



Event Safety Guidance

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Introduction

When large groups of people gather in confined spaces, dangerous situations can arise as seen at the Bradford and Hillsborough football ground disasters in the 1980s.

Whilst large sports grounds are now covered by comprehensive safety legislation, many public events are not covered by specific safety controls. South Gloucestershire Council, together with Avon and Somerset Constabulary, Avon Fire and Rescue Service and South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust, have combined resources to address this gap in the form of a Safety Advisory Group. The aim of the group is to provide guidance to event organisers on the running of a safe and trouble-free event.

The group has produced guidelines to assist event organisers in the planning and running of smaller scale safe events. The guidelines cover a wide range of activities including community events, marches, sporting events and bonfire and firework displays. Larger scale event organisers are expected to have a comprehensive knowledge of the various industry guides covering public safety. The guidance is given on a 'goodwill' basis and event organisers need to ensure that they comply with all the various legal requirements relating to publicly attended events.

1. Event safety in South Gloucestershire

The Safety Advisory Group (SAG)

The Safety Advisory Group (SAG) is a working partnership made up of the following organisations:

South Gloucestershire Council
Avon and Somerset Constabulary
Avon Fire and Rescue Service
South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust
National Highways

What does the Safety Advisory Group do?

The group meets and discusses large scale public events which are considered to have the potential to present a significant risk to public safety.

Events can be brought to the attention of the SAG in several ways:

- Direct contact from the organiser with SAG or any of its members
- Contact by SAG with an organiser, for example when an application is made for a temporary road closure, the event is advertised in the press, an application is made for a license
- Contact from another local authority

What do event organisers need to do?

We want to help event organisers make their events as safe as possible. In order to assess the risk presented by your event and determine the degree of contact that can be offered, you are asked to complete the Event Notification Form available from our [Event safety](#) webpage.

To help us, we will need the following information:

- The named organiser of the event and contact details
- The time and date(s) of the event
- The type of event you are planning
- How many people you are expecting to attend the event?
- Details of any special or unusual activities
- The results of any risk assessments you have carried out
- If your event is open to the general public
- If your event will take place on the highway
- If your event will be in a public place, such as a park, open space or town centre
- If your event is a private venue, whether there will be any activities planned that will affect the safety of the persons attending or people nearby

How much notice do I need to give?

Ideally you should give SAG the maximum notice of any proposed event i.e. at the early planning stage. The following are the recommended minimum notice periods of a proposed event but please be aware that if you need to apply for or modify a license, or apply for and organise a street closure, the council may require more than the 6 weeks minimum notice period.

Expected attendance and notice period

0–2,000	6 weeks
2,000–10,000	3 months
Over 10,000	6 months

Obviously when very little notice is given for events then the information cannot be circulated to SAG members for consideration and there may be insufficient time for a co-ordinated response to be given.

What happens next?

For small and medium events, we will make a note of your plans and possibly contact you to offer some safety guidance. Normally we will not take any further action. However, in some cases, we may ask you to change some of your plans to improve safety at your event.

For larger or more complex events we may take a more active role. For example, we may meet with you to discuss your plans and arrangements in more detail. SAG meets as required for special or large-scale events.

Who is responsible for safety at public events?

The organiser and/or landowner are responsible for safety at public events. The responsible person is the person who has control of the premises at which the event will be held for the purposes of the event. We expect you to have a named person who is responsible for the safety of your event. For larger events this may be a dedicated safety officer with a support team.

The information contained in this guide, or given by SAG, is intended to assist you with organising an event.

As an event organiser or landowner, you are required to comply with all the legal duties and responsibilities under Health and Safety or other relevant legislation.

You will need to take appropriate steps to keep the public safe in the event of a terrorist attack following the passing of Martyn's Law in 2025.

Find more information on the legislation and requirements in [Protect UK's overview of Martyn's Law](#).

Contact with the Safety Advisory Group

The main point of contact with the SAG is:

Phone: 01454 860001

Email: sag@southglos.gov.uk

2. Your event: things to consider

Risk assessment

You must carry out and provide a written risk assessment as the first step in planning your event. This will ensure that you have adequate health and safety measures in place. We can provide guidance with this.

