



Community & Voluntary Service

Mid and North Bedfordshire

How to Stage an Event

An event can be anything from a street party or a school fete to a demonstration or public meeting. However, an event of any kind usually involves some sort of public gathering and can often involve the hiring of premises or the sale of food and/or drink. As a result there are quite a few legal considerations to think about. An event of any kind, therefore, can take a great deal of planning and preparation. Listed below are some of the considerations you need to keep in mind when planning any kind of event.

1: What does your Constitution say?

The first thing you need to do when planning any kind of event is to take a look at your organisation's governing document (usually called the constitution). You must check that what you have planned fits in with your stated objects and the powers that you have to carry out those objects. If the constitution makes any restrictions on the kind of event that you can hold then you must abide by these restrictions. Other than this primary question there are certain things that need careful consideration when planning an event. These can be split down into three basic sections:

- Practical considerations
- Laws
- Licenses.

2: Practical considerations

- These would apply to all types of event:
- Have we got a plan/budget for the event?
- Are there any initial costs? How will we cover these?
- Who will the event be aimed at? How will we publicise it to this group?
- What will the benefit to our organisation be and is it worth it when compared to the time, effort, cost, etc?
- How big will the event be? Does it need to attract a certain number of people to break even?

- When will the event be? Are there any (similar) events that we need to ensure we don't clash with?
- Do we have enough people/staff/volunteers to organise/run the event?
- Where will the event be? Is it accessible, physically and geographically, to the group we want to aim at? Is the venue available? What will the venue cost?
- Are there any relevant laws? Do we need any special licenses/permissions?
- Would the event be considered trading? Does our governing document allow us to trade?

3: Laws

There are different laws depending on the type of event that you wish to hold.

Public meetings

The local authority may have byelaws requiring the Local Authority or the Police to be informed of a meeting in a public place (inside or outdoors). The police may impose conditions for safety reasons if they feel it necessary.

March/Procession

If you are organising this type of event then you must inform the local Police of the proposed date, route, starting time and at least one organiser of the event at least 6 days before the event is due to occur.

Festival/Party

These events must abide by the same rules as for public meetings (see above). Also if food is to be prepared and/or sold then food hygiene laws must be checked and complied with. If alcohol is to be served and/or sold then local licensing laws must be applied. Finally copyright law, relating to the performance of music, which is covered below, may also apply.

4: Licenses

There are many different kinds of licenses but a few of the more common that may well apply to a public event are listed below with the circumstances in which you would need to apply for them.

Public Entertainments License

Needed if any kind of dancing, music, film, theatre or sporting event is to be held. A Public Entertainment License can be obtained from the Local Authority.

Licensing of alcohol

Under current licensing law it is fairly easy to get an occasional license to run a bar at an event. An organisation can have no more than 12 of these in a year and you must apply at least 3 weeks in advance to the local licensing magistrate.

Film/Theatre

If your event is going to include the performance of theatre or film/video (for which there will be a charge) then you will need to obtain a separate license for each, in advance, from the local authority.

Music

You need to obtain a license from the Performing Rights Society.

Gambling/Gaming

These laws relate to lotteries and raffles. If you are going to hold either of these it's important to check whether or not you need to register it. If the raffle/lottery you are planning does not come within the following boundaries then you will need to register the raffle/lottery with the Gaming Board for Great Britain:

- Must be run for charitable, sporting or cultural purposes
- Proceeds must not be used for private gain
- No more than £250 can be spent on purchasing prizes
- No money prizes can be awarded
- Tickets can only be sold during the course of the event or entertainment and on the premises in which the event is being held

5: Further help

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Reg. Charity No. 1091423; Company Limited by Guarantee No. 4312967

Mid Beds District Council (Licensing) – www.midbeds.gov.uk

Bedford Borough Council (Licensing – www.bedford.gov.uk

Gambling Commission - www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk

Performing Rights Society - www.prs.co.uk

Reference Books:

- **Organising Local Events** – Sarah Passingham – *No longer in print*

CVS – Mid & North Beds has the aforementioned book in our reference library & this can be loaned to CVS members

This is one in a series of fact sheets produced by CVS – Mid & North Beds, on subjects of interest to voluntary and community groups. It is intended for guidance only and is not a comprehensive statement of the law.