

Parent Support Group Action Pack



Holding a family day

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This guide is for information purposes only and is not intended to be a source of legal advice and must not be relied upon as such. Other organisations are listed for information purposes only and inclusion does not constitute endorsement by Contact.

Introduction

One of the main issues for families with disabled children, especially families with children who have rare conditions, is isolation. Although telephone and online support between families is great, many say meeting together is an invaluable source of support and encouragement. Some of the positive outcomes are:

- the chance to meet other families and share information
- children gain confidence by meeting others with the same condition
- siblings meet and share experiences
- visiting speakers share their knowledge with parents
- a fun social event where the needs of the whole family are catered for.

If your group is a registered charity you must hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) to explain the management of the charity to the members. Many support groups find that the best way of ensuring good attendance at their AGM, is to combine it with a family event.

Planning a family event might seem daunting, especially for a rare condition group whose members live far apart. With a clear plan of what you want to achieve, you can make it a positive experience for everyone.

Planning your event

Be sure to take enough time to plan your event. As a general rule, start thinking about the event a year before you wish to hold it. Some venues will be taking bookings this far in advance and anyone you might like to invite to speak may also need to be booked this far in advance. Do make sure you let your membership know the date as far as possible in advance to ensure they keep the day free. Some families may need time to save up so they can attend the event.

If you decide to have a family day on an annual basis this will mean that it is almost a constant process. Try not to let one person become left with all of the work and, do not assume that, because they did it one year, they will want to organise the next year's event. Many hands make light work!

Decide what you want to achieve from your day right from the start so that you book the right venue and necessary people. Is it simply a social event? Does it include an AGM meeting, do you want to provide information from professionals, is it about encouraging social interaction for children, do you want to fundraise at it, do parents need to have time to meet whilst their children are being looked after?

The practicalities

Decide in advance how to share out practical tasks this can help avoid confusion on the day. A small group of parents will hopefully have plenty of volunteers. If you are an individual parent, think about asking a friend or relative to help you with some of the practicalities on the day.

- Who will put notices up to direct people to the right room?
 - Who will organise refreshments?
 - Who will welcome parents as they arrive?
 - Who will chair the meeting?
 - Who will take notes and write up minutes?
-

Venue

Check the geographical spread of your membership. Try to find a venue which will be reasonably central for all members. Remember that sometimes a greater distance is easier if the transport links are good.

As a minimum, you will probably need two rooms: one for the main meeting room and another for children's activities. Consider your objectives when choosing your venue. If you are holding a larger family day, you may want to have a few rooms to hold a number of different workshop sessions and meetings or you may want a venue with safe and accessible outside space

Visit the venue before you book to make sure it is easy to navigate and check if there are any accessibility issues. In case of emergency, will all your members be able to easily evacuate the building? Is there a procedure for evacuating people who need assistance?

Check that the venue is accessible and can meet the needs of your members.

Things you might want to consider are:

- accessible rooms and toilets
- parking for the disabled
- lighting and acoustics (how sound behaves in the room)
- how many rooms you need / what facilities
- provision of a loop system (for the hard of hearing)
- accessible overnight accommodation.
- Outside space
- Emergency evacuation procedures

Many groups choose to use a hotel. If using a hotel ask if there is an inclusive price for attendees who need to stay overnight. Are there family rooms and accessible rooms available and what are the facilities for babies and children? If you are arranging the event a reasonable time in advance, it may be possible to reserve a block of rooms at a special rate.

Groups have used many venues other than hotels to hold their events. These include schools, university campuses, sports clubs, parks, leisure centres and zoos. An advantage of using some of these venues is that there is outdoor space and activities for the children. Check with your members whether they have any contacts at suitable venues.

It is always worth telling the manager of your chosen venue that you are a charity and asking whether there is a discounted rate for such organisations.

Budget

Draw up a budget for the day

Things to consider when budgeting:

- Venue hire (full costs including all aspects e.g. post-event cleaners, equipment hire etc)
- lunch
- refreshments
- hire of any equipment, for example, sound system, overhead projector, television
- administration (photocopying, postage, and so on)
- speakers' costs (if you are offering to cover these)
- volunteers' expenses
- childcare and entertainment.

Once you have drawn up a budget, it may be worth looking for sponsors to cover the costs of various parts of the event. This will help to keep the costs down for your members.

