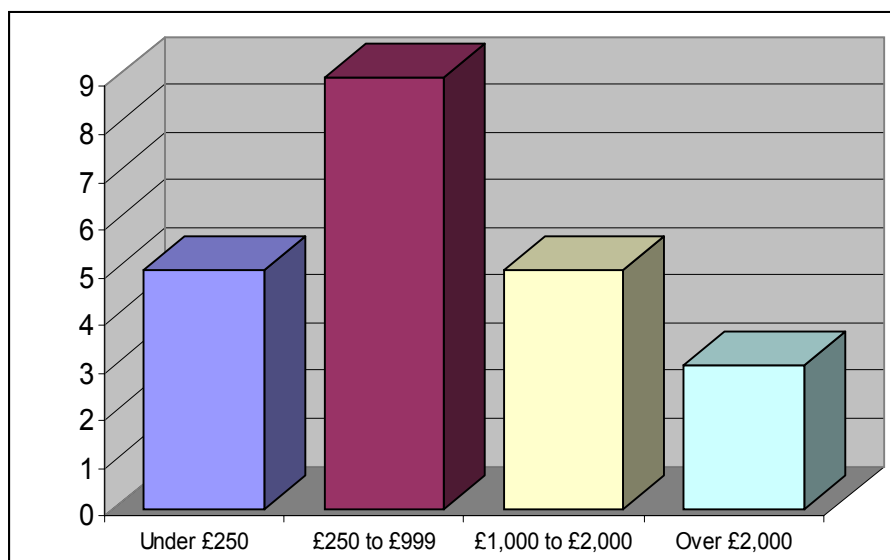
Group expenditure (not all groups replied to this part of the survey)

Type of expenditure	No of groups with type of expenditure	Average amount per group (£)	Total amount (£)	Percentage of total group expenditure
Room hire (see note below)	8	312	2,496	21%
Programme (see page six)	14	126	1,769	15%
Travel expenses	2	515	1,030	9%
Postage	18	52	937	8%
Adverts	16	57	917	8%
Group events	7	105	733	6%
Membership administration	3	213	639	5%
Leader training	1	400	400	3%
Speakers	2	161	322	3%
Telephone	1	320	320	3%
Stationery	11	22	242	2%
Bed night vouchers	1	215	215	2%
Website	4	49	195	2%
Insurance	1	178	178	1%
Donations	1	20	20	0%
Other expenditure		66	1,527	13%
Total expenditure by groups replying			11,940	100%

One group, with an exceptionally high subscription income of £1,800 pa, spent £1,200 pa on room hire. Excluding this group from the statistics, expenditure on room hire would have been £1,296, with an average of £185 per group.

One group stated that they use the 10% discount on group hostel weekends to finance the allocation of an annual £12 voucher to each committee member and weekend organisers, rather than passing the discount on to weekend attendees.

Group bank balances



Group bank balances ranged from £50 to £4,900, with an average of £1,175 based on 22 groups. This represented £25,867 held on deposit and current accounts.

To put group reserves into perspective, the average bank balance was £18.70 per member.

Those groups with a bank balance over £2,000, amounted to £3,563, £3,946 and £4,900.

The amounts held on bank accounts represented, on average, seven years of surplus income over expenditure. The average group generates a surplus each year of 24% of its group income, which clearly demonstrates why groups have generated surpluses far greater than required to meet annual expenditure.

Groups however, require fairly large bank balances so as to finance their weekend away hostel deposits.

YHA members and hostelling

Local Groups provided National YHA with approximately 8,700 nights in Youth Hostels. The 28 groups replying to the questionnaire provided about 3,700 nights. With approaching 3,000 Local Group members nationally, this meant that on average, each Local Group member only stays 3 nights at a Youth Hostel each year. The highest ratio of group members to hostel nights was 14 nights away per member each year. Clearly, many groups have members who never, or rarely go hostelling, and only join Local Groups for either their social activities or their evening and day walks.

Other comments received

Groups raised the following comments.

1. Two groups thought that there was a general lack of support from National YHA.
2. A category should be created in the President's Award for the highest bed nights at hostels.
3. The number of active groups, and the effectiveness of communication between them, has reduced now that the NHLGC (National Hostelling and Local Groups Committee) has been disbanded. No one has a job of following up registration, organising joint events or for starting new groups etc.

The author

The questionnaire, analysis and report were prepared by Paul Clifton of Leeds YHA Local Group of 8 Haven Rise, Cookridge, Leeds LS16 6SL 0113 228 6620 paulinleeds@hotmail.com

A big thank you goes to Dawn Leggott, of the same group, who despite claiming not to understand statistics, was of great assistance with her report writing and questionnaire skills.

