

HOW?

Running an event

A public event can be anything from an open air festival, a street party or a demonstration to a public meeting, a publicity launch for a project or campaign, a barn dance, sports event, gig or other arts activity.

The secret to a successful event is good planning and preparation – good project management.

There are a number of factors to consider:

- Overall planning of the event, including defining what you want the event to achieve and who is going to do which tasks
- How the event will be funded
- How the event will be publicised and marketed
- Licensing and other legal considerations
- Timescale: make sure to allow adequate time to make preparations. Depending on the size and nature of your event, you may need to allow at least 6 – 12 months.

The first step in planning an event is to define the **aim of the event**: what do you want the event to achieve? When you have agreed this, write it down! This is really important for a number of reasons:

1. It ensures that everyone involved in planning the event has a common understanding of what the event is about.
2. It will help you to explain the event to others when the time comes
3. You need to check that the event fits with the aims set out in your group or organisation's constitution or governing document. Clarifying the aim of the event will enable you to do this.

The next step is to **plan the format of your event** in more detail – this is the time for tossing ideas around, perhaps exploring some of them in a bit more detail with regard to costs, availability etc., and then deciding on what is most appropriate, realistic and achievable. At this stage there may be a number of uncertainties (such as funding) so don't be too surprised if some of your plans mutate as you develop your ideas further.

The time to prepare for the event, and money to fund it, are the key resources. Once you've decided on what you want your event to 'look like' and set the date, it's time to make a **forward plan** and a **financial plan**.

For the forward plan, start by making a list of all the tasks, how long you realistically expect them to take and the dates they need to be done by. Don't leave everything to the last minute! And don't forget venues, guest speakers and equipment all get booked up, so make the key bookings as early as possible. By mapping the tasks out on a calendar, you can check that you won't be overloading yourselves with tasks at any point. Likewise, the financial plan needs to cover all the costs you anticipate, how you intend to cover these costs - whether it be through grants, community fundraising, sponsorship from local businesses or charging for the event – and again a timescale for gathering the funding.

Then add 10% to both your time and financial needs, to allow for the miscellaneous unexpected items. If either the forward plan or the financial plan looks unrealistic, you may need to consider changing the date or the format of your event.

Now it's time to start making it happen. Another key to the project is effective planning meetings, as it is here that every element of the event is discussed and every decision made. Good **minutes of the planning meetings** are essential, so that everyone knows who's agreed to do what and by when. As well as book-keeping the treasurer needs to be able to predict income and costs as the project develops.

Certain arrangements will be crucial to your event, and have to be made in good time. For example, you may want to hire a particular venue, invite a busy guest speaker, or hire some specialist equipment.

Along with these, **licensing and other legal regulations** need to be considered well in advance of the event.



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Some licences can take 4 months or more to obtain, and all licence applications cost money.

- **Public Entertainments Licence (PEL):** whether your event is indoors or out, if it includes any kind of music, dancing, film, theatre or (indoor) sports, the venue at which it is held needs to be licensed. Some venues hold an annual licence, in which case it will be for a specified maximum number of people. If the one you are going to use is not permanently licensed, you need to apply for a **public entertainment licence from High Peak Borough Council** (telephone number 0845 129 77 77). For an outdoor event, an event plan including a risk assessment needs to be completed as part of the licence application. This event plan can be fairly arduous to complete; the risk assessment section should ideally be a joint project completed by more than one person as different people have different perceptions of levels of risk. It can take up to 4 months to obtain a public entertainments licence for an outdoor event.
- **Licences for live and recorded music:** In addition to the Public Entertainments Licence, if your event will include a live music performance, or the public playing of recorded music or music videos, where the material performed is copyright, you may need one or more of the following licences.
A Performing Rights Society (PRS) Licence is required for the live performance or public playing of copyright music by any means. This includes live bands and discos, jukeboxes, CD's, video, radio and TV. Like the PEL, some venues hold an annual license. If the venue is not licensed the event promoter needs to obtain a license from the Performing Rights Society, free-phone number 0800 068 48 28. (See also their website www.prs.co.uk) There is a sliding scale of charges.
A Phonographic Performance Ltd (PPL) Licence is needed for the public playing of original sound recordings; e.g. CD's, tapes or records, including jukeboxes, background music systems, radio and TV in most cases. When background music is played, both PRS and PPL licences are usually

required. Contact PPL on 020 7534 1000.

A Video Performance Ltd (PPL) Licence is needed for the public playing of music videos. Again a PRS licence will probably also be needed. Contact VPL on 020 7534 1000.

- **Licence to sell alcohol:** if you intend selling alcohol at your event, a member of your organisation must be licensed to run the bar. Alternatively a local pub may be willing to run the bar for you, in which case you would not need to hold a licence (but nor would you reap the profits from the bar). It is fairly easy to get an occasional licence. Apply to High Peak Magistrates Court, telephone number 01298 23951 *at least 2 months in advance*.
- **Lottery Licence, for selling raffle tickets:** Again this licence is administered by High Peak Borough Council. Like the licence to sell alcohol, an individual from your group has to be licensed. The application is straight forward and fairly quick to obtain.
- **Do you need to inform the Police that your event is taking place?** Each event is different, and there are no hard and fast rules about when the Police need to be notified. Broadly speaking, they would like to hear from you a few weeks in advance if your event is likely to cause traffic and parking problems. If your event is to take place on the streets, such as a street party, carnival parade or demonstration, they would like as many months notice as possible.

The law regarding some licensing arrangements is likely to change later on in 2004—contact High Peak CVS for the up to date position.

If you are unsure whether you need a licence or to notify the Police, it is always best to check with the relevant organisation.

You should also make sure you have **public liability insurance** to cover the event. Your organisation may already have this cover, or the venue where the event is to be held may already be covered, so you need to check.

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Good **publicity** to attract your audience or participants to attend your event is obviously important, and this also needs to be planned well in advance. Your publicity could be in the form of posters and flyers; articles in newspapers, magazines and newsletters; radio and television; websites and e-mail. Which sorts of publicity you choose depends on the audience you are aiming to reach. And again there may be deadlines to consider, for example for submitting an article to the appropriate edition of a magazine, or the time taken to print and distribute posters and flyers.

Who does what on the day? As the day of the event approaches, plan carefully every detail of the day – before, during and after: who is going to make tea for the men erecting the marquee at 7.30am and who will be picking up rubbish after everyone's gone home at 7.30pm? Have you the right staff for the event – do you need stewards or bouncers? Are you going to take photographs of the event, or how else are you going to record it.

Organising a big event can be stressful at times, but it is also very much a learning process for all those involved, and the reward is a wonderful sense of achievement once you have recovered from all the hard work. You may want to arrange a **post-event feedback meeting** to discuss what went well and what to do differently another time. Finally, **don't forget to thank** your funders and other sponsors, volunteers and supporters.

Useful publication

Organising Special Events, by Stephen Elsdon, Directory of Social Change / Charities Aid Foundation, £9.95.
(also available to borrow from the High Peak CVS resources library)



Who are we?

High Peak CVS works to ensure that local voluntary and community groups can access as much support, advice and information as possible. We help groups in many different areas, such as funding, charity registration, practical services including printing, training and links to training and with legal issues. We have resources, including a meeting room, computers and OHP for use by groups.

To find out how we can help you, please contact us on 01663 735 350 or email hello@highpeakcvs.org.uk
Visit us at www.highpeakcvs.org.uk