

# How to Organise a Walking Event

Welcome to this guide to organising a walking event. By an “event” we mean not just a led walk but a promoted event aimed at attracting people to experience walking a particular route on a particular day, but not keeping together in a group. For guidance on leading a walk see the separate document ‘How to lead a walk ‘.

A public walking event can be wonderfully inclusive and can involve large numbers of people of all sorts and ages in something which is both fun and good for them. It can attract good publicity and promote sociability. If you run it as a sponsored walk it will obviously also raise money.

The entire format, name, route and length of your event depends solely on what you want to achieve. You’re in charge of how complex or simple you want to make it. There are masses of different types of walking event, ranging from fun walks and sponsored charity walks, to courses with measured distances and long distance challenges.

A promoted walking event can be very attractive to people who are unused to walking or to exploring the countryside, since they know they can’t get lost, they can go at their own pace, they may meet new friends, learn more about the local area, raise money for a cause they believe in and generally enjoy themselves. Walking events can also be a great way to introduce children to walking.

This guide is written with community leaders and community groups in mind – to help you plan a small to moderate sized event. Not everything included here will apply to all events: it is intended as guidance, not something to be followed to the letter. We’ve tried to give you pointers to things to think about. You’ll need to pick out what’s relevant to your event and ignore the rest!

The crucial questions to ask yourselves at the start of organising the event are very basic but will help you think through all the rest of the detailed planning. The main ones include:

- Why do we want to have a walking event?
- When should we hold it?
- Where should we hold it and what will we offer?
- Who will be involved?
- How do we ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for everyone?
- What shall we call it?

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## 1. Why organise a walking event?

A walking event not only provides the opportunity for large numbers of people to walk together and experience the route or site, it also involves a lot of people in the organising. This can be a powerful way to build a sense of community and strengthen sociable networks.

Many groups have found walking events a good way to:

- raise awareness and support for an organisation, a site, a route or a cause
- mark a special occasion
- celebrate your achievements
- promote sustainability
- promote a healthy active lifestyle
- increase sociability
- raise money.

### Raising money

Many charities organise very successful sponsored walks or ask volunteers to do so. These range enormously in size, from ten, to tens of thousands of participants. They also vary greatly in length and cost.

Charities often set participants a minimum sponsorship target (which many people exceed). A common target is £100 but depending on your ambitions it can range from £20 upwards. Events with a challenge element – either for distance or uniqueness (for example walking in costume) can help participants raise more.



Most sponsored walks charge an entry fee. Events that charge higher fees usually have more to offer participants (eg t-shirt, medal, food). Most fee-charging events offer at least a t-shirt as an incentive to register. Charging even a small entrance fee helps cover costs and also helps to commit participants to attending on the day. Look at other similar walking events to get an idea of how much to charge.

## 2. When should it be?

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Getting the timing right can be the key to success. Obviously the summer months (June to September) are less likely to be affected by poor weather and give you longer days but you are likely to be competing with an already busy event season; therefore it's worth considering spring and autumn which can also provide very pleasant walking conditions.

You can narrow down the kind of people who come by your choice of day. Obviously if you want to attract as many people as possible choose weekends or bank holidays.

Make sure you give yourself enough planning and organising time to make the event an enjoyable success.

### Avoid clashes with other events

Once you've narrowed down the time of year you'll need to find out what other events are planned around the same time. As well as walking events you should consider other things that may compete for the same audience. In an ideal world you should pick a date that doesn't clash with any significant competitor. Look for other organisations' actual or likely dates on the internet, in forward planning publications and back issues of listings magazines (large public reference libraries are a good source of back issues of publications and of forward planning directories like The Year Ahead). Always check for any major sporting fixtures or large events which people will be watching on TV.

### What time to start?

When deciding what time to start your event it may help to ask yourselves:

- How long will it take to get the event site ready? (Start/finish line, registration table/s, marquees, waymarkers etc.)
- Can you fit in with local bus/train times so that participants can arrive by public transport?
- How many participants do you anticipate having to register and start?
- How long will it take the participants to finish the walk?
- How long will it take to dismantle and clear up?

Ideally you will want all of the above to happen in daylight so check when the sun will rise and set. See [www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/city.html?n=136](http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/city.html?n=136)

## 3. Where will you hold the event and what will you offer?

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### Choice of start and finish points

It's much easier to organise a walking event if you can devise a circular route with your start and finish in the same general area, rather than having a linear route which requires completely separate venues for the start and finish. Some events start with a formal opening and welcome and some arrange extra



attractions (such as music or street theatre) as well as the walk itself. This approach will require a larger event site than if you are simply asking people to turn up and walk the route.

When choosing a start/finish place you'll need to consider particularly:

- Does the place have plenty of space for the size of crowd you're anticipating (plus the extra attractions, if any)?
- How will your participants arrive? Is there enough parking or can they arrive by public transport?
- How will you make sure your venue and route are accessible for people with mobility disabilities such as people in wheelchairs?
- Are there (enough) public toilets (including facilities for people with disabilities) or will you provide mobile ones?
- If your event is possibly going to be affected by wet weather, you may want to find a venue that has good drainage or a certain amount of hard standing; otherwise you may need to include ground protection (such as Portapath) in your planning. (Remember Glastonbury!)

