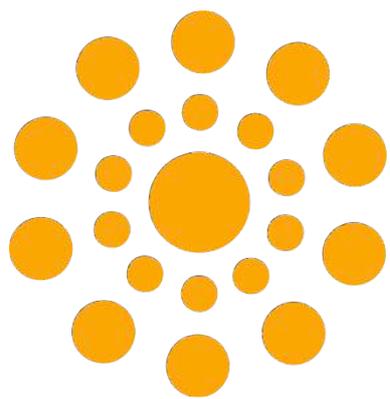


# How to organise a Community Potluck



Network  
Of  
Wellbeing



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## INTRODUCTION

This document describes the Community Potluck events that have been hosted by the charity [Network of Wellbeing](#) (NOW), in Totnes (Devon, United Kingdom). The aim of this document is to give you helpful guidelines, which provide enough information and inspiration to help you to run similar activity in your own community.

## CONTEXT

The idea for the Community Potluck came from a series of events NOW has organised in the Totnes community, during which many people told us they wanted somewhere to go on Friday evenings without having to spend money or buy alcohol, and which could also provide a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere, open to all. Our Community Potlucks are therefore family-friendly events based around having a meal where everyone brings a dish to share. They enable people to come together, connect with each other and have fun.



Feast and buzz at the Totnes Community Potlucks, in the UK.

## AIM OF THE EVENT

The Community Potluck aims to promote and support wellbeing in the local community by bringing people together to share a meal. This is a family-friendly event that is free of charge to attend. The event aims to welcome everyone, particularly those who are isolated, to get involved and meet other people in their community.

## HOW CAN THIS EVENT NOURISH AND SUPPORT WELLBEING

Considering the '[Five Ways to Wellbeing](#)' developed by the New Economics Foundation (nef), this event offers an opportunity for people to *connect* by meeting new people in their own community, *learn* a bit more about each other and about the concept of wellbeing by exploring the theme over conversations, *give* contributions towards the meal as well as potentially also offering time to help organise the event (for example, helping with decoration, entertainment and washing up), *be active* by going to a new place to do something different and *take notice* of what their own community has to offer. To read more on how NOW is putting the Five Ways to Wellbeing into practice, check <http://tinyurl.com/mgfq5zm>



Photo courtesy of Kirkless County

## STEP BY STEP – ORGANISING THE EVENT

**1. Share this idea** with members of your community and see if people are interested in this kind of event. If there is enough interest and enthusiasm from people, arrange a time and place to have a meeting and create an organising team.

**2. Create a core organising team** to help you organise and run the event. Make sure everyone has the time and energy to manage a Community Potluck. You should have at least four people (and around 10 at most) who have agreed to take this project on, and are

happy to contribute 2-4 hours each in preparation/follow-up for each potluck, in addition to the time at the potluck itself and share responsibility for ensuring the event's success. The process can get intense at times, and it's really important that there is a team of people in the 'host' group who are willing to share the load.

**3. Organise a session to brainstorm ideas** for the event and divide roles and responsibilities. Here are some topics that should be discussed:

- **VENUE:** Agree a venue for the event. (See if you need funding in order to pay for the venue or if it's possible to use, for instance, your Community Hall for free. More information related to funding is included under step four). It's important to consider a venue that has the appropriate infrastructure (tables, plates, glasses, cutlery, toilets, etc) with disabled access. Plus, it's important to consider the location of your venue. You need to ensure it's central enough so that people can walk/travel to it relatively easily.
- **DATE:** Set a date and time well in advance so that you can promote the event widely.
- **ENTERTAINMENT:** Think through what activities and entertainment could be possible to organise and have on the day? For more information on that, please see section five.
- **DECORATIONS:** What have you got that can be used to decorate the venue (e.g. fairy lights, candles, flowers, throws, carpet etc.)? It can be a really nice task to hand-make decorations, so this may be something one of the more creative members of your organising team wants to take on ahead of the event. This also offers another opportunity for a social get-together 😊
- **INVITING DONATIONS:** Explore the possibility of offering hot drinks at an affordable price or by donation. You could also consider having a raffle or an auction to raise money for your project or for a specific cause, and the potential to partner with other local projects and organisations in order to support each other's work.
- **PROMOTION:** It is important to create promotional materials such as posters and leaflets (see APPENDIX 1 for an example) as well as using the online tools (e.g. social media channels, mailing list etc) available.
- **MANAGING THE EVENT:** Agree roles and responsibilities (see section five for some suggestions).

