



The British  
**Stammering**  
Association

**Open days for people who stammer**  
**An Organiser's guidebook**

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November 2016

## INTRODUCTION



I want to thank you, on behalf of the BSA, for organising an Open Day for people who stammer. The reason that Open Days are so vitally important is that they are held in areas where other BSA events can't reach.

I've spoken to many people who stammer about the first Open Day they attended. Without exception, they have said that it changed their lives.

For some people who stammer this will be the first time they have been to an event of this kind. It may be the first time they meet and talk to other people who stammer. And it may be the first time they have been exposed to new ideas

and experiences about stammering from speakers who are experts in their field.

It's not often that we have the privilege of changing people's lives. But, through your leadership in bringing people together to talk about stammering, some will go away inspired by what they have heard, with a greater belief in themselves, with heightened confidence, and with an unwillingness to be shackled by their stammer.

The BSA is committed to talking about stammering. Open Days are a priceless opportunity for people who stammer to talk about their stammer. This is an opportunity to talk and not to hide away or be ashamed of our stammer. And a chance to meet, and make friends with, other people who stammer in a non-judgemental setting. For some people who stammer it's the first realisation that they're not alone.

Open Days are also a great opportunity for friends and family and speech therapists to come along both to learn and to add their support and expertise.

So, thank you, once again for volunteering to bring an Open Day to your area. Your efforts, I know, will be hugely appreciated.

With best wishes

Tim Fell  
Chair, Board of Trustees  
British Stammering Association



## 1. What do I do first?

Now that you have made the decision to organise an Open Day for people who stammer on behalf of the British Stammering Association (BSA) there are a few things for you to consider:

- a. **Inform.** Inform the BSA of your intentions as they will offer good advice and support throughout this process and will be able to advise on how much funding they can contribute to help towards the cost of the open day. Contracts for the venue and for catering etc are usually with the BSA, rather than with individuals, so please make sure any contract with BSA is agreed by the BSA office as BSA will be liable for any costs, damage, or other risks.
- b. **Committee.** Begin to put a small committee together. Experience has shown that 2- 4 people probably work best; however there are no hard and fast rules about numbers of people on the committee. The committee members should all be volunteers and have the spare capacity required to make this a success, there is a lot of work to do!
- c. **Meeting.** If all the committee members live locally, it is a good idea to get together and have a meeting to discuss the way forward and to delegate tasks and find out what skills the committee members have, such as IT skills, fundraising, organising and advertising. The meeting could be face to face, or via Skype/Messenger/Face time, just ensure that all members of the committee agree to the method and it is important at this stage that everyone can attend. Regular meetings are desirable as committee members can update each other on what they have done so far and this gives a clear picture of what is still to do.
- d. **Pre Meeting.** Preparation for the meeting is a must, jot down some bullet points about what you want to discuss. These points could include venue, date of open day, individual tasks and committee ground rules. If you know how to create an agenda, this could be a good idea, but is not necessary.



## 2. **What should we discuss at the meeting?**

The initial meeting is key to a well organised open day, and it should be the longest meeting you have. This is the time to sit and collectively discuss and agree on all the major aspects of the Open Day. A few things to discuss at this stage are as follows:

- a. **Set a Date.** The date of the Open Day is very important as this could dictate potential numbers in attendance. Weekends are normally the best option, with a Saturday usually being the best choice. However, be mindful of other events such as school or religious holidays, transport issues such as planned engineering works on the trains and major events in and around your chosen venue.
- b. **Discuss possible venue.** This is usually the major cost of an event. If possible, try to get a free venue. Use any contacts you may have with any local church, community centre, college etc. to ask for a free or low cost venue. But remember most buildings use their spaces to generate income so free venues are becoming rarer. Some venues will charge less for a charity event. If you think you can attract an audience during the week, some workplaces may give you space for free. They usually say no to weekends as they have to pay for extra security staff etc. It is recommended that you visit the venue before booking it to ensure it is suitable for the needs of the open day. Any booking in BSA's name needs to be agreed by the BSA office.

When deciding on a venue you should consider the following as a minimum:

- 1 main hall with 2 to 3 break out rooms.
- screen & projector (to use with laptop) and sound in all rooms.
- 1 reception area/room for breaks, socialising, tea/coffee food.
- microphone.



