



# A Guide to Running Bookshop Events



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# Introduction

Dear Booksellers,

We are delighted to bring you this guide to organising author events. Events are a perennial topic of conversation between booksellers, and a crucial part of the viability and commercial health of the high street bookselling sector – whether independent or chain. And so we felt that we needed to gather all the available expertise into one place.

The guide is thorough, covering all aspects of author events. Please feel free to dip into it according to your need, and also know that it's available in smaller, bite-sized chunks on the BA Learning Skills Hub. It's also available to download as a PDF from the BA website.

Events are part of the lifeblood of bookselling. Events bring bookshops into the cultural life of their towns and high streets; they deliver customer delight and create social spaces in those places lucky enough to have a local bookshop. We want booksellers to be as well-equipped as they can be to run the best possible events programmes, and so we have sought input from across the industry.

There are practical lessons in it, as well as inspiring case studies; there are publicists' voices to be heard in its pages, and a realistic assessment of what is required to create great events and to establish your reputation as events specialists.

Whilst we have aimed this guide largely at the newer booksellers who have ambitions to hold events, it's equally useful for those researching possibilities, or who have experience but might want to just double-check something.

We hope it will prove to be a useful addition to your professional development as a bookseller – please do share it with your teams, and feed back to the BA Learning team if you find anything missing.

Good luck!



Meryl Halls  
Managing Director of the Booksellers Association



# Why Author Events?

Author events can be fun. They can also help build loyalty, increase sales, and play a vital role in supporting the local literary scene.

Bookshop events are a proven way to:

- build relationships with your existing customers and attract new ones;
- increase footfall and awareness of your shop.
- deepen links within local communities;
- generate revenue and strengthen long-term relationships with authors and publishers.

Events give customers a chance to engage directly with authors, providing memorable experiences that online shopping can't match.

- Successful events are an ideal way to create and build links with all sorts of new markets, from schools for all age groups, book clubs and local businesses to community groups.
- These links can lead to further marketing opportunities.

Brid Conroy, owner of Tertulia Bookshop Westport says:

**"Events do create community. They get people engaged and encourage them to talk about what matters to them. That's why we do them."**



Tertulia Bookshop, Westport, Co. Mayo: An evening in the bookshop with Deanie Rowan Blank and Jean Tuomey, with beautiful music from Sarah and Hannah Lyons

# What are the Objectives of Running Author Events?

- By running author events, you will learn which events and authors work well for your own bookshop and customers.
- You will find it easier to organise and promote them.
- This will lead to higher turnout, and therefore extra sales and turnover.
- It will also build your local profile and start to build a bookshop community.

Events are a way of engaging with your customers. They provide opportunities to build relationships with customers, they get to know you and become loyal to the bookshop. Events offer the chance to build your mailing list which can be beneficial for future events but also for promoting new books and sending out bookshop news.

Sheryl Shurville of Chorleywood Bookshop says:

"One of the important things for me is to continually increase the mailing list which can be done in several ways. I always ask people at each event if they are on the shop email list, often when you speak to a couple, one or other of them is on it, I always try to get the other one to be on it, too.

I have a volunteer to ask people for this information, and I also ask people in the signing queue when I am doing the Post-Its. I try and engage with people in a friendly way, ask them where they heard about the event and so on."



Chorleywood Bookshop event - social media post



Chorleywood Bookshop: The bookshop team at an event with the Rabbi Jonathan Sacks for his book Morality



# Why Authors and Publishers do Events – and What Counts as a Success?

There are many ways to measure the success of the event. Book sales might be the obvious marker. Are you aiming to increase the profile of the bookshop, is the author a bookshop favourite? Will it bring customers into your bookshop, will it help you engage with the community? Events are hard work; it is essential that their success or failure is measured to help with decision-making.

Success breeds success, people like to be involved with something successful; plus there are the knock-on effects in the business community: local restaurants and pubs that people go to before and after the event to make an evening of it; taxi firms, local venues that rent out space for events.

Remember publishers do events to boost sales of their authors' books. This is why it is ESSENTIAL that your event sales are recorded by Nielsen. If you are uncertain whether your sales get recorded by Nielsen – find out by asking Sara Mulryan at Nielsen by email ([sara.mulryan@nielseniq.com](mailto:sara.mulryan@nielseniq.com)). If you use Gardlink or BatchLine, contact them directly to ensure the book sales are recorded on your stock management system. See pages 26–27 for more information on getting your book sales recorded with Nielsen/Bookscan.

