

Sensory Mile Event Planning Guide



'How to guide' for planning and delivering an inclusive, family friendly Sensory Mile event in your local area.



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1

Background to the Sensory Mile event in Northern Ireland

The Get Out Get Active Sensory Mile events are inclusive, family friendly events that encourage participants to complete a mile long course filled with multi-sensory experiences including sound, touch, smell, taste, wind, bubbles and colour. Participants, of all ages and abilities can run, walk or push their way around the course.

We have found this to be an incredibly engaging event for all participants especially disabled people, older people, children, people with dementia and those with health conditions. Because of this we often have large, mixed family and friend groups attending and being active together.

In Northern Ireland we held our first Sensory Mile event in 2018 in the People's Park in Portadown and it was a huge success. Since then, we have held many more events across Northern Ireland, engaging a wide range of delivery partners and many volunteers, and have even created a permanent Sensory Mile trail and map (in 2020 during Covid-19 restrictions) at the Ecos Centre in Ballymena.

This booklet is a 'how to guide' to help support you to design and deliver your own Sensory Mile event in your area, based on our learning and experience.



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Planning your Route and Event

One of the most important aspects of planning your event is choosing the right route. Asking the following questions should help to ensure that your route is inclusive, easily accessible and has the physical requirements needed for the various sensory stations.



CHOOSING YOUR SITE AND PLANNING YOUR ROUTE

Questions to ask....	Yes / No	Notes, Risks, Mitigations
Is there adequate parking at the proposed site?		
Is the proposed site accessible by public transport?		
Can the route be planned to ensure the start and finish lines are at the same point i.e. can the route be a loop?		
Is there access to toilet facilities?		
Who owns your proposed site? Who do you need to seek permission from to hold your event and what paperwork is required?		NB: most local authority owned sites will require an event proposal, risk assessment form and potentially other forms completed before approval is granted and this can take time.
How long will it take to receive approval to use your site? Do you have enough time before your event date to secure this site?		
Consider the paths. Are they wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs, buggies, large numbers, etc? Are they smooth and flat? Are there any gradients that would be challenging for your participants e.g. wheelchair users?		NB: as long as your path is accessible then most routes / stations can be adapted to facilitate your event.
Are there any trip hazards or dangerous sections along the route e.g. tree roots or ponds?		NB: If you answer yes here, can you mitigate against those risks?

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CHOOSING YOUR SITE AND PLANNING YOUR ROUTE

Continued

Is there a minimum of 2 power sources along the route? If not, can a generator be safely used at 2 points along the route?		NB: if you answer no here then you will need to source alternatives to the bubbles and wind stations or source battery powered equipment.
Is there a natural arched walkway or path where you could install a ribbon walkway?		NB: This is not a deal breaker. See equipment list for alternative suggestions.
Are there points along the route where you can safely hang wind chimes or streamers, etc?		

NB: Please note that even if you have answered no to one or more of the questions above, as long as you can make adaptations to ensure the route is inclusive or mitigate against identified risks then it may still be suitable. This list is not exhaustive and you should consider all aspects of your venue, route and planning carefully.

OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

Action	Completed (Yes/No)
Have you adequate event insurance?	
Have you completed a risk assessment for the route?	
Have you secured delivery partners to support you with elements such as power supply set up, provision of safety barriers etc?	
Have you set up a system for pre-registration e.g. Eventbrite?	
Have you considered how best to promote your event to your various target audiences?	

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Example Route Map

Below is an example of a route map we have used for a Sensory Mile event. We use existing route maps or Google maps and mark up:

- the route;
- the direction in which traffic should flow;
- start and finish areas;
- the location of marshals and power supplies; and
- the location of each sensory station.



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Equipment Checklist

THE FOLLOWING PAGES SHOW A LIST OF EQUIPMENT WE HAVE USED FOR SENSORY MILE EVENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND.

Some of the equipment was purchased and can be reused; some was fit for one use only and some was hired. There are many alternatives to the equipment we used and other suitable sensory stations that could be added or replace the stations on pages 9 and 10 - every event will be unique!