**4. Raise funds** to help make your event happen!

An important aspect to think about is how you're going to pay for your event. Your biggest expenditures are likely to be the hire of the venue and the printed materials. If you haven't got funding, here are a few suggestions on how to get it:

- Hopefully, you'll have been reaching out to your wider community and making good relationships with other local organisations. It may be that one of them might have a venue that they could let you use for little or no cost.
- Have a chat with the owner or the venue you want to use – explain about the values behind a Community Potluck, and why you're running the event. Ask if they have a special rate for good/community causes.
- The venue holder may be open to your group making a payment 'in-kind'. For instance, you could create a vegetable bed in their garden or plant some trees on their behalf, help them organise/run an event which they need support with, or offer them another skill from your group.
- There are many small-scale events you could organise to help raise funds for your Community Potluck, such as a 'locally grown' stall, selling locally grown produce donated by allotment holders and gardeners nearby, a jumble sale, a 'healing evening' where local therapists donate an hour or two of their time and people make donations for the treatments on offer.
- If you are going to apply for grant funding, it's worth reflecting on what kind of event fits prospective funders' requirements. Free advice and support in identifying funding opportunities and completing application forms is available from your local Council for Voluntary Service in the UK. Libraries and local authorities can also point you towards this free advice. The main thing you need to know with funders is: what are their aims? If you can show them how your activities are going to help them meet their aims, you're half way there.

*In basic terms, funders just need to know that your group is able to manage the money that they give you, and that you will be able to show afterwards that you did good stuff with it.*

## 5. Take action. DO IT 😊

### ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES

Below we offer details of the main roles you will need to fill amongst your organising team and the responsibilities of each role.

#### General Coordinator(s):

- ✓ Have a clear overview of everything.
- ✓ Support and make sure that all the work in the various areas/teams is progressing.
- ✓ Act as the 'go to' person/people on the day of the event.

- ✓ Produce food labels to have available on the table on the day (see APPENDIX 3 for an example).
- ✓ Create a brief and clear piece of writing that says why you are organising this event and what's the intention behind it, along with your contact details which can be given to all the helpers and attendees on the day.
- ✓ Keep hold of the all the receipts related to the event.

*General Coordinators should always provide print materials with information about the event and their contact details.*

### Venue coordinator:

- ✓ Check what is available in the venue: is there enough crockery, cutlery, etc? Do you need table cloths, washing up liquid/bowls, brushes and tea towels? Is the water drinkable? Does the oven work (some people may want to heat up their food, will your group agree to this or specify that food is brought ready to serve)? What is the recycling system in the building? Will you bring your own recycling bins/bags, including compost bins and empty food containers/bags for re-distribution of leftovers? Is there a bicycle/car parking? Is there a heating/cooling system?
- ✓ Is the venue insured (if not, you may need to get Public Liability Insurance)?
- ✓ What's the maximum number of people allowed in the venue?
- ✓ Once the venue is agreed, book and, depending on the case, pay for it; be the contact person for the owners; make the arrangement regarding key collection/access for set-up and pack-down; be familiar with where the emergency exits, fire extinguisher and toilets are located; verify previously, during and after the event the conditions of the toilets and any other specific requirements associated with the venue.

*It is important that the venue coordinator makes sure that the venue is accessible, including for those who are disable.*

### Publicity team:

- ✓ Write up information for inviting people (poster/leaflets/flyer), and for the press (see APPENDIX 2 for an example), making sure that the information about the event is clear and engaging, and that it's easy to find information when and where the event is happening, what the cost is (or if it's free), and that people should bring some food to share.
- ✓ Think about networks and other channels for getting your information to the right people.