## **Looking after people and entertaining them**

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Welfare facilities such as refreshments, first aid, foot massage and toilets can be made available even within a small event site. You may want to include entertainment such as music or street theatre for people waiting to start and for any friends/supporters not doing the walk.

If you are planning to sell alcohol or have what is known as 'regulated entertainment' (which includes music and dancing) you will need to have a licence from the local authority. They will be able to tell you if your venue already has a licence and will give you details of how to apply.

## **Registration and the start**

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If you have a large number of participants then you should stagger their start times. This will help prevent people having to queue for ages to register and will ensure a steady flow of walkers starting off onto the streets/paths. Think carefully about your registration process. You may want to allocate staggered start times before the day, or you could advertise a start 'window' of two to three hours and ask people to queue and register as they arrive.

Participants can also be encouraged to select their own anticipated speed for walking the route. This will help you place the faster walkers at the front of the queue and the more leisurely walkers at the back, ensuring everyone has an enjoyable experience.

The number of participants released onto the route at one time may need to be managed by stewards - with participants gathering in a small 'muster' area. This control measure allows you to manage the number of participants starting at any one time and to allow gaps to form if necessary.

## **Welfare along the route**

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If you can provide refreshments (such as water and fruit) along the route it is enormously good for walkers' morale as well as their wellbeing. Mobile toilets or public toilets are essential at the start/finish points, and may be desirable along the route if it's a very long one.

The number of checkpoints will depend on the length of your route. To encourage, motivate and check on (!) your walkers you may want volunteers at checkpoints to give out official stickers or stamp



walkers' maps or handbooks to prove they have completed each section. Checkpoints also offer the opportunity for morale-boosting entertainment.

## **At the finish**

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You may decide you want your walk to finish in the same place as the start. If so, you will need to think about how to separate the starters from the finishers – either by using a different part of the park for example, or by being sure that no one will finish the course before the last person sets off.

You need to set up a well-defined finish line to give walkers that moment of knowing that they've completed the distance. As well as the all-important finish line the finish site should ideally offer toilets and refreshments and a sense of reward to participants for taking part - and for raising money if it's a sponsored event. You might direct walkers to a distribution area to collect something to recognise their achievement and to thank them - eg a goody bag, a drink, a certificate or a medal.

## **What impact might your event have on the place itself?**

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Some beautiful and famous countryside sites are at risk of being over-used for large-scale walks. This kind of activity brings hundreds of tramping feet and a hubbub of noise and bustle which can destroy the very beauty and atmosphere for which the place is famous. Other sites and routes are much more robust and lend themselves happily to throngs of people all enjoying themselves at the same place at the same time. Choose your event site wisely.

## **4. Who will be involved?**

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If you think in turn about each of the different groups of people involved and consider their different points of view, this will help to ensure you don't forget anything vital. These groups will include:

- participants (and their friends and supporters)
- the organising team
- agencies which you need to inform or to apply to for permissions or licences (eg for access, or for putting up signs, for selling refreshments or for playing music)

and may also include:

- land owners
- local residents and businesses
- funders.

## **Participants**

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Obviously you will need to tailor your walk event to the interests and abilities of the people you plan to attract. This will affect your choice of route, its length and difficulty and the way you publicise and promote it.

It is often a good idea to offer a shorter route option for people who do not want to walk the whole way. This can help widen the appeal of your event to young families and older people.

Think about what you need your walkers to know and when they need to know it. The following list gives some pointers:



## Communication in advance

This will contain information about where and when to turn up and what it's all about; public transport information (if appropriate) about how to get to the start, a description of the route, its accessibility, length and difficulty; suggestions for what to bring (snacks and water, hats and sun cream, waterproofs and warm clothes).

- Publicity
- Pre-event material sent out
- Registration form
- Sponsorship form

## On the day

- Info pack/sheet
- Map and phone number to contact the event control team
- Signs to show where to do what, and to point out the route

## Afterwards

- A "well done!" certificate
- Thanks for their effort and achievement
- Press release to raise awareness and congratulate the participants and everyone involved
- Reminder to send in sponsorship money raised.

## Organising team

Even moderate-sized events take a lot of planning and organising. It's wise to set up an organising group right from the start and allocate areas of responsibility. Extra helpers can be brought in for particular roles, such as stewarding, without having to attend all the planning meetings. This approach cuts down on stress for particular individuals and ensures a more efficient use of everyone's time and energy.

For more about communications with your entire team see the section on organising your team.

## Consulting local authorities and landowners

If your route uses rights of way on land owned by local authorities or by private landowners you don't need their permission but it is polite and sensible to contact them. If it uses roads, then you should contact the relevant local authority's highways team. You may also have to approach other departments of the same or another tier of local authority to consult them about the location of checkpoints and event facilities.

Local authorities are structured very differently in different places. It's wise to make the initial contact by phone to find out which authorities you need to consult, and which departments or individuals. You may need to discuss different aspects of the event with different people, and possibly show some documentation to demonstrate that you are responsible organisers and that the event is being properly planned. The sort of documents you may be asked for include:

- an event management plan
- a risk assessment



- a route map
- evidence of public liability insurance.

