



RUNNING A HEALTH EVENT / DELIVERING A HEALTH MESSAGE

Sexual Health D&G run a Local Sexual Health Awareness Week every year. The aim of the week is to increase knowledge and awareness of sexual health issues for professionals including our partners in the statutory and voluntary sectors across the region.

This toolkit has been developed to support you in planning any health event or activity for the week, or highlight a particular health message. For ease of reference we have used 'event' to mean event or message throughout this document.

THE NEED FOR YOUR EVENT OR MESSAGE

Successful events are based on a good understanding of issues and needs, as they affect your own area - wherever ideas for events come from.

Some may be local responses to a national campaign. Others seek to meet local need head on, with 'direct action'. Other events respond to a need to encourage public interest, as part of a wider, long-term programme to change attitudes and behaviour.

To have confidence in the success of your event, you must be aware of what need you are responding to - and be able to support this with firm evidence that the need exists in your area.

DECIDING ON YOUR TARGET GROUP

This may well come from your decision about the need for your event, but you may need to refine it. For example:

- to specific locality
- to specific client group
- to a particular age
- for a limited time
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WORKING OUT YOUR AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Achievable aims with clear objectives are important not only to give you focus and direction, but to enable you to set up realistic evaluation. Make sure you know the difference between your aims and your objectives:

- Aims - the overall, end result of your event
- Objectives - the steps towards the aim

COMMUNICATING YOUR AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Once you have a clear idea of your aims and objectives, the ability to get the message across to the right people in a consistent and easily understood way is essential to your success.

You'll need to make sure you communicate with:

- Your task group (the people you are working with)
- Your target audience (the focus of your event)

- Your sources of funding
- The media
- The wider world

Think about which of these will be important to your event, and when.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

You should give some thought in the early stages of exactly how you will measure success, and work that into your budget, too. It could be simple, for example, you might count the calls to a phoneline and ask them if it helped.

You need to establish:

- What you plan to measure
- How you are going to do it, and who will carry it out.

Knowing what you want to measure can help to clarify your aims and objectives. You may even decide to change your aims and objectives, slightly, to make them more easily and clearly measurable.

HANDLING YOUR RESOURCES

Ask yourselves some important questions when it comes to selecting materials for your event:

- is it the right kind of material for your particular needs? does it fit your aims and suit the audience you are aiming to attract?
- is this the right information? is it appropriate, clear, accurate, relevant and up-to-date?

PITFALLS TO AVOID - STOP AND THINK IF YOUR REASONS FOR SELECTING YOUR MATERIALS INCLUDE:

- we have to be seen doing something
- the material is a bit out of date but something is better than nothing (it's not necessary)
- we've got a little money left in the budget
- everyone else will be at the health fair - we have to show up with something
- could you use another means of relaying the intended message other than handing out leaflets, think about how best to reach your target group - think about using the internet, email, newsletters etc.

MAKING THE MOST OF MATERIALS

Written materials may include flyers, leaflets, booklets or instruction sheets. Always check that the information is accurate and allow time for trying it out. Writing simply can be harder than it seems.

Adopt a clear, simple approach: be brief and to the point, keep the layout clear and the language simple - use plain English, simple words and short sentences.

Check it says what you want it to say.

Displays, should:

- Pass the 3 second test - that is how long you have to attract a passer by
- Be clear and direct. Use language your audience will understand and if possible express your message in pictures as well as words. Pictures should be relevant.

- Colour can be used to create contrast, link ideas or highlight information you want to stand out. But choose colours with care or you can find yourself making a statement you did not intend.

MARKETING YOUR MESSAGE

PR begins the moment you tell anyone about your event. It is an essential part of creating, developing and sustaining the interest of others through each stage of your event. Whether you are raising funds, planning a display or inviting others to join your team, you can promote the essential aims of your cause.

Beyond this, however, you almost always need to reach a wider audience with at least one of the following;

- Publicity in newspapers, television or radio
- Presentations to professionals or other interested parties
- Interviews
- Advertising

Your budget will go some way towards deciding the extent of your promotion

A basic plan:

- contact interested parties by telephone or letter
- produce a simple information sheet outlining the event
- contact your local/regional newspaper with press release and/or photocall

With more cash and resources you can:

- produce posters, leaflets, press and information packs
- advertise in newspapers, periodicals, or on poster sites
- stage a promotional event and invite the press

MAKING A PRESENTATION

Public presentations can be a useful way of getting your message across to a particular audience. Think ahead and be well prepared.

In advance:

- know your audience and how long you should speak
- gather information to suit the audience
- prepare prompt cards to divide each section into key points
- prepare visual aids to provide structure and interest if appropriate

Your choice of medium includes:

- overhead projector transparencies
- PowerPoint presentation
- background posters

ETHICS AND IMPLICATIONS

Things to think about, below is a list of issues you might want to think about when planning your event

At the outset, you need to ask yourselves

- will this do more good than harm?
- will you be telling the truth?

- will we fulfil promises and agreements?

You need to think about the consequences of any actions

- are we increasing individual good?
- are we respecting our own good?
- are we increasing the good of a particular group without harming others?
- are we increasing the social good?

Are your actions appropriate?

- what is the most effective and efficient thing to do?
- what is the risk involved?
- is there a professional code of practice?
- are we sure of our facts?
- are there disputed facts?
- are there legal implications?
- what are the views and wishes of other relevant people?
- can we justify our actions?
- is there any conflict between the interests of organisers / sponsors / advertisers and the people we want to reach?

And is the way you put your message across appropriate?

- is the language racist?
- is it sexist?
- is it authoritarian?
- is it negative when it should be positive?
- is it appropriate for your target group

Health Scotland has a catalogue of free leaflets, booklets and posters covering a range of health issues and can be downloaded at www.healthscotland.com/documents/5075.aspx

For more local information contact:

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