**Running a successful fair or fête**

A fair or fête is probably the biggest PTA fundraising event of the year, often bringing the whole school together and giving the school and the local community an opportunity to celebrate their links. As schools and their communities vary so much so will the format of your event.

This guidance provides information on the key areas you need to consider, to ensure that your association runs an event that complies with event licencing laws and health and safety requirements. It also provides practical step by step event planning advice.

**Planning and organisation**

There are a number of key areas and the earlier you consider these the better:

**Insurance:** Before you embark on any type of fundraiser or social event, you must ensure that your association has public liability insurance in place. Members of PTA-UK automatically receive subscription linked insurance cover as part of their annual membership fee. The cover provides £10 million public liability for all PTA run events, wherever they are held, plus £500 all-risks cover for PTA owned items1, personal accident cover for PTA committee members and volunteers and cover against money loss. For full details, please refer to the PTA-UK Insurance Summary.

If you are using the services of a commercial company, they must have their own public liability cover in place. Ask to see proof of this before the event as your PTA-UK subscription linked insurance covers your PTA for holding the event but **not** the company providing the service/activity.

Your local authority (LA) will be able to tell you what level of public liability insurance they require third parties to have. As there will be a minimum level we recommend you check with the LA to understand their requirements. Commercial companies should then meet this requirement.

In addition to the information provided in our Insurance Summary, additional guidance on insurance cover for running pony rides and the use of inflatables such as bouncy castles is also available for PTA-UK members. If you are running either of these activities please ensure that you read and adhere to the recommendations contained within these documents.

If you have any questions in relation to your PTA-UK subscription linked insurance cover then please contact the PTA-UK Advice Line on 0845 850 5460.

**Safeguarding children:** PTA volunteers, by the nature of their role, will come into frequent contact with children. Therefore, PTAs have a duty of care to ensure that the safety and well being of children and vulnerable adults is taken into account.

**Licences:** When planning your event you must investigate whether or not a licence is required. If you plan to sell alcohol, have recorded or live music and a raffle, with tickets being sold in advance, then you will need the requisite licence.

**Health and safety:** Health and safety must be taken into account both at the planning stage and at the event itself. A simple risk assessment should be undertaken for the fair/fete, and each activity within it. Risk assessments should be kept simple; they do not need to be too onerous. In addition to the PTA-UK Information sheet Health and Safety at PTA



1 details of the items need to be submitted to PTA-UK at the time of renewal or joining for cover to apply



events (which is based on running a summer fair); guidance can be sought from your school, your local authority and the HSE (Health and Safety Executive).

**First Aid:** For such a large event it is good practice to have someone in attendance that can administer basic first aid and deal with minor ailments plus have the ability to summons further assistance, should this be needed.

If you decide to appoint an external first aid provider, such as St John Ambulance, or British Red Cross you will need to give them plenty of notice, particularly if your event is being held in the summer, when fairs and fetes are numerous. You may have to make a donation for this service. The local Ambulance Service should also be informed of large events.

