

Organising a first community event

For information purposes only. Not to be used as a substitute for appropriate legal and/or specialist advice.

Before you start

It is important to be clear about the purpose of any event. Think about:

- your target audience
- the messages you want to give
- what activities will be appropriate and effective
- the outcomes you want to achieve.

Bookings, permissions and licences

Find out about regulations early on as it can take months for some licences to be granted. You may need to consider:

- temporary event notice
- street collection licence
- road closure permit
- permission to use public land
- lottery licence.

Planning an event

Getting started

It's important to start planning any event far enough in advance. You may need to allow time for applying for funds or licences, booking a venue and entertainers or speakers, inviting guests and promoting the event.

The first step in planning an event is to agree who will be responsible. A small team who can share out the tasks and meet regularly to keep track of progress is a good idea. Try and meet at least once a month initially, and every two to three weeks in the lead up to the event.

Setting a date and time

Pick a date when there is nothing else planned in the area that will conflict with your event and choose a day when the people you want to attend will be able to come (eg weekends and school holidays for a family fun day). Decide how long the event will last.

Planning the detail

Work backwards from the date you have set, deciding on your key deadlines. Agree what actions need to be taken, by whom and by when.

Allow for some slippage in the planning as some things take longer than expected. Give a copy of the plan to everyone involved.

The venue

Make sure the venue is accessible to all, is available when you need it, can hold the number of people you expect, has catering facilities if necessary and the rooms you need. If your event is outside, you should have a plan in case of bad weather and you might need lighting, toilets, generators etc.

Top tip: It's a good idea to plan the layout on a large sheet of paper.

Involving others

Decide who you want to be involved and how they will contribute eg information stalls, demonstrations, workshops. Find out how much space they require and if they need tables, chairs, display boards etc, which you might need to hire.

Publicity

Who do you want your publicity to reach? Think about where those people are most likely to see a poster or flyer, and what will attract them to the event. How much money do you have to spend on publicity? Do you have someone in the group who is good at art and can produce promotional materials? Keep it simple and to the point. Don't forget to include:

- the date and time
- the venue
- the attractions and/or activities.

Make sure you distribute your publicity early enough: you don't need to wait until every last detail of the event is finalised.

Other things to consider before, during and after the event

Shortly beforehand you need to run through the event in detail:

- Where will everybody be on the day?
- Is the rota full, or do you need to fill some gaps?
- How will you get equipment to and from the event?
- Who is responsible for money on the day?
- Have you got enough change? Banks will require about a week's notice to provide change.

Top Tip: *Count takings from different activities separately so that you can tell which were popular and which cost you money.*

- Have you enough time, materials and people for setting up and clearing up?
- Make sure everyone is aware that they are expected to help with the clean up.
- Don't forget to take photos during the event. They are always useful to show funders how their money was spent.

Afterwards

- Have a meeting after the event to see what worked, what didn't and what could be improved.
- Remember to thank your supporters and tell them how the event went.

Safety and access

Consider the health and safety of staff, volunteers and members of the public in selecting a venue and planning the detail of the event. Make sure you are aware of all potential risks and have taken adequate steps to limit them.

Does your insurance cover the event you are planning?

Decide who will be responsible for first aid on the day. St John Ambulance or other trained volunteers need to be at a visible first aid point.

Make sure your publicity gives details of public transport and parking. You may need to put up signs in the surrounding streets to make the event easier to find.

Local development & support agencies

www.mvda.info
www.rcvda.org.uk
www.srcga.co.uk
www.teesvalleyrcc.org.uk