Contact with the local authorities and police will also help you find out about any clashes with other events. The earlier you make contact with local authorities the better. As a rule of thumb, you should make contact at least four months in advance of the event date for smaller events and for larger ones at least six months in advance.

## **Consulting the police**

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Depending on the route, the walk may go through more than one police area. Organisers are normally required to log route details with the operational departments of each separate police force.

It may be appropriate to check with the police that your route is considered safe from a crime perspective and take advice about your plans.

It is generally the case nowadays that although the police may assist with the development of your event and give advice, they no longer provide a free presence on the day other than their normal beat presence. Any special policing presence (such as traffic police for road closures) needs to be arranged as a contract and included in the budget planning.

## **Consulting local businesses and residents**

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If your organised walk will potentially have enough participants to cause disruption to normal pedestrian or traffic flow, it's always a good idea to consult with businesses and residents on the route. A simple way to do this is to deliver a general letter explaining the event's route, timings and objectives. Always include a contact e-mail address or phone number for one of the events team who can answer any queries and do make sure you respond to all queries. Mostly, residents and businesses are grateful for the advance notification and may even support the event.

If people express concerns it is worth agreeing to meet them in person and talking through the event with them so that they understand in detail how they may be affected. If there's a particular business which you foresee could be a problem, for example a courier firm with vehicles coming and going throughout the day, approach them in person first and see if they're willing to work with you and reduce (or eliminate) the number of vehicle movements.

Some businesses may need to be alerted to the fact that they could benefit from the event (eg a cafe on the route) so it's also worth talking to them and encouraging them to have enough staff/supplies to cope with demand – perhaps even a special offer for your participants!

## **Funders and sponsors**

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Even small events need some funds. Many local authorities can give advice on sources of local and national grants available to community groups within their area. It may also be appropriate to approach local commercial sponsors. Sponsorship is not just a one-way benefit. It offers a promotion opportunity for a business to be associated with your good cause. Build a relationship with your funders and sponsors, and at the very least remember to credit them in the way you've agreed and to thank them afterwards.

Don't just think of raising cash, some businesses may be able to help with:

- services free or at reduced rate (such as advertising, printing, catering)



- things you would otherwise have to buy (refreshments, high visibility vests)
- prizes for best costume; quickest walker; youngest/oldest walker; most sponsorship raised.

## 5. Publicity and promotion

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It's a good idea to start by working out who you want to attract to your event. This will help you decide what to call it, where to place your publicity, how to express the invitation to participate and what media to use. For example if you want to attract families, it may be worth working with schools/playgroups to run a promotional campaign over time in the lead up period.

A good starting place is to aim to ensure that you send out:

### Press releases and adverts to:

- local newspapers
- newsletters
- radio
- TV
- websites

### Posters/invitations to:

- local shops, businesses, clubs, schools, libraries, community centres
- all the agencies you are consulting/working with
- your organisation's mailing (and emailing?) list, and other possible partner organisations' mailing lists
- local websites
- other events/organisations which might attract a similar audience.

If you are working within an existing organisation, make sure that your logo is prominent on any publicity and all printed materials to make best use of the opportunities to raise your profile and help create a cumulative effect with your event's advertising. If your event is a standalone affair you may want to create a logo to make it recognisable at a glance.

If your event has received sponsorship or grants remember to include the relevant logo/s on all promotional material.

Asking local companies for sponsorship can raise their profile as well as money if you build up a relationship with the company, invite their staff/customers to participate and supply them with text/photos they can use in company literature or display in their premises before and after the event.

The more people and organisations you involve in helping you with the event the more publicity you generate through getting the event talked about.



## 6. How to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for everyone

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### 6.1 The Event Management Plan (the EMP)

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Every event, regardless of size, needs careful planning in advance. The planning process should include, in an appropriate way, everyone who will be assisting in the event delivery as well as any other relevant agencies such as the local authority and police. Keeping track of all the steps in the process is made much easier if you keep all the information together in a single Event Management Plan (see suggested outline below). If you keep this electronically make sure you back it up frequently.

Small events do not need the same mass of documentation as large ones, and there is no need to make things over-complicated. But, within reason, the more organised you are the more relaxed you can be, since you will know that your systems will ensure that you won't forget too many crucial things and that you are not - constantly - caught out by the unexpected.

Creating and using an Event Management Plan helps make it easier to:

- keep track of progress
- share responsibility
- keep momentum up during meetings since there is less need to go over old ground
- brief newcomers to the team
- demonstrate your reliability.

### Outline

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The following is an outline of an Event Management Plan for a large-scale event. Don't be alarmed! Just pick out from it the elements relevant to the scale of your own event.