EQUIPMENT USED FOR SENSORY MILE EVENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Sensory Station: WIND

Equipment Needed: 2 x Industrial cooling fans, 1 x transformer box

Notes: A power source is required for this station.

*We usually partner with local authorities who provide gazebos, a power source and safety barriers (where needed) for this station free of charge.



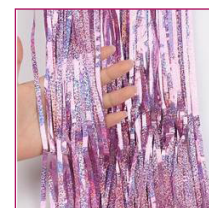
Sensory Station: RIBBON WALKWAY

Equipment Needed: 6 x Multi coloured metallic fringed door curtains

Notes: This is a popular station and you can create two ribbon walkways to break up a longer route.

Having a route with a natural arched / walkway to hang ribbons from is ideal. However we have also made our own arches by attaching poles to safety barriers.

These ribbons are often only usable once due to wear and tear during the event.



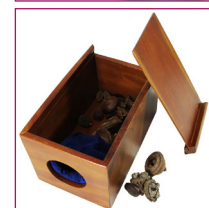
Sensory Station: TOUCH

Equipment Needed: Bubble wrap, sand paper, artificial grass, plastic piping, coloured spools, corrugated cardboard, coloured material, sensory tactile discs, stretchy rubber strings, carpet samples

Blind touch box and contents e.g. pine cones, cotton wool, rocks etc.

Notes: Be creative. There are many options for materials to use at the touch station. You can source some of these materials for free or low cost at local Play Resource centres for example.

Blind touch boxes can be purchased online or made to spec.



Sensory Station: PARACHUTES

Equipment Needed: 2 - 4 small or large parachutes (depending on the width of your path)

Notes: Each parachute requires 2 - 4 volunteers so this will limit how many you can use. Parachutes are useful to break up a long section of your route.



Continued >

EQUIPMENT USED FOR SENSORY MILE EVENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Continued

Sensory Station: BUBBLES

Equipment Needed: 2 x Electric bubble machines, bubble fluid

Notes: Bubbles is our most popular station so it's useful to have 2 machines to avoid congestion here.

One 5 litre bottle of bubble fluid should be enough for each event.

A power source is required for this station.

*We usually partner with local authorities who provide gazebos, a power source and safety barriers where needed for this station free of charge.



Sensory Station: SMELL

Equipment Needed: A selection of Aroma blocks / cubes - nasty smells, a selection of Aroma blocks / cubes - nice smells

Notes: Aroma blocks can be reused and can be bought in boxes of 8 -12.

Other natural products could be used also.



Sensory Station: SOUND

Equipment Needed: A selection of simple musical instruments



Sensory Station: TASTE

Equipment Needed: Lemon juice, sugar & water solution or honey, plastic spoons, napkins, rubbish bags, allergy notice

Notes: We created a sour and sweet taste sensation but there is potential to use other foods.



DECORATIONS

Equipment Needed: Plastic windmills / wind spinners (large and small), wind chimes, helium balloons, strips of coloured material

Notes: Decorations are not essential but add some colour and can be a fun addition especially on longer routes.

Most decorations can be inserted into the ground or tied to trees railings or fences.



EQUIPMENT USED FOR SENSORY MILE EVENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Continued

Other Equipment Required

SAFETY BARRIERS

Equipment Needed: Required where there are gaps in the route, safety hazards, generators, etc.

Notes: We usually partner with local authorities who provide safety barriers where needed free of charge.

NB: We have also used safety barriers to attach some of our touch station materials to, when necessary.

TABLES

Notes: Tables are required at sign in area, taste station, smell station, sound station etc.

GAZEBOS

Equipment Needed: Gazebos are useful at the sign in area, to cover electrical equipment, etc

Notes: Not essential but can be useful at sensory stations during rain showers!

PA SYSTEM / MIC

Notes: Not essential but is useful for your welcome, health and safety announcements and the dance warm up.

MEDALS

Equipment Needed: Medals, centres and ribbons

Notes: Given at the finish line.

SET UP / TAKE DOWN EQUIPMENT

Equipment Needed: Cable ties, string, scissors, bin bags, pens, etc

Continued >

EQUIPMENT USED FOR SENSORY MILE EVENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Continued

REFRESHMENTS

Equipment Needed: Bottled water, fruit, goodie bags (if you have partners / sponsors)

Notes: Given at the finish line.

