



Activity and Event Guide for Branches



Introduction

Thank you for the effort and commitment you dedicate to planning and delivering Royal British Legion activities in your local communities.

The events you host raise awareness of the outstanding work of your branch and the RBL, and the vital funds you raise assist us in delivering services to our Armed Forces personnel and their families.

With our network of branches, we have a fantastic opportunity for the RBL to be a “Force for Good in Communities”, nationally and internationally.

Many of our branches are already involved in holding a wide range of activities and events throughout the year. We hope that this guide will inspire and inform more branches to either take their first steps to holding events and activities or to think about other ways that they can connect with their local community.

This guide, alongside the *Branch Activities and Events Health and Safety Guide*, will assist you with planning and delivering safe and successful events in your local communities on behalf of the RBL. It's inspired by some of the most popular events in the RBL calendar and activities hosted by our dedicated Membership community year after year.

So, whether you are looking for a new approach to planning activities that will engage your local community, recruit new members, or fundraise, this booklet will prepare you for each stage of the process.





Contents

<i>Case Study: Blyth Branch</i>	4
What are Membership Events and Activities?	5
<i>Case Study: Midsomer Norton & Radstock Branch</i>	6
Activity Planning — Stage 1: Planning	7
Establish your Team	8
Event Funding	9
Types of Funding	10
Where to Hold your Event or Activity	11
Promoting your Event or Activity	12
Resources	13
<i>Case Study: Dover White Cliffs</i>	14
Activity Planning — Stage 2: On the Day	15
Event Delivery	16
<i>Case Study: C Group, Suffolk</i>	17
Activity Planning — Stage 3: Follow-up	18
<i>Case Study: Bexleyheath and Welling</i>	19
Glossary	20
Useful Online Resources	20

Blyth Branch: Summer Garden Party

Gail Armstrong — Branch Chairman

How did your branch decide to do this event?

“We were a new branch and wanted to do something to tell people the RBL were back in town after a period of six years without a branch. We also wanted to establish a link with the older generations with a wartime theme.”

How did your branch gather a team together?

“We had an event coordinator who was experienced in organising events through her work as a personal assistant. She organised a team of volunteers to work in various locations – those who had food hygiene training in the food prep, and those less mobile to take tickets at the gate etc. Our branch committee is very active and everyone did what they could to help as required.”

Did you work with any other local partners or organisations?

“We contacted Cream Teas for Charities who provided us with scones, cream and jam for the number of guests we had arranged. We booked a local singer/band and arranged for a local children’s dance group to perform. We wanted a ceremonial opening involving Standards and so invited the local Air Cadets.

“Our guest of honour was an ex-Wren, in her nineties, who served at HMS Elfin, the wartime submarine base in Blyth.”



Where did your event take place and how well was it attended?

“Our Branch President has a large garden and offered it to us for this event. She has an apartment she rents out which covered her for public liability insurance etc., so no permission was required, and full risk assessments were carried out by a qualified H&S [health and safety] manager, who is also a branch member.

“There were 50 guests and around 15 volunteers on the day. They were made up of branch members, veterans and their families and other non-members who had supported the RBL for many years. We invited local councillors but as ordinary guests not VIPs. They seemed to like that.”

What was the most successful aspect of the event?

“There was lots of variety and entertainment with music, fun bingo, dancing, cream tea and fundraising, combined which made for a great day and everyone said they had really enjoyed it. (We did another the following year).

“We had a lot of people talking about us from those in the local community who attended and local businesses donated lots of good raffle prizes. We shared photos on Facebook to promote the event.

“People really enjoyed the fun, friendly atmosphere in a fabulous location. The weather was great, and everyone joined in with the flag waving, singing and dancing at the end.”

Would you do anything different next time?

“We were better prepared for the weather the second time, ensuring there were blankets for laps if it was chilly and an indoor alternative if wet weather. We also organised our volunteers better.”

Anything else?

“This was the first and one of our biggest events in our start-up year. We are a fun, youthful branch and wanted to be part of the community, so a big event like that really put us on the map. It also gave us an opportunity to tell them our future plans and engage with other community groups. After the event we did gain new members and also support from the likes of The Rotary Club and local businesses.”



What are Membership Activities and Events?

They can include any of the following:

Engagement

Branches are at the heart of local communities so holding events that connect us to members of the public and other local organisations are important. Branches that connect to other charities, local councils and other partners find that they can have a bigger impact in raising the profile of RBL, recruiting new members and bringing benefits to the branch.