- ✓ Invite key people directly, preferably face to face (e.g. the mayor of your town, your MP, managers of other organisations, etc).
- ✓ Put posters up around your town.
- ✓ Use social media channels (e.g. create a Facebook page for the event and share it with others).
- ✓ Make sure that local organisations that are engaged with the local community are aware of the event, particularly those who are working with families and those who are isolated in the community. Note: you may wish to create a list of all the places where posters can be posted and websites/email addresses/social media channels that can promote this and future events. Others may share such lists with you if they already active locally.

*The most important thing for the publicity team to remember is:  
Spread the word. Spread the word. Spread the word!*

**Decoration team:** Decorating the venue shows care and creates a warm/fun atmosphere. Ideally, you want to get some very creative and resourceful people to play around and have fun at making things for the event. Flowers, bunting, banners, candles, fairy lights, rugs and throws, for instance, are good and simple touches. Decorating outside the venue and around the entrance is also very helpful to let people know about the event and attract them.

*Remember decoration team: creativity has no limit!*



Simple, creative and beautiful decoration kindly made by one of NOW's volunteers.

**Entertainment organisers:** If possible, it's really nice to offer some entertaining activities as a way to invite people to connect and have fun. For instance, having a 'children's corner' with colourful pencils, paper, paintings, and a few toys has proved to be very successful, simple and appreciated. Here are some suggestions of activities: have a magician entertaining the public; have live music during the event (you may arrange for musicians to come and play, or you can have musical instruments available and offer a kind of 'open mic'); have someone doing face painting; have a painting exhibition in the venue (this is a great opportunity to promote the work of local artists).

*Entertainment organisers - Do you know any ice-breaking activity? Are there any musicians in your community who could share a bit of their talent? Why not join efforts and bring everyone together?*



Children's area.



Lovely music offered by a member of the community.



Learning how to make lanterns.



Playing with the spinning wheel.

## ON THE DAY OF THE EVENT

**Setting up team:** Allow plenty of time to set up the venue on the day. This will vary according to the venue and the amount of decoration you have, etc. Two hours is typically enough time to get ready before the public begin to arrive. The General Coordinators should have a great sense of everything that needs doing, 'who is doing what' and how long it will take.

*It's helpful to have all the teams working on their specific area on the day of the event, to ensure all final tasks are covered.*

Make sure that:

- ✓ There is an easy way to identify the organisers of the event (e.g. the organising team could wear sashes, a badge or a T-shirt).
- ✓ There are enough tables and chairs out.
- ✓ All cutlery, crockery, teas, milk, sugar and small compost bin for t-bags, etc. are easily accessible by the public (you may want to have napkins available).
- ✓ The toilets are clean.
- ✓ Fire exits are not obstructed.
- ✓ Printed materials related to your project/organisation are available (perhaps you want to have some sign-up sheets available to collect people's email addresses in case you'd like to promote a follow-up event).
- ✓ If there is a children's area and/or an entertaining area, these should be ready and tidy before the event starts.
- ✓ Labels for the food and pens are available on the main table (where all the food is going to be placed).
- ✓ There is a donation box available.
- ✓ All the decorations are safely and nicely placed.
- ✓ If you wish to do so, have the feedback forms printed (see APPENDIX 4 for an example) and available.
- ✓ Here are some extra materials that can be helpful to have on the day: plenty of pens, a couple of pair of scissors, blue tack, glue, sellotape, ribbon, signs to help people to find their way around, speakers (if suitable, it may be nice to have some music playing in the background. If this is your choice, it may be helpful to have playlist ready on your mp3 player).