Programme

The programme for the day will depend very much on the aims you have identified, the needs of your membership and your budget. Some ideas which have worked for groups are:

- inviting specialists who can speak about the latest research. There may also be an option for members to become involved in research whilst at the meeting, for example, completing questionnaires, registering for future research projects

- sessions on subjects such as behaviour, education, benefits and grants, ensuring access to short breaks and other services, or opportunities for siblings.
- sessions specifically for parents, such as workshops on sharing ideas on making time to look after ourselves, or dealing with stress.
- Sessions for children to build confidence and self-esteem

Remember to leave plenty of free time for families to speak to each other on the day. Families often tell us that this is the best part of events they go to.

Inviting your members

Give as much notice as possible. Keep it in people's minds by mentioning it in each newsletter, and have a section on your website dedicated to your events. Make a point of mentioning your event to new families who join the group who may find it useful

Once the details of the event have been finalised, send all the information to families via a letter, flyer, online message etc. Remember to include all necessary details e.g.:

- date and time
- venue details and facilities
- costs
- travel arrangements and map
- outline of programme (such as speakers and workshop titles)
- crèche information
- details of children's events
- booking form (including photograph permission form, safeguarding/ terms and conditions form).

Examples of a booking form, a photograph consent form, and a risk assessment can be found at the back of this guide.

Feedback and evaluation

Prepare some short and simple questionnaires for those who attend to gather their thoughts or comments about the day. This will help you plan for any future events

Things to include:

- general question on how they found the day
- what they most useful/ best parts were
- what they thought of the venue

- what they would like to see in the future
- what was not so good/ useful

Hand out feedback forms at least 10 minutes before the end of the session to give people time to fill them in.

Photography

If you are taking pictures at your event, you must ensure that you have the permission of people attending. It is good practice to include a photograph permission form with the information you send to members to return to you along with their booking form. On the day of the event do remind people at the beginning that you will be taking photographs and ask anyone to let you know if they do not wish themselves or their children to be included in any photographs. If someone does not wish to be photographed do ensure you discard any photographs that include that family.

A sample photography consent form can be found at the end of this guide.

Childcare and crèches

Having a successful programme for the children will have an enormous impact on the success of your family day. Within your budget, is it possible to provide some entertainment which will make the day enjoyable and memorable for the children? Can you provide a childcare service which will allow the parents to leave their children and concentrate on the programme for the day?

Do get as much information as possible about the special needs of all the children who will be attending. Send out a short questionnaire with the booking form, and don't accept a booking for a child's place unless you have their information is returned. Some groups use mobile crèche organisations that provide qualified staff and equipment. This can be expensive but will also free up your time and reduce the need for volunteers. Whether you use a professional service or volunteers do ensure they are fully briefed on the medical needs of all the children who will be using the service.

Safeguarding

You need to ensure that any staff or volunteers are safe to work with children. If you are going to use your own volunteers for childcare, you should check that they do not have any relevant criminal convictions. In 2012, the Criminal Records Bureau and Independent Safeguarding

Authority merged to become the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) that carries out checks on people in England and Wales. The DBS will carry out the ISA's current functions in Northern Ireland and AccessNI will continue to provide a disclosure service for Northern Ireland. In Scotland, equivalent checks are carried out by Disclosure Scotland.

You can find helpful advice about who needs DBS checks at:

<https://cbscreening.co.uk/news/post/do-i-need-a-dbs-check-if-parents-are-present/>

The NSPCC also has information about safeguarding

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/for-voluntary-and-community-groups/>

Health and Safety

Regardless of the venue you use, you should ensure that all equipment is safely used to prevent accidents, and that all emergency exits are clear. It is worth pointing out that health and safety is the responsibility of everyone attending the event, and equipment and possessions should not be left lying around. Most venues have a health and safety policy on how they ensure their premises are safe and how they minimize risks. Ask to see a copy of this.

You would expect large venues to have a first aider and medical kit available. Ask what their arrangements are and how to access a first aider. Smaller venues are generally unstaffed, so you need to consider who would provide first aid if there was an emergency. Check if the venue provides a first aid kit and where it is kept. If a first aid kit is not provided make sure you have one with you on the day. It is also worth noting where the nearest accident and emergency department is and knowing the exact address of your location. You may have a member of your group who is a trained first aider and who would be happy to provide any first aid on the day. Alternatively, you could approach an organisation like St John Ambulance to see if there is a local volunteer available.

It is good practice to do a risk assessment before an event. One of the organisers visits the venue and looks for any potential risks. You should record these risks and make comments about what you are doing to minimise them; for example, there may be a pond next to the village hall you are using. This could be a risk for children, so ensure parents are aware the pond is there and stress that parents are responsible for ensuring their children are safe.

