**Matter of Life and Debt TV Series 2018/9 BBC1, BBC2**

**10 episodes over a fortnight**

**Beginning 11am November 19th**

**Second series of 10 episodes due in January 2019**

**Credit Union Opportunities & Preparation**

 In 2017 the BBC ran it’s Matter of Life & Debt TV series in which credit unions were heavily and very positively featured. Reports indicate that it impacted most heavily as a morale booster for credit union movement activists and supporters, many of whom observe that few people are aware of cr4edit unions or what they do. The average audience for the 2017 daytime episodes was 1.25million, probably larger than the total “financially active” credit union membership in the UK.

The 2018/9 series is expected to have a similar impact, with major opportunities for credit unions to increase loans, membership and the numbers of volunteers.

The 2017 series mainly focussed on how credit unions assist people struggling with financial problems or needing to lend. As a result, many credit unions were deluged with requests for loans. While many loan applications were turned down, it nevertheless often lead to significant increases in loan volume, and it also attracted some altruistic savers.

The largest audience share was amongst the 18-25-year olds with 250,000 - 25% of the viewers being in that age range, which is striking, and is worth some thoughts about marketing activity around the programme.

The August 1st 2018 episodes <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09929s8/broadcasts/2018/08> had 1.6 million viewers. We had a bit of feedback that there was a small spike (double but from a low summer baseline) in loan applications at a few credit unions.

NB all episodes will be available on BBC iPlayer for all. Whether or not your credit union gets the news out today – you can put the iPlayer link out and show it through social media or email it out once it is published.

The opportunity is not only to boost awareness but also boost membership, whether you require new savers or new borrowers.

PREPARATION

The 2019 SERIES offers our best opportunity to take advantage of the programme, if we use the time to prepare.

What can be done:

Remember that you may have as little as one week’s notice of the series beginning. It is therefore worth a volunteer or staff member drawing up an action plan with a view to activating the plan as soon as the first scheduling is confirmed. However, do remember the series is likely to last two weeks so you have opportunities to arrange publicity activities etc

Credit Unions may already have the text of basic alerts from the 2017 and 2018 programmes. In addition, there are several YouTube videos of the 2017 programmes that you could use as trailers e.g.

<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6vjm0y>

Alerting Members, Followers and Partners

* Use the BBC link giving forward notice of the programmes/schedule to alert our members and networks
* Once you learn of the programme dates, consider a daily schedule of actions to maximise opportunities
* Email all members if possible and by social media – but especially make the staff, volunteers, workplace reps and Board aware and ask them to make extra efforts to inform their networks about the programmes – especially if members of your credit union are featured.
* If you have members involved post videos of them talking about the programme.
* Ask for volunteers able to be on standby to help out at short notice in the office if necessary
* Alert all financial inclusion partners e.g. Citizens Advice and ask to promote programme
* Ask all payroll partners to feature the above link on their intranet
* Ask prominent local councillors/MPs for supportive quotes to use with the media and on social media
* Put up posters in all offices and on shop windows
* Consider organising and publicising a special members/public meeting at the end of the series to harness the morale boost and recruit new volunteers/reps and members.

Using the Broadcast Media

* Issue a press release, with a quote e.g. from local MP, Council Chief etc. Focus on the BBC programme, the debt crisis, impact on work, lives, what the credit union is doing to combat it etc – and do try to find news angles e.g. you have reached 1000 members, lent out £3million, rescued families from debt etc.
* Contact local BBC radio news programme news editors with a press release as above, and speak to them personally. offer to appear etc.

Preparing for Impact:

* Email all members if possible – but especially make the staff, volunteers, workplace reps and Board aware and ask them to make their networks aware.
* Assess availability of staff to manage additional phone, online enquiries, office visits etc.
* Discuss with office staff actions that could be taken e.g. changing the answering machines’ message to state that your credit union only deals with people who live or work in… etc.

High Volume of Loan Applications

* Ensure the office answering machine clearly states that you only serve people “who live or work in. (i.e. your common bond)
* Ensure any online application form clearly asks application to confirm they “live or work in.. ..(i.e. your common bond)
* Consider organising a triage or filter system whereby priority is given to existing members and potentially more complex issues such as debt consolidation and multiple CCJs are given much lower priority
* Prepare standard responses for those respondents whom you cannot meet the needs of but require assistance e.g. regarding financial capability, Good Sheppard schemes etc.

Adequate Personnel

* Request volunteers are available to cover any shortages

Savings’ Enquiries

* Credit Unions looking for a quick boost in savings could focus on how they have great offers for savers – and people can help credit unions help those in need whilst promoting responsible borrowing and saving by switching some of their savings to the credit union, and still getting a better return than many banks offer. In the 2017 feedback, a credit union reported two deposits directly attributed to the programme amounting to £16,000 and another reported a member joining and depositing £15,000.
* Use social media to target AB (middle class area) postcodes with post boosts.