**Selecting the date**

* set this as far in advance as possible; the more planning time you have the better. One of the first things your committee should agree, at the beginning of the academic year, is the date for the PTA fair
* consult the headteacher to avoid clashing with other school activities such as exams
* think about other local events such as a carnival or festival and whether you want your event to avoid or  coincide
* check the sports calendar so you can avoid, for example important football matches
* decide on the time of day the event will be held – morning, afternoon, evening. Think about food. During  lunchtime, you can make money on food but afternoon teas are usually easier
* how long will it last? Three hours is about the average. You must also allow two - three hours in advance to set  things up and one - two hours to clear up
* inform the headteacher and PTAs at nearby schools of your date, to avoid a clash  **Planning**
	+ establish a steering group to oversee the event and then divide the areas of planning and organising into work teams
	+ work teams should coordinate activities such as food and drink, entertainment, publicity and promotion, stalls and the raffle
	+ one overall coordinator works best; ideally a person with at least some time available during school hours
	+ keep a schedule of what has to be done, by when and by whom; this will be invaluable for this, and subsequent  events
	+ it is worth considering a theme. The timing may naturally suggest this, such as Christmas, Midsummer or  Chinese New Year, or you could link the fair with a school celebration such as the opening of a renovated  garden or a school anniversary
	+ you will want to offer a balance of stalls or activities that attract both adults and children, which will encourage  everyone to enjoy themselves and to spend money. Stalls that give people something fun to do are important  even if they do not make much money
	+ decide if you will offer parents the option to rent pitches to sell goods for which they keep the profit. This can  be a tricky issue, so setting a policy and sticking to it is important. If you allow rented pitches, you must know in advance what items are being sold. If the parent is hiring the pitch to sell goods or provide an activity (e.g. face painting) that is an extension to their day-to-day commercial business then they would need to have their own public liability insurance cover in place. If you are unsure, please contact the PTA-UK Advice Line for further guidance, 0845 850 5460.  Having a good selection of stalls, suitable for a range of ages, will keep your visitors at the event for longer. Below is a selection of stalls and activities which tend to work well:



**Stalls that earn**

Tombola Food Refreshments Bar Bric-a-brac Raffle Plants Jumble Cakes Produce Books Crafts Clothes Toys Toiletries

**Stalls which amuse**

Treasure hunt Snail racing Tremble tester Wheel of fortune Hook a duck Lucky Dip

Guess the weight of the cake Number of sweets in a jar Shove ha’penny Lucky card

Wine tasting Santa’s grotto Themed stalls

**Activity stalls**

The stocks Coconut shy Bouncy castle Inflatable slide Bash the rat Beat the goalie Tug of war Pony rides Go-carts

Quad bikes Assault course

Have a PTA stall too; you can promote your next event, publicise your achievements to date, what the PTA has funded and why and use the opportunity to recruit PTA volunteers. You could ask parents to complete a skills Questionnaire. Make sure they are numbered, and then put the ones returned on the day into a prize draw as an incentive for people to complete and return it promptly.

If you are struggling for ideas remember to ask the parents, pupils and children for suggestions and visit other local fairs for inspiration. If you would like to add to the above list please contact us.

**Equipment**

* make lists of every piece of equipment that each stall/activity needs. Consider if the stall is still financially viable if equipment needs to be hired or materials bought. Also whether the stall is freestanding or does it need a table and can it be moved indoors?
* equipment can often be improvised e.g. coconut shies can be hired-in but some experimentation, in advance, with damp sand, small flowerpots and a tier of school benches, can work just as well
* hiring from commercial outlets will add to your costs. Contact your local authority to see if there is a non-profit alternative in your area or see if you can borrow equipment from other local schools and / or scout groups for example
* if you do decide to hire, ensure you book early **Publicity**  Publicity is vital. It is also time-consuming and labour intensive, so remember to allow plenty of time. Start planning the publicity material around three months ahead, so it is ready six weeks in advance of the event.  Getasimplebolddesignforaposter,whichworksinseveralsizesandcanbeadaptedforsmall leaflets and the event programme. Consider running a competition for the pupils to design a poster, which will generate its own publicity for the event and build anticipation for the fair.  Publicity must mention the location of the fair plus:  day and date opening and closing times special features, attractions and shows



raffle details plus prizes on offer and time of the draw **Additional hints and tips**

