

ACCESSIBLE EVENTS AND CATERING

As voluntary and community organisations, we generally want to make our services as inclusive and accessible as possible in order to engage all members of the community. Here is a starting point of things to think about when holding events:

Keywords

Kosher – foods that meet Jewish dietary laws

Halal – foods that are allowed under Islamic dietary guidelines.

Ramadan – a month of a fasting based on the Islamic calendar and Muslim tradition

Step 1: Timing

When planning your event, consider a range of factors to get the timing right. Who is your target audience? Will you need to avoid school holidays, any religious festivals, and/or any weather conditions (whether it will be very dark or windy for instance)?

Step 2: Venue and facilities

Think about whether the venue and facilities are accessible, can you get there by public transport, has it got adequate car and bicycle parking, is it easy to find? You may want to send out a map and directions with different transport options.

Consider whether the venue itself has wheelchair access, a hearing loop system, disabled toilets, if children will be attending, is there a crèche or do you offer childcare vouchers? If it is a long event, is there a prayer room or space that people can use for religious requirements? You can use the booking form as a way to find out if people have specific requirements, but it is always best to ask the question.

Step 3: Catering and refreshments

Food and drink are a good way of bringing people together and making people feel welcome. Food plays a key role in many belief systems, so it is important to ask people about their specific dietary requirements or allergies. Food and drink can also be a way of building understanding of different cultures and celebrating diversity.

Remember that some diets may be stricter than others, so it is always best to ask the question or check before making arrangements. Here is a rough guide:

- **Halal** – Islam has strict rules about the slaughter of meat for food, and Muslims do not eat certain foodstuffs including alcohol, gelatine (which is in many cakes and sweets) and pork. Ramadan is a month of fasting so avoid organising events during this time. The Islamic calendar moves forward by approximately 11 days each year so Muslim celebrations are not fixed to the Western calendar.
- **Kosher** – Jewish people abide by a number of strict dietary laws known as ‘Kosher rules’. For instance, they only eat meat that has been killed and prepared in accordance with Kosher rules (where death is instantaneous in order to prevent the cause of pain to animals) and they only eat animals with cloven feet (split hooves) and that ‘chew the cud’. For example, they will not eat pig, which has split hooves but does not chew the cud. Some kosher animals that may be eaten include: cattle, sheep, lambs, and goats. Other rules mean that meat cannot be served together with either fish or dairy products, processed food must be prepared in the presence of a rabbi and kosher kitchens must maintain separate sets of utensils, pots, pans, and anything that comes into contact with non-kosher food.
- **Vegan** – vegans do not eat or use any products derived from or exploiting animals. This includes meat, fish, dairy, eggs, honey, gelatine and isinglass. Such ingredients are often hidden so always check labels or ask your caterer. Remember if you are serving meat and fish alongside vegetarian and vegan items, keep them separate and always make sure everything is clearly labelled.
- **Vegetarian** – vegetarians do not eat meat or fish (they stick to a vegetable diet). People become vegetarians for many reasons, including ethical and environmental. Some food contains animal fat or gelatine, so try and double check if you can.

- **Gluten free** – gluten is found in wheat, some cereals and products containing them (e.g. bread, pasta, and various processed items). Many people have to avoid gluten for health reasons.
- **Diabetic** – diabetes is a disease that affects how the body uses glucose and many diabetics need to avoid foods with high levels of sugar and need to eat at regular times.
- **Allergies** – some people may be allergic to other foods, such as seeds or nuts, so always make sure things are clearly labelled if they contain such ingredients.
- **Drinks** – if you are providing drinks, it is worth considering a caffeine-free option – such as water, juice or herbal tea – alongside the traditional tea and coffee.

If you get overwhelmed by all the different dietary rules, remember that a vegetarian meal, with vegan options, may often be suitable for everyone, and is healthy and may be cheaper too.

Step 4: Additional support needs

If you are planning a big event, it is important to use your booking form to ask if there are any additional support needs that people will need, for instance:

- Do they need a translator or interpreter (including British Sign Language)?
- Will they need large print-outs?
- Do they have any other special requirements?

Whilst you should ask the question before arranging for additional support needs, there may or may not be costs involved, so try and build some flexibility into your budget.

For more information on events, including licensing, funding, volunteers, health and safety and insurance, see the Events: licences and legislation factsheet

A religious festivals calendar can be seen at: www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/2016-religious-festivals



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