Loan Enquiries

* Credit Unions looking for a boost in loans should focus on such being available at competitive rates versus the banks (where this is the case) and avoiding the pay day lenders and loan sharks. Most credit unions reported that the 2017 BBC2 daytime TV series resulted in a significant boost to loan and membership applications over the broadcasting period. One recorded 192 new adult joiners. One mentioned a 65% increase and one a four to fivefold increase
* Use social media to target C1C2DE (white collar and working class area) postcodes with promotional post boosts (and if possible, use it to promote your availability at a drop-in/outreach session you have organised in the area). Those after higher value loans could use social media to target AB (middle class area) postcodes with post boosts promoting availability of loans of e.g. £5,000 to £15,000.

Recycling on Social Media

* Broadcast each day on social media the schedule for the following day, encouraging people to share as widely as possible
* After each programme use the iPlayer link on social media, and after the link is exhausted search YouTube for recordings to use on social media

Public Events

* The series is likely to last ten days to two weeks, so there is time to plan some type of publicity event in the local shopping centres e.g. a leafletting and a stall

Looks like a long list but the main work is simply emailing to get the message out to members and partners, and preparing and sending a press release to the media, plus preferably somebody personally contacting local TV and Radio.

If anything, it will see a new stream of members bringing in the new savers and borrowers that you need.

And finally, here’s the report from some of the credit unions on the impact, benefits and drawbacks of the 2017 series:

**TV Series 2017 Impact Survey**

PF report March 20th 2018

Responses from 14 credit unions that have participated in the Barclays Project

**Summary**

The impact of October’s BBC TV series “A Matter of Life and Debt” on credit union activities was significant, as reflected in comments below of increased member and loan applications, increased footfall in branches, increased expressed interest and increased morale.

The average TV audience for the 2017 episodes was 1.25million.  The largest audience share was in the 18-25-year olds with 250,000 - 25% of the viewers being in that age range.

The impact of the series underlined the potential benefits regarding promotion of credit union awareness via national broadcast media. It also underlined the widespread lack of knowledge and understanding of credit unions and their role (a matter already widely reported in the Barclay’s project marketing workshops).

**Most credit unions (respondents) said they were insufficiently prepared for the programme and that in future they would hugely benefit by having much more notice (e.g. four weeks) of any major national media ‘promotion’.**

This issue of national (or major localised) media exposure and preparation of campaigns to take advantage of publicity may be a matter for credit unions, and their trade bodies in particular, to consider.

**Respondents’ Views**

Credit Unions involved in Years 1, 2 and 3 of the Barclays Project were asked a series of questions, which below appear in red, with a brief summary of the responses beneath. Selected quotes appear in italics.

Were you aware of the programme before you found out the broadcast date?

 2 credit unions said they were unaware of the programme/s 4 said they were only made aware by PF

When did you become aware of the broadcast date?

 Credit unions at best still had less than two weeks’ notice to prepare for broadcasting of the programmes

Was your credit union featured in the series?

Two of the responding credit unions were featured in the series. One other declined because they felt it would be bad for the business.

*We opted to not appear in the show as the producers clearly wanted to position CUs as providers of subprime consumer credit which we believe is an unhelpful distortion of the role we provide.*

If so, how many times?

 Lewisham (and several London based credit unions were featured many times. Pioneer twice.

What actions did you carry out to take advantage of the programme?

Credit Unions varied in the level and means by which they sought to take advantage of the series. Only one credit union sort to manage a perceived uptake in business by increasing staff resources.

*Circulated details to partner organisations*

*I informed the staff and volunteer team and urged them to view it whenever possible, which some did.*

*Made the volunteers aware of it.*

*Posters in all branches*

*Marketing Company did some social media work around it.*

*Commented on Facebook.*

*Told as many people as poss via social media.*

*Referred to it several times on our Facebook and Twitter pages*

*Posted links on Facebook*

*Published existence on web site, Facebook and Twitter.*

*We had a promotional event in our local shopping centre to combine the broadcast with International Credit Union Day*

*We resourced our account opening team to handle an increase in savings applications (which was welcome)*

What was the impact on day to day operations?