Safety checklists are included in Sections 5 and 6 which will help you begin to identify the key elements of the risk assessment for your event. The list probably will not cover all aspects of your event and you may need to add items that are specific to your event.

The safety checklists are included for you to start identifying the main potential risks at your event and the preventative action that needs to be put in place. SAG will be looking for a full risk assessment for your event that has been recorded in writing. Completed safety checklists are a tool for helping to provide a documented risk assessment and will not be a risk assessment in themselves.

Remember you will need to take out adequate insurance to cover your event irrespective of the safety controls you put in place.

Stewards

You must have enough stewards for the size and type of your event. The number of stewards you need will depend on your risk assessment of the event. This will include the following factors:

- Whether the event is held indoors or outdoors
- How many children are likely to attend?
- If it is dark or light
- If there are unsound surfaces
- If the weather is bad
- If vulnerable people are there
- If alcohol is being served
- The type of event and composition of the anticipated audience

Communications

You must have a reliable method of communication in place for the event. It is essential for stewards and organisers to be able to communicate during the event. In addition, there should be at least one office on site, jointly staffed by all the organisations involved in the event.

Equally vital is the method of communication with the public. This is particularly important if the site has to be evacuated.

Evacuation

You must have an evacuation procedure as part of the risk assessment for your event. For indoor events, the building you are using may already have an evacuation

procedure in place.

However, this is far less likely for outdoor events. Please ask for guidance in establishing an evacuation procedure for your event.

First aid

The level of first aid, paramedical and medical facilities will be determined by the risk assessment, taking into consideration such things as the activities, the numbers, types and age groups attending, accesses and egress, the site and structures, Health, Safety and Welfare issues must be included as a cost in the event budget.

Provision of adequate numbers and types of resource (e.g. First Aiders, Ambulances, Paramedics etc.) should be based upon published guidance, especially the Event Safety Guide ("Purple Guide") and Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds ("Green Guide").

Many organisations provide medical services, but you must ensure that the organisation you choose is competent, well trained and able to meet the demands of the Event. Medical Services are extremely busy and should be booked well in advance.

Ensure that the Medical Services provider has a "Duty Order" detailing the operation of services for the event and a Contingency Plan for Major Incidents. These Plans may require validation and approval by the statutory NHS Ambulance Service.

Remember: Medical provision for the event should NOT rely upon the normal provision made by the statutory NHS Ambulance Service for use by the General Public, i.e. the "999" system.

Fire arrangements

You must agree arrangements for fire prevention, detection and control with the Avon Fire and Rescue Service. The fire service's details are given in section 4 of this guide.

Temporary road closures

If your event is to take place on a road or will involve large numbers of people attending the event, you will need to consider developing a Traffic Management Plan for the event.

If your event involves the Highway and requires traffic to be stopped then you, as the event organiser, have the responsibility to make road closure applications, submit a traffic management plan and provide an appropriate number of competent adults to potentially act as marshals and/or stewards.

A marshal is considered to be a person who has been accredited under a Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) program. As a result, they are empowered with the police constable powers of legally directing traffic when a road closure order is in place.

A steward is a person who has received basic training on traffic management but is not accredited and holds no legal powers for directing traffic. An example of the deployment of a steward would be alongside a road closure sign/barrier to offer public advice and

information (the sign or barrier facilitates the closure not the person).

You need to be aware that the police will not provide uniformed police officers to attend road closure points for pre-planned events, they have no statutory powers that would allow them to stop traffic under these circumstances. They would only do so in order to manage an unforeseen emergency.

Uniformed police officers may attend your event based upon pre-identified policing needs (around threat and risk) and while they will, whenever possible, assist event organisers there can be no reliance on them being available to be present at road closures. So, to be clear, your event and traffic management plans need to be self-sufficient and able to safely take place without the reliance being placed on police officers.

