

Organising a Community Event

Voluntary and community events are an important aspect of everyday life that help encourage people to play a more active part in society. They may celebrate a particular occasion, raise funds for a good cause or simply bring people in a community closer together.

The type of event you are holding will effect how you plan and run the day, so this Information Sheet is to be used as a guide only.

Planning your event

When you are beginning to plan and organise a community event, the first thing to consider is what you are trying to achieve. Discuss with your fellow organisers what the purpose of the event is. Is it to:

- raise money for a good cause?
- bring the community together?
- encourage a particular activity, such as a sport?
- spread a message about or encourage action to address a particular issue?

You will also need to decide early on:

- Who you want to come to the event - who is it aimed at?
- Will there be activities for a range of different people? Consider families, children and people with different needs.
- How many people are you expecting? Think of both a minimum and maximum number. Are you catering for all of them? Do you have the right facilities for this number?
- Will admission be free or will there be a charge; if the latter, will tickets need to be bought in advance or at the door? Advance tickets or booking (even if admission is free) can help you assess the level of interest and the numbers to plan for.

Remember that the bigger the event, the more people you will need to plan and organise on the day itself, and the more time you will need give yourself to plan and prepare.

Ensure you are clear about who is responsible for planning the event - it is a good idea to have a core group of people who will help. Ensure they know their individual responsibilities, both during the planning and the actual running of the event. Creating an action plan with deadlines for key activities and a named person to take responsibility can help to keep this in check.

Timescale

Make sure you have given yourself enough time to organise the event. You may need to consider applying for funding (which can take 12-16 weeks, sometimes even longer). Other things that may need to be done well in advance are booking entertainers, booking venues, inviting special guests or speakers (for example, the Mayor) and arranging publicity.

How far in advance you need to plan depends on the scale of the event but you may want to allow roughly three months to plan a small event, six months for a medium event, and 12-18 months for a large event.

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Date and Time

It is really important that the right date for your event is selected. If it is a family fun day than a weekend or a date during school holidays may be appropriate. If it is an action day then maybe a week day during term time would be better. Ensure everyone involved in running the event is available on the date and that your venue and any guests or entertainers are also available.

Timing your event is equally as important. Do you want to have your event run through the whole day or just part of the day (a morning or afternoon for instance)? Again, consider things such as school runs, transport availability, people's work commitments and mealtimes.

Budget

Before you book anything, even the venue, you need to set a realistic budget for your event. It is a good idea to put someone in charge of the budget and to allow for contingencies. A simple spreadsheet is often the best way of keeping track of the money. Things you may need to include in your budget are:

- Venue hire
- Entertainment (for example, face painters, bands, bouncy castle)
- Insurance (see below) and any permits
- Equipment, including tables and chairs, PA system, music, interpreters or signers
- Publicity
- Refreshments or catering

Funding

Running an event can be costly - if you need external funding to cover costs, there may be funding available. Contact VODA's Funding Adviser to get advice (see page 4 for contact details).

You could always approach local businesses and suppliers for donations for things like prizes, sponsorship or if they want to advertise at your event.

Venue

Where you hold your event is crucial. Some points you may want to consider:

- Is the venue accessible to all?
- Is the venue accessible by road and public transport?
- Is adequate car parking available (at a reasonable cost)?
- Is it available when you want it?
- Is the hire of the venue within your budget?
- Will you need additional facilities such as a crèche, translation services or a signer for people with hearing difficulties? If so, can these be provided at the proposed venue?
- If catering facilities are required, are those at the venue adequate? Can you bring your own refreshments and are drinks provided?
- Are there enough toilets?
- Does the venue have appropriate support equipment available such as flip chart and paper, overhead projector, slide projectors, microphones and hearing loop system?
- Are there different rooms to put things in, or just one big room? Is there outdoor space?

Ensure you liaise regularly with your venue in the run-up to your event to make sure everyone involved in the set up and running knows where and when activities will take place.

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Partners

Consider if there are any other organisations or agencies you want to be involved in your event and how will they contribute. For instance, they may be able to provide:

- Information stall
- Demonstration
- Workshop

How much space will they need, do they need tables, chairs, space for display boards? If you haven't got them you might need to hire them in. Don't forget to include partners or guests in your catering numbers.

Licences and Permissions

Many community activities don't need a licence. However you should check the situation early on, because if you do find you need a licence or other permission, this can take some time, even months in some cases.