Promoting RBL

Branch events are a great way to promote RBL, the services we offer, our campaigns and the branch's activities locally. Events and activities are a great way to get new members involved. Inviting people from the local community to an event showcases how we connect and support people. RBL promotional events go hand in hand with this opportunity.

Commemorative and Remembrance

Remembrance honours those who serve to defend our democratic freedoms and way of life. Branches can unite across faiths, cultures, and backgrounds to remember the sacrifice of the Armed Forces community from Britain and the Commonwealth.

While remaining respectful of traditional Remembrance, we encourage branches to work in their communities to develop Remembrance activities and events that are open to everyone.



Camaraderie

Our branches have always had the ability to connect people to others who have served or who wish to recognise and support the Armed Forces Community. They are at the heart of their local community providing friendship and support to those who are lonely and isolated. Activities that support comradeship are many and varied, from coffee mornings and breakfast clubs to radio shows, talks and presentations.

Fundraising

Poppy Appeal fundraising events must be organised in collaboration with RBL Community Fundraisers (CFRs) and Poppy Appeal Organisers (PAOs.).

Branches can raise funds for branch activities that enable members to support our Armed Forces Community at a local level (e.g., branch community support activities).

Midsomer Norton & Radstock Branch: Dressing of Graves

Geoff Wilson — President & Secretary

How did your branch get a team together?

“Branch members were each designated a role. One member identified the location of the graves and liaised with the local churches and parish councils, the Branch Treasurer researched the history of each veteran, the Secretary covered all documentation of the event from information received via the main liaison branch member.

“To cover the cost of the poppy sprays, each of the 57 graves were sponsored by local people and a local IT designer created individual veteran cards. On the day of the event other members were involved at each cemetery.”

Did you work with any other local partners or organisations?

“The church authorities and parish councils who were responsible for each cemetery were approached and the branch worked closely with them. Where possible, youth groups were also included to actually lay the poppy sprays. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission were also approached to seek their approval prior to the planning.”

Where did your event take place and how well was it attended?

“Sixteen cemeteries in the local area were chosen because they contained the graves of veterans. The branch approached each location to confirm that they were happy to be involved, but no formal permissions [were] required. The numbers attending ranged from five to 20, and branch members, veterans, their families and the public were all involved.”

What was the most successful aspects of the event?

“The most successful aspect was the public interest and the co-operation with the various organisations etc. They both increased the co-operation and the close relationship with the branch. The events were well received by the local people who appreciated that the branch have ensured we have not forgotten those who served. We also found that the sponsors were very happy to sponsor on an annual basis.”



Would you do anything different next time?

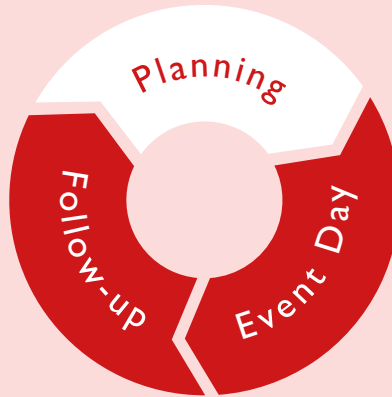
“Due to the small number of active members, we found it difficult to continue to run the event in the same way. We therefore approached the local councils and clergy to see if they would take on the responsibility for the events which relieved the pressure on the branch. However, the branch still retains the responsibility for the admin and all associated jobs to ensure the event is well run.”

Anything else?

“The branch used a database to record the veteran and sponsor details which also creates the initial letter, confirmation letter and invoice. The veteran details and thank you cards are distributed to each sponsor. The branch also uses an events database to write an operational plan for every event and carried out risk assessments for each event. Both documents are then distributed to the various groups/individuals which forms the basis for discussion.”