You will need to consider, for safety reasons, whether the temporary closure of a road is required. South Gloucestershire Council Issues Temporary Road Closure Orders and you will need to give at least two months' notice to the council of a request for an order. The council must follow strict legal procedures before issuing a Temporary Road Closure Order. You therefore should not leave an application for a Temporary Road Closure Order until the last minute, as the council may not be able to assist you.

When a Temporary Road Closure takes place, you will be required to provide road signs, alternative routes for traffic and management of the road closure.

Provision of signs and management of the road closure will be at your expense, and you will need to bear this in mind when planning your event. If you require any further advice on obtaining a Temporary Road Closures Order, please contact the council's Legal and Democratic team as detailed in section 4 of this guide.

Security

You must ensure any special security measures are in place prior to the event taking place. You will need to consider issues such as large amounts of cash, VIPs etc. The police can advise you on this issue.

Barriers

There are many different types of barriers – please ask us for further advice about this. You will though need to consider the following:

- Raised concert style 'pop barriers' can only be used if you have trained and experienced stewards who are familiar with how they work.
- Any temporary structure that is load bearing must comply with health and safety laws and building regulations.
- Updated guidance has been provided by the National Protective Security Authority (NPSA) relating to [threats from vehicles at events](#).

Access and facilities for disabled people

Suitable arrangements should be considered to ensure that disabled people are able to attend. Consideration should be given for people with:

- Mobility problems (including wheelchair users)
- Impaired vision and/or hearing problems
- Learning difficulties

The event publicity should include a contact number where disabled people can obtain information on site arrangements. Also the venue design should include consideration of parking arrangements, access and emergency evacuation, circulation within the site, viewing areas, lighting levels, signage, ramps, access to facilities, support and sanitary arrangements.

Signs

You must provide clear direction and information signs at your event. Multilingual signs may be needed.

Any temporary signs on the highway will need to be approved by the Transport Network Management Department at the council.

The environment

You must look after the environment when planning your event. For example, you must make sure that the site is suitable for the type of event you are planning and take account of local concerns such as noise and litter.

Facilities

You must decide what facilities will be needed at your event, such as

- Catering
- Hot and cold drinks
- Toilets
- Refuse storage and collection
- PA systems
- Lighting
- Temporary structures

We can help you with liaising with the various departments of the council which has responsibility for food hygiene, health and safety, noise control, licensing and temporary structures.

Catering & Food Safety

The event organiser must ensure that all caterers are registered with their local authority and that they should have a current food hygiene rating of 4 or above.

With regards to location on site, food stalls must be sensibly positioned; away from children's activity areas for example but near to water supplies etc. Adequate space should be left between catering facilities to prevent any risk of a fire spreading should one occur.

Insurance

Event organisers should ensure insurance cover exists to indemnify them against civil litigation. This is referred to as public liability insurance and details can be obtained from any reputable insurance company. A minimum cover of £5million is suggested. You are also advised to consider whether you require cancellation insurance.

Bonfire and firework displays

If you are considering including a bonfire and/or firework display within your event safety guidance can be obtained from the council. See section 4.

Parking

Adequate provision must be made for parking to avoid congestion on access roads. On-site parking is preferred but this needs to be effectively managed and the employment of a private contractor should be considered.

Entertainment licensing

A licence may be required where any premises are used for the public performance of films, plays, dancing, music or other similar entertainment including karaoke and discos. Outdoor events may also require a licence, and sufficient notice must be given (minimum 3 months). Small scale events may be covered by a Temporary Event Notice with a reduced timescale (at least 10 working days' notice) or may be exempt under the Live Music Act 2012. Events involving the sale of alcohol (at any time) or late-night refreshment (between 11pm and 5am) will also need a licence.

Normally there will be a fee for the granting of a licence and further details and application forms can be obtained from the council's licensing team whose details are given in section 4.