Other points for consideration when looking for a venue:

- The venue should be fully accessible e.g wheelchair access.
- Is it easy to get to, by road and by public transport?
- Are the rooms you require an appropriate size to hold the numbers you are planning for?
- Where and how will you set up refreshments?
- Are there facilities to make hot drinks?
- Does the venue have health and safety requirements? Are we required to appoint fire marshals, have they got any first aiders available or are we responsible for providing?
- Get a copy of the venue's terms and conditions so it is clear what is expected.
- Contact the venue a week beforehand and go through a checklist with them to head off any potential problems.
- Is there someone from the venue around on the day or is there a contact number?

c. **Equipment.** Always try to keep equipment needed to a minimum due to cost, but it is useful to have a sound system with microphone if you can. It is recommended that you use the venue's equipment, as any equipment you bring in, you are responsible for. The venue may tell you all electrical equipment you bring in (example sound systems) must be [PAT tested](#). Many workshop leaders will bring their own laptops, so this cuts cost of hire, and having a committee member who is good at IT and other equipment is invaluable!!

d. **The Open Day Programme.** The programme of events for the Open Day is very important. If you want people to attend, you must capture their interest and imagination. Below are a few points to consider when putting together a programme of events:

- You could choose a theme for the day e.g. Stammering and Employment.
- Decide what presentations and workshops you want to include.
- The great thing about Open Days is that they can reflect the interests of the committee. Your Open Day doesn't have to look like the others.
- An Open Mic session is always popular.
- Make sure you research potential speakers and workshop leaders on the internet, social media etc. and if in doubt contact BSA. Make sure that they add value and are suitable to deliver what you want.
- Contact potential speakers well in advance of the day. A key-note speaker adds great value to the day and celebrities are often accessible via Twitter.

- BSA has contact details of people who have organised previous Open Days. Open Day organisers are usually happy to share their contact list of who has presented or done a workshop during previous Open Days.
- If you advertise for workshops, ask for an application form to be filled out and returned to you by a closing date. An example is included at the end of this guide.
- Once you get all the forms the committee can look at them all and make a decision as to which ones you want to accept. This is particularly important so as to be fair to everyone, and if someone wants to know why they haven't been accepted, you can be clear that it was a fair selection process.
- Make it clear all decisions are made jointly and committee members need to be aware some people may try to contact individual members of the committee if they are unhappy.
- Get the programme sorted out well in advance of the day, so you can let workshop leaders know their slot and make up a programme to advertise the event.
- You may want to keep one or 2 in reserve in case you get a cancellation.

e. **Fundraising.** Fundraising is an extremely important part of this whole process. It is strongly recommended that you contact the BSA for advice on this matter. Remember: It takes time! Don't expect to raise money quickly. The BSA policy is not to charge for open days, but you can ask for a donation on the day. The BSA can help out with the costs of these open days, but please keep the sums of money requested realistic.

f. **Lunch & Refreshments.** These are always very popular and important to allow everyone to socialise. Consider trying to get sponsorship to provide this as refreshments and lunch for approx. 100 people can be costly. Check the venue's rules about refreshments – some venues insist you use their in house catering and will not allow you to bring food into the premises. For lunch ask participants to let you know of any dietary requirements – nut allergies, vegetarian, vegan etc. You always need more vegetarian than you think you will. The LONDON Open Day 2016 committee decided not to provide lunch for its last 2 open days due to the very high cost, but it provided tea, coffee and water.

g. **BSA Website.** Use the BSA web page about your event as a central point of online information regarding the Open Day. This also encourages people to access other parts of the BSA website:

- When you have a date and venue booked, let BSA know (with any other information about the day you have at that stage) so it can go on the BSA website, if only as a 'date for the diary'. If you have a sentence or two to help get people interested in the event so much the better, but the main thing is to get it online.
- If you choose to publish an invitation for workshop/presentation leaders, it can go on the BSA web page and you can then share it on social media.
- As you get more information about the event, let BSA know so we can add it to the web page, which will help make the event more attractive to people viewing the page. When possible, some examples of what speakers/workshops there will be are likely to be particularly useful to get people interested.
- When the full programme and timetable is available, that can of course also go on the web page. BSA commonly makes clear that published details are provisional/subject to change.
- The BSA web page can be an attractive internet hub for the event, with an image which displays when the page is shared on Facebook.