Stage 1: Planning

Having a plan for your event or activity is highly recommended for ensuring its safe and successful delivery. **Below is an example of the planning cycle to help keep you on track.**



Make a start	Plan	Execute the plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure that your event or activity, including budget, has been agreed at a Branch or County/District Committee meeting.• Establish its purpose: why are you organising it and what do you hope to achieve?• Think about how big it is going to be. If it is going to be quite large, please let your MEO know as you may need additional support. Please also refer to the <i>Branch Activity and Events H&S Guide</i>.• Establish what you will need to achieve this: people, skills, resources, funds, location, venue and time.• Ask your MEO if any local branches have held a similar event and can offer hints and tips.• If you are unsure about things like risk and insurance, please ask your MEO. The RBL has many years' experience of running events and will very likely know the answer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read the <i>Branch Activity and Events H&S Guide</i>, which will guide you through H&S and site planning for your activity.• Write a detailed plan.• Keep your Committee informed of the plan and regularly feed back to them.• Gather your team and agree responsibilities.• Ensure you have enough in your agreed budget.• Check if you need to register the event and/or apply for permission to hold it.• Find a location/venue• Check the RBL website has the right resources you need such as poster templates.• Book regular catch-ups with your team.• Plan the promotion – write up briefs, find suitable pictures, choose appropriate channels. See pages 12 and 13.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Register/apply for permission to hold the event if required.• Book location/venue.• Order resources.• Start promoting the event using the PR Toolkit on the Membership Administration Portal (MAP).• Hold catch-ups with your team and ensure that each team member knows what their responsibilities are.• Check the location and write a risk assessment (see the <i>Branch Activity and Events H&S Guide</i>).• Ensure all volunteers assisting at the event receive a briefing including actions to manage risks.• Treat all members who offer services, activity delivery or equipment as a third-party supplier. This means they must supply all relevant documents such as insurance, up-to-date qualifications, certification and risk assessments.

TIP: Check out our Event Resource area on Office 365 for planning and promotion materials you can personalise to assist you with planning your events.

Establish your Team

Depending on the nature and capacity of your activity, you can nominate yourself and others to support with planning and delivery. You can start by considering what responsibilities are required, then decide which tasks can be allocated, giving members the opportunity to participate and ensure the event is a success.

Listed below are tasks to consider with some examples of skills and experience that would be useful to complete them.

It is important that each member should have the opportunity to participate and gain the experience to develop their skill set, as this will contribute to the successful delivery of future events. You can always try to pair up those more experienced with those who have little or no experience – this way you will have a backup in case someone drops out, and it will also be good for succession planning.



Task

Promoting the event

Skills

Marketing

Task

Engaging local contacts, finding sponsors, securing involvement from other groups/organisations

Skills

People, negotiating

Task

Event budget management

Skills

Accounting

Task

Managing health & safety and risks

Skills

Previous health & safety experience

Task

Venue hire and visits

Skills

Attention to detail, previous event experience

Any other specialist skills that may be needed



Event Funding

Funding your Event

Once you have decided the type of activity and the key responsibilities, you now need to prepare the event budget. You can estimate the budget by checking how much a similar event cost in the past, or by asking your county or neighbouring branches if they can help you estimate event income and expenditure.

Expenditure on events should be reasonable and proportionate. For example, if you are holding an event such as a dinner or a concert, for which you sell tickets, they should be treated as a fundraising event and must therefore cover the costs of the event as a minimum.

If you're using branch funds to cover the costs, please ensure you obtain the approval of the Branch Committee. You must also retain all receipts and invoices to enable your Treasurer to complete the branch accounts.

Fundraising Events

If you're running a fundraising event, it must make a profit: the amount of funds raised must exceed the cost of running the activity.

If your event is specifically with the aim of raising funds for the Poppy Appeal, you must work in collaboration with the local Fundraising team. They can provide useful advice and guidance, let you know about other events that may conflict with yours, and let you have promotional items.

Ticket Sales

In your promotional materials, include information on how to buy tickets, the venue location and refreshments. When possible, sell tickets in advance. For free online ticket sales, visit **[eventbrite.co.uk](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk)** or **[wegottickets.com](https://www.wegottickets.com)**

Secondly, ask your members and supporters to help attract attendees; you could even set a target for ticket sales to incentivise a little light-hearted competition. Remember to keep track of registration numbers and always prepare for a 10% increase or decrease in attendance rate on the day.

