**Planning an event**

**Why hold a big event?**

An event such as a fun day can mean a lot of organising and hard work, however many Residents Associations who have held them say it was great fun and a worthwhile event. It is useful to think first about why you want to run a big event? What do you want to achieve at the end of it?

Fun days or events can be held for a variety of reasons:

* To raise funds.
* Bring the community together.
* Attract more members.
* Consult on a specific problem or issue in the area.

Once you have a clear idea of what you want to achieve, this will help you decide what you would like to do and then you will be able to properly evaluate afterwards if it was a successful day.

**Planning:**

**Finding the right date:** This is really important. Try and do some research and choose a date when there are no other local events on that local people may plan to attend, for example the school holidays.

**Location:** Where are you going to hold the event? If at a venue, you will need to make sure the venue is available and how much it will cost. Using outdoor space is great as people will see your event. You will need to make sure you have the permission of the land owner and there will be a charge and an application form to complete, this will need to be submitted at least four weeks before you intend to hold your event <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/leisure-tourism-and-culture/parks-and-open-spaces/public-open-space-for-events> this highlights the need to plan well in advance. Make sure wherever you hold the event, you consider those less physically able including wheelchairs users.

**Working with others:** You could contact your local schools, children’s centres, Parish and any other local groups who could get involved and support on the day. They may be able to bring ideas, funding, and volunteers.

**Insurances:** You will need public liability insurance for your event. If anything goes wrong the Residents Association will be responsible. Contact different providers to get quotes or ask other Resident Associations who they use.

**Events for the day:** Let your imagination run riot! You can have races, craft and information stalls, book stalls, raffles, the list is endless! Try not to have too many of the same type though and make sure any activity is fun and affordable for local residents.

Raffles can be held on the day and you don’t need a licence as long as you draw it at the event. If you are having stalls from others, think about how much they should pay to be there. If the main focus of the day is to let people know what is going on in their area, you might want to consider letting people have free stalls or you could ask for a percentage of any money raised. If you are holding something like a car boot sale, try to make the cost cheaper than organised ones to encourage local people to come to yours.

**Cost:** Has a budget been agreed. Will it be a free event or is the idea to raise funds? Think about what you will charge whilst still making the event accessible to all.

**Advertising your event:** There are a lot of options to help you advertise your event. You can produce a fun day flyer or newsletter telling everyone about the day and who to contact if they want to help or run a stall. Talk to your local Parish Council and ask if they can put something in their newsletter. Also you can contact the local newspapers and radio station and give them the details, although think about if your event is for local people or open to everyone. One of the best ways is to tell people is word of mouth. If you sound enthusiastic people will respond with their own enthusiasm.

**Food:** Should you provide food at your event? This is up to you and will depend on how long your event is going to be on for. Most events have some sort of refreshments though.

If you are planning to have a BBQ, make sure you do a thorough risk assessment - first including keeping food fresh and healthy, assessing the risk of fire and also ensuring food can be stored and cooked safely. You will also need to ensure that you have the correct fire safety equipment. Have one person cooking food and another taking money; don’t do both!

 You may also need to provide some hand washing facilities. Try to keep vegetarian and meat products away from each other and use different utensils for each. You should hold a food hygiene certificate, courses are available online and from lots of independent providers. You will also need to consider food allergies, and display any potential allergens. Alternatively you could ask a food van to provide food at their own costs. Make sure that you check their prices and that people attending will be willing to pay them. You should request a copy of their food hygiene certificate and public liability insurance. You can also charge them to attend or request a percentage of the money they make.

You will need a special licence if you decide to sell alcohol, however you should consider if this is appropriate for the event that you are organising as alcohol may discourage people from attending.

**Prizes and Donations:** You can ask local shops, restaurants, cinemas and family activity providers for donations and prizes. Most major companies have some form of social responsibility policy to support local community groups in one form or another. Write to them well in advance of the day stating what the aims of your group are what you intend to use any donations for. It is also a good idea to find out the name of the person you are contacting and advise that you will ensure they get a mention or you use their logo as having supported your group.

After the event write to them thanking them for their support and include a photograph of the happy winner if it’s a major prize.

**Photographs:** Take photographs so people can see what you have achieved over the year. Ask people to sign a waiver so you can use their picture in your newsletter if this is possible, however this is not always practical at a large event. Make and display signs warning people that pictures will be taken and used for publications. Ask people to contact you if they don’t want their pictures taken. If you have pictures of children make sure the parents have given their permission for you to use them, and are aware you are taking pictures of them.

**Need more help?** Contact the Resident Engagement Team who will be happy to help and support you residentengagement@milton-keynes.gov.uk

**Health and Safety on the day:** You will have insurance but to ensure nothing goes wrong, keep an eye on health and safety issues and ensure you fully complete a risk assessment. Make sure any generators are not in a place where people can damage or misuse them, they must have security fencing around them and fire extinguishers should be close. Any trailing wires will need to be covered and guide ropes should be secured in a cross design at the side of any gazebos to reduce trip hazards. These are just a few examples that will go within your completed risk assessment for the day, although it is always good to keep your eyes open and a look out for any possible hazards through the event. Inviting the Police, Ambulance and Fire service to your event will also assist and will be a draw for families.

**First Aid:** Make sure you have a qualified first aider on site in case of emergencies and a lost person point so lost people know where to go.

No matter how well you plan, there might always be something that doesn’t go quite to plan. Keep a note of this and discuss it when you have an end of event evaluation. Do not look at it as

a negative, think of it as a learning opportunity.

**Considerations:**

Exhibitors and volunteers do not turn up, make sure you contact them two weeks prior to the event to ensure they can still attend, then again days before the event.

* Volunteers - remember that sometimes things happen in people’s lives that impact and may not allow them to volunteer. If possible, have more volunteers than needed, this way if some are unable to attend this will not impact on your event.
* Bad weather - this is something that no one can control, however by utilising gazebos this will give cover should the weather not be kind. Bouncy castles will not be able to be used if it is wet, check through the terms and conditions from the hire company to see if you are still liable if they are unusable, you should also request a copy of their public liability insurance.
* Low attendance - this is beyond your control as long as you have advertised and consulted your community prior to the event to gauge interest you should be ok, although sometime this is just something that happens.
* Unsociable behaviour - engage with anyone causing a problem and try to get them involved in the activities. It is a good idea to involve your local Police and PCSO’s this will give them an opportunity to engage with then community and assist you should there be any problems. In an emergency call 999.

Most events happen without any problems. There is a lot of hard work involved and the majority of the community will come along and have a great time. You may get some negative comments although sadly this is quite often part of being in a Residents Association. If there are any constructive comments take a note of them and raise them when you have an evaluation session after the event.

Make sure you thank all of your volunteers, and most of all make sure you all enjoy the event, that you have worked hard to organise, remember you are part of the community.