

A 'Can Do' Guide to Organising Events in Tunbridge Wells



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Introduction

This guide will outline the steps you will need to consider when planning an event in Tunbridge Wells borough. For further in-depth information including your legal requirements when planning your event visit [Event safety – HSE](#) Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has an online event application called EventApp that takes you through your event application step by step, asking you for relevant details. Before you do this please read through the information below then apply on-line at eventapp.org/tunbridgewells

Tunbridge Wells Safety Advisory Group (SAG) encourages safe, well-organised events that enrich community life. The Events team can offer support throughout the application and planning stages and can act as a central point of contact between you and other council departments, statutory services, and stakeholders.

The group will generally be consulted for help and advice on an event that has 500 or more people attending, or some kind of special provision such as a road closure. This group can offer support, advice and guidance to ensure your event is safe. To allow the SAG enough time to consider your event you will need to apply 2 to 3 months in advance. There are more details below about this group.

What is an event?

An event is an organised activity that invites members of the public to attend, either free or for a charge. There are many types of events and many places and venues where events take place on either public or private land. An event can include the following:

- Community celebration
- Specialist street market
- Marathon or fun run
- Charity fundraising

- Street party
- Music, sports or any other festival
- Parade, procession or march
- Fete, fair, firework display or bonfire

Do I need to apply?

You should submit an application for your event if it will;

- Take place in a Council park or site
- Have loud music
- Sell food drink or alcohol
- Require licences e.g. sale of alcohol
- Require a road closure
- Impact on traffic or parking

If your event is on private land and doesn't fall into one of the above categories you do not need to apply to the council.

Event applications should ideally be submitted 12 weeks before the event. However, for larger or more complex events (500+ attendees, road closures, alcohol, etc.), applications should be submitted at least 6 months to a year in advance, to allow time for full Safety Advisory Group (SAG) review.

Your responsibility as an event organiser

Before you begin to plan your event consider your responsibilities as the organiser. These include:

To the council - you are responsible for informing the council of your event plans, applying for permissions and licences, assuring them that your event will be safe and you have planned for all eventualities. You may be asked to attend the Tunbridge Wells Borough Safety Advisory Group to give a detailed account of your event. More details about this can be found on page six.

To the public - you are responsible for providing the event as described in any of your publicity. You are also responsible for making sure that the public are in a safe environment during the event and that their welfare is considered.

To yourself and your committee/staff - you are responsible for thinking through and planning all aspects of the event in good time beforehand so that your event will run as smoothly as possible and you are able to cope with responsibilities on the event day and any issues that arise.

To the law - as the organiser of an event you will need to comply with common law and assume legal responsibility or what is called 'duty of care' under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. You are responsible for the safety of anyone who attends the event including all committee, staff, hired workers, contractors, performers and the public. You also have a legal duty to people outside your event. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 demands that you ensure your event does not constitute a nuisance to residents nearby. To ignore or neglect something that you know could be unsafe or harmful to them is illegal and could render you liable to prosecution or civil claim. This applies if you are there by association or employment. More on these responsibilities and how to meet them are presented in this document and at hse.gov.uk/event-safety

Define your event

Before you start write down exactly what your event is about:

- **Location:** what kind of site or venue do you want and what is the capacity?
- **Date and time:** does your event clash with another local event and how long will it last?
- **Activities:** what activities will happen at your event?
- **Team:** who will be involved in the planning and execution of the event?
- **Finance:** how will you fund the event and how much will it cost?

Once you get a very clear definition of your event, it is time to start the planning.

Elements of an event

Before you begin organising your event think about planning and management of the event. Look through the list below and see if you have thought about what you will need to create your event.

- **Communications:** promotion of your event, making links with the local media, contracts and communication with your organising team and audience
- **Health and safety:** adverse weather conditions, fire safety, crowd management, security or stewarding, structures, barriers, risk assessments, method statements, electrics, lights, power, food, drink, water, emergency planning and accident reporting
- **Permissions:** licensing,
- **Traffic management:** road closures, diversions, parking suspensions, signage, transport and parking
- **Welfare:** first aid/medical needs, lost children, vulnerable persons, noise control, toilet facilities, waste and litter disposal

In addition, some events may need to consider amusements and attractions, civil aviation, performers, merchandise, traders, special effects, fireworks and bonfires.