SELECTION OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY EQUIPMENT FOR THE FINISH STATION

Equipment Needed: In the past we have set up obstacle courses, soft archery, tunnels, ball games and throwing, kicking and jumping skill stations

Notes: Where we have had partnership funding we have also had circus performers at the finish line.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Equipment Needed: Fire extinguishers x 2, first aid kits, hand sanitiser and allergy notices for all relevant stations

VIDEOGRAPHER / PHOTOGRAPHER

Notes: Sensory Mile events are fun and colourful and provide a great source of content for social media.

NB: Electrical equipment will likely need to be tested prior to the event by the partner or persons providing your power supply.

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Volunteer / Staffing Roles and Duties

Sensory Mile events are busy and require a substantial amount of set up.

Most sensory stations need to be manned by a volunteer and marshals are also required at certain points along the route. This means that each event can require between 10 and 15 volunteers to carry out these roles. On pages 14-16 is a table that details each role which can be tailored for your event, adding route /station specifics. You should make sure all staff / volunteers have a copy.



DETAILS OF THE ROLES WE HAVE IDENTIFIED

Staff / Volunteer	Role	Station Task
1 person required	Warm up	Set up PA system. Lead dance warm up.
2 or more people required	Registration	Set up registration table, gazebo, etc. Check participants in as they arrive and hand out wristbands and maps (if using). Point out allergy notice on registration table. Act as an information point throughout, hold accident book and first aid kit, etc. Greet participants on completion of the course and hand out drinks / goodie bags / medals etc.
1 person required *someone from delivery partner providing power source may also wish to be in attendance	Sensory Station (Wind)	Support tech services to set up and secure power source. Set up tables, gazebo, fire extinguisher and fans. Connect fans to power source and turn on just before walk commences. When last participant has passed turn off fans and disconnect power. *This station must be manned at all times.
2 people required	Sensory Station (Taste)	Set up 2 tables – one sweet and one sour. Ensure allergy notice is in clear view. Allow participants to try a small amount of each taste on a spoon. Spoon / napkin to go in the bin provided. Once last person has passed, remove all taste samples and bring to registration area, along with rubbish.
1 person required	Sensory Station (Bubbles)	Support tech services to set up and secure power source. Set up table and gazebo. Put bubble solution in the machine. Switch on bubble machines as participants approach. Keep machines topped up with fluid. *When topping up please turn off machine first*. When last person passes turn off machines, disconnect and bring them back to registration area.

Continued >

DETAILS OF THE ROLES WE HAVE IDENTIFIED

Continued

<p>1 person required per station</p>	<p>Sensory Station (Touch)</p>	<p>Attach touch materials to bridge, fence, safety barriers etc. Ensure materials stay in tact during event. Monitor and encourage participants to experience different textures as they pass. Set up and monitor blind touch box. Direct participants on the remainder of the route. Assist with take down at end of the event.</p>
<p>2 people required</p>	<p>Sensory Station (Smell)</p>	<p>Set up 2 tables with a mix of nice and nasty smell boxes on each. Allow and encourage participants to lift smell boxes and sniff. Once all participants have passed bring equipment back to registration area. Assist with general take down once event is finished.</p>
<p>1-2 people required</p>	<p>Sensory Station (Ribbon Walkway)</p>	<p>Set up / attach ribbons to existing or temporary structure. Direct participants through the ribbon walkway. Ensure that the ribbons are kept in-tact. Take ribbons down at end of event and clear rubbish.</p>
<p>1 person required</p>	<p>Sensory Station (Sound)</p>	<p>Set up table with a range of instruments. Allow and encourage participants to try to make different sounds with instruments. When all participants pass bring equipment back to start/finish area. Assist with general take down at end of event.</p>
<p>2-4 people required per station</p>	<p>Sensory Station (Parachutes)</p>	<p>Be in position before event starts. Wave parachute up and down and allow participants to pass under. Return parachute to start / finish area once all participants have finished. Assist with general take down at end of event.</p>