Planning and programming

Careful planning is vital to make the event that you are organising a success. You may find some of the following points worth considering when planning your event:

- Decide on the type of event and the date 9–12 months ahead
- Establish a working group or committee if necessary and have a named organiser(s) identified
- If you are looking for sponsors, begin to approach local businesses and companies 9–12 months ahead
- Complete an Event Notification form and return it to the council within the recommended time limit
- If you need any special permissions, for example an entertainment licence, Temporary Road Closure Order, contact the council at least 3 months before the event takes place
- Book your venue/site 9–12 months ahead and confirm in writing
- Arrange local publicity
- Check the availability of sound equipment, marquees etc
- Send out first press release as soon as dates are confirmed

- Book first aid, caterers, judges, dignitaries and any other services 6-9 months ahead
- If holding competitions send out schedules and rules 2–4 months ahead
- Start looking for volunteers 2–4 months ahead
- Talk about finances as early as possible and any other funding opportunities; there will be cut off dates for various funding applications so be aware of the time scales involved
- Order posters and publicity 3 months ahead and send out 6–8 weeks prior to the event
- Choose a time and date for your event that will suit the audience it is intended for and check that no similar public events are taking place at the same time

What to do when things go wrong

Careful planning and organisation will help ensure your event is successful and safe. As the organiser of the event, you are responsible for the safety of everyone involved. If anyone is hurt or injured because of your negligence, you may face prosecution.

If an incident does occur at any event in South Gloucestershire, members of SAG will ask:

- Were risk assessments completed, including the items included in the checklists?
- Were plans in place to manage a major incident?
- Were there enough emergency services resources onsite?
- Was there a detailed casualty treatment, management and evacuation plan?
- Were the emergency procedures properly explained and practised?
- Was there a clear chain of command and control?
- Were communications between key personnel and the crowd adequate?

3. Sources of further information

*All Health and Safety Executive (HSE) publications are available from:

[HSE Books](#)

PO Box 1999
Sudbury
Suffolk
CO10 2WA

Phone: 01787 881165

Many HSE publications are available to download free from the [HSE website](#).

Typing 'events' into the HSE website will bring up most subjects involved in running an event. You can also visit the [event safety section of the HSE website](#).

Organisers should be aware that there are a number of guidance documents to assist them, and the following are the most often quoted.

[Managing crowds safely](#) (HSE)

[Fairgrounds and amusement parks: Guidance on safe practice](#) (HSE)

[Bouncy castles and other play inflatables: safety advice](#) (HSE)

[Health and safety in construction](#) (HSE)

[Safe use and handling of flammable liquids](#) (HSE)

[Avoiding danger from underground services](#) (HSE)

[Electricity at work: Safe working practices](#) (HSE)

[The Purple Guide](#) (Events Industry Forum)

[Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds: Green Guide](#) (Sports Grounds Safety Authority)

[Temporary demountable structures: guidance on procurement, design and use \(third edition\)](#) (GOV.UK)

[MUTA](#) – the UK's only trade association dedicated to marquees, tents and structures

[Safe use and operation of temporary demountable fabric structures](#) (MUTA)

[Fire safety](#) (HSE)

[Guidelines for the provision of water supplies at temporary events](#) (Water Health Partnership)

Other advice

[Your guide to organising a street party](#) (GOV.UK)

[Noise nuisance guidance](#) (South Gloucestershire Council)

[Firework safety](#) (South Gloucestershire Council)

[Food safety advice](#) (South Gloucestershire Council)

4. Useful contacts

[Avon and Somerset Police Constabulary](#)

South Gloucestershire District
Concorde House
Harlequin Office Park
Fieldfare
Emersons Green
Bristol
BS16 7FN

Phone: 0117 9286060

[South Western Ambulance Service Trust](#)

Head Office
Abbey Court
Eagle Way
Exeter
EX2 7HY

Email: eprr.bnssg@swast.nhs.uk

Phone: 01454 455433

[Avon Fire and Rescue Service](#)

Technical Fire Safety
Avon Fire and Rescue HQ
Temple Back
Bristol
BS1 6EU

Email: fire.safety@avonfire.gov.uk

Phone: 0117 9262061

[South Gloucestershire Council](#)

