

Event planning checklist

However big or small your event is going to be, planning it will follow the same general pattern – and include some general pitfalls!

1. Make sure your objectives are clear

- Discuss what you want your event to achieve – will it raise the profile of your group? Will it bring people together? Are you aiming to raise money or just to have fun?
- Who are you hoping to attract to the event? Will there be activities for a range of different people?

2. Make sure you have plenty of time

- Start planning your event well in advance to give yourself enough time to organise everything.

3. Plan out the work – and delegate!

Working together on a timetable with all the main dates and deadlines on it can help clarify how much work there is to do, and when. You may want to establish a core planning group to organise the event, with additional volunteers to help out on the day. Be clear about what the roles and tasks are, and who is doing what.

Most events are too much work for two or three people. Try to get more people involved by:

- advertising planning meetings widely;
- thinking about the timing and location of your planning meetings, and asking potential volunteers what suits them best;
- producing early publicity for the event which also serves as an appeal for volunteers;
- putting together a list of jobs that can easily be handed over to new volunteers,
- even if they don't want to come to meetings;
- pinning a list or rota up on a noticeboard and asking people to pledge a small amount of time on the day or contributions of food, raffle prizes, etc.

Think about asking other local organisations to get involved. They may have the expertise to take a major aspect of the event off your hands.

Make sure everyone knows what is going on. Reporting regularly to the other people organising the event and to the whole group is not just politeness – it can stop an individual or an organising committee from making costly mistakes.

Be clear about how, when and what you are going to communicate with each other as a group. Will you email a list of organisers and volunteers? Will you meet on a weekly basis? How will people know when you've completed a task?

4. Practical considerations

Health and safety

Take care to do what you can to avoid accidents and injuries at your event. It is useful to conduct a risk assessment, to help make sure you have thought things through systematically.

First aid

Decide who will be responsible for first aid on the day. For large events, you could ask a first aid organisation to attend. Even if you are just using your own volunteers, you need to have a visible first aid point at the event and people who are taking the role of first aiders. Some of your volunteers may already have first aid training. If not, research local first aid training providers.

Transport

How will people get to the event? Make sure your publicity gives details of public transport and parking. Will you need to put up signs in the surrounding streets to make the event easier to find?

Access

You should do what you can to ensure that disabled people can take part in your event. For example, if possible, choose a venue which is accessible for wheelchair users, and provide a British Sign Language interpreter for speeches and performances. Put information on your publicity about how accessible your event will be, so that people will know in advance if their needs are going to be catered for.

You could also invite people to contact you in advance if they have a particular access need, so that you can adjust your plans to make the event accessible for them.

Children's activities

If you plan to have children's activities, be clear in your publicity whether you are providing care for unsupervised children, or whether children need to bring an adult to look after them. If you plan to provide childcare, research information on running a crèche.

Photography

Do you want or need to photograph or film your event? You should put up signs informing people if they might be photographed, and you should gain parental consent before photographing children.

Insurance

Consider whether or not you want to take out public liability insurance.

5. Bookings, permissions and licences

Make sure the venue is booked and confirmed. Think about what equipment you will need to hire. Check with entertainers/speakers what they expect you to provide.

Find out about the regulations for that venue/space early on – 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

6. Make a budget for the event

Take into account all your costs, so that you don't end up with nasty surprises along the way. For example:

- the venue
- publicity
- hire of equipment
- decorations
- entertainers/speakers
- prizes, refreshments, face paints, art materials
- transport
- phone bills, postage and other admin
- insurance
- first aid equipment and volunteers
- fees for licences and permissions

Then plan how you are going to cover them:

- entrance fees?
- grants or sponsorship?
- raffle?
- sale of refreshments?
- money-making sideshows and stalls?
- charging stallholders or catering suppliers?

7. Publicity

- Who do you want your publicity to reach? Think about where those people are most likely to see your publicity and what will attract them to the event.
- How will the posters and leaflets be distributed? Who will do it?
- Will you be using social media? You could set up an Event on Facebook and invite people to it. You could also use Twitter to send out reminders about your event in the weeks and days running up to it.

- You could also try to get something in the local media, such as your local community newsletter, local paper or radio station.

It is best to get publicity out early, even if this means that it can't include all the final details of the event. You might want to do one piece of 'save the date' publicity as early as possible, which includes the date of the event and basic information about it, and another closer to the time, which includes more detailed information.

8. Plan in detail

Shortly before the event, you need to run through the day in detail:

- Where will everybody be on the day? What will each person be responsible for doing?
- Are all the jobs covered, or do you need to do a last-minute ring round to fill some gaps?
- Have you set up all the admin (forms/paperwork) that will be needed on the day? e.g. forms for writing down money you take in, photo consent forms, etc.
- How will equipment and volunteers get to and from the venue?
- Will you be able to take hired equipment directly to and from the event, or will it need to be stored?
- Who is responsible for money on the day?
- Will you need a lot of change? If so, contact your bank at least a week in advance and ask them to put some aside for you.
- What will happen if it rains?
- Do you have enough time, materials and people for setting up and clearing up?

9. On the day

- Take photos and record feedback from participants, stallholders and volunteers.
- Give volunteers support and encouragement, and make sure everyone gets a break.
- Keep track of money in and out.

10. Afterwards

If you've organised a fundraising event with different stalls, you might want to count takings from the different stalls separately, so that you know which activities made money and which didn't do so well. This will help you make a more accurate budget for your next event.

Remember to thank your volunteers and helpers, and report back to and thank funders, sponsors, etc. For example, you may want to let people how much money your event raised on the day.

It's always worth having a brief discussion with your group after an event is over, to talk through what went well and badly on the day, and draw lessons for future events.