

Organising an Event

What should I be thinking about at the start?

The first thing you will need to consider is why you have decided to hold an event in the first place? Is it to raise funds for a particular campaign or project? Setting objective early on will give you focus and help attract the right people to your event and maximise on any funds raised.

Think about the people who you think should come to your event. Are they business people? Are they young or old? Are they wealthy? Are they animal lovers? This will help you to determine: the type of event you might hold; the size of room; and, the location etc.

You will need to do some number crunching to establish: how much money you will need “up-front” to organise the event (do you have a budget); how many people you will need to attend to breakeven; and, how many people will you need to make a good return on your investment for the RSPCA. You should never organise an event if it will make a loss or does not have a fair return on the money you have spent.

Develop a budget to ensure you don't overspend. Make sure you include all the hidden costs. Consider the parts of the event which are critical to its success: a celebrity turning up, the venue being available, free or available parking. Think about how you can secure these being in place.

Ensure you have enough help and support in the early stages. Try not to work alone as organising an event is hard work, so recruit enough people early on.

Consider the reputation of the RSPCA at all times by ensuring your event does not go against the aims and objectives of the charity.

Ensure your event does not clash with another major fundraising events; for example: avoid organising a big event when BBC Children in Need is in full swing.

If you are new to events, try piloting a smaller version to see how it goes. Don't run before you can walk.

How do I choose the right venue?

As mentioned earlier, you need to ensure the venue you choose is appropriate for your activity and for audience, so it has to be a suitable size and capacity, taking note of any restrictions.

Your venue must be fit for purpose, so it must:

- Ensure equal access to all
- Comply with health & safety
- Not damage the environment

You need to ensure your venue can cater fully to the requirements you need to hold your event; for example:

- Catering facilities
- Enough toilets
- childcare facilities if needed or appropriate to your event
- access issues including vehicles, local transport and adequate parking
- availability of local emergency services and whether first aid provision is necessary

What about Risk?

- You should conduct a risk assessment on all elements of your event. The RSPCA's insurance policy will be null and void if you have not conducted an adequate risk assessment. *To be covered under the RSPCA insurance policy you must ensure that all elements of planning are agreed by the trustees before you go ahead.*
- Some events require *permissions and licenses* to take place; you must ensure you contacted the relevant bodies and acquired the correct licenses to cover all elements of your event; for example: you might require a performing right license if you are playing music in public.
- You must also consult with the relevant bodies to ensure you have full permission to conduct your event:

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- local authorities;
 - emergency services; and
 - rights of way, private permissions, landowners.
- If you are hiring a room or any other facility you should get your agreement in writing. Ensure the following is agreed and covered:
- what services will be provided, if any;
 - which organisation is responsible for particular services;
 - which organisation will be responsible for obtaining relevant insurance
 - and what the insured amounts will be;
 - costs and VAT;
 - timetable for deposits and when full payment must be made;
 - cancellation rights and penalties;
 - any indemnities given in relation to losses arising from breach of the parties' obligations; and
 - any limitations on the parties' liabilities.
- If you have managed to get a sponsor who will pay for your event, then you need to ask for confirmation in writing as to how much funding will be provided and what their expectations are.

How do I organise people?

- If you are involving other people to provide services or help during the event, you must ensure you and they know what their responsibilities are. These might include: staff, stewards, volunteers, guest speakers, sponsors, performers etc. You should put this in writing and provide support, guidance or training to ensure people know what their roles are.

How can I ensure the success of my event?

- To attract the right people to your event you must already know what types of people you are hoping to attract judging by the event you are holding; therefore, the method you use to promote and advertise must reflect these people. If you are hoping to attract young people there is no point advertising your event in primary school!
- It is always best to sell tickets rather than hope people will turn up as this will reduce the risk of your event suffering a loss if the weather is bad
- The RSPCA already has its own newsletters, website and online social networks for you to promote your event.
- If you are designing your own posters or literature you must at all times adhere to copyright laws and that permission is obtained from the rights holders for use of images, logos etc. and are printed with all legally required information, for example, registered charity status or number, full company name and registered office and VAT number if applicable.

How do I handle the finances?

Dependent of the type of event you are holding you will want to ensure that you keep records and are able to manage and monitor your finances, so you should:

- record income received and all expenses;
- monitor income and expenditure against agreed budget;
- Ensure there are facilities and procedures for cash handling and storage on the day including a safe or suitable cash box

There is more information in the fact sheet entitled: **Handling Cash Donations**

What do I do if I have to cancel the event?

You should ensure that you have a cancellation policy already written. Everyone involved in your event should be made aware of the procedure for cancellation at the point of signing up. This should include:

- financial penalties should external contract, suppliers or sponsors cancel
- administrative and financial procedures in the case of cancellation of individual places, tickets, or the whole event.
- If the event is cancelled, or if it is postponed and a participant is then unable or chooses not to take part, or if they are unable to take part for any reason, the participant must contact donors and ask if they are still happy for monies to go the organisation and if not the donation must be refunded to them.