Types of Funding

Name	Summary	How to apply	Criteria
Central Funding	Grants provided directly by Head Office for some type of events.	Check information in branch communications (e.g., <i>Central News</i>).	Criteria will be explained in branch communications (e.g., <i>Central News</i>).
County Funding	Funds allocated by Head Office to branches through county grants.	Once a year your MEO will invite you to submit applications for event funding, which will then be included in the master county grant application. Once the application is approved, the funds are paid into the county account and the county is responsible for passing the approved branch funding to the branch.	Events must support RBL charitable objectives.
Branch Funding	Branch funds used for day-to-day operation of the branch, including running events that contribute to its success, including recruitment, remembrance and promotion of RBL activity.	Check with your Treasurer what funds are available and agree with the committee how much you can spend on a particular event.	Events must support RBL charitable objectives. If the branch raised money for a specific event, these funds can only be used for that event.
External funding	Funds obtained from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • statutory funding bodies (e.g., National Lottery Heritage Fund); • trusts and foundations; • local and parish council. 	Branches must not submit any grant applications without prior agreement from your MEO and philanthropy@britishlegion.org.uk .	Funds must only be used for the purpose specified in the grant application, and within the specified time frame, and they must be ring-fenced within the branch accounts.
Donations	Donations from local businesses as a specific contribution to events and activities. This is an effective way of bringing the local community and businesses together to promote and support the services of RBL.	Please speak to the business owner directly and find out if they can offer any donations.	The sponsor must be clearly informed how the donation will be used before the funds are accepted by the branch, e.g. if it's for general branch use, for the Poppy Appeal or for a specific event/activity.



Where to Hold your Event or Activity

Research

Your choice of venue, location and date has the potential to be your biggest cost or your biggest saving, so take time to do some research. Remember if you pay a deposit, you may not be able to recoup the costs in the event of a cancellation. Therefore, it's important that you do as much research beforehand and ensure you have a team in place to support the event.

Tip: Mentioning that you are a charity may get a discount.

Some of the things you need to consider are:

- Will your venue be accessible to everyone?
- Does it have appropriate public liability insurance in place?
- What is the cancellation policy if for some reason the event is unable to go ahead?
- If the venue is preparing food as part of the event or activity, it must have at least a 4* food hygiene rating.
- Are there any potential event clashes such as county or regional events?
- Have you visited the venue to make sure that the space is appropriate for your needs e.g., maximum capacity, floor space, stage, etc.?
- Arranging to conduct a risk assessment.
- Do the costs fit with the budget that has been agreed by the committee?
- You may want to put a short memorandum of understanding in place with the venue.

Promoting your Event or Activity

So now you need to get people to come along to your event or activity. There are lots of different ways that you can promote your event, and using a mix will reach different audiences.

These could be:

- Word of mouth – tell a friend/relative.
- Invitations via post or email (remember to refer to GDPR guidance if you are using and storing personal data).
- Social media/Facebook – branch and/or county and local community pages.
- Membership Yammer.
- Branch or county newsletter.
- Posters at local meeting points or your local club.
- Local magazine, newspaper or radio.



Remember to ensure that any posters etc. that you produce follow the RBL Brand Guidelines. **More information, promotional materials and an order guide can be found at the Members' Brand Page or on M365 MAP Membership Brand Resources.**

Planning Communications

It's a good idea to keep a plan of when, where and how you are promoting your event. A simple log like the one below can help you keep track and make sure you have used all the possible channels to generate interest and maximise attendance for your event.

Key Message

Promote event and send first round of invitations

Date for Delivery

12th Aug-6th Sept

Channels

Yammer (Office 365), printed posters & leaflets, membership, e-newsletter, Regional Facebook

Audiences

Public, RBL Members

Author of Message

Branch Secretary

[Click here for Members' Brand Page](#)

TIP: If your event aims to exceed over 100 attendees, you could speak to your County Recruiting Officer (CRO) for further guidance on creating an event promotion campaign to attain the number of attendees you require.



Resources

Branches can access resources and information about the RBL brand on a **dedicated Members' Brand Page on the RBL's website**. Branch Officers can also access this information on the Membership Administration Portal.

You will find editable templates for posters, emails, letterheads and business cards. You will also find templates so that you can locally produce branded resources for your event.

These are available for:

- Balloons
- Gazebos
- Notebooks
- Pull up banners
- Tablecloths
- Bunting
- Mugs
- Pens
- Sail flags
- Water bottles

Please note that your branch can use funds to pay for these to be produced.

Your MEO will also be able to let you have branded items to give away or use to fundraise at events for the branch. Please contact them as soon as possible when you are planning events so that they can support you.

[Click here for Members' Brand Page](#)

If you are running a Poppy Appeal fundraising event your Community Fundraising Officer CFR can also let you have resources.

Dover White Cliffs: Community Support Events

Christine Walton — Secretary, Branch Community Support Officer and Poppy Appeal Organiser

The branch runs two community support events. The first one is a monthly **Friends Breakfast Club** for members and friends in our local Wetherspoons. The second is a **Coffee and Camaraderie** monthly get together for veterans with free coffee/tea and breakfast roll.

