

Practical tips for organising workshops

Running a face-to-face workshop is enlightening and enjoyable – but not without its headaches! Here are some points to think about before you start!

Costs

- Venue
- refreshments for facilitators and participants
- pay for facilitators
- travel for participants and facilitators
- Pay for participants?
- travel and other incidentals for participants
- stamped addressed envelopes for participants to send claim forms and receipts
- Our total cost was £3500, but we estimate we would have paid an additional £3100 for facilitation, but this was covered by another project fund

Venue

- Easy for people to get to?
- Toilet on the same floor as meeting room?
- Breakout rooms nearby to main room and accessible?
- suggest someone go and check out the venue before the workshop, if not before booking
- arrive an hour early to set up the room or ask for any changes from the venue staff

Refreshments

- have at least tea/coffee on arrival, tea/coffee with lunch and then afternoon tea/coffee for a full day
- make sure the venue will clear up dirty plates after lunch before the afternoon session

Other

- have plenty of bluetack and flipchart paper
- Work with a partner organisation – Asthma UK helped us enormously. They have research and policy volunteer group and promoted the workshop on Facebook and twitter for us.
- People are most active on Facebook and twitter on Sunday evenings (though your partner organisation may vary) make sure you are on twitter then to promote the workshop and ask your partner organisation to promote it at the key times for them!
- Ask your partner organisation to help out with the wording – they knew their volunteers the best!
- Consider doing a survey for people to fill out if they are not going to the workshop. This was suggested by Asthma UK and we got some very rich information which we triangulated with what was discussed in the workshop.

What we would do next time

- Have someone there to liaise with the venue who is not presenting or delivering the workshop to deal with practical issues like getting more tea and coffee and asking for plates and rubbish to be cleared
- We did a whole day workshop, but it was quite long. I think next time we would have 3 hours instead. 45 mins introduction, 1.5 hours small group and 30 mins voting and wrap up. Maybe tea and coffee to start the voting.
- Use this as an opportunity to link with other partner organisations