Book-ish, Crickhowell: A wonderful night at The Manor Hotel with Anton Du Beke



# Why are you Hosting Author Events?

Alison Barrow, PR Director, Transworld says:

"Publicity teams are busy and under-resourced but it is our job to bring readers to books and writers, so we are keen to partner with bookshops on events. Worth bearing in mind that the publisher will have to underpin the cost of train/car travel and a possible overnight stay, so will want to see a return on their investment in terms of sales/generated publicity and PR. Also, an author has to invest time out of their writing day to travel and attend an event, so will want to make it worth their while delivering a substantial audience (ideally upwards of 20/25 people for a small bookshop event - upwards of 100 for more significant names). Publishers and writers will consider joining a book club gathering but would still want to see book sales on the day, and attendance of around 10 people minimum."



Bookpoint, Dunoon: Michael J. Malone, Caro Ramsay and Douglas Skelton, Crimewriter bookshop event



# Getting Started

So, you want to host author events? Let's get started. Every bookshop is different, and the possibilities are endless. You will find what works for your bookshop size and staff capacity, so it's best to start small and manageable!

Setting objectives for your event is a great way to measure your success for the future. Are you putting on an event to make money from books or ticket sales? To generate footfall into the shop? Or to put your shop on the map, or build your brand?

Kelly Bradford, owner, Beckenham Bookshop says:

**"There is no right or wrong, there is no correct way to do it, there is only each individual event and set of circumstances. Be brave and try it, but as I was advised, if it isn't for you, don't do it."**

Beckenham Bookshop: Claire Ratinon signing her new book, *Unearthed*, in the shop



# What Format of Author Event are You Considering?

Choosing the right event format can be tricky. In our survey we asked bookshops which event formats they use, and the percentages are below. There are pros and cons to each option. Choose which format works best for you, the bookshop, the audience and the author.

- **78%** Author talks (solo author, interviewed)
- **77%** Book signings
- **69%** Book launches – public
- **66%** Special openings  
(i.e. late openings, themed events, Christmas events)
- **54%** Storytime events for children / young people
- **53%** Book clubs
- **51%** Author / poetry readings
- **47%** Children's author events
- **42%** Book launches – RSVP-only
- **36%** Panel discussions.

Remember that authorless events can work well. Children's events, for instance, can be worked around character costumes such as those for *The Gruffalo* or *The Tiger Who Came to Tea*.

The costumes can also be used for visits to schools and private nurseries. You might want to sell books and mini soft toys as well. This way, you build momentum about the bookshop. It's a good idea to have the character do a photo opportunity in the shop, as it brings people in and creates a buzz on the street outside the shop.

Book clubs and creative writing workshops are other great examples of authorless events. For information about hosting book clubs, please read our guide here.

**[www.ipgskillshub.com/courses/how-to-host-and-run-a-book-club](http://www.ipgskillshub.com/courses/how-to-host-and-run-a-book-club)**



Read the guide to authorless events here:  
**[www.ipgskillshub.com/courses/events-without-authors](http://www.ipgskillshub.com/courses/events-without-authors)**



Once you have an idea of what kind of event you would like to run, you can start planning how to deliver it. Consider going to a few bookshop events as an attendee, so that you can see how they work in practice.

# Where to Hold the Event?

We surveyed members in England to discover where they typically hold events. Many bookshops host events in a variety of venues, as detailed below:

- **87%** of bookshops use their own bookshops for events
- **43%** host events in local community spaces such as town or village halls
- **22%** use their local library for events
- **20%** host events in a local theatre
- **12%** of bookshops host events in pop-up venues
- **18%** of the bookshop events take place within a festival.

Some bookshops open with a bang and invite a local author to cut the ribbon on their opening day. But many won't even think about doing events in the early months, as they have many other aspects of bookselling to get to grips with. The most important thing is to go at your own pace and learn as you go along.

Hosting events in store, whether they include an author or not, is a proven method of reaching your community effectively and an ideal way of making sure potential customers find out about you and come back again and again. You have total control over the set-up and no need to move stock. Welcoming customers into your own space can help put you on the map, can often be most cost-effective and least risky. It can be easier to take payments and sell books than it would be at an external venue, and you are likely to need fewer helpers in your own shop.

Space can be an issue with in-store events, so you may well have to move tables or shelving units to accommodate seating. Remember bookshop 'events' can include book groups, children's treasure hunts or a private book launch. Not every event needs a lot of space.

