How to organise a ball

Organising a ball is the most glamorous way to raise money to make life-saving research happen. Though it is a large event to pull together, when you’re all dressed up and welcoming your guests you’ll be overcome with pride at the way you’re helping to change the future of breast cancer.

The legal bit

Your safety is our main concern – that’s why this bit’s here! Please follow these guidelines to keep yourself protected when organising your event.

• Raffles – sale of raffle tickets and raffle draw must only take place at the event. Only sell tickets to people over the age of 16, cash prizes cannot be a prize, all tickets must be sold at the same price (see our raffles how-to guide).

• Alcohol – only sell alcohol to people over the age of 18.

• Food hygiene – you should check if your venue has adequate food hygiene insurance, otherwise you may need to get some for your event. Always make sure if you serve food or snacks that you add some labels to foods that may include allergens such as nuts, gluten or dairy.

• Risk assessment and insurance – please check with the venue to see if their insurance will cover your activities for the night.

• Venue guidelines – be aware of venue deposit and other costs the venue might charge.

• Expenses – keep a record. Consider what money you need to have available on the night (eg a float for a raffle) and how you will manage this.

• Ask the venue if they have a safe you can use and make regular sweeps to ensure that volunteers are not holding on to a lot of money all night – this will also help you keep track of your fundraising. Always have two people present when counting money.

• Licencing – check if you need a temporary event notice (licence) to organise your event. Visit www.gov.uk and search “events notice”. The venue may be able to tell you if they hold a licence you can use. Alternatively, you can contact your local authority to check.

How long you’ll need

Give yourself at least three months to plan everything. Balls are big events that can raise a large amount of money, so allow yourself plenty of time to keep everything stress free.

Pick a venue
Make sure to pick a venue that suits your needs. Big enough to fit everyone, not so big it’ll feel empty. Hotels, halls and sports clubs are all good places to host events.

Get some entertainment
A ball is nothing without top-class entertainment! Get a live band or DJ, dancers, comedians or magicians on board to make your ball stand out and sell even more tickets.

Order your materials
We have got loads of free materials to make your ball a fundraising success. We can provide you with banners, balloons, donation envelopes, and so much more. If you’d like to do a speech or presentation on the evening, we can even help you with that.

Get your friends and family involved!
Ask your family and friends to help to plan and promote the event, as well as helping on the night. The more people you have involved, the more you can use for sponsorship, selling tickets and asking for raffle prizes.

Speak to a member of the team to find out more: community@breastcancernow.org / 020 7025 2402
Meet Lorraine Patten

“After my treatment for Breast Cancer I wanted to have a party to celebrate that I had got through it all. I hired a fabulous room at a golf club with space for 200 people. It would be a sit-down meal, dancing, raffles and a silent auction.

The first Glitzy and Glamourous Charity Night was in November 2011 and raised over £10,000 from ticket sales, the raffle and the auction. So, I did it again in 2013 and again in 2015 and yet again in 2017! To date I have raised over £65,000 for cancer charities. I would say to anyone, just go and do it.”

Lorraine’s top tips

- Be organised and make sure tables are sold, raffle and auction prizes have been secured and everything is paid for at least six weeks before. It then gives you time to dot the i’s and cross the t’s a couple of weeks before without getting stressed.

- When deciding a date, be aware of any date clashes with other events and give people plenty of notice.

- Make it clear to venues that your event is for a charitable purpose, as you may be able to negotiate lower costs.

- Ask local shops and businesses to donate prizes for raffles, auctions and games, or see if they’ll sponsor food or entertainment for the night.

- Have a theme! It could be something as simple as pink, or it could be a night at the Oscars, or 1920s style – be creative.

- Display raffle prizes or auction items in a place where everyone can see them. Maybe have lists on tables if this isn’t possible, or a projection at the front of the room.

- Charity balls are about having fun but make sure the aim of the night is clear – raising money to further research into breast cancer. You might want to organise a speech to raise awareness and talk about why you want to raise money for Breast Cancer Now which will motivate people to donate.

- Announce the total you have raised at the end of the night – this means keeping track of what’s going on all evening and totalling it up as you go.

- Make sure to thank guests, volunteers and everyone who supported the event for their incredible contribution to Breast Cancer Now’s life-saving research.

- Enjoy the night, and most importantly have fun!