* tell parents the date at the start of term; tell them in every newsletter and at every meeting
* local publicity needs to appear about two - three weeks in advance. Divide up the area and send volunteers to  ask shopkeepers to display posters.
* go to the library, doctors’ surgeries, community and leisure centres, local playgroups and community clubs too
* money spent on advertising in the local media may not be cost effective, so consider this carefully before  making a commitment. It may be more effective to produce your own media release, particularly if you have something novel happening at the event. Issue your media release to local newspapers, radio and television stations. Alternatively, many local media outlets will display journalist’s contact details so you may simply be able to give them a call
* a few days before the event, undertake a leaflet-drop to residents in the local area
* if you are lucky enough to have a local celebrity, it may draw interest and get you more publicity
* get children involved in the event. Their boundless enthusiasm is a good way of ensuring Mums, Dads, other  family members and friends attend  For a week or so before the date, try having a PTA table at the school gates, before and after school to publicise the forthcoming fair, as a collection point for donations, for recruiting last-minute volunteers, dealing with queries and selling raffle tickets. This helps create a sense of build-up to the day.  **People**
	+ make the school premises manager your best ally. Inform him /her of the date and work closely with them, using their knowledge and expertise
	+ ask the school to appoint one teacher with whom you can liaise throughout the whole process; who will pass messages to staff and pupils and will (hopefully) get some support from the teaching staff too
	+ keep staff up-to-date with plans and consult them as much as you can, without taking up too much of their time. Remember organising the fair is not part of their professional role but purely voluntary
	+ at any and every parents’ evening, meeting, PTA event, throughout the year, get the name, contact telephone number and email address for any potential volunteer. You will then have a base from which to begin recruiting volunteers for the day
	+ about three months before the event, start recruiting your volunteers. Send an open letter to all parents asking for assistance and a guide as to what help you are looking for. Fairs and fêtes can often attract parents who have not volunteered in the past
	+ use known talent, exploit enthusiasm and encourage everyone. If some people can only offer limited help, make use of it, and don’t turn them away. Even half an hour relief cover will be useful
	+ encourage whole family involvement in running a stall. Ask every volunteer if they can find one more helper to boost the numbers
	+ try and get the children involved in running stalls and activities. However, this will need careful supervision, even in secondary schools. Do not rely solely on pupils as they can get confused about the rules of a game for example, about pricing and giving correct change. It is far better to place a willing pupil on a stall with an adult volunteer
	+ if younger children want to lend a hand, ask if they can get a parent or older brother or sister to help them
	+ plan to put stalls run by children next to each other and appoint an adult to supervise and help  **The raffle**  A raffle is potentially a good fundraiser, so try to let someone organise this who does not have other fair related tasks or responsibilities. Decide if you are going to run a simple on-the-day raffle, selling to people at the fair, or a more



elaborate raffle, with printed tickets, which can be sold in advance. Make sure you are aware of the appropriate licences required for running a raffle.

Ensure you have a wide range of appealing raffle prizes. You do not need to have lots of prizes; ten items should be enough to make your raffle a success.

Contact local businesses such as shops, cinemas and attractions to see if they would be willing to donate a raffle prize. Advise contributors that the PTA will publicise their organisation to the parents, as a way to encourage them to support you. The PTA-UK Information sheet – Implementing a sponsorship scheme explains how you can tackle this and apply the same approach to securing sponsorship for your stalls and attractions.

Use the school newsletter to ask for donations too as some parents will be working for local businesses or may have unwanted gifts of their own that they would be willing to donate. Ask that all raffle prizes are delivered to a named person at the school or make arrangements to collect them.

Make sure all publicity materials state the first, second and third prizes that are available, where tickets can be purchased, (if you are selling them before the event) plus the date and time of the raffle draw.

On the day, draw the raffle near the end of the fair. The person drawing the tickets will need helpers to keep records of winning numbers, names of recipients and the prizes that have been won. Publish a list of the raffle winners and the corresponding numbers on your association’s notice board and in the next school/association newsletter. Anyone still at the event holding a winning ticket can take their prize away on the day.

After the fair, write to all local contributors and supporters, advising them how much money their donation helped the PTA to raise and what it will be spent on. PTA-UK has produced a Thank You certificate that you can personalise and present to businesses and organisations that supported your event. This is a good way of showing your appreciation and hopefully encouraging continued support for future activities and fundraisers.

**Entertainment**

Hiring third party entertainers and attractions such as musicians, dancers, clowns, magicians, displays of sports, a loan of the local fire engine, needs careful thought. Attractions such as these will add depth to your event giving it a greater sense of occasion, drawing more interest from the local community. You may find that visitors to the fair stay longer, which may mean they spend more money. However this all needs to be weighed up against the initial expense of hiring in such entertainment.