- The BSA page can also link to anything else such as an eventbrite page (see below) if you choose to create one.

h. **Social media.** Social media is one of the key methods by which many of those who have access to the internet engage with events and communicate, so to have clearly defined channels set up to support the Open Day is key! The committee will need to discuss this in depth in order to ascertain the very best methods of getting the word out there about the Open Day. Here are a few points to consider:

- Facebook is arguably the most important channel to have set up to promote the event as so many use it, compared to Twitter or other alternatives. Set up an event page, use this to invite friends, post updates and images on the day.
- Be careful with relying completely on social media to hold event information as it immediately limits your audience reach.
- [Eventbrite](#) is a free and easy to way to mainly provide the necessary information about your event as it is simple for organisers to upload detail (though the BSA web page will give detailed information about the event), as well as have potential attendees let you know that they are attending through a more professional method. Eventbrite is also handy for usually quite difficult tasks but this bit of kit makes things much simpler for example ticketing, and contacting everyone via email.
- Twitter is incredibly important for quick and simple updates about the day pre, during and post event. Before the event, you can give programme teasers (including featuring those who may be running whatever activity it may be), share images from previous days, give out short and snappy facts and create a buzz around the event. Twitter also allows organisers to easily get in touch with those who may sometimes have an agent to go through, famous people who you might want to give a keynote talk. Send them a direct message and take it from there. You might get them to speak at your day! This worked with LBC Radio Presenter Shelagh Fogarty.
- When using Twitter, create a hashtag that you will use in EVERY tweet, this gets the hashtag heard about and crucially used by others. Encourage event attendees to also use the same hashtag - then it's much easier for you, as the organiser (or BSA's own twitter account @stammer) to retweet and engage with others' posts.
- Use social media on the day. Twitter might be your life saver as it is immediately less clunky than Facebook and quick updates are easily posted. Try grabbing quick quotes from event attendees about their immediate reaction to what's going on at the event or even some 10 second videos?

A few final quick tips on social media usage:

- Good imagery – use a decent camera or a phone with a high quality/high megapixel camera
- Try to have an image to accompany every post – research about online engagement has shown that people are more likely to engage with a social media post if it has an image attached instead of just being text
- Consistency is key – use the same hashtag, use punctuation, what are your key messages
- Be frequent – keep people checking back, if this is a struggle use a website like Buffer to schedule tweets during the day.

i. **Other Publicity.** Local radio/TV is usually interested in stories about stammering, contact your local station. This is good for getting outside your comfort zone and chatting openly about the open day. Local newspapers & magazines also love to hear from you. Why not make a poster and place it as an advertisement in your local paper? The BSA website has advice about [speaking to the media](#).

j. **Getting an idea of numbers.** You will want an idea of how many are planning to come, for example to plan catering. You can ask people to let you know either by email or by registering on Eventbrite. However, in asking people to let you know if they intend to come, you don't want to put people off by making it seem like a commitment. Nor do you want to deter someone from coming (it may be their first stammering event) who just decides to come on the day. For example the wording on web page of the 2016 London Open Day (which used Eventbrite) was: "Please let us know if you are intending to come by registering at [Eventbrite web page]. Registering on eventbrite is free and without commitment – it is to help us plan for refreshments. However you are very welcome to attend whether or not you have registered in advance".



k. **Health & Safety.** Health and safety is an important factor for the open day and one that is easily forgotten about. We must ensure that we provide a safe place for our open day that is free from hazards that could cause injury.

- Check if the venue has a risk assessment (RA) in place and ask for a copy. You may need to write a risk assessment for what is not covered by the venue RA such as committee members moving furniture, use of equipment etc.
- Ask the venue what they expect e.g. announcement about fire exits, appointing designated fire marshals.
- Most venues will ask you to have a list of participants and provide everyone with a name badge. These can be made from sticky labels. The list of participants is usually a Health and Safety requirement and you need to ask participants to tell you if they leave, so if there is an emergency, you have an up to date participant list to check.
- [Find out more information on Risk Assessments](#)

l. **Action Plan.** During the initial meeting there is a lot to discuss. Your discussions however will come to nothing if you do not make an Action Plan and delegate tasks to the members of the committee. Remember that this is a team effort and it is extremely difficult to organise an open day without good team work. We recommend the following:

- Delegate tasks to all members of the committee, being mindful that a volunteer is more use to you than someone who is press ganged into doing a task.
- Keep a record of who is responsible for doing what.



- Set down a deadline for the tasks to be done and reported back to all the members.

m. **Communication.** The committee now needs to keep in contact with each other and communicate regularly. Below are some recommendations as to how to do this:

- You will need to communicate by email for some organising. We recommend setting up a dedicated email address for your open day and give all the committee access to it. **Our advice is to not give out personal emails as the contact.**
- Make sure all the committee have access to email and can check it regularly. Messenger or other chat sites are really useful too, if **all** the committee have access to them.
- Use email to update everyone on any developments.
- The whole committee needs to make all the important decisions, such as the venue and what workshops will be running on the day.
- Be mindful that not everyone will have access to email or the internet and you may need to think of other means to keep in contact.

