

Executive Summary

The Scottish Borders Safety Advisory Group (SAG) was formulated to provide a coordinated and multi-agency approach to tackling public event safety.

The project took inspiration from City of Edinburgh's Events Planning and Operations Group (EPOG) event management process established to improve public safety at events. By utilising a multi-agency partnership approach, Scottish Borders were able to bring key partners together to improve the planning and delivery of public events in the area.

Since its inception the SAG has been used to ensure the public's safety at events across the Scottish Borders and has assisted in the investigation of a number of safety incidents at public events.

The event planning process has since received support from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), and is being rolled out across 27 Scottish Local Authorities in Scotland.

This project was a finalist in the Wider Partnership Safer Communities Award in 2016.

Background and Aims

In 2012, the Scottish Borders identified 22 prestigious events in the area that could benefit from an improved, more co-ordinated event safety planning process. Officers being aware the success of Edinburgh's Events Planning and Operations Group (EPOG) in ensuring the public safety at events, looked to replicate this good practice.

The SAG process provides a 'one stop shop' for event organisers. Prior to the introduction of SAG event organisers had to send emails and make phone calls to many agencies and departments. Now they have everyone they need to meet around the table.

Activities

Using the EPOG model officers from Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Scottish Ambulance Service and a number of local authority departments established a multi-agency planning process. Officers attended weekly meeting to consider applications and provide advice on safety and organisational requirements.

To ensure that the public were aware of the process details of the SAG process was published on the council website and in their periodic newsletter.

The main purpose of the SAG process is for the partner agencies to scrutinise each event in the same manner, using the same standard agenda. The partners focus on seeking information that relates to the safety elements of each event.

When an event is of a significant size the SAG partners will require the event organisers to manage their event from a Joint Agency Control Centre (JACC). With the exception of Melrose 7s, who have their own facility, the event organisers and their team are located in the emergency control facility at council HQ. The partner agencies attend at the JACC and the event is managed on a multi-agency/event organiser partnership basis.

The main challenge was to gain the support and cooperation of event organisers during the introduction of changes to how events were being approved and managed. The basic problem being, people do not like change, especially when it is being introduced by a local authority. The Scottish Borders Council website and newsletter were used to inform the public about the SAG process and to elevate any concerns.

Feedback indicates that the vast majority have found the process useful, that the one stop approach not only saves them time but provides consistent messages.

With improved awareness of the process the SAG has attracted additional partners such as the Criminal Justice and third sector organisations.

Impact

The value of having a documented process whereby possibilities were examined and planned for was evidenced in May 2014 following an accident at a public event resulting in six injuries and three fatalities. This incident had undergone a safety assessment and all the documentation recorded was made available to the investigators. The availability of the documented safety assessment assisted the investigators in identifying how the accident happened and verified that all foreseeable safety precautions had been taken. This highlighted the value of having a Safety Advisory Group for public events.

A direct impact is that Police Scotland has reduced the number of officers present at most events. They have been able to achieve this because the SAG process insists that all events have sufficient stewards, rather than rely on police support.

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Monitoring and Evaluation

The SAG process is scrutinised by senior officers from each partner agency, the SAG Core Group, who meet twice per year to review the processes and agree which events should be included in the SAG process.

The evaluation of the process highlighted good communication between agencies, a robust and universal risk assessment approach with clear roles and responsibilities which contributed to reducing crime, disorder and danger at local events. The report

also identified that the one stop approach had reduced duplication of effort and standardise procedures.

Whilst the Safety Advisory Group is primarily focused on safety, monitoring of the process identified economic benefits. By creating a safer environment for events local authorities had a strong safety reputation which resulted in an increase in public events providing a positive boost to local economies. In 2015 there were 44 events which resulted in over 100 meetings.

Lessons Learnt and Sustainability

Following the initial evaluation of the process it was evident that by implementing a Safety Advisory Group at an early stage of the planning there was a greater chance of improved outcomes with increase partnership cooperation and co-production. By evidencing improved outcomes to event organisers the SAG were able to increase awareness and trust in the process.

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Resources

There was no direct financial cost attributed to the formulation of the process and there was no established budget. The greatest resource used during the process was staff time.

Practice Note Information

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