Give each family a sheet outlining their responsibilities for their children and information about emergency procedures.

Keep a list of attendees, children and volunteers as this may be useful in case of an emergency. Prepare badges or cards for everyone with an organiser's mobile number to call in case of emergencies.

A sample Risk Assessment form can be found at the end of this guide.

Catering

Ensure you know of any special dietary requirements of your guests beforehand so you can cater for everyone's needs. This should be included in your booking form. If you are using a hotel or venue that is providing the catering, all rules and regulations for food preparation and storage are the responsibility of the venue. If you are preparing your own food and drinks, here are the Food Standard Agency rules for charities and community groups:

www.food.gov.uk/safety-hygiene/providing-food-at-community-and-charity-events

Simple steps to follow include:

- wash your hands, surfaces and utensils properly and keep them clean
- cook food properly
- chill food properly
- use different preparation areas for raw and cooked foods, meat and vegetables
- avoid spreading food poisoning bacteria between foods through cross contamination of surfaces, plates, chopping boards, and so on.

For more information on preparing and serving food, visit the Food Standards Agency's website at www.food.gov.uk Food Standard Agency Scotland www.food.gov.uk/scotland/

Useful contacts

England and Wales

Organising a voluntary event: a 'Can do' guide – The Cabinet Office

www.gov.uk/government/publications/can-do-guide-for-organisers-of-voluntary-events/the-can-do-guide-to-organising-and-running-voluntary-and-community-events

Charity Commission

Tel: 0845 300 0218

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission

Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)

A membership and representative umbrella body for the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland.

www.nicva.org

Scotland

Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator

Tel: 01382 220 446

www.oscr.org.uk

Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)

Umbrella body for voluntary organisations in Scotland, with offices in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness www.scvo.org.uk

Volunteer Scotland

Volunteer Scotland is funded by the Scottish Government to support volunteering. You can advertise your volunteer vacancies and events on the website.

www.volunteerscotland.net/

Wales

Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA)

The WCVA offer help for anyone running a charity or voluntary group, whether you're a volunteer, a trustee or committee member, or a paid member of staff.

WCVA Helpdesk: 0800 2888 329

www.wcva.org.uk/advice-guidance

Volunteering Wales

Find tips and information on working with volunteers and signup with Volunteering Wales to advertise your opportunities.

www.volunteering-wales.net/

Our series of guides to help local parent support groups – our [Group Action Pack](#), is available on our website.

Sample Photography Consent Form

Photography, Filming, and Audio Recording Consent Form for Families

Your images help us continue our work supporting We may use these images in printed publications and on our website, Facebook page and Twitter account. We need your permission before we can photograph or make any recordings of you and/or your children. Please complete the form below:

I am happy for to use any still photographs, and/or audio footage, and/or video footage depicting myself and my family in the following ways:

May we use images of you and your children in printed publications that we produce for promotional and marketing and educational purposes?	Yes/ No
May we use images of you and your children on our website ?	Yes/ No
May we use images of you and your children on our Facebook page?	Yes/ No
May we use images of you and your children on our Twitter page?	Yes/ No
May we record images of you and your children on video ?	Yes/ No
Do you consent to images of you and your children being published in the press (for example in newspaper articles, television interviews, radio interviews, or to publicise same?)	Yes/ No
Do you consent to images of you and your children being used in our newsletters (paper or email)?	Yes/ No
I am happy for our first names to be used	Yes/ No

We aim to use images for a maximum of five years. However where images are used in a printed publication, these may be in circulation for longer. You may withdraw your consent at any time by contacting The guidelines we will adhere to when using your photographs are on the back of this form.

I have read and understood the conditions of use on the back of this form.

Signature:(Parent/Carer) Date:

Parent / Carer Name:

We will not include personal e-mail or postal addresses, or telephone or fax numbers on video, on our website, social media, or in our other printed publications.

If we use photographs of individual children, we will not use the name of that child in the accompanying text or photo caption, unless we have your agreement.

If we name a child in the text, we will not use a photograph of that child to accompany the article.

We may use group photographs or footage with very general labels, such as “a Science lesson” or “making Christmas cakes”.

Websites can be viewed throughout the world and not just in the United Kingdom where UK law applies.

Parents/carers’ consent will be recorded on and will be retained no longer than is necessary for the purpose the data was obtained for. The paper copy will be retained on file up to a year.