### 3. **What Happens Now?**

Now the hard work really begins. After your initial meeting everyone in the committee should be confident as to what their responsibilities are and when they need to achieve their goals by. A few things to remember at this stage:

- Keep in communication with the committee.
- You may want to call regular meetings in order that any important decisions can be made in good time, and keep an eye on how things are progressing.
- Remember to keep the BSA informed as to your progress.



#### 4. **The week before.**

The week before the open day is when you should be wrapping up everything and finalising the last administrative points that remain. It is good to double check everything during this week as it will give you the nice warm fuzzy feeling that you have everything under control. You should remember and do the following:

- Ensure that the venue is booked with every piece of equipment that you need for the open day.
- Ensure that any refreshments and food have been booked and you have confirmed when it will arrive / who is picking it up.
- Ensure that the action plan has been completed.
- Ensure that you have double checked that ALL the presenters / committee members are still coming. Although be prepared for last minute changes.
- Ensure you have a grab bag with felt tip pens, pencils, rubbers, sellotape, Blu tack, paper and cardboard.
- Make signs to indicate where the workshop rooms are etc.
- Ensure you have photocopies of the Open Day programme.
- Ensure all the committee members know what their job is on the day and what time they are expected to arrive at the venue.

#### 5. **The OPEN DAY.**

The best words of advice at this stage are to KEEP CALM. This is a busy day for the committee and you will need to keep your eyes and ears open to any unforeseeable events that may happen throughout the course of the day.

This is when you see the weeks of hard work all come together. A few pointers for the day are as follows:

**a. Reception.** Ensure that you have a reception area where you can meet and greet people.

Consider the following:

- How many committee members do you need for reception?
- Where will you put your reception and do you have everything you need to run it?
- Do you have name badges for everybody?
- Have you a collection bucket from BSA for any donations people may wish to make?
- Do you have copies of the Open Day programme at hand?
- Is the reception area the same area as the refreshments will be in?
- Is someone taking a list of names?
- If you have considered a raffle, who is responsible for making it happen?

**b. Master of Ceremonies.** Someone needs to be chosen to ensure the whole day runs like clockwork and needs to be able to guide people to the workshops and inform people as to where they need to be. The master of ceremonies is usually responsible for presentations and workshops keeping to the time allocated. The master of ceremonies would normally delegate tasks to other committee members such as who is responsible for ensuring refreshments and food are laid out, if not done by the venue staff.

c. **Speakers/ Workshop leaders.** It is advised to delegate someone from the committee to meet the speakers on arrival at the venue. The speakers will need to be taken to their classroom and briefed on what time they are presenting. Ensure you inform them to arrive early so that they can set up and prepare. This is the time to ensure that presentations work on the media provided if delivering on IT. Ensure all speakers are briefed on the following:

- Where they are speaking
- What time they start
- What time they finish

d. **The Programme.** Try to keep to the programme as far as you can especially with timings. Remember to give at least 5 minutes between workshops if moving from room to room. There will be unexpected challenges throughout the day which will need a clear head to think and evaluate the best possible solution.

e. **Social Media.** Ensure everyone knows the hashtag to use and encourage those attending to tweet or post in Facebook throughout the day.

f. **Open Mic.** The open mic session is usually left until the end of the day. This is where the attendees are encouraged to stand up with a microphone in front of everyone there and say a few words about what the open day has meant to them.

g. **Feedback.** You may also consider giving out feedback forms to everyone attending. This can be done at the end, or at the beginning, in order that those attending have an opportunity to give positive (and negative) feedback to the committee.

h. **The end of the day.** Although the open day has finished, the committee will still have some work to do. You should ensure that the venue is left clean and tidy. Remember to walk round all the areas that were in use looking for any damages or lost property that may have been misplaced. Other things for consideration are:

- Arrange a place to gather close by for a meal or a celebration drink or two, you deserve it!
- Begin to think about writing an article or blog for the BSA web site about you and the committee's successful Open Day.
- Write a letter to the venue thanking them for their hospitality and write to the speakers and include any note of positive feedback received.

## 6. **Conclusion.**

To successfully run an open day takes time and effort from you and the committee. This process can be extremely rewarding as the self-satisfaction one will experience will be on a high level. Open Days are important to people who stammer, and they can be the starting point for stammering journeys and friendships that will last a lifetime. Open days can be life changing for many who stammer.

We welcome any feedback or suggestions for improvements.

## EXAMPLE – APPLICATION FOR WORKSHOPS / PRESENTATIONS

### London Open Day - Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2016 Application for Workshops/Presentations

If you would like to run a workshop at the Open Day, please complete the details below. The am and pm workshop slots both run for one hour.

