

Guidance for planning and hosting events

This document sets out guidance to refer to when planning and hosting an event or any large, external meeting. It is particularly relevant for public events, events that may involve potential safeguarding risks, or events that bring together cross-sector groups of stakeholders to discuss potentially contentious topics.

The guidance is both for the Modern Slavery PEC to use in our own events and also a resource for our funded project teams and partners to refer to when organising their own events. It provides recommendations on steps to take before, during and following an event with the goal of ensuring equality, diversity, inclusion and accessibility, and overall that the event provides a safe, respectful and collaborative environment for all participants.

For larger events, consider using an [event planning template](#) so that there is a single record of key information relating to the event that can easily be shared across the organising team (and you may want to share elements with speakers/participants as well).

We have developed this guidance based on the Modern Slavery PEC's experience of organising and hosting events. We intend to keep this guidance under review and welcome feedback that can help us to further strengthen it and make it as useful as possible for others.

Before the event

Diversity and inclusion

- Consider the timing of the event in relation to religious and cultural holidays; also consider the time of day in relation to travel, childcare and other accessibility concerns
- Consider the diversity of invited speakers and participants across [protected characteristics](#), expertise and experience (including sector)
- Where possible, budget to cover travel/accommodation expenses for participants who are unable to do so themselves
- Where possible and appropriate, set aside budget to compensate participants for their time attending the event, e.g. an independent consultant with lived experience of modern slavery whose time is not covered by a salaried role

Accessibility and safety

- For in-person events, liaise with the venue to consider:

- Physical accessibility arrangements
- Availability of in-house first aid equipment and trained staff
- Fire safety, including exit routes, evacuation points and whether any fire drills are planned at the time of the event
- Arrangements for any participants who want to remain anonymous
- For online events, consider the accessibility of the tools used to organise and host the meeting (e.g. preferentially using tools that are free for participants to access and involve minimal IT requirements)
- To support participants who wish to remain anonymous at in-person events, consider:
 - Making allowance for participants to use pseudonyms, be listed under the name of their organisation (e.g. University of X Peer Researcher 1) or use first names only (depending on their preference)
 - Ensuring that participants do not have to show ID to enter the venue but can instead show, e.g., a confirmation email
 - Putting in place a written agreement with any venue that normally requires registration lists with full names and/or that everyone entering the building show ID
- Review the Modern Slavery PEC's (or relevant institution's) [safeguarding policy](#) and determine if the event is likely to present any specific risks; if any are identified, raise them with relevant members of the organising team, the Chair and any external speakers as appropriate to develop a mitigation plan, and produce a risk assessment
- Nominate a safeguarding lead for the event who will be present on the day and ensure they are aware of the appropriate steps to take in response to any safeguarding concern being raised during the event

Format & content

- Format
 - Online events should be set up as a webinar (rather than as a meeting), e.g. using [Microsoft Teams webinar](#) functionality (which is free) or [Zoom Webinar](#). The webinar set-up allows the organiser to control participants' microphones and cameras, allowing for greater control of the event and less chance of safeguarding risks arising.
 - We recommend that online events are set up with the chat function turned off, to prevent any potentially harmful comments from being posted; [Teams](#) and [Zoom](#) both have Q&A functions that can be used instead which allow for moderation of comments.
- For online events, ensure participants are aware in advance if part or all of the event is going to be recorded and obtain their consent if any contribution that they make is going to be included in the recording
- When preparing presentations, consider:
 - Language: is it accessible to non-expert participants?
 - Sound & images: are they appropriate and sensitive to participant needs?

- Slide composition: are the slides accessible to a neurodiverse audience and/or to any participant with a special educational need or disability? ([See here for advice](#))
- Share the agenda and any background information well in advance (including a link to the Modern Slavery PEC's or host organisation's [meeting rules](#)), allowing enough time for participants to prepare fully and understand the structure of the session, including when and how participants will be able to contribute, ask questions etc.
- Ensure that the agenda or invitation includes relevant information such as: accessibility information, ID requirements, safeguarding arrangements (and named point of contact), any planned recording or photography, and a contact point to raise any queries

Monitoring & evaluation

- Plan approach to seeking feedback after the event, such as through a feedback survey or follow-up discussions

Speakers and Chair

- Engage with each speaker individually to agree the parameters of their role, including:
 - how they would like to be introduced / referred to
 - when they will speak and for how long
 - what content they will cover
 - whether they are happy to respond to questions (including, if so, which topics they are or are not happy to speak to)
- This is particularly important for any speaker who may have lived experience of modern slavery
 - Such speakers may also wish to remain anonymous, in which case arrangements should be made accordingly, where possible
- Ensure that the Chair is clear on the parameters of their role, especially if the Chair is from an external organisation (e.g. does their role include fielding questions or keeping speakers to time? Or is there an additional facilitator who will be responsible for those aspects?)
- Prepare a Chair's brief that includes expectations around participant conduct within the meeting as well as a copy of the meeting rules
- Consider (where possible) holding a pre-meet with both the Chair and any speakers before the event to ensure all are familiar with the event objectives, running order, each person's role on the day and any potential risks to be aware of

During the event

Facilitating inclusive activities

- Consider organising an initial ice-breaker activity to allow participants to meet and talk informally before the main part of the event begins

- Consider including breakout sessions to ensure as much interactive participation as possible (wherever appropriate in relation to the aims of the event)
- Consider including different ways for participants to contribute beyond speaking in plenary, e.g. breakout groups where a rapporteur summarises the group's discussion, written contributions that can be read out by the Chair, or online tools such as Mentimeter

Ensuring the meeting structure & rules are clear

- Consider providing short, plain English summaries following any main remarks to ensure that all participants understand, including those for whom English is not their first language (particularly consider this for any instructions from the Chair)
- Either distribute printed copies of the meeting rules (for in-person events) or share a link to an [online copy](#) (for online events) and read them out at the beginning of the meeting

Recording or photography

- If recording the event, begin the recording only **after** the meeting rules have been read out, to allow participants time to ask questions or (if online) to turn off their cameras and change screen name, if they wish to do so
- If any photography is taking place at an in-person event, consider how to manage this for those who want to remain anonymous. For example, prepare and distribute coloured sticky dots (or similar) to indicate whether each participant is happy to have their photo taken or not. Check any relevant guidance that the host organisation may have in place.

Safety

- Ensure participants are aware of who the nominated safeguarding lead is as well as how to raise any concerns with them during the event
- Ensure participants are aware of venue arrangements and facilities including fire alarm procedures and availability of first aid equipment / trained staff
- If possible, provide a space separate from the main event where participants can take time out if they wish to do so

Monitoring & evaluation

- If sharing an online feedback survey, aim to share earlier in the event as it can increase the response rate

After the event

Follow-up

- Send a follow-up message to participants, including (e.g.) a link to the feedback survey and any relevant information regarding follow-up work

- Hold a debrief meeting with the organising team (potentially also including Chair and speakers) to review the event and identify any areas for future improvement
- Assess feedback received and record any lessons learned; consider how to embed lessons learned into future activities