For most credit unions the impact on day to day operations was very significant across a range of operations; increased calls, online, visitors in branch, even donations. Many were not prepared. As a result, many struggled

***We received around 1,000 additional calls in that month. The program did raise awareness and we did have many potential members call. We also had individuals call from other areas of the UK and maybe the concept of a common bond had not quite been made clear enough.***

*Large increase in call volumes and visitors in branch. Lots of people asking if we were the same as the places on the programme.*

***Severe congestions in reception area and phones ringing constantly. Resources stretched.***

*We were a lot busier at all branches when the programmes were running, and it created a positive buzz. One applicant commented on the kind and patient way that someone had been dealt with at their credit union in the programme and thought, “that sounds too good to be true”, but when they came to us they were pleasantly surprised that we served them in exactly the same way!*

***We were not ready for the increased workload and struggled to stop chaos***

***One new member sent us a cheque for £15000 to open a membership and said he wished do more to raise awareness as he’d never heard about credit unions.***

*Slight increase in enquiries through all channels i.e. e-mail, telephone, online and face to face. The main questions we received were what savings rates do you offer.  When told it is a dividend and not decided until end of accounting year interest in joining dissipated.*

***Some of the common responses from the new members was ‘I have seen that programme on tv and I want some of that.’  ‘I want to keep my money in my community.’ ‘I want to help people in my community.’***

*Increased volume of enquiries about the credit union. Memberships and loans still filtering through.*

*Extra members depositing money*

***Slight delay in day to day work processes.***

*Delays in processing applications and loans.*

***Collections are busier and there are more people calling into the shop for information etc.***

*Did generate a lot of chat in the office with the volunteers and members that called in*

What was the impact on loan operations?

Quantifying the increased volume of loan applications was difficult for some because the programme occurred in the pre-Xmas loan demand period. However, many reported major increases in applications. However, the levels of rejection were high. It was felt that the viewing public did not fully understand the credit union loan process.

*None of the enquiries who mentioned the TV series asked about lending.*

***Difficult to say as demand was picking up to Christmas period, we imagine we have had quite a few more though.***

*not something we can quantify as it is our busiest time of year with loans so unable to say if the programme impacted upon this.*

***9 loan applications as direct result of programme in October. 7 declined and 2 accepted. Total loans agreed £7000.***

*More applications. Very positive*

***October applications were up by 30% on the same month of 2017***

*little*

*have no feel for it.*

What was the impact on membership applications?

 Most credit unions reported that the TV series resulted in a significant boost to membership applications over the broadcasting period (NB some also reported that with other promotional activity, it was difficult to attribute all the increase to the series). One recorded 192 new adult joiners. One mentioned a 65% increase and one a four to fivefold increase. Another reported two deposits directly attributed to the programme amounting to £16,000 and one a member joining and depositing £15,000.

***We saw a substantial rise in the amount of loan applications we received - 345 applications processed. Although at face value this number appears strong the number of declines (85%) was a large proportion of these applications. The show appeared to encourage a sentiment around providing loans to people with poor credit records which is wrong and sector damaging****.*

*"Very little impact as we operate a ratio-based loan policy"*

*Hard to quantify*

*We had a lot of queries (average 4 per day during the series) with the most popular question of what ‘interest savings rates’ we offered.  A slight increase in membership though. Not as many as those who enquired. We have had an increase of 17 new members over average in the month the series was on but we had other promotions ongoing through the month also which increased our usual membership totals.*

*No stats, but we’ve seen a definite increase.*

***We had 192 new adult joiners last month. Our branches have relayed back to us that the new members that joined in branch, most of them mentioned the programme and that it was a result of that, that led them to join.***

***75% increase in new member applications in October – 62 additional members***

***Increased demand from walk ins and on line. Compared to last October a 100% increase in some branches and close to that in other branches.***

***October new members were up by 65% on the same month of 2016.*** *We cannot tie it all back to the programmes (as people give a variety of reasons for joining) but a large number did result from them.*

***rate of applications increased by a factor of 4 or 5***

*We’ve had a few extra new members deposit money to “help community”.*

***2 people deposited £16000***

*We saw a substantial rise in the amount of applications for membership - 223 processed. A number of people commented on how they would like to start saving and seeing the credit union as a positive*

***"During the event we signed 31 new members and during the entire time of the broadcast we enrolled 68 new members****"*

*Maybe one or two new members – hard to say*

What was the impact on staff morale?

 The TV series reportedly gave the staff an important morale boost by emphasising the good work of the credit unions and featuring staff members but also by boosting member morale.

***Staff were impressed with the response but the extra work brought its own pressures.***

***Mixed reactions. Pleased to have such interest and improved profile but frustrated at being over stretched.***

***Staff were happy that the profile of the credit union was raised and caused interest.***

***However, the programme gave an erroneous message about the nature of the loan applicants we can help which staff found disappointing.***

*Staff seemed really excited that finally Credit Unions are being noticed.*

*Staff talked about the programmes frequently, among themselves and with the members.*

***The team were really pleased that they had portrayed our CU way of doing things so positively (i.e. not the usual perpetration of CU myths -only for the poor, only for people on benefits, people who can’t get services anywhere else - which really annoys us!).***

*The staff are very happy with the way the credit unions were presented and feel more appreciated*

*Positive*

*Positive*

*Good*

What was the impact on members?