We would have to pay for the hire of audio/visual equipment, and so if a white board or flipchart would suffice please say so. Please see the end of this document for notes of the application process.

If possible please email this form to [londonopenday2016@gmail.com](mailto:londonopenday2016@gmail.com) by **Friday 20<sup>th</sup> Feb 2016**. Alternatively post to: London Open Day, British Stammering Association, 15 Old Ford Road, London E2 9PJ.

**Thank you very much for your help.**

Name of facilitator/presenter(s):	
Title of workshop/presentation	
Brief summary in no more than 100 words: <i>(Please also indicate whether workshop or presentation)</i>	
Please specify any presentation equipment required: <i>(See note on this above)</i>	
Maximum number of participants:	
Your contact details:	

Notes for people wishing to lead workshops:

- Fill in your workshop application form, giving us the details of your workshop

- Email it in to [londonopenday2016@gmail.com](mailto:londonopenday2016@gmail.com) (or if that is not possible, post to: London Open Day, British Stammering Association, 15 Old Ford Road, London E2 9PJ) to be received by Friday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2016.
- The committee will let you know whether you have been successful. The date for this will be published on the website later.
- Once we have the final list of workshops/presentations, we will compile a sheet with workshop details for participants of the Open Day. We will check with each workshop leader that the details we put on this sheet (taken from their application form) are correct.
- The London Open Day committee are sorry but we cannot offer financial support for speakers/workshop leaders to attend the Open Day.

### EXAMPLE – OPEN DAY PROGRAMME

#### London Stammering Open Day

Saturday 9th April 2016 | 10:45 – 16:30 | Resource for London

Feel free to tweet about the event using the hashtag #BSALondonOpenDay | @stammer

Time	Event
10.15 – 10.45	Doors Open / registration / sign up for workshops
10.45 – 11:00	Welcome and Introduction
11:00 – 12:00	Keynote Speaker - Shelagh Fogarty
12:00 – 12:30	Tea and Coffee Break
12:30 – 13:30	Just a few words – Nye Russell-Thompson  Workshop for Parents of Young People who Stammer - Michael Palin Centre  Mindfulness for people who stammer - Carolyn Cheasman
13:30 – 14:30	Lunch: Please note that lunch is not provided but see over for a list of cafes and places to buy sandwiches
14:30 – 15:30	Why sso ssserious? A look at the lighter side of stammering Nisar Bostan, Patrick Campbell, Lesley Kodom-Baah  The underside of the iceberg: Looking after your wellbeing in stammering Sophie Mitchell  The Write Way to Stutter - Dr Cameron Raynes  The dreaded job interview – a stammerers survival guide! – Mike Wyant
15:30 – 15:45	Comfort Break
15:45 – 16:30	Open Mic
16:30	Close

### EXAMPLE – OPEN DAY EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

#### Evaluation questionnaire

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We would very much like to hear your views about the Open Day to help us plan future events. Please complete the questions below and hand to the organisers. Many thanks!

Name (optional):

Please select a box for each item listed by putting a 'x' in it:

	Poor				Excellent
	1	2	3	4	5
Location of the Open Day					
Quality of Venue					
Variety of sessions offered					
Quality of sessions offered					
Standard of refreshments provided					

Which sessions did you particularly enjoy and why?

Can you suggest any ways the Open Day could have been improved?

Can you describe what attending the Open Day means for you?

How many Open Days have you been to?

- This was my first
- Two
- Three or more

About how many years have you been a BSA member?

- Not a BSA member
- Less than one
- 1 - 2
- 3 years or more

Please add here any other comments you'd like to make.

*Thank you very much for your help! Please return this form to the organisers or post it to BSA, 15 Old Ford Road, London E2 9PJ*

*Norbert Lieckfeldt*



**Useful links:**

Eventbrite: [www.eventbrite.co.uk](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk)

PAT Testing: [www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/faq-portable-appliance-testing.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/faq-portable-appliance-testing.htm)

Speaking to the media: [www.stammering.org/talkaboutstammering](http://www.stammering.org/talkaboutstammering)

Risk Assessments: [www.hse.gov.uk/risk/](http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/)

**Contact the British Stammering Association**

The British Stammering Association  
15 Old Ford Road  
London E2 9PJ

General telephone: 020-8983 1003

Fax: 020-8983 3591

Email address: [mail@stammering.org](mailto:mail@stammering.org)

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	<b>EDUCATION HELPLINE</b> 01606 77374 <a href="mailto:education@stammering.org">education@stammering.org</a>