



# How to organise events

## Introduction

Events can be one of most rewarding activities you undertake, not just financially, but also in terms of engagement. To give yourself the best possible chance of making your event successful, you need a robust and realistic plan. Taking some time at the start of the process will definitely pay dividends later. Our 'how to' guide on events provides some top tips to help you along the way.

For help, call our dedicated customer services team (please have your policy number available) on

**0345 070 2223**

(Monday to Friday 8am-6pm excluding bank holidays)

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## Plan, plan and then plan some more

### Be realistic about your launch date

In the initial rush of enthusiasm, it's easy to be optimistic about how everything will come together to make your event a success.

Depending on the scale of the event, it can take months of work to get everything right, so make sure you leave plenty of time to plan everything thoroughly.

### Success is in the detail

A detailed plan of action is essential, including contingencies for what to do if things don't go to plan.

### Your project team

Ideally your project manager or event committee will be organized people. It also helps to have a sociable, 'people person' in charge of things, particularly if you're asking volunteers to help. Organise small teams for particular events. People work well in small groups, and it helps to build friendships. Find out what skills people have, and group people together to make things happen.

### Make the most of your resources

Your volunteers will find it easier, and more enjoyable, if you give them roles based on their skills. Make sure everyone has clear objectives that they've agreed to. Sometimes you can even add an extra dimension to your event if you find you have the skills available, for example, someone who can organise IT and social media, someone who can talk to the press, or someone who can approach local businesses etc.

Once you have an initial idea and need to start gathering resources or skills, don't be afraid to use your personal contacts

### Don't be shy about asking for help

Try and get as many goods and resources donated to the church free of charge. Local businesses are often very happy to donate, all you have to do is ask. There's also plenty of free advice out there. For instance, if you're thinking of opening a charity shop, ask other charity shops in your area how they do things.

Always reach out to the wider community. If you are raising money for a new space or building, suggest other groups who might want to use it.

### Do your research up front

Talk to people outside the church community before you plan your event in detail. Ask them what kind of things they would like to take part in. That way, you don't make assumptions about what people are interested in, and you know your event should hopefully strike a chord with people. Getting input at this stage can also raise additional good ideas that will make your event even better.

### Choosing your venue

Plan the venue carefully.

- Does it have enough facilities?
- Is there disabled access?
- What about risk assessments and health and safety?
- Do you have insurance cover?
- And what happens if it rains?



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## Deciding on an event

### Follow your heart

Do something that you love and have a passion for. It's easier to be motivated, and to motivate others, if you truly enjoy what you're doing.

### Think creatively

Think of something to make your event just a little bit different. For instance, a quirky name, a link with something local, a personality or a mascot.

Or think of ways you can combine two events to make an even bigger one. For instance, a church fete in the grounds could be linked with an activity inside the church, or entertainment in the evening. Give people plenty of ways to give money at the same event or on the same day.



### Make it personal

When planning an event, remember that people give to people, rather than institutions. So if you're organising a feat of endurance like a half marathon or a challenge, make your focus the person taking part.

### Keep it simple

The simplest ideas often seem the most successful. Think about British or local obsessions – the weather, animals, village history or famous people. And, if there's a connection with your church, you could create a really strong fundraising idea.

Simpler ideas can often lead to lots of ways to raise money. Let's say your idea involves flowers. So what about a flower-themed quiz, that people pay to enter? Flower arranging classes given by an expert? Competitions in local schools to draw or grow the prettiest flowers? There are always plenty of ideas that can come from one initial thought.



And if you're creating something for people to experience in the church, does it have longevity? If it can be used again, you could raise money the same time again next year, without all the initial outlay.

### Tell people where the money will be spent

Unfortunately some people think that churches already have lots of money, or believe that the collection should go towards daily upkeep. That's why it's often best to launch an appeal for a specific project or need.

If you are holding an event to raise money for a specific charity, choose an event that has a clear link to their cause so people understand what you're doing. And don't forget to ask a representative from that charity to come along on the day.

Keep the objective financially realistic. If you need to replace a set of bells, why not focus on raising the money to replace just one bell to begin with? Otherwise people may feel overwhelmed.



If you're raising funds for a particular project such as a building or renovation, the general rule of thumb is you shouldn't set up a general public appeal until you have raised at least 60% of the needed capital. People want to know that you are already working hard towards your target, and they want to be part of something that will be a success.

When someone gives money, remember to ask them whether they are eligible for Gift Aid. It adds an extra 25% to every donation, at no extra cost to them.

### Naming a date

If you can, have specific launch and end dates. Invite local celebrities, VIPs or MPs along to the launch. A service at the church is always a good way to conclude an event, and it gets everyone from the community back into the church.

If you're booking entertainers, remember that Friday and Saturday nights will be their busiest (and most expensive) times, so you may well need to book well in advance.

If your event is happening on a specific date, check that it doesn't clash with anything else. The World Cup Final or a Royal Wedding might tempt some potential donors to stay at home! Check local newspapers and websites to find what else is going on. And make sure your event happens after payday!



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## The day itself

### Sharing the load

If you're serving refreshments for a long period, or you need people to be on duty at the church, make sure you divide the session into shifts. That way no one feels hard done by.

### The admin

Make sure you have the following:

- Adequate insurance – both your own and that of any third party
- A risk assessment – think about any potential risks before the event
- First aid – have someone available who can administer first aid
- Protection for young children and vulnerable adults
- All the relevant licences and permits – you need licences for a number of activities, including serving food and alcohol and providing entertainment.

### A fresh perspective

Make the church the focal point of one activity in your fundraising event, just to encourage people through the doors. People who have not visited before may be surprised by just how beautiful and welcoming your church really is.

### Happy memories

Take photos and films during your event. They could make a great presentation in the church afterwards, encouraging people to keep coming back, and could also be used on social media. You can also record things you might choose to do differently next time.

Work with other local groups to get them involved on the day. For instance, a local dance group may want to show off their moves during 'down time' at your event.

Remember you're ambassadors for your church. So if you're 'piggy backing' off another event, make sure you help out with that too. For instance, supply marshals for a half marathon, or volunteers for a village fete.

## After the event

Keep a record of all the money you made with every single activity, so you can evaluate what worked well and what could be improved next time.

While it is still fresh in everyone's mind, ask everyone who was involved for feedback (ideally written), saying what they think worked and what could be improved.

Finally, always remember to acknowledge all contributions, however small. This can be as simple as an email attaching a photo from the event. If people feel involved, they're more likely to help out next time.



For further information call us on

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