You and your team

The largest resource for your event will be the number of committed people willing to work on the planning and execution along with a network of people to support, help and advise you.

The planning and administration of the event requires several roles. For smaller less complex events some people will take on more than one role while a larger event may require one person per role. Start considering the roles that your event requires. The following list is a suggestion of the more common roles:

Event chair or manager - this is the person in overall charge to ensure that all responsibilities and plans are carried out; who will delegate and make decisions; who will call the meetings; ensure permissions are in order and appropriate licences are applied for and obtained. They will also ensure clear communication takes place between all parties involved. If the event has been granted a licence, this person is responsible for ensuring that any conditions on that licence are met.

Treasurer - this person will create the event budget and cash flow forecast, handle the bills, pay people and take in any monies.

Entertainments - this person will arrange and co-ordinate everything to do with performers or may look after amusements.

Market stalls - this person will arrange and co-ordinate everything to do with market stalls and/or food vendors including ensuring the relevant food safety hygiene and other licences are in place.

Stewards and volunteers - this person will co-ordinate the volunteers and their schedule of duties.

Publicity and marketing - this person will ensure the event information is publicised to the correct target audience via flyers, emails, websites, press releases, listings and advertising. They will make sure correct permissions are in place for any leaflet distribution.

Sponsorship manager - this person will be responsible for raising funds for the event by contacting people and organisations willing to sponsor the event. They will liaise with the rest of the committee to ensure that the sponsors name and/or logo are included on publicity materials and on display at the event.

Production or site manager - this person will co-ordinate everything needed to build your event site/infrastructure: toilets, fencing, signs, staging, marquees, generators, public address system, water provision, site clearance, skips, litter bins, fire extinguishers etc.

Welfare - this person will co-ordinate lost children, looks at the needs of the elderly or of those with access or other special needs. This person could also coordinate event information available on the day and ensure that first aid is available through out the event.

Health and safety - this competent and qualified person will create the event risk assessments, contingency plans and emergency evacuation plans. They will carry out health and safety checks on any contractors or services the event buys in, as well as making sure the event site is safe on the event day e.g. checking signage, access, trip hazards, first aid.

The above are all suggestions. You may find that your event requires more roles or that some of the roles above need to be divided between two or more people.

The Role of Marketing in Your Event's Success

Effective marketing is vital when organising an event. Attracting the right audience relies on more than a poster or a social post; it requires a coordinated strategy that positions your event where potential attendees already are.

Marketing transforms event planning from functional logistics into a community experience. By blending digital platforms, local networks, and media channels, you increase attendance, generate excitement beforehand, and build positive momentum after the event. Don't treat marketing as an afterthought—make it an event pillar from day one.

Event management plan

Once you have a clear idea of what your event will look like and the roles involved you are ready to begin creating and writing your event plan. The event management plan will serve several purposes, not only will it help to have a clear written plan to assist your management of your event in the coming months, but it will be required by agencies outside your event committee who want to ensure that you have thoroughly thought through your event plans including the safety of the public and your team.

These agencies may include various council units such as Tunbridge Wells Borough Safety Advisory Group, Licensing, Kent Transportation as well as the Police, Fire Service, NHS and ambulance services.

Your event management plan is not set in stone. It is a working document and will need to be amended and updated as you carry on. For an idea of what to include see 'elements of an event' above.

Site plan/site map

As you go through the different elements of your event, you will begin building a picture of what will physically be present on your site.

This blueprint is your site plan. This plan should be scaled and/or include dimensions such as area available to the public and exits.