Hiring entertainment means extra work and extra financial outlay, often in advance. Your local authority may have a list of entertainment providers. Wherever possible try to see the performance in action, do not hire on reputation only. You will also need to consider:

* if it rains whether the activity/show/display will work indoors
* will you have to provide staging, a special floor, electrics, changing rooms or other equipment
* how much space it will occupy and whether that space could be put to better use e.g. getting the local fire  engine, for instance, into a space from which it can quickly depart could be a challenge
* can the school provide entertainment? School bands, orchestras, choirs, dance groups and gymnastic displays can all be entertaining. Having pupils take part like this often means that some families, who might not otherwise attend the fair come along to support their child/ren. Ask for teacher volunteers to be there to  supervise
* local dance schools or sports clubs that put on displays can provide entertainment and bring families from other  schools to your fair



All third party entertainers (including other schools/PTAs and local voluntary groups) and hired-in activities must provide their own public liability cover as your PTA-UK subscription linked insurance will not cover them (see Insurance above).

**Food and drink**

Food and refreshments are almost certainly guaranteed to make you an additional profit. However, much depends on the time of day, time of year and facilities and equipment available to you. Quality is important and food hygiene is paramount. Read PTA-UK’s Information sheet Catering for PTA events for further guidance.

**Organisation**

The following elements are critical to running a successful fair:

**Plan**

* draw up a ground plan, showing where everything is meant to go
* include car parking and access to the site (for the delivery of equipment)
* work out how many tables each stall needs and whether you need chairs and/or school benches
* liaise with the premises manager about moving school furniture
* if there is electrical work to be done you will need to appoint a qualified electrician – this is a legal requirement;  you cannot simply use a willing parent, unless they are suitably qualified
* if you plan to hold the event outside, have an adverse weather plan in place. Remember, extremely hot weather  can be just as disruptive as wet / windy weather
* prepare the plans in consultation with the headteacher or appointed representative, who should have risk  assessments for the areas of the school you are using including maximum capacity numbers
* make copies of everything and ensure one copy is retained after the event as a reference point for future events
* prepare a small sturdy box, containing masking tape, electrical tape, chalk, marker pens, sticky tape, scissors,  ball of string, drawing pins and paper – anything that you feel may be needed on the day. Label the box as PTA  property and make sure all volunteers know where it is on the day
* ensure you have enough supplies of rubbish sacks
* check decorations, such as bunting. If the school/PTA does not own items like this, it may be worth buying your  own. Alternatively, speak to other local schools and community groups to see if they have decorations that can  be borrowed. (Read how one PTA-UK member made their own bunting and raised money in the process)
* arrange for someone to meet third party entertainers and contractors. Ensure that they have all the information  needed to deal with any last minute queries
* once the event is underway, ensure stallholders have the chance to take a break. Devise a relief rota.  **Timetable**
	+ in the lead up to the event, ensure all your work teams are aware of what they have to do and by when
	+ if you are using school equipment, make a list of what is required, in conjunction with the school’s premises manager. Agree when and where items should be placed. Ensure the premises manager has a copy of the list  for reference
	+ at the last working group meeting before the event, ensure the final timings for the day are agreed and that all  volunteers are aware of the timetable. Include pre and post event timings too, allowing plenty of time to set-up  and clear away
	+ ensure stall holders are aware that it is their responsibility to set up and dismantle their own stall
	+ ensure that items for PTA run stalls, such as plants, bric-a-brac, books, have been sorted and priced before the  event





**Programme**

A simple programme detailing the activities at the event, the stalls on offer and the location and timing of any displays is essential. It should also tell participants where the first aid post is located and details of the raffle such as prizes, cost of the tickets, when the draw will take place and how the winners will be notified.

The programme can also include details of the local businesses that have supported your fair or alternatively you could sell advertising space at the back of the programme, as an additional fundraiser. Consider numbering the programmes and offering a prize draw for lucky programmes. Announce the winner along with the raffle and other contest winners.

If you want to charge an admission fee, then programmes can be sold before the event and at the gate/door. Consider setting a family ticket price as well as individually priced admission charges.