Once you've worked out which events work well for your bookshop, you'll find it easier to promote them and will get an even better turnout than you did to start with. But whatever size or type of venue or event format you choose, the best practice is, for each event you do, to have a planning document with EVERYTHING on one spreadsheet (contacts, costs, practicalities, etc.).

## Schools and Libraries

Partnering with schools and libraries as co-hosts is a great idea as often the venues will be free of charge, and they will provide staff to help with everything. There is a separate guide to hosting author events in schools. Read it here:

**[www.ipgskillshub.com/courses/author-events-in-schools](http://www.ipgskillshub.com/courses/author-events-in-schools)**





# External Author Events

In preparing this guide, we asked booksellers about external events. 88% of bookshops who responded said they support events outside of their bookshop. Of these:

- **77%** support events arranged by third parties by providing a bookshop
- **68%** support author events in schools
- **57%** accept invitations from publishers to include specific authors in their events programmes
- **55%** work with book festivals to provide a pop-up bookshop
- **47%** programme and organise ticketed author events at local venues and keep the ticket revenue
- **45%** pitch to publishers for authors
- **40%** run events for children/families
- **35%** ran online events during the pandemic
- **14%** run online events now

- **88%** of our bookshops surveyed support external events, with the majority getting invitations from third parties (including schools) to support their existing event-with- book sales. Working with a larger venue means the potential for booking bigger-name authors, generating bigger audiences and increasing your income.

## Be aware...

... with this comes with a larger associated risk. Most venues will require a hire fee with an upfront deposit – and you should contact the venue first to find out their availability before contacting the publisher.

Ensure the venue itemizes all costs in a quote (staffing, box office, PA/AV, parking) and review these carefully before signing a contract. It is also imperative that you arrange at least one site visit, and we recommend going to an event at the venue to see it in action, with an audience.



Griffin Books, Penarth: Mel Griffin, talking on stage at All Saints Church, Penarth with Matt Haig about his new book, *The Life Impossible*



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## Things to Consider When Booking an External Venue:

- ☐ Are you able to hold a date with the venue while you confirm with the publisher, and, if so, how long for?

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- ☐ Is there a backstage area/green room?

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- ☐ What PA is available, and will there be a sound engineer present on the night?

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- ☐ Is there security, and what is the cost?

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- ☐ If possible, arrange for your hire cost to be included in the remittance after the event – and find out how soon after the event this will need to be paid.

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- ☐ Will the venue include the event in their own marketing (e.g. newsletter, onsite posters/flyers, website listing)?

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- ☐ Is the venue wheelchair-accessible, is there a hearing loop?

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- ☐ What deposit is required?

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- ☐ Will the venue take any commission from onsite book sales?

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- ☐ What furniture will be provided (for book sales, onstage, green room)?

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- ☐ Can you get stock delivered directly to the venue? After the event, can you leave stock overnight and collect it the morning after?

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- ☐ Make sure you are insured to host events in schools and for the transporting of stock outside the bookshop.

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- ☐ If you haven't run an off-site event before, it's best to ensure as much as six months' planning and reduce the number of events in-store during the run-up, to allow yourself as much capacity as possible.

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- ☐ If hiring a venue feels like a risk at this stage, are there other organisations in your local area who may be interested in teaming up, or who you could support with book sales? Are there nearby venues who could benefit from a bookseller for their events programme? Drop them an email and arrange to meet them or arrange for them to come to an in-store event for free so they can get to know your business.

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- ☐ If you're working with a bigger audience capacity (i.e. at an external venue), a memo of understanding is essential. It sets out the requirements of the event and the expectations of each party, which can then be put into the contract.

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# When Will You Host the Event?

Think about the ideal time for hosting your author event. January can prove challenging both from a budget and weather perspective. You might want to avoid school holidays. Generally, December is a very busy month for bookshops. Depending on your location, June – August might be good months, or it might be that your core customer base is away over the summer.

Decide whether it is a daytime or evening event. Remember that not all events have to be in the evening. Hosting events during the day does put a strain on the team but might work for your audience for some events, while afternoons might be better for children's authors.

Be mindful of local events, holidays, and other potential conflicts that could affect attendance.