As part of your event plan you will need to create a map showing where items will be placed on your site: Where is the stage? Where is the generator? Where are the exits and entrances? Where are the markets stalls? Where are the toilets? It will also show where your entry and exit points or gates will be, and the emergency evacuation routes. The more accurate you can be with this plan, the better.

Risk assessment and emergency planning

One of the key parts of your event plan will be looking at how you will minimise risks and how you will handle emergency situations.

Risk assessment

The risk assessment, including the fire risk assessment, is a document that systematically lists the elements at your event that may be a hazard and therefore could cause harm; then listing what you do as the event organiser to identify, manage, eliminate, minimise or control that risk. For an idea of what to include in the risk assessment visit [Event safety](#).

Emergency planning

At your event you are responsible for the people on the event site. This includes staff, contractors and crew as well as the public. Should there be an emergency that requires the event to be stopped and/or people to be evacuated from part or the whole site, you are the one responsible for seeing this happens as quickly and efficiently as possible.

You will need a method of contacting the emergency services and getting the help you need if the emergency is beyond your control.

An emergency can include the following:

- A fire, bomb, terrorist or major incident
- A collapsed structure
- Social disorder
- Food poisoning
- Bad weather (heavy rain/floods/high winds)
- A critical failure of staff, contractors or venue. For example - key staff do not show up for the event, the toilets do not get delivered or the power goes out on site

An emergency usually requires that you, as the event organiser, intervene in order to make the situation safe. You may be able to handle the emergency internally, for example; security may be able to stop a dispute. Or you may have to call in the emergency services to handle these situations. Your emergency plan will include information on how you will have systems and methods in place to deal with both small and large scale emergencies. Your site plan should show access points for emergency vehicles, the RVP (rendezvous point) where you will meet arriving services, the evacuation route and the evacuation rally point for the public.

Costs and budgets

As part of your initial plans you should be getting an idea of what your event will cost. Many of the elements of the event will incur costs too. Start getting an idea of costs from contractors or hire companies. Some of the core costs you need to consider are as follows:

- Permissions/licences which will often be from the Council
- Insurance e.g. public liability insurance
- Hire of equipment
- Hire of services and staff
- Hire of venue/site
- Administration costs
- Performers and amusements costs

You will also need to think about your income -where is the money coming from to cover these costs? Most events gather money from more than one source such as:

- Selling market, bar or food stall pitches
- Sponsorship
- Ticket sales
- Fundraising

Ensure your known income covers core costs rather than depending solely on forecast ticket sales. The person responsible for the budget should keep the event committee informed on income and outgoing costs to help all determine if they are on track for having a successful event that does not leave the organisers looking for funds at the last minute. It is worth thinking through all aspects of your budgetary plans. If the event makes a loss who will carry the responsibility, if it makes a profit, where will the surplus money go?

Insurance

There is no law that says you must buy insurance for a voluntary or community event –but you might want to make sure you are covered in case something goes wrong and someone makes a claim against you. Having public liability insurance may give you peace of mind and it's good planning.

Sometimes the local council or the land owner of where the event is going to take place will require you to have public liability insurance. Remember that before you buy insurance you

should check the terms of the policy carefully to make sure you know exactly what cover it provides and any requirements you may have to meet.

If you are renting or using someone else's building, you may be covered by their insurance, do check to see if this is the case. If you are hiring equipment such as a marquee or bouncy castle check with the company you are hiring it from whether their terms of hire include insurance and read any conditions carefully (particularly any exclusions). If external businesses are providing services, such as food or rides, you should check they have their own insurance, and that it is in force on the day of the event.

Public liability insurance

This insurance covers the organisers of an event providing them with financial protection if they are held to blame for injury to a person or for loss or damage to property and sued. You can buy different levels of cover, from £1 million upwards. This seems a lot, but costs are relatively low, sometimes as little as £50 to £60.

How much you need varies according to:

- The type of event and activities you are planning
- How many people will attend If you are unsure, talk to your own insurer or an insurance broker who will be able to advise you.

You do need to be sure that the policy you buy covers all the activities you want included, so be open and clear with the insurer or broker you talk to and make sure that you check the terms of the policy and in particular any exclusions.