**'During the event' team:**

*Ensure that everyone makes time to eat and rest. Hopefully all this work will be full of joy! If someone needs a break, just remember to let the others who are working with them know about it. If extra support is needed, let the general coordinator know.*

- ✓ Welcome/greet every person that comes to the Potluck (particularly those who are coming on their own), and explain briefly the idea of the event and how it works.
- ✓ Have one person counting how many people are coming to the event.
- ✓ Encourage people to make a label for the food they brought (make sure there are plenty of pens available).
- ✓ Take as many photos as possible, as these will be helpful in sharing with others how the event went, and will also be helpful in promoting any future events you may want to organise.
- ✓ Encourage people to share their contact details with the organisers in case they want to keep up to date with the progress of your project.
- ✓ Before everyone starts eating, invite everyone to gather around the table, mention a little bit about your project and how this idea/event came about. If there are musical instruments available, encourage people to play/sing. Also mention where the toilets and the fire exits are. If you have feedback forms available, encourage people to fill them in. If you feel it's appropriate, invite everyone for a moment of silence and appreciation of the food/feast and the presence of the community. Thank all the volunteers who helped with the organisation of the event, and encourage people to help with the clearing up.
- ✓ A couple of people can be responsible for taking empty/dirty dishes from the tables.
- ✓ Keep an eye in the jars of water and hot water (refill it when needed).
- ✓ Make sure there are enough glasses, plates, cutlery, etc. available.
- ✓ Encourage people to fill out a Feedback Form.
- ✓ Network, spread the word about your project and future events.

### **Clearing up team:**

Simply make sure that everything is tidy and clean. The venue coordinator should make sure that everything is left as initially agreed. Thank everyone for their contribution to the day – and any special thanks to those who made a particular contribution.

*Celebrate what you've achieved 😊*

## POST EVENT

This stage can really help to reflect on the event. You can think through the impact of the event and start to think about what could need following-up (especially if you intend to run another event).

Following the event, you can invite the organising team to come together and reflect on what went well, what could be improved, what feedback you've received, and what the next steps are. In addition, the publicity team may want to write a press release to share how the event went.

Do write to everyone in the organising committee individually, thanking them for their contribution.

If you can, write a report from the day as it can be really helpful to record the thinking and learning that happened. It is also always helpful to save some photos of the group and/or the working sheets from any activities you did.

In addition to general evaluation, it's essential to show how the event went if your event was funded, so you can report back to those who provided financial support. Your funders may have specific things they want you to report on, so make sure you've recorded them and send them back in good time.



Members of the community enjoy the feast.

## SUMMARY – TIME FRAME

### 12+ weeks before

- ✓ Plan the event, create a core organising team, set out your strategy and timetable for making it happen.
- ✓ Decide roles and responsibilities .
- ✓ Set the date and time.
- ✓ Look for funding, if you need it.

### At least 8 weeks before

- ✓ Book the venue (keeping hold of all receipts if you're able to claim them back).
- ✓ Create and print the promotional material for the event (posters/leaflets/flyer).
- ✓ Send out a 'save the date' email to those who you would like to invite.
- ✓ Create and print material about your project (if that is the case).
- ✓ Invite key people to the event.

### 6 - 4 weeks/a month before

- ✓ Publicise the event wherever possible.
- ✓ Write a local press release.
- ✓ Prepare the decoration and organise general activities.

### 1-2 weeks before

- ✓ Check in with everyone who is involved with the event how they are doing (it may be worth arranging a meeting, and then having a more informal gathering – e.g. going for drinks in a pub).
- ✓ Ring the venue and check if everything is okay.
- ✓ Create a contact list and feedback form – if you wish to have them.

### 1-2 days before

- ✓ Get milk, teas, coffee, napkins etc.
- ✓ Do any photocopy you may need.
- ✓ Prepare your own contribution to the meal.

### On the day

- ✓ Open up and set out the venue.
- ✓ Prepare site/tables where the food is going to be.
- ✓ Prepare any materials needed.
- ✓ Welcome everyone.

- ✓ Encourage people to leave their contact details, make a donation and fill in the feedback form.

### After the event

- ✓ Tidy up.
- ✓ Thank everyone's efforts and contribution.
- ✓ CELEBRATE.