How did your branch decided to do this event?

“As the Branch Community Support (BCS) Representative, I attended a veteran’s breakfast club in Ashford and thought this type of event was a great idea to bring lonely people together. However, I was told I could not run an Armed Forces Breakfast Club as I am not a veteran myself. So, I decided to change the idea to a Friends Breakfast Club and it is very successful. Coffee and Camaraderie came out of the same idea.”

How did your branch get a team together?

“There are only two BCS representatives, so we work as a team at both events.”

Did you work with any other local partners or organisations?

“Yes, the local Dover District Council rep, police, councillors, DWP, Poppy Factory and SSAFA are invited to attend and usually do.”

Where do your events take place and how well are they attended?

“Friends Breakfast is in Wetherspoons, we asked permission and they reserve part of the pub for us. Each month they are themed just for fun i.e., April St George and usually 30-40 people attend.

“Coffee and Camaraderie is held in St Mary’s Church hall in the heart of Dover and usually about 30 people attend. We chose this venue because it is close to other community groups who refer veterans to us. We also have access to a small office for any veterans wishing to speak privately. Here they can just have a chat with like-minded people, but I am there to give information about the RBL, signposting veterans for help and advice.

“I have recently introduced art to the group for mental health reasons in partnership with Kent Art and Wellbeing. I managed to get a grant from our local council to enable us to offer coffee/tea and a breakfast roll free.”

What was the most successful aspect of the event?

“[After] Friends Breakfast club people leave with a smile. At Coffee & Camaraderie we have helped branch members who are veterans, but the most successful aspect is helping veterans who were recommended to attend because they needed our help. From these groups new members have joined, and we now have a very good working relationship with other agencies who help veterans.”

Would you do anything different next time?

“No, this works very well. Friends Breakfast will continue as will Coffee & Camaraderie.”

What do you think the people attending enjoyed the most?

“The chance to chat to other veterans and know they can get more help if wanted.”

Anything else?

“It gives us a lovely warm feeling to see people, especially veterans who have given so very much to our country, smiling and enjoying themselves.”



Activity Planning

Stage 2: On the Day

Below is an example of the planning cycle to help keep you on track



Prepare	Monitor	Clear up
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arrive at the location early to ensure everything is set up and follow the organiser's or location's health and safety provisions.• Gather your team and brief them on the event or activity and risk management, including a specific safety brief for individual roles.• Motivate the team to be positive, open, welcoming and inclusive.• Ensure all actions to mitigate risks have been completed. Having the risk assessment in front of you will help.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep checking that the area remains safe throughout.• If you are raising funds, ensure that you are following the correct processes.• Ensure that cash is handled securely and, if possible, counted on the day and by more than one person. More information can be found in the <i>Membership Management Handbook</i> Section 2.a.• It may also be useful to track how many people are attending or if this is required for any licence requirements.• Look after the team, e.g., give them breaks to ensure they can have a drink/something to eat. <p>Have fun!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear the space and clean any dirty elements/areas – leave it exactly as you found it.• Gather all rubbish and sort it – use appropriate bins to dispose of it and reduce waste.• Check on the team to ensure they all return home safe and sound.

Event Delivery

It is essential that you hold a team briefing to inform them of the operational details, and to review the event after to assess the highlights and lessons learned.

The checklist below can be used during the briefing to ensure the event runs successfully and in accordance with health & safety.

Checklist	Tick
Have you reviewed your risk assessment and made any changes required on the day to ensure the health and safety of all participants?	
Are all public areas clean and clear?	
Are fire exits clear and appropriately lit?	
Do you have the appropriate level of first aid provision in place?	
Are effective signage and directions in place?	
Do you have everything you need ready for the event or activity?	
Have you completed an on-the-day briefing with your volunteers, covering roles and responsibilities, health and safety elements, all the information on the venue (toilets, fire exits, parking, etc.)?	
Have you reviewed your contingency plans on site in case anything goes wrong?	
Are all phone numbers of all key event contacts (inc. bands, entertainers, speakers) stored safely and securely, and emergency contact numbers are to hand?	
Are all banking materials (float, cash box, receipt books) stored safely and securely?	
Do you have appropriate photo consent and posters in place?	



C Group: Annual Festival of Remembrance

Norman Plumpton – Group Secretary

How was it decided to do this event?