Affiliated YHA Local Group Questionnaire

It would be very helpful if you would fill in this questionnaire and return it to Paul Clifton of Leeds YHA Local Group. My address and contact details are shown at the end of the questionnaire.

You may need to ask members of your group's committee the answers to some of the questions. Please try to be as accurate as possible in order to increase the validity of the results.

Group details

What is the full name of your group? _____

Who is the primary contact of your group? (the results will be sent to this person)

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone number _____

Email address _____

Group's website address _____

Group's email address _____

Subscriptions

How many members did your group have at the end of your last subscription year?

Judging by this year's subscriptions, would you say that your group's membership is

Increasing ? Decreasing ? No change ?

Does your group charge a subscription fee of any type? Yes No

Do you have different subscription categories? Yes No

Which categories of subscription did your group have at the end of its last subscription year?

Category	Category price	Number of members at end of last subs year
Full	£ _____	_____
Reduced rate (e.g. low income)	£ _____	_____
Other (please specify) _____	£ _____	_____
Other (please specify) _____	£ _____	_____
Other (please specify) _____	£ _____	_____
Total number of members		=====

What is the main age range of members?

Under 25 25 to 34 35 to 44 45 to 54 Over 54

What is the second most common age range of members?

Under 25 25 to 34 35 to 44 45 to 54 Over 54

Activities

What are your group's main activities?

Walking-related activities

Social activities (list your top five)

Weekends away	<input type="checkbox"/>	1 _____
Weekend day walks	<input type="checkbox"/>	2 _____
Evening walks	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 _____
Other (please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 _____
Other (please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 _____

Which events do you typically organise mid-week? (Please tick all applicable)

Category	summer	winter
Walks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pub nights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Theatre	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Games / quizzes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sporting activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Management

How many people are there on your committee?

Do any of your committee members have a specified role? Yes No

Which roles do they have? Please indicate how many people perform each role.

Role	Tick if role exists	How many in each role?
Chairperson	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Treasurer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Secretary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Membership secretary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Webmaster	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Publicity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programme secretary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Weekend coordinator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Total people on committee _____

How many committee meetings do you have a year? _____

Publicity

Do you actively market your group?

Yes

No

Which of the following methods of attracting new people to your group do you use?

	Tick if yes	Tick the <u>three</u> most successful methods
Website	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Libraries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Posters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Word of mouth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adverts in shops & leisure centres	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
National YHA e.g. Triangle	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Newspaper advertisements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Communication with members

What means of communication does your group use with members?

	Tick if yes	Tick the <u>two</u> most common methods
Programme of events	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Email	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Group meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Postal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Programme

How often does your group prepare its programme of events?

Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bi-monthly	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quarterly	<input type="checkbox"/>
Half yearly	<input type="checkbox"/>
Annually	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

How much does it cost your group annually to produce its programme? £ _____

National YHA

What do you see as the main advantages of being affiliated to National YHA for your group? (List up to 3)

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

What do you see as the main disadvantages of being affiliated to National YHA? (List up to three)

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

Finance

Fund raising

If your group participates in fund raising for causes outside your group, what is the usual annual amount raised? £ _____

Who do you give the money raised to? (tick any that are applicable)

National YHA schemes

Other charities (non-YHA)

Group income

What are your three main sources of group income? (excluding any charitable fund raising)

Source	Tick if applicable	Amount of income
Subscriptions	<input type="checkbox"/>	£ _____
Sponsorship	<input type="checkbox"/>	£ _____
Other (please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	£ _____
Other (please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	£ _____
Total annual group income (not necessarily the sum of the above)		£ _____

Group expenditure

What are your five main types of group expenditure? (excluding any charitable donations)

Type	Applicable	Amount of expenditure
Programme printing	<input type="checkbox"/>	£ _____
Advertising	<input type="checkbox"/>	£ _____
Room hire	<input type="checkbox"/>	£ _____
Website costs	<input type="checkbox"/>	£ _____
Postage	<input type="checkbox"/>	£ _____
Stationery	<input type="checkbox"/>	£ _____
Other (please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	£ _____
Other (please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	£ _____
Other (please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	£ _____
Total group expenditure (not necessarily the sum of the above)		£ _____

Assets

What is the group's current bank balance? £ _____

If your group prepares an Income & Expenditure Account, please would you enclose a copy.

Other

Is there anything else that you would wish to put forward that has not been covered above?
(Please feel free to continue on a separate piece of paper)

Please return the completed form to Paul Clifton 8 Haven Rise, Cookridge, Leeds LS16 6SL of Leeds YHA Local Group.
My email address is paulinleeds@hotmail.com. Thank you for your time and comments.