1. Introduction / Event Summary – a summary description of the event and its objectives.
2. Budget – a spreadsheet of all incoming and outgoing monies including sponsorship payments, grants, etc. (You wouldn't normally have this section available for everyone to view but stakeholders may want evidence that you have enough money to fund the event.)
3. Venue – a detailed description of the selected start/finish/congregation area(s), including any negotiated costs/timings and including a drawn plan of the proposed site layout.
4. Route Management – a written description and detailed plans including proposed signage, marshal points, crossings, widths of pavements/paths (especially the narrow parts).
5. Stakeholder Management – a list of all key people with full contact details including those agencies included in the planning stages such as the police, local authorities, etc.
6. Licensing – a list of any licences or permits which you need and have applied for, such as premises licence, PRS/PPL (for public performance of pre-recorded music), etc.
7. Helpers and their responsibilities – detail of the people needed in each area to undertake key roles and how they will receive training/briefings, etc.
8. Communication with participants – a summary description of:
  - how participants will be recruited (publicity and promotion)
  - any pre-event information
  - how on-the-day registration will be organised



- maps and information sheets/packs on the day
  - communication after the event (eg collecting sponsorship money).
9. **Branding and signage:**
    - copies of artwork for posters/logos/signs
    - plans showing where the signs will be put up (and confirmation of any necessary approvals you obtain).
  10. **Additional attractions** – a description of any entertainments and add-on activities you are organising for participants or spectators eg massage, face painting, music etc as well as giveaways (medals, drinks).
  11. **Event infrastructure** – detail of all the constructions and equipment (marquees/tables etc) being brought onto your site or route, radio communications plan, toilet facilities and security.
  12. **Health & Safety/Emergency Planning** - a full risk assessment for the event as a whole, a first aid plan, safety equipment (eg fire extinguishers), insurance cover and an easy-to-follow emergency procedures plan.
  13. **Forms** – your Event Management Plan file should also contain examples of any pre-written forms you decide to use – such as Incident/Accident forms, Missing/Found Person Forms, Lost/Found Property Forms.

In the early stages of the planning process your plan will not contain definitive information, but it will help to keep you on track and will reassure partners and stakeholders that you are planning a safe, well-thought out and organised event. As the planning progresses, you will be updating this document and you should make sure that your fellow event organisers are updating their relevant areas of responsibility as well.

All those undertaking key roles on the event day should receive a copy of the final Event Management Plan (EMP) in advance, to allow time for them to raise any queries or potential problems.

It's a good idea to have at least two copies of the EMP on site which should be kept at the Event Control location.

## 6.2 The route

An interesting and varied route can include a mixture of green spaces, paths and pavements alongside roads. The route should avoid crossing roads as much as possible and if a crossing is necessary should use a pelican/zebra crossing if possible. Marshals may need to help walkers at busy road crossings and will need appropriate briefing on their duties. The principal task there will be to advise walkers when it is safe to cross. By law they have no powers to stop traffic.

Knowing the kind of people who are likely to come will help you decide the distance and type of route and any element of challenge you may want to introduce.

### Including everyone

Long distances are likely to be unsuitable for families with young children or (some) people with mobility disabilities. To be inclusive, it may be a good idea to offer a shorter route option. In order to welcome people in wheelchairs or with pushchairs to your event make sure you offer a route which avoids:



- terrain which is too rough or steep (this can include cobbled streets!)
- stiles and kissing gates
- narrow paths / bridges / gateways
- overgrown or muddy paths

Any website or event information material you produce should describe the route in detail so that individuals can make up their own minds. Do not presume to tell people what they can or can't do.

## **How to stop your walkers getting lost**

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If your route can be organised as a predominantly self-guided walk this means you don't need so many marshals or signs. This reduces the cost, time and effort spent putting up signs. However, large, mass-participation events do need highly visible marshals and may well need signs placed at strategic points to keep people on the right route. If you want to put up signs you'll need to get approval from the local authority.

If the route is mostly self-guided everyone should be given a clear map. Sections through parks and green spaces may need additional marshals to help point out the right route.

Many large-scale events give their participants a special t-shirt to wear which helps event organisers and marshals identify them as participants. Event organisers can help the walkers identify them by wearing special badges, hats or arm bands.

## **6.3 Planning for a big crowd**

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When planning the size of your event you need to consider both the size of the event site (the start and finish area) and how many walkers the route itself can accommodate safely. If participants have to register in advance for your event you can, to some extent, limit the numbers if you need to.

## **Laying out the event site - start and finish area**

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For small events this could be as simple as erecting a small gazebo with a couple of trestle tables for registration purposes. Larger, more elaborate events will require a fully marked out site with spaces allocated for whatever welfare facilities and entertainment you are organising. You should make your plans for these with the assumption that there may be spectators and supporters as well as participants at the start and finish, and that they may well want to enjoy any on-site facilities and entertainment you provide until the walkers return.

When planning where you are going to put registration table/s, information point/s, mobile toilets, refreshments, entertainment etc the crucial things to bear in mind are:

- the flow of visitors: which direction they will be arriving from, and where they need to get to
- the areas likely to be most popular which could cause congestion and possibly obstruct emergency vehicle access.

## **How many people can the route take safely?**

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You should work out how many people the route can take by thinking about the narrowest point on the route, especially within the first mile or so. After that the crowd will have strung out a bit according to their walking speed. But if, for example, the pavement for the first mile of the course is only 2.5m wide, you will need to restrict the number of walkers at any one time so that nobody spills onto the roadway. You can do this in several ways. Options include:



- reducing the number of participants
- starting the walkers off in waves or
- reducing the width of the start point to 2m so that your walkers start off only 2 or 3 abreast from the start line.