Permission to use an event site: venues, parks, green spaces

Once you have selected the site for your event, whether it is indoors or out, you will need to reach an agreement with the venue or property owner who may require payment for the use of their space. For your own safety and for insurance purposes, make sure that you have a written contractual agreement between you that clearly states the following:

- The exact venue, park or green space location
- The dates you have access to the location (remember that you will need extra time to build your event and take it down)
- How much you will be paying to hire the location and under what terms. For instance – is there a cancellation fee? Remember to budget for any damage you may cause to the site or venue
- Exactly what your hire of the venue, park or green space includes. For instance, does it include use of the water taps on site or any electrics? Never assume that your location comes with all the facilities you see, using them may cost extra.

Sustainable Events

Event organisers are encouraged to consider the environmental impact of their event and to take steps to reduce waste and emissions, such as:

- Minimising single-use plastics.
- Providing recycling and composting stations.
- Encouraging public transport, cycling, or walking.
- Using digital over printed communications where possible.

Accessible Events

You have a legal obligation under the Equality Act 2010 to make your event accessible.

Consider:

- Step-free access routes and accessible toilets.
- Viewing areas for wheelchair users.
- Signage that's readable and clear.
- Options for neurodiverse or sensory-sensitive attendees (quiet zones, early access).
- Providing event materials in accessible formats.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Safety Advisory Group (SAG)

This group will take a close look at how your event has been planned and advise on the safety and smooth running of the event. You should also encourage other key members of your team to attend such as your Health and Safety Co-ordinator or your security representative.

SAG exists to ensure public safety at your event. Their advice, while not mandatory, carries significant weight. They may request additional documentation such as contractor safety policies, stewarding plans, or crowd control strategies, depending on the scale and type of event.

SAG meetings will usually include the following attendees:

- Your team representative(s) – the person in overall charge of the planning
- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council - Safety Advisory Group members
- Licensing unit
- Environmental health – noise, food hygiene, health and safety
- Emergency services – police, fire and rescue and ambulance

- Others attendees may include Traffic Management (for road closures or street events), parks and other key council staff.

Once your online application to run an event at eventapp.org/tunbridgewells has been submitted, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council will take a look at the nature of your event and will contact you. SAG meetings may need to take place if your event includes any of the below:

- Requires a premises licence (i.e. 500+ attendees)
- Involves a road closure
- Sells alcohol
- Involves fireworks, bonfires or other special effects/requirements

Before the SAG meeting you will be requested to attach a copy of your event management plan to your online application. This should also include a copy of your site plan, your risk assessments and your emergency plans.

The number of SAG meetings depends on the nature of your event. It may be that after one meeting, all future updates, amendments and changes to your plan can be made online. It may be that one of the attendees feels they need more involvement with your plans and they request another meeting before your event date. With some of the larger events, the key SAG members may want to meet on the event site just before or even during the event so they advise about the ongoing safety of the event.

Permission/licences

Once you know what kind of licence your event requires, you need to apply through the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council licensing department. It helps to apply for the licence well ahead of your event. Applying six to nine months before the event should be enough time in most cases. You will need time for a consultation period for a premises licence.

This gives the council, emergency services and the public opportunity to provide feedback and assist you to deliver a safe event.

Will your event be featuring any of the following? If so, you will need a licence:

- Retail sale and supply of alcohol
- Performance of a play, dancing, exhibition or a film, indoor sporting events, boxing or wrestling
- Performing live music, playing of recorded music, providing facilities for making music or dancing
- Supplying hot food or drink

The size of your event will determine which licence you apply for. In other words, how many people will be at your event?

If you are raising money for charity, you should follow good practice standards.

Temporary event notice (TEN)

A temporary event notice (TEN) will need to be applied for from the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Licensing Authority for small events which last no more than 168 hours and have up to 499 people attending at any one time. There are a limited number of TENs that can be applied for in any one year for individual premises.