Some instances where you may need a licence include:

- If you are running a raffle, lottery or race night (see Information Sheet 4.8 Raffles, Lotteries and Tombolas)
- If you are providing entertainment (performances of unamplified music, amplified music for up to 200 people, performances of plays and dance for audiences up to 500 and indoor sporting events for audiences up to 1,000 people **do not** need licences between the hours of 8am and 11pm).
- If you are providing alcohol (you do not need a licence to provide alcohol, as long as you are not selling it, or to offer alcohol for prizes provided a number of conditions are met, see the websites below).

However, you may need a Temporary Event Notice if you want to:

- have a bar where alcohol is sold
- sell alcohol in another way
- provide entertainment to the wider public
- charge to raise money for your event

See www.gov.uk/government/collections/alcohol-licensing-temporary-events-notice for more information.

Please check with your local authority and the government guidance if a licence is required for your activity:

- North Tyneside Council Licensing Team: www.northtyneside.gov.uk/ or telephone 0191 643 2175
- Entertainment Licensing: www.gov.uk/entertainment-licensing-changes-under-the-live-music-act
- Alcohol Licensing: www.gov.uk/alcohol-licensing

Publicity

Once you have the details of your event booked, and you have a clear idea of who your event is targeted at, you can begin to publicise it.

It may sound obvious but ensure that the date and time of the event, the venue and the attractions of the day are clear. It is also a good idea to provide contact details so people can find out further information if they need it.

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How and where you publicise the event depends on the scale, budget and resources you have.

Some ideas for publicising events are:

- flyers through letterboxes
- posters in shop windows or on community noticeboards
- leaflets in places where the people you want to reach are likely to go
- a letter or advert in a community newsletter
- a piece in the local paper
- an announcement on the local radio
- a Facebook event
- a page on your website, if you have one
- regular Twitter announcements, especially in the day or two before the event

Insurance, Risk Assessments and Health and Safety

Insurance

If you are running an event, you have a responsibility to do what you can to ensure people don't get hurt. If you hold regular events with the public, you may consider taking out Public Liability Insurance. This would cover you against any claims. See www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information/public-liability/ for more information.

Risk Assessments

However, in most cases, all you need to do is consider realistically what could potentially go wrong, what effect this could have on those present and what you need to do to prevent it. Focus on risks that could cause real harm and ignore the trivial.

Carry out a risk assessment of the venue and any equipment you are using. Often this involves simply using your common sense but there are plenty of guides to risk assessments. For more information see The Health and Safety Executive website: www.hse.gov.uk/event-safety/managing-an-event.htm.

Health and Safety

Some things you may need to think about in terms of health and safety:

- ✓ the layout of the event to ensure people and vehicles can move about safely
- ✓ the number of people attending the event, for example, managing entrances and exits to prevent overcrowding
- ✓ keeping the venue free from slip and trip hazards
- ✓ making sure that structures like bouncy castles you hire have an up-to-date inspection certificate and that they are properly tethered and used in accordance with manufacturer's instructions and guidance - find out more about the industry's PIPA scheme
- ✓ if hiring a fairground ride, check that it has an up to date certificate of conformity, this is equivalent to a car's MOT certificate
- ✓ electrical safety: for example, if you are using mains voltage outside use a 'trip device' to ensure that the current is promptly cut off if contact is made with any live part
- ✓ first aid arrangements
- ✓ fire safety arrangements

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At the event

- Arrive at the venue early and ensure everything is set up according to your plans.
- Ensure everyone involved in the running of the event knows what their specific roles are.
- Make sure the official personnel and anyone involved in health and safety are clearly identified.
- Ensure facilities such as toilets and refreshments are clearly signposted.
- If you are keeping a record of attendees, set up a signing in sheet at the entrance to your event.
- You may want to take photographs of the event; ensure you have permission from attendees before you start taking pictures.
- It is often a good idea to evaluate events so that you can see what worked and what didn't. If you are planning this, make sure you have evaluation forms ready and distribute them either at the start of the end of the event.
- Finally, relax and try to enjoy it!

For more information: For general advice on running a community event or for funding advice, contact VODA's Development Team on 0191 643 2636 or email development@voda.org.uk.

Other websites:

Cabinet Office Guide to Organising a voluntary event: www.gov.uk/government/publications/can-do-guide-for-organisers-of-voluntary-events/the-can-do-guide-to-organising-and-running-voluntary-and-community-events

Resource Centre Event Planning Checklist:

www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information/event-planning-checklist/

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