In most cases organisers use a mixture of all of these measures to create a safe route.

## 6.4 Organising your team

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### Roles and responsibilities

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As a starting point you will need to think through the key roles your event needs to make it work smoothly and make a list.

Allow plenty of time to recruit and brief your volunteer team. It may help if you ask everyone to start by filling in a simple form, asking them for contact details and information on their previous experience. The form could also ask for any medical details that may impact on their ability to perform certain tasks.

It may help you to organise things efficiently if you produce a 'staffing plan' which lists the individual responsibilities and equipment needed for every member of the event team along with contact details and any training they may need.

### Working with children and vulnerable adults

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If you are arranging to have people looking after children, for example a lost children team or crèche workers, they need to show evidence of a recent check for any relevant criminal record (known as a Criminal Records Bureau - CRB - check). If someone needs a new CRB check it has to be done through a recognised agency (see [www.crb.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.crb.homeoffice.gov.uk)) and can take up to 2 or 3 months, so make sure that you allow enough time.

### Team leaders

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For larger events it will help if you delegate responsibility for particular areas of the work both on the day and beforehand to responsible people who can operate as team leaders. It's all the better if they have previous experience of helping with events or something similar.

The table on the following page gives you an idea of key roles. You may not need all of them and you may be able to combine several compatible roles together and give them to one person to do, but this list gives you an idea of all the necessary jobs.



Role	Location on the day
Event Manager	Start / Route
Treasurer	
Publicity distribution	
PR and media link	
Website updating and IT liaison	
Site Manager	Start / Finish
Registration Supervisor	Start
Information Supervisor	Start / Finish
Start Supervisor	Start
Lost Children Manager	Start / Finish
Route Manager	Route
Entertainment / Stage Manager	Start / Finish
Lead Walker	Route
Tail End Walker	Route
Finish Supervisor	Finish

A team training/briefing session should be held before the event day. All the team leaders should be fully briefed about the event and their area of work so that they in turn can brief/train any other volunteers in their areas. This session will also give team leaders the chance to ask questions. The aim is for all team leaders to feel confident about answering any questions posed by participants (or anyone else) on the day.

Helpers should receive their role descriptions outlining their responsibilities by email (or post) in advance of the event day. They should also be told about timings and meeting points. Additionally, helpers should be briefed on the morning of the event by their relevant team leader. Always greet volunteers in the first instance with a big thank you for giving up their time and ensure that they are briefed on the overall objectives of the event so they can fully appreciate why giving their personal free time and energy is so important to the cause.

### **Making the team visible**

All your helpers should stand out from the crowd. Ideally they should wear, for example, a bright distinctive branded t-shirt or high-visibility tabard. This uniform should be worn as an outer layer – for example over a coat in cold or wet weather. According to budget a distinctive arm band or hat may do the job.



## Looking after your team

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In order to keep volunteers in position during the event it may be wise to provide a packed lunch and bottled water for them, (making sure that any prepared food is stored in advance at the correct temperature.) Alternatively you should tell your team that there will be no opportunity to buy food at the event and ask them to bring their own packed lunch and drink. It's a good idea to ask your helpers to travel light in order to avoid having to organise a baggage facility for them.

Any team located out on the route should have a reliable means of communication with the event management team.

The route team will need to check that the route is free from obstructions. Marshals will also be your eyes and ears on the ground and can act as a source of information for walkers. Team members will need to respond to any incidents on the route and know what to do. Their general task is to communicate with the walkers, know the answers to frequently asked questions and give encouragement, all of which will help the participants complete their walk.

You will need to produce a map detailing the route and location of facilities and marshals. This should be distributed to all teams before the event.

## 6.5 Event practicalities

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### An event control base

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For larger events it is advisable to have a dedicated location for an event control person (or team) to be on duty throughout the key event operations including:

- getting the site ready
- the walk itself and
- dismantling everything and clearing up.

The function of the event control person (or team) is to be available for the helpers (who are registering walkers, giving information, marshalling on the route and so on) with advice and instructions for any question or issue which crops up. Event control is the hub of all communications and it's from here that the event should be co-ordinated safely and effectively. Event control is essentially a temporary office and can be located in, for example, an office building, a hotel room, mobile trailer or small marquee.

Ideally at least one person should be permanently on duty at the event control base. They will need a table and chair and all the essential event information, documentation, key contacts and maps.

### Communications

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Communication can be by mobile phone or two way radio. But remember that almost invariably there will be places along the route where some or all mobile phone networks won't work either temporarily or all the time. Phone networks anyway have limited capacity. For this reason, especially at larger events, two-way radio networks are a safer method for primary or back-up communication.



The people issued with a radio should be given clear instructions on how to use them properly and discouraged from using them for anything other than necessary communication.

All helpers should be issued with a list of key contacts indicating name, position, radio channel and mobile phone numbers. If possible, a landline telephone in the event control base is useful for emergencies or as a helpline for participants.

## **Stewarding and security**

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For a very large-scale event you may want to engage a professional stewarding/security company to undertake security and crowd management for the duration of the event, including setting up and dismantling, as well as the event itself. Their presence alone tends to deter any potential trouble makers. All security and stewarding staff should be accredited, identifiable via uniform and will need to have received a full briefing and appropriate training before they start work.