Tertulia Bookshop, Co. Mayo:  
Celebrating World Book Day



Imagined Things, Harrogate:  
Elly Griffiths signing copies of  
her latest book instore during  
The Theakston Old Peculier Crime  
Writing Festival



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# Asking for Big Name Authors

Alison Barrow, PR Director, Transworld says:

"Don't be too cautious to ask - it shows ambition and scope, and publishers/publicists do like that - but do understand that often with the bigger 'brand' authors/celebrities, publishers have very little of their time and will need to deliver premium-sized events - audiences in their 100s. If you see that a major author is on tour and may pass through your area en route, you could offer a lunchtime/morning/afternoon event with a more modest-sized audience as an alternative. Often daytimes are travel/quieter time so it might be a good opportunity (from the publisher's perspective) for more book sales on the journey."

Alison went on to say:

"When we launched Ruth Jones' brilliant debut novel, I was of course overwhelmed with event requests. With Ruth's blessing, we agreed to schedule daytime as well as evening events (as an actress she had been used to long days and matinees!) and the resulting event sales - mostly through bookshops - catapulted her to the top of the bestseller lists. Bookshops definitely made the difference!"

Simon Armstrong, Press and PR Manager for the BA Group, and formerly a publisher's publicist, comments:

"Bookshops sometimes feel they need to offer big events to get big authors. This can lead to overpromising and underdelivering. In fact, what publicists fear more than just about anything is a half-empty event and what authors love is a full house. Their preference, then, might well be a proposal featuring a 50-100-seater (especially one with guaranteed sales through a book-with-ticket arrangement) in a great venue or with a strong chair/format baked in, rather than a pitch putting forward a scarily ambitious venue but with none of the finer details worked out. Also, if a bookshop is in a more out-of-the-way location, publicists might well be open to a smaller but well-attended event, if they happen to be in that part of the country anyway. Also, some big authors do love the occasional salon/more intimate event. A final note: publicists can often sense if a bookshop is going too big in their pitch. They respond well when they get a sense that someone is being ambitious but realistic. For example: 'We have a local venue that seats 250, but our bookshop comfortably seats 100, and we feel it better to start off selling for a shop-based event; then we can always do another push for tickets if the original venue sells out.'"

# Areas to Consider Before You Decide on Author Events

## Accessibility

If your shop or venue is not accessible, it is best practice to notify customers of the challenges, using the event booking page. You may be limited by your premises but ensuring that all customers are provided for without them needing to ask is one step towards inclusiveness. It may be possible to hire or purchase a ramp or wheelchair lift for larger venues, and British Sign Language Interpreters may be booked. UK bookshops can book a BSL interpreter here:

**[actiondeafness.org.uk/services/interpreting/](https://actiondeafness.org.uk/services/interpreting/)** And Irish members can find one here: **[slis.ie](https://slis.ie)**

## Staffing

Ask yourself, have you sufficient staff cover to run a successful event? Many bookshops rely on volunteers who love being part of the team and seeing the author for free. You could consider giving them a discount on books at the event, or a small token to spend in the bookshop.

Depending on the style of events, you are likely to need the following people:

- One person on author care
- Minimum of one person checking tickets, depending on the size of the audience
- Someone to introduce the event and to thank everyone at the end
- Someone to interview the author(s)
- If you are using a PA system, allocate one person to this role
- Two people to sell books and manage the book-signing queue and table.

If you are hosting the event yourself, then everyone will need to lend a hand at the end to help reset the bookshop for the next day.

Lindsay at The Book Warren says:

**"As I work on my own it can be quite daunting to organise events, however I do try to plan as much as possible, market events locally and seek support from other small businesses. I now live in a relatively deprived area with low incomes and high unemployment, where attendance at even an 'affordable' event would be a struggle for many. We rarely make any profit from events but do use them as a marketing tool."**

If you are in an external venue, factor in that everything needs to be removed from the venue after the event and most likely into your car/vehicle.

Several bookshops that host a lot of events have a team of volunteers who specifically work on events. This takes a lot of pressure off the core bookshop team. However, events can be a fun part of working in a bookshop and it might be that members of your core team want to work at them, too. This will have a knock-on effect on the bookshop rota. You need to factor that in.

## Taking Payments

You will need a card payment facility for external events. There are a variety of options available, including:

- SumUp
- Revolut
- Square.

Talk to your bank and ask if they can provide a portable credit card machine. Whatever option you choose, set it up and test it before the event. Make sure it is fully charged before the event.



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Sheryl Shurville, owner of Chorleywood Bookshop, says:

"We have two extra Dojo machines on top of the ones in our shops. One is generally used for schools events; the other one I always have with me. It is handy to have one on the bookselling/signing table and one for the refreshments. Ask your provider what the charges are for additional terminals."

## Identifying the Right Authors

Ensure the author's genre and style fit your customer base. Consider surveying your customers to understand their preferences.

