



Planning a Children's Activity Programme

This is one of a series of factsheets for voluntary and community groups produced by West Norfolk Voluntary and Community Action.

Who can organise a Children's Activity Programme?

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What age group should we aim at?

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What is the best way to plan it?

What safety precautions should we take?

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Who can organise a Children's Activity Programme?

Voluntary or community groups can organise a children's activity programme. However, it is unwise for them to do so, unless they are experienced in providing services for children or are willing to obtain support from relevant organisations. The group should consider whether this area of work fits with their constitution, whether they have the expertise to carry it out and the relevant policies and procedures in place such as a Child Protection policy.

Are there legal aspects to consider?

Groups providing children's activities need to consider whether they need to register with Ofsted (see glossary and The Ofsted publication, A Guide to Registration for Day Care Providers). Advice and guidance can be gained from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

It is also important to check whether your group's current insurance would provide cover. Equally, it is vital that your organisation has carried out CRB checks (Criminal Records Bureau checks) and a reference check on all adults involved in the running of the children's activity programme. If you are providing background music or a music activity an entertainment licence may be required.

What age group should we aim at?

Unless your group currently provides services for under 8's, it is advisable that you organise your activity programme for children over 8. Whatever, age group you decide to aim at, it is important that people leading and assisting in the activity programme are experienced and capable of dealing with children in that age group.

Children's safety and well-being is paramount.

Younger children usually need more care and support than over 8's and a different approach is needed for teenagers. Remember all children have particular needs and this will need to be taken into account to ensure accessibility for all children. Involve the children/teenagers in forming "ground rules". Behaviour management should encourage and support constructive and positive behaviour.

How do we fund it?

At the early stages of planning, it is advisable to prepare a budget. Costs soon add up when you need to hire a hall, pay for entertainers or activity specialists and purchase activity resources such as paint and paper. Your group may like to fund-raise to cover the costs or apply for a grant. Local businesses and residents can be supportive in providing craft materials, which also contributes to recycling.

It is usual to make a small charge to children attending the activity programme, but it is important that the fee is as low as possible to ensure that children are not being excluded because of family financial constraints. Some families aren't always organised enough to book in advance. Some struggle to pay in advance, so a flexible approach is needed. Let families choose whether they book and pay in advance, or come along informally and pay on the day.

What is the best way to plan it?

Your group should not "rush into this." Think carefully about what you aim to achieve and for whom. ***There are many aspects to consider and children's safety and well-being must be paramount.*** Organising a children's activity programme is a lot of work, so it is wise to talk to other organisations to find out if they are planning one to avoid duplication and unnecessary work.

Talking with local families, schools and organisations will help you to identify whether there is a need for such a programme, the best type of activities to include, suitable timings, venues etc.

A small planning group with an agreed budget is a realistic and productive way to move the idea into a project. As with any project, producing a project plan with tasks, times for the tasks to be done and who will carry out the tasks is a must. Ensure that you also have plenty of adults willing to be involved in the programme to make sure the activities are successful and safely provided, and that children have sufficient support and attention to meet their needs.

What safety precautions do we need to take?

As mentioned, the programme would need to be covered by insurance. All venues used should be risk assessed, the programme should be risk assessed and each activity should be risk assessed. Remember the need to check volunteers or staff involved in the programme are suitable (CRB and reference checked, having an appropriate approach and experience of working with children and the age range). Parental consent forms for each child will be needed and should include emergency contact numbers. As with any event, adults in charge need to know the fire procedure and where first aid and emergency equipment is sited.

How do we know if it has been successful?

Any event or project needs evaluating to gain a picture of whether it is successful or not. To get a thorough picture, involve everyone in evaluating the children's activity

programme (organisers, volunteers, staff involved, activity specialists, parents and children).

Different people feel comfortable with different methods so try a range which could include a tick box evaluation form, children's drawings of things they enjoyed, suggestion box, informal views received.

The planning group should look at all the views received and produce an overall evaluation report. The evaluation report should be discussed at the group's next committee meeting and kept on file to refer to when planning the next years children's activity programme if the group decide to repeat the project.

This information has been produced by West Norfolk Voluntary and Community Action set up and owned by local groups to support, promote and develop local voluntary and community action.

We have taken all reasonable steps to make sure that this information is current and accurate. We cannot, however, guarantee its accuracy or completeness and therefore cannot accept liability for your acting, or failing to act, on the information given.

For resources, books, ideas and useful information please contact West Norfolk VCA or email info@westnorfolkvca.org.

Sample of an Evaluation sheet for an event or project

Name of event/project:

Date of event/project:

Aim of event/project:

How did it go?

Did it meet our aims?

What went well?

What would we do differently?

What did we learn?

Planning a Children's Activity Programme

Have you thought about.....

Ofsted Registration (if needed)?		Insurance cover?	
Funding?		Staffing/volunteers?	
CRB checks/references?		Venues booked?	
Fees decided?		Activities planned?	
Equipment?		Resources?	
Activity specialists booked?		Licenses?	
Risk assessments?		First aiders?	
First aid box?		Accident book?	
Consent forms?		Booking forms?	
Booking in file?		Cash box with float?	
Refreshments?		Cups, clothes etc?	