**Signage**

* invest some time in making some signs for the basics e.g. *Toilets, First Aid, Refreshments, Bar*
* laminate the signs so that they are weatherproof and can be reused. A local business may be willing to sponsor the production of the signs in exchange for their logo being placed on the signs and/or an advertisement in the  event programme
* produce signs to direct participants to the stalls and activities which are not sited in the main arena
* print a few signs giving the time of the raffle draw and a list of raffle prizes to encourage the purchase of tickets
* write out rules of all games on cards, to display at the relevant stalls
* decide the price of each attraction e.g. 20p a throw – three throws for 50p and print clear signs for each
* make and hang some large signs to advertise the next/future PTA events  **MC/announcer**  Find a good MC/announcer, who is confident and used to public speaking. Prepare a programme for the MC, so they are aware of the event timings and make sure they know the names of key people/businesses that warrant particular thanks during the event. The MC can be useful when passing on information, such as price reductions at certain stalls. At the end of the event, following the raffle draw, ask the MC to thank all your volunteers and supporters.

**Money**

* + appoint two/three people to be responsible for the issue of floats, collection, counting and safe storage of cash, during the event
	+ issue all PTA stalls with a float of small change just before the event starts; remember to give your bank the requisite notice for a cash withdrawal of small coinage
	+ on a regular basis throughout the fair, the two/three appointed people, should collect money from the stalls
	+ think about introducing a simple book system. Allocate a page for each stall, ask the stall volunteers to sign for the float and then to sign each time cash is collected from their stall. Once this collection has been counted,  this amount can then be initialled, before it is securely stored
	+ ensure the two/three volunteers responsible for the money have a safe to deposit money in and a secluded,  lockable room to work in
	+ once the money has been collected, it should be counted before being stored. In addition to the security  aspect, this will also give you an indication of how much is being raised throughout the day, which the MC might  like to announce, during the event
	+ at the end of the event, two/three people should undertake a final count before storing the money  For more information about overnight storage of money and transporting cash, please refer to the PTA-UK Insurance Summary document, Section 4 – money, or call the PTA-UK Advice Line 0845 850 5460. Limits and conditions apply so



please ensure you are fully aware of the requirements as failure to do so will invalidate your subscription-linked insurance cover.

**Finally**

* thank all your volunteers
* remember that clearing up is the PTA’s responsibility, not the school’s.
* clear up as fast as you can, so the school can be locked up
* leftover items that cannot be used at future PTA events should be taken to a charity shop. Make arrangements  as to who is responsible for this, before the fair
* announce the amount raised as soon as possible. Be cautious as there are possible costs which might still need  deducting
* have a post event meeting as soon as you can, to assess what worked well and where improvements can be  made
* consider asking stallholders and external contractors to complete a feedback form, so you will know if anything  needs to be changed for next year. Listening and valuing the opinions of volunteers may be an incentive for  them to support a future event
* remember to keep a file detailing the event as this will make it so much easier for the organisers of next year’s  event

**PTA-UK Information sheets**

* + Catering at PTA events
	+ Communications – newsletters
	+ Communications – preparing a media release
	+ Fundraising - implementing a sponsorship scheme
	+ Fundraising – working with local businesses
	+ Health and Safety at PTA events
	+ Licences – events
	+ Licences – lottery
	+ PTA guide to producing a risk assessment
	+ Public liability insurance – inflatables
	+ Public liability insurance – pony rides
	+ Safeguarding children – PTA duty of care  **PTA-UK resources**
		- PTA-UK Insurance summary
		- PTA-UK poster templates
		- Parents’ questionnaire
		- Sub-contractors declaration form
		- Thank you certificate
		- PTA-UK Advice Line 0845 850 5460 / info@pta.org.uk **Useful contacts**

• British Red Cross www.redcross.org.uk / 0844 871 1111



* Health and Safety Executive www.hse.gov.uk / 0800 345 0055
* St John Ambulance www.sja.org.uk / 08700 10 49 50  November 2011