Working with publishers' reps to identify authors for events has proved useful for many bookshops. Reps often know which authors are available for events; they can be your key contacts and help make everything happen.

Consider launching a book with a local author. Local authors may draw a community crowd, while national or international authors might attract wider attention. Local author events can be a great way of testing the waters when you are starting out.

On the Skills Hub there is a Guide to Working with Self Published and Independent Authors. Providing tips and advice on working with authors, you can read the full guide on the Skills Hub. Search 'authors'.

## Local Authors

Supporting local authors by featuring them in your events and incorporating their book launches is a great way to build up an events programme. It fosters a sense of community and often draws a loyal local crowd. Local authors often bring along their friends and family, providing a ready-made audience. You could consider offering them the opportunity to hire the bookshop for a small fee. They could provide the audience and pay for refreshments, while you offer the venue and have any relevant books on sale. It is appealing for new authors to launch in a bookshop and gives them increased credibility.



There are more details on working with local authors on the BA Learning Skills Hub: [www.ipgskillshub.com/courses/independentself-published-authors-tips-and-advice-for-booksellers?returnTo=/learn/article/independentself-published-authors-tips-and-advice-for-booksellers](http://www.ipgskillshub.com/courses/independentself-published-authors-tips-and-advice-for-booksellers?returnTo=/learn/article/independentself-published-authors-tips-and-advice-for-booksellers)



## Book Groups

Collaborate with local book groups to feature books they are reading and invite those groups to your events. Talking to book groups is a quick way to find out which authors and genres will appeal to book buyers locally.

Consider events with the authors that you, your team and customers love to read. Print off a list of the bestselling books in the last year, research which authors might live in your region and invite them. While some of the titles appearing on the bestseller list might not be new titles, they could offer up event ideas. Authors love nothing more than being in a room full of their most avid readers.

Some of these events might have low book sales. However, if you are just starting out with events, they could be a great way to gain experience. And provide an opportunity to gather photographs and testimonials from attendees.

On the BA learning Skills Hub, we have a full guide to setting up and running book groups.

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# How to Plan Author Events

Twice a year, leading publishers present new title information to independent bookshops at events organised by the BA. At the London Book Fair, sessions are set aside for publishers to highlight the titles they believe will sell well in independent bookshops in the autumn. These presentations are recorded to ensure all bookshops can access this information on the BA Learning Skills Hub.

At the BA Conference in September publishers present their Spring titles to attendees.

Both sessions are easy ways to see the books published in four to six months' time. You are also likely to find out who the right contact person is for each author.

For publishers who do not present their titles at the conference or London Book Fair, think about getting in touch with them directly, asking to be put on their mailing lists. Let them know if you are interested in events and ask them to keep you on their events databases.

The campaigns team at the BA sends fortnightly bulletins to its members. While most of the offers are for point-of-sale materials, occasionally publishers ask for author event pitches. If you are not receiving this bulletin and would like to do so, please email Katie Connor: **katie.connor@booksellers.org.uk**

Twice a year the campaigns team at the BA hosts a Bookshop and Publishing Partnerships meeting for UK publishers. The meeting is held virtually in January and July, with a maximum of three bookseller slots in each, and it is an opportunity for members to present to approximately 80 publishing contacts. Keen booksellers can contact Emma Bradshaw: **emma.bradshaw@booksellers.org.uk**

Dinah from Bookpoint in Dunoon says:

**"Persevere with trying to get authors. Don't worry if, to start with, you only get small audiences; it's embarrassing, but not the end of the world. The books seem to keep selling**

**for ages after the event. Get an email list of folk who want to come to events and don't be greedy about ticket prices - unless you live somewhere with high disposable income - which we don't. Minimum charge so you get an idea of how many will turn up. The events do motivate you - and the rest of your team - and do put your shop on the map. Enjoy them."**

Many small publishers attend book fairs around the UK. To read more details about small publishers' fairs, go to **smallpublishersfair.co.uk/book-fair-calendar/** All the publishers who attend the book fairs are listed, together with their website addresses. See more details here: **smallpublishersfair.co.uk/publishers-2023/**

## The Bookseller and BookBrunch Bulletins

Both book trade magazines send out daily bulletins. Along with general trade news, they also include information on book deals. This is a quick way of finding out about a new book by your favourite author. Signing up for the daily news bulletins is free. The Bookseller website is here: **www.thebookseller.com** and BookBrunch here: **www.bookbrunch.co.uk** The Bookseller magazine also carries previews of forthcoming titles together with a review of each book. These are incredibly useful if you want to know which titles are being published months ahead.