Even for smaller events it is worth having volunteers on hand to fulfil a similar role of directing and assisting people and keeping an eye on property.

## **Event equipment**

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The event team should be issued with any equipment they need for their role. This may include:

- high visibility bibs for course marshals
- gaffer tape, cable ties, secateurs (for removing or securing things which might otherwise interfere with the walkers)
- red/white hazard tape
- copies of any forms you have decided to use for recording incidents.

## **6.6 Welfare**

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### **Toilets**

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For larger events you may need temporary mobile toilet facilities in the start and finish areas and possibly on the route to supplement existing public facilities. The number and type of toilet facilities used should follow the industry guidelines for events (your toilet supplier will be able to advise you about this). Don't forget to include facilities for disabled people and baby change units if your event is likely to attract families. It is essential to nominate someone to check the condition of the toilets regularly and restock them with toilet paper, soap, etc.

Plan the location of your temporary toilets so that they are convenient for your participants but also easy for the contractor to deliver, empty and remove at the end of the day.

### **Waste management**

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Think about ways to minimise the negative environmental impacts of your event as much as possible. Participants can, for example, be asked to discard empty water bottles at specific recycling points along the route. For smaller events, participants can be asked to take their rubbish home with them to



recycle/compost. Never underestimate how much rubbish can be generated, especially if anything is being given away free. Consider whether you need a skip and if so, where you are going to put it.

## 6.7 Health and Safety

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### Risk Assessment

Any event organised for the public must have an up-to-date risk assessment to demonstrate that the organisers have acted responsibly and done everything possible to prevent any harm to the participants. This is sometimes referred to as exercising 'due diligence'. The risk assessment should be a written document held by the event manager and available for people to see if they ask for it. For small to moderate-sized events an adequate risk assessment can be produced by the event organiser taking a realistic and common sense approach to possible risks within the start/finish areas and on the route. The process need not be complicated. You will need to make a thorough site visit and walk the route (preferably on the same day/time of the week that the event is planned to take place, and certainly not too long in advance of the day itself) and list all the risks.

The following list includes common risks to consider, but is not exhaustive:

- overcrowding (start/finish area and route)
- risk of collapse of any temporary structures you construct
- slips/trips/falls (uneven surfaces)
- route obstructions (including planned highway maintenance works)
- road crossings
- participants' pre-existing medical conditions/general fitness
- weather conditions (hypothermia/sunburn/heat exhaustion)
- food poisoning (if you are having caterers – are they registered with the local authority? Is food being prepared and stored in acceptable conditions?)

Under each of these headings you should list the measures you are undertaking to reduce these risks. If the risk is then considered acceptable there is no reason for the event not to proceed. If you find that a certain risk cannot be reduced sufficiently, for example if the participants have to walk on the road because of pavement works, then you need to find a way to remove the risk, perhaps by diverting the route.

### Potential walk hazards

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#### Congestion on the route

This shouldn't happen on a well-planned route supported by a well-managed and controlled start. However, other factors outside your control can sometimes affect your event. For instance, a church or cinema suddenly releasing hundreds of attendees will take up much of your pavement space and create a bottleneck. In situations like this, safety is paramount and the nearest marshal/steward should try to take control of the situation both by encouraging the public to keep moving and by discouraging walkers from stepping onto the road. The marshal should contact the route supervisor so that marshals in earlier sections can be asked to delay approaching walkers, to give time for the congestion to clear.



## Sudden route obstructions

Rare but not unheard of. For example a burst water main or gas pipe or a fallen tree will need emergency route diversions to be implemented quickly and efficiently. This may involve relocating both signs and marshals. As soon as they are aware of the route obstruction, the relevant marshal should contact the route supervisor/event control to describe the issue and receive instructions on what to do. Any walkers who have not yet left the start point should be delayed until the diversion has been put in place. Walkers already on the route should (if possible) be held at an appropriate place before reaching the obstruction/diversion.

## Road crossing points

Make a plan in advance for all of these, especially at busy junctions. Brief the marshals on their role: to ensure that walkers abide by the crossing signals and don't try to cross when it isn't safe. This can be done by the marshals holding hazard tape across the crossing point whilst traffic is flowing. Marshals and stewards have no powers or authority to manage traffic and certainly shouldn't try. It's worth discussing complex or busy crossings with the traffic police and, if necessary, contracting them to supervise these areas. In some instances, it is possible for the traffic management team to adjust the phasing of traffic lights to favour pedestrians by extending the crossing time. An additional ten seconds makes a big difference.

## Lost walkers

All walkers should be encouraged to walk in small groups, but despite the best signage and route maps, it is not unheard of for walkers to get lost or separated from their group. All route maps should include an emergency contact number (event control) for walkers to call. Once you've worked out where the lost walker is, send a spare helper (who knows the route and the area) to find the walker and get him or her back on track. If walkers wear an event t-shirt or distinctive hat it will help marshals both to manage straying walkers and also to locate those reported lost.

