

Formal Events:

An introductory guide for Fundraising Groups

Formal events are a fantastic way to bring a large number of people together to raise money for Marie Curie. They are seen as special, ticketed events that often have a theme, food and activities.

If this is something you are considering, please read on to find out more. If you decide to go ahead, your Community Fundraising can send you a more detailed guide.

1. What is a formal event?

Formal events can include balls, ladies lunches and sportsman dinners. Attendees are often in formal attire and will purchase a ticket to attend. Food is usually included, and also other fundraising activities. Some may include a speaker(s) to engage the audience and keep them entertained.



Marie Curie Holly Ball 2022



You will need to decide what you will include in your event. For example, many ladies lunch events will have a speaker or a demonstration of an activity to have participant engagement, whereas a ball may have a themed dinner or entertainment like a big band.

How much can be raised?

Typically, a successful formal event can raise anywhere from £5,000 and higher.

- The Falmouth and Penryn Fundraising Group have held successful Holly Balls in December for many years. In 2022, they raised over £10,000.
- The Inverness Fundraising Group held a Sportsman's Dinner in November 2022 and raised over £19,000.

What type of group can organise a successful formal event?

Feedback from fundraising groups that have organised formal events strongly suggest a successful fundraising event is due to a group having:

- A good network of support
- Prominence in local communities
- Prominence on social media
- Networks to obtain sponsorship

2. How does the fundraising work?

Tickets are sold to participants. The price of the ticket will depend on:

- What food is included
- Is it a day or night event
- The venue
- Entertainment

In your planning, you will need to ensure that price that you are charging for tickets makes a profit based on outgoing costs. For example, food costs can often be quite high and your ticket price will need to represent this.

To support with this, many volunteers will look to seek sponsorship for the event to cover some of the outlaying costs, such as food or venue hire. The sponsors logo could be included in any programmes of the event or posters/flyers. Please speak to your Community Fundraiser for more details of processes involved in obtaining sponsorship.

You could also increase your fundraising at the event by holding interactive fundraising activities such as a silent auction, raffle or games to get people involved. Base how much you charge for these activities on how much the participants may have already paid and also based on the audience attending.

3. Organising the event

1. Book a venue and choose a date
2. Decide on your theme or activity
3. Book any entertainment
4. Promote and sell tickets

How much time is required to organise this event?

The event requires at least six month lead time, in order to allow time securing the venue, sponsorship, entertainment and to allow time for selling tickets. Many venues get booked up quickly, so some of our groups advise to organise the event with 9-12 months to the date you require.

Choosing a venue

This will depend on the type of formal event you are running. Take a look at similar events in your community and where these are held. Hotels are a good starting point and they may

have specific packages for these style events. You will need to ensure that there is good parking at the site and also check for disabled access.

Selecting a date and time

Formal events can be run at any time of the year. You may want to consider theming your event to tie in with times of the year, such as Christmas, or to celebrate key fundraising milestones such as an anniversary of your fundraising group being set up.

Keep an eye out on when similar activities are happening in your community to avoid clashes. Also, speak to your venue to find out whatever events are taking place around the time of your proposed activity to again avoid similar events at a similar time.

Booking entertainment

Some entertainers may donate their time for free, for example someone coming to give a talk or demonstration. Some may have a fee for attending and others may have other terms such as travel being covered. It is important that find out any costs when enquiring about them taking part in the event.

Have a think about the atmosphere you want to have at your event and what entertainment might be best. Will it be a formal band, a singer or just music in the background.

Filling the event

You will need to actively promote this in your community to encourage people to buy tickets. The venue may have a cut off date for you to confirm numbers, so do bear this in mind when planning.

For balls, local companies may buy a table for their workplace, so do reach out to any local contacts you have.

Social media is also a great way to advertise, and your community fundraiser can support with press release templates.

What happens next?

If you are interested in going ahead with organising a formal event, your Community Fundraiser can send you a more detailed document about how to go about this. This will help the group determine the amount of input required to organise this event.