**Some members suffered because offices were under pressure from the increased volume of correspondence and transactions. However, many credit unions reported members commenting positively on the series and the role of credit unions.**

***Slight delay in day to day work processes.***

*Many of the members mentioned that they had seen the program.*

*Lots of people who phoned the office wanted to know why we weren’t on the programme.*

*Delays in processing applications and loans.*

***Lots of members reported seeing the broadcasts and spoke very positively about them and about the way we live the ideals here at HEYCU.***

*Some members commented on how happy they were to see the credit union on TV and receiving exposure. I am sure that it was discussed amongst friends and colleagues*

***Members now feel that they are part of something bigger and are proud to be associated with the service/movement.***

What plans do you have to follow up?

 One credit union used the opportunity to take to local radio to further promote the credit union. One is looking to take on an extra staff member to cope with the volume. Several hope to use the series (many of the programmes are now available on YouTube) in online promotion. One, expecting the new accounts to quickly become dormant, is developing plans to focus on retaining the new intake as active members. Some have no plans.

***I have "appeared" on 2 local radio stations talking about (a) the work of the credit unions and (b) how debt affects young people and how we should be teaching them about financial competence. We plan to strengthen this relationship with local media.***

***Continue to share related content on our web and SM pages.***

*We’re looking at the possibility of taking short clips from the programme to use digitally to raise awareness, subject to copyright issues and compliance – any ideas on this – presumably we’re not the only ones?*

*through social media reminding people, it’s on iPlayer*

*Will consider putting episodes on line via digital media****.***

 ***Need to recruit more staff to cover the work load.***

***We suspect many accounts opened will become dormant, we have plans to contact new members to encourage them to use their accounts.***

*None – unless more programmes are planned?*

*Can’t say we have any.*

***We do not wish to encourage loan applications from deeply subprime demographic as handling large volume of declines is very costly****. However, we are promoting payroll savings to Employers and have a planned advertising spend with Birmingham Chamber of commerce*

What actions and information might have assisted your credit union to make more use of the TV series?

Credit Unions expressed a clear view that they would have been able to benefit much more from the series had they been given sufficient notice (e.g. 4 weeks) and detail e.g. topics covered. One felt that the midweek morning slot meant that most new applicants were elderly, another that a prime-time slot would have been preferable. One expressed the view that the series would have been more beneficial it if had covered the Payroll Deduction Schemes.

***If we’d known it was going to be on far in advance and some marketing material.***

***To be told of this series in advance so we could have done some work with our Marketing team to promote this within our area in advance.***

***More detailed advance information on the structure and content***

*Advance notice (a month or so) to prepare for the rush.*

***More publicity***

*(1) Knowing the range of topics that were going to be covered – I think we were led to believe that the programmes were going to focus on people using CU loans to start a business, whereas they covered the full range.  Had we known that, we may have found volunteers to take part more readily.  (2) Knowing longer in advance when they were going to show, and what topics would be covered when.*

*The timing of the programmes meant that the clientele we attracted were older people of pensionable age.*

*Could have been closer to primetime spot. Could have been told up front more about content*

***The TV should have done more to cover the very popular Payroll Deduction mechanism for savings and how building up a good track record of savings will make individuals less reliant on obtaining finance. Encouragement to Employers to adopt payroll savings (and loans) as an employee benefit is key to the survival of the sector.***

*We needed to be farther down the track with our loans*

If you had this information, how would you have better prepared to take advantage of the broadcast series?

Credit Unions reported that more advance notice of scheduling and content could have allowed them to prepare by e.g. preparation of marketing material and the marketing teams, scheduling social media posts and emails about their credit unions role and how it works, informing members, recruiting more volunteers/staff for operational cover.

***it is one of those short-lived little blips.  If credit unions could continue this ‘advertising/awareness’ on an ongoing basis and at more peak times we might eventually see a greater uptake on our services***

*If we’d known it was going to be on far in advance and some marketing material.*

*To be told of this series in advance so we could have done some work with our Marketing team to promote this within our area in advance.*

***Being able to schedule Facebook posts and e-mails to highlight different aspects of the credit union movement and how it works in Lincolnshire.***

*More publicity*

***Communicated the schedule to the team in advance, put relevant messages on social media to tie in with each broadcast and possibly arranged a special promotion.***

***may have been able to get more volunteer cover***

*Could have advised members about specific episodes*

**END**

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