Department for Place
PO Box 1954
Bristol
BS37 0DD

Health and safety: hs@southglos.gov.uk

Environmental protection (noise): environmental.protection@southglos.gov.uk

Food safety: foodandhealth@southglos.gov.uk

Licensing: licensing@southglos.gov.uk

Phone: 01454 868001

Emergency Planning Unit
PO Box 1953
Bristol
BS37 0DE

Phone: 01454 860009

Legal Department (road closures)
PO Box 1953
Bristol
BS37 0DB

Email: legalsupport@southglos.gov.uk

StreetCare and Transport (signage)
PO Box 1954
Bristol
BS37 0DD

Email: streetworks@southglos.gov.uk

5. Event safety checklist

- Have the following key personnel been identified? Event organiser, safety manager, chief steward, stewards?
- Do you need any special permissions, for example Temporary Road Closure, entertainment licence etc?
- Is the site suitable for your event?
- Have you carried out a risk assessment to make sure you have all the necessary health and safety measures in place?
- Who will be responsible for health and safety at the event?
- Have you provided necessary information, for example maps, site plans, details of gas, electricity, water supply and an outline programme of events?
- Do you know how many people you are expecting?
- Do you know where the entrances and exits on your site are?
- Are the entrances and exits controlled, stewarded, suitable for prams, pushchairs and appropriately signed?
- Do you have trained, briefed and clearly identifiable stewards?
- Have you met the needs of disabled people?
- Have you set up a reliable system of communication between key people?
- Has a control point been identified, call signs predetermined and announcements prepared?
- Are crowd control or protection barriers needed?
- Are emergency procedures in place and have these been agreed with the emergency services?
- Can emergency vehicles get on and off the site easily?
- Do you have effective fire control measures in place?
- Do you have adequate first aid facilities?
- Do you need any other special arrangements for example, for lost children, lost property, drinking water, toilets, noise control, car parking?

Emergency planning

- Do you have an emergency plan?
- If you have one, has it been updated in the last 6 months?
- Does the plan cover all likely emergencies?
- Has the plan been reviewed by the Safety Advisory Group?
- Has a person been allocated to make decisions in an emergency?
- Are there arrangements for stopping the event during an emergency?
- Have you sought guidance from the emergency service about emergency routes?

Please note that, apart from emergencies, the emergency services may charge you if you ask them to be present at your event.

6. Safety checklists for events on the highway

In addition to the general safety checklist items, the following issues should be considered when organising events on the highway.

You should pass on the following advice to everyone taking part in your event.

- If any part of the event takes place in the dark, everyone should wear reflective white clothing. Remember that fluorescent clothing helps people to be seen during the day but is of little use at night. If on foot, stay in small groups, using footpaths and verges.
- Timing. Whenever possible don't hold your event in the dark – bad visibility and tiredness make accidents more likely.
- Planning your route. Whenever possible your event should be held in a park, sports ground or on country footpaths away from the road. Remember that country walks need careful planning. Plan the route away from roads wherever possible. Don't use roads without proper footpaths or verges. Don't use roads where there are road works as these can be dangerous.
- Signposting your routing. The police cannot provide signs for your event. You may need to check with the StreetCare department of the council on the suitability and location of signs.
- Organisation on the day. Try to start and finish your event off the road. Mass starts are dangerous – avoid them. Enter and leave the highway without causing inconvenience to road users. Don't obstruct the highway. Never allow cars to follow closely behind groups of participants. Support vehicles should not travel slowly, causing obstruction or inconvenience to other traffic. Ensure that you have enough marshals to supervise the whole route. Make sure that the marshals are properly briefed and clearly identified. Make proper arrangements to look after people who drop out.
- Use crossing places on the route. Remember only police officers have the power to stop traffic. Your marshals must not try to do this – they can only advise people when it is safe to cross. Crossings should be at places where there is good visibility.
- Changes in the route. Make sure that the police and council are advised of any changes to your route and are satisfied that suitable safety measures are in place. Make sure that everyone taking part knows about the changes through marshals or signs.
- If there are no footpaths, face oncoming traffic, no more than two abreast. Use the proper crossing places and always cross in a group – be extremely careful on busy roads.
- Remember – children tire easily and may become a danger to themselves and others. If you take animals, keep them under control.
- Comply with traffic signals and the advice given in the Highway Code.