

Top tips for holding a public event in your community



There can be a lot of things you need to think about when holding a public event. We have brought together all the key bits of information you might need into one place to help you get started. But of course every event is different so you might not need all this information or you might need more. Your local council and all of our organisations are happy to help you find further information if you need it.

This guide covers events such as fetes, parades and charity fundraisers that will attract an audience of several hundred people and may feature sales of food and alcohol. If you want to hold a private street party where only your friends or immediate neighbours are invited, then you should use the Government's street party guide – <http://tinyurl.com/streetpartyguide>

I want to hold my event in a street or public place. Do I need council permission?

You will need to get permission from your local council if you want to hold an event in the street or a public park – ask to speak to their events, parks or communities team. Contact them as soon as possible as it takes time for them to consider it properly. The amount of time needed to consider an application varies from council to council, and you can find this information on their websites. If it is not on council property you will need permission from the owner, which might be a housing association, schools or business.

Your council will work with you to ensure a smooth and safe event as soon as you submit an application; so the earlier you speak with them, the more they can help to make it happen. If you can't give the amount of notice they require, then your council may still be able to consider your application or suggest an alternative location.

You can get in touch with the right department at your local council by using <http://tinyurl.com/councildept>

I want to close a road or public space. How do I go about this?

You will need to get permission from the Highways Department of your council. It will be easier to close a cul-de-sac than a main through route, but emergency services will always need to be able to get down the street.

Your council will require you to arrange and place appropriate road signs and barriers. The signs will need to comply with Regulations, but this needn't be difficult. Some councils lend you the signs, and others will be able to tell you where you can hire them.

There may be a charge to cover the council's costs for checking the feasibility of closing the road. Councils keep this as low as possible, and some waive it entirely for special events such as The Big Lunch, Diamond Jubilee and Olympics.

How do I avoid accidents?

You should think carefully about how you can make your event as safe as possible. A risk assessment will often be required for a public event. This will help you to consider if people could trip, burn or otherwise hurt themselves and then how you could prevent it happening. You should write down these risks and actions if you are running anything bigger than a small party. You may find it helpful to discuss this with someone else.

It is a good idea to have someone who is trained in first aid there on the day. The Red Cross, St John's Ambulance and other health charities may be able to provide a first aid person for larger or more public events, or you could go on one of their courses and become qualified yourself.



Do I need insurance for my event?

A number of local councils don't ask for insurance for a small private street party, although you will need to check, but larger events, or those that include activities such as bouncy castles, fireworks, or sporting events will need 'public liability' insurance. This covers you for any claims of injury or damage which happens to the public at your event.

Contact an insurance broker or your local council events team for further advice. Insurance doesn't have to be expensive – costs start from as little as £50 for cover up to £5 million of damages. The Association of British Insurers (<http://tinyurl.com/assocbritins>) provides advice on risks and insurance and the charities Streets Alive (<http://tinyurl.com/streetsalive>) and The Big Lunch (<http://www.thebiglunch.com/join-in/faqs.php>) have negotiated some good deals for street parties.

If a community event is run on my own land (my garden, field, property etc) will I be responsible for any accidents?

You have a 'duty of care' and are responsible if someone hurts themselves because the land is unsafe, so make sure any hazards are clearly marked, but the activities related to the community event are the responsibility of the event organiser and individuals taking part. However, you should make sure that you are satisfied with the safety precautions taken by the organiser.

There is a very useful website for landowners, set up by the Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group (<http://vscg.co.uk/guiding-principles/>), which covers all of these situations (in rural and urban environments) and explains the law.



Can I charge an entry fee for my event?

If you are holding a community event then you should not aim to profit from it, as profit-making events are unlikely to have fees for road closures waived. However, you could ask for donations or hold a raffle on the day to help cover the cost of holding the event.

Will I need a licence?

You will need a licence if you are:

- Selling alcohol; but not if people bring their own. Visit www.drinkaware.co.uk to find out the things you need to be aware of when running an event where there will be alcohol.
- Selling food after 11pm, or using a mobile food vendor like an ice cream van – but they should have their own licences anyway. Check with your council that you are inviting a legal and safe seller.
- Selling raffle tickets in advance of the event; but not if you are only selling them on the day or in a tombola where the total value of the prizes is less than £500.
- Playing amplified live or pre-recorded music. You should be considerate of noise levels to your neighbours and it is a good idea to check with your local council what restrictions there are on the times you can play music publicly and the maximum volume.

The good news is that most of these activities can be covered under one licence, so you won't have to complete a lot of forms.

What about music copyright?

If you are planning on playing pre-recorded music to anyone beyond immediate friends or family, then you need to contact the Performing Rights Society (PRS) at www.prs.co.uk and the Phonographic Performance Limited (PPL) at www.ppluk.com. These are commercial organisations and will usually charge a fee, although it may occasionally be waived for small events celebrating things like the Diamond Jubilee.

What about fireworks?

Organising a firework display can liven up events significantly, but also brings with it some additional hazards. The Health and Safety Executive (<http://tinyurl.com/hsefire>) has produced a simple guide to help.

Any other questions?

Your local council should be your first point of call for any questions you have. To get in touch with the right department at your local council go to <http://tinyurl.com/councildept> And why not involve your local councillor? Some councils also provide money or materials to help set up an event, especially around national celebrations, so it is worth checking them out.

There are many sources of advice, covering all types of event. For street parties and small events, www.streetparty.org.uk, www.communitymatters.org.uk/ [onlineguidance](http://www.thebiglunch.com) and www.thebiglunch.com may be useful, but there are many others including the Olympic local leaders guide – <http://www.london2012.com/get-involved/local-leaders/>



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