“The Festival of Remembrance was resurrected around 10 years ago following a lengthy spell of inactivity and is organised by a group of branches.”

How did you get a team together?

“The group formed a sub-committee who decided on which roles were needed and who is best placed to take on the individual roles. The people involved report quarterly to the group on their actions.”

Did you work with any other local partners or organisations?

“We worked with the APEX Theatre Bury St. Edmunds where the festival was held. We also worked closely with RAF Honington’s Voluntary Band, the county Padre, local funeral directors and a number of business donors.”

Where did your event take place and how well was it attended?

“The festival was held at the APEX Theatre in Bury St. Edmunds. We decided on this venue as it was the most suitable location, it had availability but importantly had good general acoustics and great ambience for such an event. The event was attended by approximately 400 people including branch members, veterans, serving personnel and their families, plus members of the public.”

What was the most successful aspect of the event?

“On average the event raises approximately £3,000-£4,000 per year for the Poppy Appeal. The feedback on all aspects was very positive, everyone enjoyed the remembrance service and the sunset ceremony.”

Would you do anything different next time?

“The sub-committee utilises a wash-up meeting following each event annually to look at any items that need alteration. The sub-committee has met twice this year to begin making the necessary preparations for our 2023 event.”

Were there any positive aspects that you didn’t expect?

“The wonderful response from the general public, who were unaware of the vast amount of work that went into the production.”

Stage 3: Follow-up

Below is an example of the planning cycle to help keep you on track.



Gather information

- Reconcile funds, ensuring any funds raised for the Poppy Appeal are banked as soon as possible.
- Ask team for feedback and write a list of things that went well and things that could have been done better.
- If possible, get similar feedback from attendees.

Address issues

- Discuss with the team how you could prepare better for any issues, hiccups, and obstacles, and how they can be avoided in future – keep a list of ideas for future reference.
- Discuss if you achieved what you hoped to achieve and, if not, how you can reach your goals in future.
- Feed back to your Committee on the event, lessons learned, expenditure, etc.

Celebrate success

- Congratulate the team on a successful event.
- Thank everyone involved and everyone who made even the smallest contribution to the event.

Start planning your next event!

Bexleyheath and Welling: Sponsored 10km “Honour Walk”

Ken Sprowles — Chairman and Poppy Appeal Organiser

How did your branch decide to do this event?

“It was based on an original idea from Head Office when all the banners and paperwork were made available. This dates back to at least 2016 and we have held the event every year since, except during Covid.”

How did your branch get a team together?

“We decide at our monthly meetings. Our branch has a core group of willing volunteers, and we are quite well known amongst local youth organisations, the local council and business organisations.”

Did you work with any other local partners or organisations?

“Permission [was] required from the local Borough Council (and payment for park hire); cadet units are involved as walkers; police cadets are involved as marshals; a local Welling Trust provides some sponsorship towards cost; local people who are the walkers; local Rock Choir have sung for us before the event but this year a primary school choir took part; first aid cover provided by trained volunteers; the Mayor usually opens our event; local supermarkets donate bottled drinking water to us.”

Where did your event take place and how well was it attended?

“We hold the event in Danson Park, Welling which is the best off-road option. We get permission from the council and have to pay a fee. The number attending varies from year to year. In 2022 we had 74 people participating made up of branch members, veterans and their families, cadet units who put in teams, plus a local pub team of walkers and members of the public.”

What was the most successful aspect of the event?

“Fundraising and increased awareness during the run up to the event. We hold promotion events before the weekend and display banners to advertise. It is always interesting to be involved with new groups of people. Again, post Covid, things have yet to fully ‘return to normal’ but people enjoyed the walk and meeting other like-minded people plus raising funds for the Poppy Appeal.”

Would you do anything different next time?

“The event is tuned as necessary from previous experience, but Covid means we have had to re-start the event after a two-year absence so we are always learning.”





Glossary

CFR	Community Fundraiser
CRO	County Recruiting Officer
CYO	County Youth Officer
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulations
MAP / M365	The Microsoft site accessible to Branch and County Officers
MEO	Membership Engagement Officer
PAO	Poppy Appeal Organiser
RBL	Royal British Legion

Useful Online Resources

Local Gov.uk

Top tips for holding a public event in your community

Gov.uk

Organising a voluntary event: a 'can do' guide

Eventbrite

How to Plan an Event in 15 Simple Steps

You can find the [Health and Safety Guide](#) on MAP

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