Sample Booking form Terms & Conditions - Events and Activities

1. Parents and carers are responsible for their children at all times.
2. Families should be prepared for events, and bring appropriate clothing, footwear, spare money, bottled water, sun cream etc if appropriate. Families will be notified of any special requirements.
3. Under no circumstances will staff tolerate verbal or physical abuse from children, parents and carers or other relatives during family outings or other activities organised by.....
4. The behaviour of children, parents and carers, or other relatives when attending an event or activity should not affect the Health & Safety or wellbeing of others.
5. Parents and carers will be responsible for any damage they or their children cause on an event or activity, either through negligence or deliberate action.
6. Under no circumstances will tolerate the consumption of alcoholic beverages whilst attending any events unless this is specifically agreed in advance as part of the activity e.g. a parents meal at a restaurant.
7. Please note that cannot be held responsible for any items that have been lost or stolen during an event or activity.
8. Under no circumstances will tolerate any acts of criminal conduct of any kind and will report criminal activity if necessary.
9. staff, and any organised transport, will not wait for families or individuals who are late and have been informed of the arrival and departure times.
10. Under no circumstances should parents and carers behave in a way which could bring the organisation into disrepute.
11. In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to cancel an event at short notice. Families will be advised by staff of any changes to an event, and must follow appropriate instructions.
12. Families attending events must abide by instructions issued by staff and, in addition, adhere to any specific instructions relating to hired transport, such as use of car seats or seatbelts on coaches, consumption of food and drink etc.

Please note failure to adhere to the above could result in you and your family being sent home from the event and you incurring the transport costs to do so.

Sign and return copy (unsigned booking forms will not be accepted)

Parent/ Carer Name: _____

Parent/ Carer Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Please complete all the information required below as clearly as possible. Please write your details clearly it is important for whoever receives your booking form that they are able to register you and your family with the correct contact details, Please also sign the terms and conditions sheet.

You must return these to us by _____

Booking forms received after the deadline will be put on a waiting list.

If you are successful in getting a place on one of our events, we will call, email or text you within 5 calendar days of the deadline.

Name of parent-carer(s): _____

Address: _____

Home Telephone: _____ Mobile: _____

Email Address _____

What is your disabled child's name? _____

What is your child's disability/ additional need? _____

What is your disabled child's age, gender and ethnicity? _____

Does your child use a wheelchair? (Please circle) YES NO

Other children attending (siblings only) inc ages

We are unable to offer places to friends or non-immediate family members unless this has been discussed in advanced with the Manager.

Please note that children under 3 years old go for free on all our events but they must be included on the booking form

Pictures will be taken for funders and our website and your children are your responsibility at all times.

Event	Number of adult places	Number of child places

Sample Risk Assessment

1. Description of Activity :

2. Date and Location of Activity:

3. Does the Activity utilise the facilities of another organisation or company (transport and/or venue)?

If Yes; A) Provide the name and address of the organisation or company providing the facilities.

B) Is the Activity to be supervised, or receive instruction, by suitably qualified employees of (A)? If no, why not?

C) Are you assured by (A) above that they are holders of a suitable & valid Public Liability insurance policy?

4. **If answered "No" to (3)**, is the Activity to be organised and supervised by staff/volunteers of Contact?

If No, give the Name, Address and relevant qualifications of the individual(s) providing such organisation and supervision.....

5. Is there to be a Qualified First Aider in attendance?

6. Are details of the nearest Accident & Emergency Hospital to be displayed?

7. Are (voluntary) Emergency services personnel (St.Johns / Red Cross Ambulance, Fire Brigade etc.) to be in attendance?

If "No" to 5,6 or 7 why not?

8. Any further remarks or observations:

9. Organiser/s: Emergency contact (mobile or venue)

Date of Risk Assessment:

Office:		Date of assessment:		Review date:			
Area being assessed:		Assessor(s) name:					
What are the hazards?	Who could be harmed and how?	What are the control measures	Risk rating	What further actions are required?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Date done
Risks associated with slips/trips and falls (i.e. wet/slippery/ floors. General trips Falls from equipment/ Any uneven surfaces including steps and stairs	May affect all parties.	Staff clean up spills.	3	Parents / caregivers to be advised of risk. Parents are reminded to be responsible of their children at all times. Parent carer to inform staff of any spills Parent carer to note and enforce procedures and ensure adequate supervision during the visit. Venue has its own extensive risk assessment.			

Office:		Date of assessment:		Review date:	
Area being assessed:		Assessor(s) name:			