Continued >

DETAILS OF THE ROLES WE HAVE IDENTIFIED

Continued

1 person per area of risk / tricky part of the route	Marshals	Marshals are situated along the route to interact with participants and ensure they are safely on the correct path. Marshals will make other area users aware of the event and that there will be more traffic on the paths than normal. *Do not leave your post until the event is finished.
1-2 people required	Post walk activities	Set up 4 activity stations after participants have started their walk and left the warm up area. Support and encourage participants to take part in post walk activities as they complete the route.
1 person required (this person can also undertake a second role)	Park Decoration / Signage	Route and event signage to be placed along the route. Windmills to be placed along the route. Balloons and coloured material strips to be tied to fence / trees around the route. Wind chimes attached to fence / trees / railings at touch stations.

NB: This list may not be exhaustive and you may have other considerations at your event which require volunteer support.

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Example Event Agenda and Template Health and Safety Plan

EXAMPLE EVENT AGENDA

Below is an example of an agenda which can be tailored to suit your event.

Time	Activity	Location
4.00pm – 6.00pm	Set up event (registration area, sensory stations, route, finish area) Walk the route to ensure pathways are clear and there are no amendments required to your risk assessment Brief all staff and volunteers	Whole route/ area
6.15pm – 6.30pm	Arrival and registration	Registration area
6.30pm – 6.45pm	Welcome, safety briefing and dance warm up	Registration area
6.45pm – 7.45pm	Sensory Mile Walk	Whole route / area
7.00pm – 8.00pm	Finish line and activities Hand out medals and refreshments	Finish area (adjacent to registration area)
8.00pm – 9.00pm	Take down event Walk route to ensure no rubbish, decorations etc left behind	Whole route / area

Other things to consider:

- We recommend that you stagger your start times to avoid congestion at the first sensory station.
- You should allow at least two hours for your event set up. Stations such as the ribbon walkway can be especially time consuming to set up.
- Consider having a volunteer act as a back marker to ensure all participants have completed your course at least once before you start your event take down.

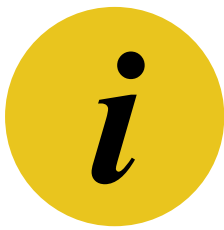
TEMPLATE HEALTH AND SAFETY PLAN

You will need to design an event Health and Safety Plan to ensure your event runs safely and smoothly. The plan should be shared with relevant staff so that they have all the details and contact numbers they need. Below are some areas we cover in our event plans.

Health and Safety Plan

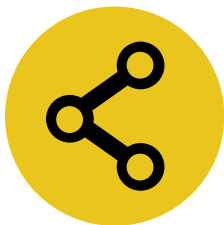


Title, Date, Location And Time Of Event



Introduction to the Event

This section could include where and when your event will be held, who is organising the event (including your delivery partners), a brief overview of your event and who it is suitable for.



Organisational Chart

This section should include an organisational flow chart detailing who will be fulfilling key roles e.g. Event Manager, Health and Safety Manager, Site Manager, Chief Marshal, Marshals and Volunteers.

This section should also detail who has overall responsibility for the event and who will manage and report accidents or incidents.



Details of the Event

This section should include your pre-registration information, instructions for participants on arrival, an agenda, start and finish details etc.

We also include a brief description of what will take place at each sensory station (including the station number which corresponds to the marked up route map).

[Continued >](#)

Health and Safety Plan

Continued



Venue Design

This section should include details of: structures (gazebo locations); audience profile and visitor numbers; toilets (location); refuse points (location); fire precautions (including details from risk assessment and where fire extinguishers will be located); access and exit points (vehicular and pedestrian).



Site Safety Plan

This section should include: general site safety rules including those concerning reporting incidents, machinery being used, signage being used, first aid facilities, clear pathways and Site Manager on the day of the event.



Crowd Management Plan

This section will include names, numbers and location of all Marshals, including the Chief Marshal.



Transport Management

This section will include parking details.



Emergency Plan

This section will include: general information including what will happen should an emergency evacuation of the site be required; and first aid arrangements (including names and numbers for qualified first aiders, processes for dealing with minor and major incidents, how to report an accident, etc).

We hope this event planning guide has been useful and we wish you luck with your event.

Have fun!



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Get Active

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