



***NOTES ON RUNNING A
GENERAL
INFORMATION SERVICE***

These Notes are intended to help anyone preparing to provide a general information service for the public at festivals or similar events. The Notes are very general, covering one day local events and longer camping festivals, so some points might not be applicable to the event you are involved with. People attending events will ask for a wide variety of advice, so we have included some of the most-frequently requested information. The Notes are mainly directed at the person responsible for arranging the Information Services on site, but also give the other helpers involved some idea of what to expect.

1. PLANNING

Agreement will be made in advance with the event promoter regarding the Information Service required. This includes - the size of team, duration of service, location on site, cost of service, facilities required. The nature of the service will depend on the event - its size, duration and type of audience. Usually your team will need to be set up ready to operate before the gates open until after the public have left the site. After agreeing the size of team, you will need to find suitable helpers. FWS's "Agency Pack" gives more details of planning a team, negotiating with the promoter and briefing helpers.

2. RESEARCH

Much information can be collected in advance of the event.
Make a list of the address and phone number of the nearest :-

Bank/Bureau de Change/24 Hour Cashpoints

Chemist (including duty chemist over weekends)

Police Station

Social Services Emergency number

Hospital with casualty department (the first aid service on site will be able to tell you which one will be used)

The co-ordinating organisation for welfare services at festivals

The Festival Welfare Services Trust is a registered charity, No 277251 a:festgen\noteinfo Co-ordinator: Penny Mellor

Trustees: Don Aitken, Roger Duncan, Walter Lloyd, Alan Lodge, Trevor McCarthy, Nicole Pollen, Vicki Stangroome

Participating Organisations: British Red Cross Society, Church of England, Institution of Environmental Health Officers, National Association of Youth and Community Education Officers, National Council for Voluntary Organisations, National Council of YMCAs, Release Emergency Services, St John Ambulance Brigade, Salvation Army, Samaritans, Save the Children, Fire, Police, etc.

24 Hour garages
Bus Station
Railway station
Taxi firms
Bed and breakfast places
Calor Gas suppliers
Camping shops

Note the location of public telephones near the site.

When you have a list of the above information, duplicate the list and distribute it to all the Information Service helpers. Make sure a copy is pasted to your information table at the festival.

It may well be worthwhile to find some emergency accommodation e.g. church hall, for young people who may be stranded and without money, especially if the event is attracting people from outside the area.

A set of local "Yellow Pages" phone directory will be very useful and get copies of the local bus and train timetables. If your service will be located near the public phones on site, you may find it useful to have a set of phone Dialling Codes and coins for people to change.

3. EQUIPMENT

Don't just assume that the festival organisers will lay on a marquee for you to operate from. Get a FIRM COMMITMENT that this will be provided. (If you can, bring a spare tent, just in case).

Your main tent should have a large table, chairs, noticeboard, and an area where off-duty helpers can relax in some privacy. Bring tea and coffee-making equipment if these are not being supplied for you, as there may be long queues elsewhere. Also bring scrap paper, pens, pencils, tape, drawing pins, a torch and a strong light (you may not be provided with any lighting in the tent), and a map of the area.

FWS has a checklist of equipment which the team might find useful.

4. LIAISON

You should liaise with the other agencies who will be operating on site e.g. security, police, First Aid, Samaritans, so they know where you are on site and what you will be doing. Make sure all your helpers know where these agencies will be and what they are doing.

You might need to tell the promoter if any particular difficulties are occurring during the event, therefore you will need some means of communicating with the promoter's office. At some time during the event you may need to have an announcement made over the main PA system. If this happens, you will want it to be done quickly. Unless you have liaised with the event organiser/ stage manager beforehand to find out what the procedure is, this will be impossible.

5. ON SITE

When the team arrives on site, helpers should familiarise themselves with the location of services and facilities.

It is a good idea to make a large map of the site. This should be painted on hardboard or some other weatherproof material (not cardboard) and mounted near your main tent. Small duplicated sheets with the same map are also useful.

Your map should show :-

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| "You Are Here" | Lost Property |
| Camping area | Lost peoples' meeting place |
| Car/ Coach Parks | Main roads |
| Concessions (including cigarettes) | Police HQ |
| Creche/ Lost Children | Public telephones |
| Emergency Shelter | Samaritans |
| Entrances & Exits | Security HQ |
| First Aid Points | Stage |
| Fire points | Toilets (including wheelchair accessible) |
| Food | Water points |
| Left Luggage/ Property Lock-ups | Welfare Services |

You will also need to find out - the running order of performances, any special travel arrangements, bar opening times etc.

6. LOST PEOPLE

One of the most difficult and time-consuming jobs is dealing with people who have lost their friends. They are usually upset and may be depending on these friends for food, transport or money. Your task will be made much simpler if you keep two alphabetically-arranged message books or index boxes with cards - one for the person leaving the message (e.g. under 'J' - "1.45pm John came in looking for Rachel. He'll be at the Lost People Meeting Point every hour, on the hour.") - and the other for the

person receiving the messages (e.g. under 'R' - "Rachel, John is looking for you....." etc.). Cross-referencing in this fashion should make your job much easier.

7. LOST PROPERTY

Check before the festival to see if your team have responsibility for Lost Property during the festival. If not, make sure you know who is dealing with Lost Property.

All items handed in to you must be kept out of sight in a secure place until claimed.

Remember that "lost" items may have been stolen or taken directly to the police or security services, so people should be advised to check with them too.

Use a Lost Property Book to record items - the time handed in, place found, any identification etc. You can then refer to this book rather than searching through the pile of lost items. FWS has some additional Notes for Dealing with Lost Property - ask the office for a copy.

At the end of the festival, Lost Property should be handed in to the police. You can collect any unclaimed items from the police after a period of time.

8. GENERAL

The team will obviously work best if everyone gets along with each other - any source of friction should be isolated early in the day. Rock festivals can be emotionally exhausting events and after a number of hours a helper may contract "festivalitis" (symptoms = irritability; a feeling of being absolutely indispensable; not wanting to miss anything; and repeatedly saying "But I don't want to sleep. I couldn't sleep if I tried.") Once someone has contracted "festivalitis", there is only one cure - sleep. If they continue working, errors of judgement may occur.

Organise a shift system so that each helper has a period of rest and time to explore the festival. Make sure your helpers eat properly and look after themselves. Don't forget that at camping festivals festival-goers do not, as a rule, go to bed early. At any given time a significant number will be up and about, so members of your team should organise a 24 hour rota. If there is a separate campsite, you may have to move your operation to cover this area during the night.

Remember to look after all personal bags and handbags, or they might not be there when you want them.

Thank your helpers after the event and seek any suggestions from them on different ways to operate the team in future. Feedback any relevant comments to the promoter too.

FWS has some more detailed Notes for Helpers Working at Festivals which you can get from the office. We welcome any comments from you on the usefulness of these Notes.

Revised November, 1993.