### The following week

- ✓ Send out an email to the contact list (thanking them for their presence at the event, and informing them about what's coming up related to your project).
- ✓ Thank all the members of the organising committee individually.
- ✓ Write a post event press release.
- ✓ Write up and send out a report and/or photos.
- ✓ Celebrate again 😊



We, at NOW, would love to hear about your experience (including your views on this guide), so please get in touch via [info@networkofwellbeing.org](mailto:info@networkofwellbeing.org)



potluck

You are warmly invited to a free shared meal with our local community.

Family friendly event. All welcome!

**Every 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of the month**

**5pm to 8pm**

**Totnes Methodist Church Hall**

**Bring food (preferably local) to share**

(alcohol free event)

Hosted by



For further information, contact [info@networkofwellbeing.org](mailto:info@networkofwellbeing.org) or 01803 849107

## APPENDIX 2 – Example of a press release to promote the Community Potluck

[Insert date]

**Press Release for immediate release:**

### **‘Network of Wellbeing is excited to announce the third edition of the Community Potluck’**

Totnes-based charity the Network of Wellbeing (NOW) is hosting its third Community Potluck on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> February at the Totnes Methodist Church Hall. A Potluck is a meal where everyone brings a dish to share. The idea came from a series of events NOW has been organising in the local community as NOW’s Project Manager, Dr. Larch Maxey, explains:

‘Many people told us they wanted somewhere to go on a Friday evenings without having to spend any money or buy alcohol and which was relaxed, fun and open to all’.

The family friendly event features open ‘no’ mic, activities for children and a free market stall where people can help themselves to items.

One of the event’s organisers, Mirella Ferraz, comments: ‘We are so pleased with the response we’ve had from the community. The invitation for everyone to contribute with this project has created real feasts, many friendships and it’s rewarding to see this initiative being appreciated by the growing public’.

The event has been so successful that NOW has decided to make it a regular part of Totnes’ calendar. Everyone is welcome to join the next Community Potluck on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> February, from 5pm to 8pm, at the Totnes Methodist Church Hall. Anyone interested in further information or helping with the event can contact Mirella on 01803 849107 or [mirella@networkofwellbeing.org](mailto:mirella@networkofwellbeing.org).

### **NOTE TO EDITOR**

1) The Network of Wellbeing (NOW) is a charity project dedicated to applying wellbeing best practice within communities. Its first local initiative is in Totnes. NOW encourages an increased focus on personal, community and planetary wellbeing throughout society. Its vision is a world where everyone’s wellbeing needs are met within the planet’s natural limits.  
[www.networkofwellbeing.org](http://www.networkofwellbeing.org)

2) More photos available on request

### **MEDIA CONTACT**

[insert your name and role]

[insert your email address]

[insert your phone number]

### APPENDIX 3 – Example of a food's label

Dish: \_\_\_\_\_

- |   |  |                                      |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contains dairy | <input type="checkbox"/> Contains meat | <input type="checkbox"/> Hot (spicy) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vegan          | <input type="checkbox"/> Sugar free    | <input type="checkbox"/> Gluten free |



## Community Potluck Feedback

As we'd love our events to be as enjoyable, informative and useful as possible, we'd be grateful if you could spend a few minutes telling us about your experience today.

(1) How did you find out about the Community Potluck event? **(Please circle)**

Word of mouth

The internet

A flyer

A poster

Other **(Please give details below)**

(2) What were your reasons for coming along to the Community Potluck today?

(3) What 3 things did you most enjoy about the event today?

1.

2.

3.

(4) Do you have any suggestions about how today's event could have been improved?

(5) Do you think you would come along to future Community Potluck events? **(Please circle)**

Yes                  No                  Unsure

(6) Do you think that this event has contributed to improving your wellbeing? **(Please circle)**

Yes                  No                  Unsure

If yes how has it improved your wellbeing?

(7) Overall, how would you rate your experience at the event today? (1= a very bad experience to 5= an incredible experience)

1    2    3    4    5

(8) Would you be willing to help organise or contribute to a Community Potluck event in the future? **(Please circle)**

Yes                  No

(9) Any further comments and/or ideas?

(Optional)

Name.....

E-mail address.....

Telephone number.....

Please give your completed feedback form to one of the Network of Wellbeing (NOW) team members.

**Thank you very much.**