Premises licence

A premises licence will be required for events with more than 500 attendees. This process will need a consultation period. Some locations or sites already hold a premises licence, including some of the parks in Tunbridge Wells. Check with the location you are using. If they do not have a premises licence, you will need to apply for a temporary one.

Street trading licence

To trade on the street or any other area that is not enclosed and is within seven metres of a road or footway where the public has access without payment would require a licence. Contact Tunbridge Wells Licensing Team.

Permission to sell alcohol

- Personal licence - a personal licence will be needed by anyone who wants to authorise the sale of alcohol as part of their business

or event. This licence is issued to a named individual, not to an organisation.

- Designated premises supervisor (DPS)
-where alcohol is to be sold in connection with a premises licence there must be a designated premises supervisor (DPS) named on the licence. The DPS must be a personal licence holder. If the event takes place under a TEN then a personal licence is not required, although the intention to sell alcohol must be stated on the TEN application

Permission to use and close roads: Traffic Management Order

Any event that has an increase in traffic and parking in a particular area, larger than average number of people on public transport or a road closure will need a Traffic Management Order (TMO).

In some cases, an event may wish to close a road for a short period of time. A road that is closed to vehicle access, even for a short period of time has many implications:

- The public needs to be informed of any closure or diversionary routes before the event dates
- Buses, taxis and emergency vehicles may be affected and need to be warned of diversions
- Parking bays may need to be suspended for the day
- Business loading zones may be affected

You will need to apply for a Traffic Management Order (TMO) if you want to hold a street party or event that closes off access to vehicles.

The council need a minimum of 12 weeks to prepare a TMO. This means that the road closures and diversionary routes need to be agreed before this 12 week deadline.

Permission for catering or special treatments

Food - all food business operators (FBOs) that will be part of your event must be registered with their respective local authority. They must also comply with food and health and safety legislations, have in place a food safety management system and have health and safety risk assessments. You must be able to assure the council environmental health teams that any food being sold or served on your site meets these safety standards.

Permission for music and entertainment

If there is music at your event, live or prerecorded, you must have a music licence from the Performing Right Society (PRS) and/or Phonographic Performance Ltd (PPL). These organisations help performers and artists to claim their royalties. There are fees involved with the use of music.

In order to get permission from the council to have pre-recorded or live amplified music at your event, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council environmental health unit need to consider:

- Where your speakers will be placed and what direction they are facing
- How loud the music will be
- How long the music will go on

Make sure you take these items into consideration in your plans and that you state the details in your event management plan. If you need guidance on where to site your speakers, and at what volume and duration to play your music, please contact Tunbridge Wells Borough Council environmental health unit who will supply you with advice. If the event is of a large scale this unit may advise that you employ a noise consultant who can write a report on how noise will be controlled at your event.

Notification to residents and local businesses

Your event will need the goodwill of the residents and businesses closest to your event site. The extra sounds, lights and changes to vehicle or pedestrian traffic may have an impact on area.

Resident's Letter

The best way to have residents on your side is to keep them informed through a resident's letter. Explain your activities and intentions ahead of time and avoid queries or complaints on the event day, when you will be busy with your organising. Your resident's letter can be posted, or hand delivered to all residents and businesses close to the event site. You will find an example of this letter in the EventApp.

After the event

Immediately after your event, conduct a post-event evaluation to identify successes and areas for improvement. You may be asked to complete a debrief or evaluation form by the council. Collect feedback from your team, volunteers, and attendees where possible. This helps improve future events and supports your relationship with the council. For example what worked, and what did not? What would you do to make it better? Were there any incidents, accidents or emergencies?

Disclaimer: Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has prepared this advice pack to assist you to deliver safe events in the borough. The council cannot take responsibility for your event. The event organiser bears sole responsibility for the event, employees, volunteers, attendees, infrastructure and budget. It is recommended that the organiser equals or provides a better service than the approved codes of practice. It is a criminal offence not to comply with appropriate legislation such as all the health and safety laws that may apply.