## Walkers who can't finish

Many novice walkers, children, older people and those with disabilities can be caught out by the challenges of a route, for example, due to the weather, distance, lack of their overall cardiovascular fitness or the accessibility. Make sure that the route length has been clearly communicated in advance of the event and that any particular challenges are highlighted. In particular steep hills or steps should be described in detail. If you're promoting the route as an 'inclusive' event, ensure that this is the case and that everyone, including those with disabilities (such as people in wheelchairs) and those with pushchairs, can be accommodated. A suggested training plan can be circulated to all pre-registered walkers to prepare them for their challenge. Walkers who are unable to complete the route should be advised to tell the nearest marshal who may in turn arrange for a 'sweep' vehicle to take them back to the start/finish point.

## Walkers who run out of steam

Even the fittest of participants can experience problems on long distance walks from muscle fatigue due to lack of fuel. On longer walks, even if rest areas, drinks, fruit and snacks are strategically placed along the route, participants should always be encouraged to carry a few snacks to suit their dietary needs.



## First aid provision

Levels of cover should be determined by the route distance, time of year and likely numbers of participants. Cover may be provided by a voluntary organisation such as St John Ambulance or British Red Cross or a private medical provider. In either case the first aid provider will risk assess the proposed activity and identify what resources are needed to cover all potential incidents. A First Aid team should be available at the event start/finish and another, possibly, along the route of the walk.

## **6.8 Planning for contingencies**

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### **Keeping a record - forms**

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It's important to make sure that if something goes wrong at your event it is dealt with in a structured and systematic way. Therefore, as well as giving adequate briefing in advance, you should make it easy for your helpers to keep a record.

One useful way to do this is to equip the registration tables, information point and marshal stations with pre-printed forms on which to write down anything which needs to be reported or communicated to others. The helper who fills in the form should add their name and contact details so that it can be followed up later if need be. An example form is shown on the next page.

### **Lost child / missing person**

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All helpers should be told what to do in the event of a child or vulnerable adult being lost. If a child (or vulnerable adult) is reported missing the information should be recorded immediately on an appropriate form. This information should be communicated to the police (if they are on site) and to all key helpers on the route and event site, who should in turn, disseminate this down to all marshals, security people and stallholders/exhibitors. **(The name of a missing child or vulnerable adult should never be communicated over a radio or phone or broadcasted over a PA system).** The person reporting they've lost the child should remain at the information point or event control base.

In the case of a found child, she or he should be taken immediately to the information point. It is preferable that no child be left alone with just one helper even if they are CRB-checked. Although it is likely that the child will be distressed they should not be offered sweets or any other food in case they suffer food allergies. Attempts should be made to find out as much information from the child as possible about who they were with and when they were last together. If the child has not been reunited with the parent/guardian within one hour, the police should be notified.

### **Lost property**

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Every member of the event team should be aware of the pre-agreed location for lost property, whether that is event control or the information/registration desk. Each reported find or loss must be recorded on the appropriate form, including name and contact details of who reported the loss/find, location and a description of the item. If someone subsequently claims a lost item and is able to give a full description, the item can be handed over but it is essential that their details are recorded.



## Event accident / incident recording form

*Please write very clearly*

Please use this form to record anything which needed the attention of event helpers.  
This form applies to the following (please tick):

- accident
- incident
- lost / found children (or adults)
- lost / found property (with description and where it was lost / found)
- other

Describe...

Reported by (name of the participant or member of the public):

Contact details:

Information recorded by (name of the helper):

Contact details:

### **Route block / path closure**

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The route should be checked immediately before the event. If there is a route block, the route manager should use local knowledge to advise the team on the ground what diversions to implement. Signage and marshal positions may need to be altered accordingly.

### **Overcrowding**

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Overcrowding shouldn't happen on the route if your participants have registered before the event, you have organised procedures at the start line properly and only registered participants have been allowed to take part. However, there is the possibility that additional attractions at the start/finish area could draw in additional, unexpected crowds. It is essential to be aware of any planned activities and the attention these can attract.



Crowd numbers and flow of pedestrian traffic must be monitored at all times and action taken immediately if a problem is foreseen. This may mean shutting down a popular attraction or suspending a stage performance until some of the crowd has dispersed. If a situation escalates and your security team is unable to control it the police should be contacted for back up support.

## **Event cancellation**

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Although it is highly unlikely that the event would need to be cancelled in the days running up to the event, it is possible. Potential reasons for cancellation might be: sections of the walk for some reason become unavailable and no alternative can be found; severe weather is forecast; or that the police have advised the general public to stay away from certain areas.

In advance of the event you will need to consider how to communicate a cancellation to participants, for example by email, text or local radio. In the event of cancellation sufficient helpers will need to attend the event venue to explain the situation to participants and encourage them to make use of available transport and return home. If anyone continues with the walk after being told that the event has been cancelled they will be outside the event and not covered by your public liability insurance.

## **6.9 Insurance**

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### **Public liability**

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Regardless of whether key stakeholders (landowners, local authorities, etc) insist on your event being covered by insurance, it is prudent anyway to take out an insurance policy to protect yourself against anyone (participants/volunteers/general public) making a claim against you in the event of an accident. There are many insurance companies who specialise in event insurance and it is always worth speaking to at least two or three companies for comparative prices since quotes can vary enormously. Double check any restrictions a particular insurance company may want to impose on your policy.

