

Guidance to event organisers

These guidelines are intended to provide assistance to organisers who are planning to hold a public event.

Public events

In general the public perception is that the police are the lead agency for approving all public events, including those which take place on the public highway. In reality the police have no authority to either approve or ban such events and, in fact, police powers to regulate traffic for planned events are extremely limited. Furthermore, the police have no general duty to preserve public safety at any public event, except where there are imminent or likely threats to life.

Legal opinion suggests that the responsibility for public safety rests with the organisers of an event, the owners of the land on which it takes place and the local authority if the event takes place on a road. However, other persons or agencies who undertake actions regarding public safety at an event may assume a duty of care and, therefore, also become responsible.

In the past the police service has taken the lead and undertaken actions to facilitate public events, acting for what they believed to be the public good. However, with the emerging spectre of civil litigation, a more focused approach, confining police action to those issues which are part of our core responsibilities and where there is legal authority, has been adopted.

This guide is aimed at standardising the police approach to all organised events staged in a public place and on all public highways. It creates an environment where, through consultation and partnership, public events will continue to take place. A greater awareness of the individual responsibility of the organisers and those of the other agencies involved should emerge, which will ensure a more focused approach by all concerned resulting in a better planned, safer and more resilient event.

Debriefing

When an event has ended the organisers should arrange for stewards and safety officers to be debriefed so that all information useful to the organisers and the police may be gathered. The organisers should liaise with the police after the event so that significant information may be exchanged and discussed. In this way all parties involved may develop their systems of planning and event management in the light of experience. Experience and good practice has shown that these debriefs should be in the form of a 'hot' debrief straight after the event, followed by a formal debrief some weeks later, which allows time for all organisations involved to gather their own debriefs.