

HOW TO ORGANISE...

A BALL / DINNER DANCE

Organising a ball can be fun, but it is really hard work. An event of this sort takes a great deal of planning and careful financial management, so you will need to allow 6-12 months to plan it. If it is a success, it can be a real money-spinner and great PR, but don't even think about organising it on your own. There is far too much to be done for one person alone, so try to set up a working group made up of three to five people who will each be responsible for selling tables and sourcing prizes. The working group will need a budget to work to, so one of the first things to do is to agree a breakdown of projected income, projected costs, and projected profit.



VENUE AND DATE

Look at local event calendars and national events - you don't want your event to clash with others – and it is best to steer clear of Bank Holidays. Look for quirky venues (castles, barns, boats, Tower Bridge), but don't forget local accommodation and amenities are essential. Try negotiating the venue at a discounted rate. Other considerations at the venue:–

- Room layout – dance floor, tables, raffles/prizes, displays.
- Theme – colours, holidays, movies, events? This will impact on the flowers (auction them at the end of the evening), table decorations (balloons, candles), linen, cutlery, goody bags, menu and entertainment.
- Food – is the set menu provided by venue or sourced externally? Can each course be sponsored or the whole meal? Don't forget individual dietary requirements and organise a tasting session.
- Venue costs – ensure these are outlined early. Some additional costs could include room hire, provision of a cash bar, staffing, staging/dance floor, linen for tables, menus, equipment hire, cloakroom facilities, wine corkage etc.

SPONSORSHIP

The more elements to the evening that you can get sponsored the better. Consider the printing, flowers, entertainment, drinks reception, food and wine. Personally approach local businesses (a letter followed up by a call) and offer them the opportunity to have their logo on tickets/posters/programmes, a display at the venue, sponsor a table etc. Many companies may also wish to donate to goody bags and raffle/auction prizes.

ENTERTAINMENT

This could follow your chosen theme, but must appeal to the widest possible audience. All entertainment should be booked well in advance, preferably with written confirmation. If booking a band watch them perform or ask for a demo tape and give them an outline of the age and composition of the audience. If you book a disco, ask the local radio station to provide a DJ and PA system which may result in promotion of your event on air.

www.cftrust.org.uk

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MARKETING

Invitations, tickets and all publicity material should be eye-catching and include venue, timings, entertainment, CF Trust logo and registered charity number, dress codes, and special features such as guest(s) of honour, comedians, celebrities etc. You may wish to produce a programme for the evening to include a timetable for the night, auction prize details, background details of the CF Trust and a foreword by Rosie Barnes, Chief Executive of the Cystic Fibrosis Trust – this is also a great outlet to sell advertising space.

GUESTS

Should be invited at least eight weeks before the event to allow time to sell tickets. You may decide to sell tickets as tables (typically between £500-£1,000 per table of ten). You may wish to invite people to speak at the event – people attend balls to be entertained, so think carefully about your choice. You will want to outline what Cystic Fibrosis is, and the activities of the CF Trust, without upsetting guests by being too emotive. All speeches need to be short and ensure that the MC or host of the evening thanks all speakers, organisers, the venue, celebrities, entertainment and guests for their generosity.

VOLUNTEERS

These are essential to any event to assist with its smooth running. You may need people to help set up and decorate the room and tables, meet and greet, assist with fundraising at the reception and tables, help display raffle/auction prizes and count money to keep a running total. Don't forget to allow for a separate room for your volunteers and entertainers to eat and relax in when not on duty, and a safe place to count money.

FUNDRAISING IDEAS ON THE NIGHT

- Auction – A maximum of nine items is recommended as people will lose interest after that. Ensure there are lower value items as well as one or two key prizes and make sure you choose a good auctioneer. Consider hosting a silent auction as well with smaller prizes where the items (or a description of the auction item) are placed on display throughout the evening, and guests write their bids on open forms next to each item. This continues throughout the evening, with each person bidding higher than the previous one – especially successful after a drink or two!
- Bonus Ball – People pay £10 for a ball between 1-49, once the National Lottery is drawn (or you make your own draw) the person with the 'bonus ball' wins £100, with the balance of £390 going to charity. This is an easy fundraiser for the reception that your volunteers can implement.
- Bingo – appoint a team captain on each table to sell strips of bingo tickets that are in an envelope on the table. Later in the evening ask everyone to stand then call out bingo numbers drawn from a bag; when a player's number is called they sit down and the winner is the last person standing!
- Raffle – Source up to ten good prizes, sell tickets and draw out the winners. An alternative way of drawing the tickets is to place winning numbers in balloons which have to be burst
- Music – take bids for special requests from the band/DJ.
- Heads and Tails – Sell tickets for £1-5, or make it free, as an 'icebreaker' before guests sit down. Players place their hands on their heads or bottom, the MC tosses a coin. If it lands on heads all the people with their hands on their bottoms sit down; this continues until there is one person standing who wins a prize. (If it gets down to two people they have to choose either heads or tails).
- Casino – There are many companies that hire out tables and croupiers. Search the internet for a full local list.

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