### **Contractors' insurance**

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All contractors or sub-contractors engaged to provide any type of service for your event must also have their own valid public liability insurance. It is the responsibility of the event manager to ensure that contractors present evidence of this well in advance of the event. As a rule no contractors should be allowed onto your site unless you're satisfied they are covered.

## **7. Evaluation and thanks**

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For reporting to sponsors, for writing post-event press releases, and even just to get a sense of pride in your team's achievement it's very useful to have feedback on the success or otherwise of your event. It will also be invaluable if you organise more in the future.

You can use your Event Management Plan to give you the headings for your evaluation. As a minimum you should note down under each heading what did or didn't work from your point of view and what you would do differently another time. It's more complete and objective if you collect opinions from a



range of people with different perspectives on the event. You can learn a great deal even if you ask only the most basic questions: 'If we organised such an event again what should we repeat? What should we abandon? What should we do differently?'

Opinions from participants can make great quotes to use in any follow-up press releases and thank you letters.

There are many ways of getting feedback – including the standard method of asking people to fill in (short) questionnaires. If you use this method make sure that you ask only for the information you actually want/need. Try also to offer some methods which don't rely on people being confident about reading and writing.

Other methods of collecting feedback include:

- Asking the helpers who are giving out rewards/certificates to ask walkers for feedback.
- Asking the helpers to jot down responses if they have time/inclination.
- Setting up a 'graffiti board' or a comments box and ask people to make comments.
- Having a 'thank you' party for your helpers a fortnight or so later and spend a bit of time asking them for their opinions.

Thanking all the individuals, organisations, and agencies who have been involved gives you an opportunity to:

- celebrate your (joint) achievement
- express your gratitude
- ask for feedback
- keep your cause in the limelight
- strengthen partnerships.

## 8. Case study: Rotary Club of Church & Oswaldtwistle

The Rotary Club of Church & Oswaldtwistle have organised an annual charity walk for the last 5 years. Local residents are encouraged to take up the challenge to raise valuable funds for charities or good causes of their own choice, whether these are nationally known such as the NSPCC or a little known charity or scout/guide group.



They use a popular and interesting 7 mile circular route along a local canal which takes approximately 3 hours. All the planning and organisation is undertaken by the Rotary Club and stewards are on duty throughout the day to provide encouragement and support for the walkers.



Walkers are requested to complete a registration form which they download from the website and return with an entry fee of £5 per walker. The Rotary Club follow strict safety guidelines by ensuring that all participants are registered (for insurance purposes) and are able to produce their 'walker number' if requested by an organiser or a steward on the course. Participants can buy a walk t-shirt either in advance or on the day. Those who register on the day are charged £10 (£5 of which goes to The Rotary Club charitable fund).

The Rotary Club provide the sponsorship forms and encourage walkers to seek sponsorship from friends, relatives and workmates, suggesting say £1/mile. It is the responsibility of all walkers to collect the money raised and send it to their chosen charities. The Rotary Club collects just the registration fee to cover the organisation costs for the event.

In the past, celebrity Coronation Street soap star, Julie Hesmondhalgh, has officially opened the event with walkers starting anytime between 9.30 – 10.30am once they've reported to the registration desk. The event officially ends at 3pm.

Walkers are advised to provide their own appropriate clothing and footwear and snacks and drinks. There are places on the route where people can buy snacks and barbecue-style refreshments are on sale at the end of the walk. A local hotel, approximately half way around the route, offers reasonably-priced bacon butties to all walkers. Toilet facilities are also available at the start/finish and on the route.

In 2009, approximately £60,000 was raised by walkers for various charities.

[www.rotarycharitywalk.org.uk](http://www.rotarycharitywalk.org.uk)

## 9. Further sources of information

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The Countryside Code [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)

The Highway Code [www.dft.gov.uk](http://www.dft.gov.uk)

The Institute of Fundraising [www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk](http://www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk)

Health & Safety Executive [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

National Outdoor Events Association [www.noea.org.uk](http://www.noea.org.uk)

## 10. Licences

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Depending on what you plan, you may need to get permissions and licences. It's always best to check with the local authority and not to make assumptions about whether you do or don't need a licence for something. The sort of activities which need licences include:



## Entertainment

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If you're planning to provide a beer tent, playing live music or showing a film, your event could be a licensable activity. If you want to play pre-recorded music see [www.ppluk.com](http://www.ppluk.com) for how to get a PPL licence.

## Trading

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If you intend to sell any kind of merchandise from your event space, you may need a street trading license or consent. If the event is charitable and 100% of the profits will go to the charity then you will need a Charitable Street Trading Consent. It's unusual for local authorities to charge a fee for this. If you have also invited other traders, such as a food stall, then they will need to apply for their own Street Trading License.

## Charitable collections

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For any charitable collection to take place within a public space (such as a street or local park) you must get permission in advance from the local authority. If your collection is taking place within private premises (such as a pub garden), you need only to seek permission from the property owner. However, in both cases, always put your application in as early as possible - many local authorities or private premises restrict the number of collections per year. It is unusual for local authorities to charge a fee for these licenses.

At the event the Event Manager should carry a copy of each licence just in case they need to be seen by someone official.