It is also worth checking out regional literary festivals to see who is coming, as you may be able to tie in an event in your store. Consider the logistics of the author's travel and make that work for you – perhaps you can catch them for a lunchtime event as they travel between two cities?

We asked Georgia Duffy at Imagined Things Bookshop in Harrogate what she has done to attract the authors attending the Theakston's Crime Festival in the town. She said:

"We've used a mixture of techniques to encourage authors in town for the crime festival to pop in. Such as reaching out directly to the author on social media, as well as to their publicist or agent. Also, publisher reps can make those who are attending the festival aware in advance, which can really help. Authors might have festival contracts that preclude them from doing advertised signings, but they can still pop in to sign. We found that activities such as having their photo taken, signing a tote bag, etc. are good and create a bit of a buzz as they encourage the author to stay longer in the shop. Also, authors who aren't featured at the festival might be in attendance and they could do advertised events, though finding out who they are can be a challenge! Building relationships with authors, agents, publicists etc. is so important for future years, so speak to as many as you can when they're in town. It's taken years of people getting to know us, but now we get actively approached. Also, authors tend to know lots of other authors so get them to tell their friends! Festivals are naturally hectic so if an author hasn't been in, give them a prompt on social media. This year we took videos and photos of the shelves, encouraging authors in, and a few spotted their books on there and headed in. In the early days, it really helped when authors or publicists went back to the festival and encouraged others to pop in."

For UK bookshops, this website lists the main book festivals taking place:

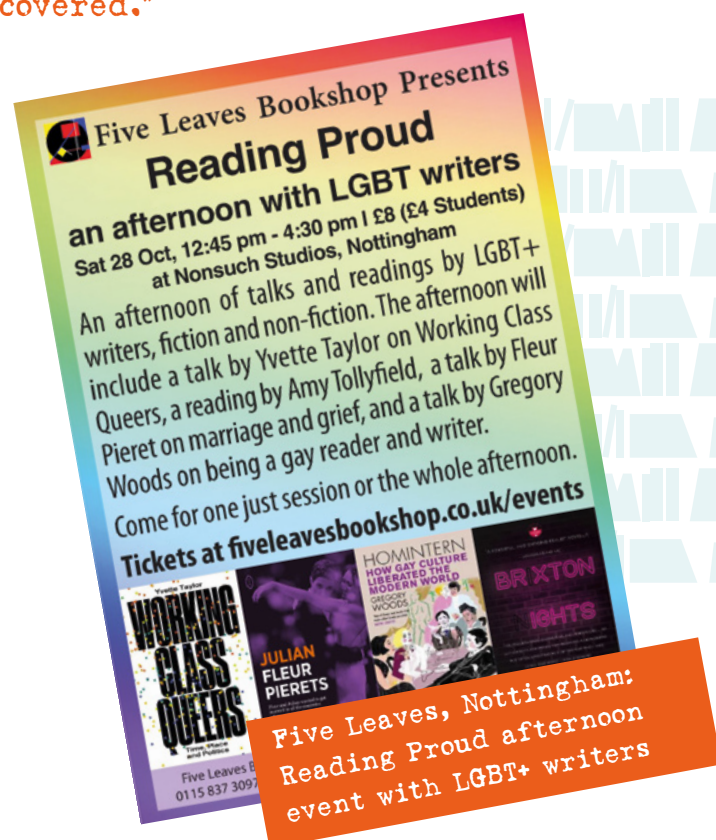
**[talesfromabsurdia.com/the-complete-uk-book-festival-calendar/](http://talesfromabsurdia.com/the-complete-uk-book-festival-calendar/)** Irish members can check the Munster Literature Website for details here: **[munsterlit.ie/festivals/](http://munsterlit.ie/festivals/)**

Offer a mix of author events in order to appeal to a broad audience. For instance, if all your events feature fiction authors, audiences might get tired over time, regardless of how great the authors are.

Keep an eye on the tour plans for international authors; the publisher might consider a stop-off for a book signing in your bookshop if it's on or near the route of the book tour. Check the author's schedule on their website and be flexible with your dates to accommodate their availability.

Ross Bradshaw of Five Leaves Bookshop, says:

"Vary the programme. You can't expect the same people to turn up again and again. Try to work your way round the whole shop, in terms of the different genres covered."



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# Approaching Publishers for Event Authors

To win support from publishers and get authors to your store, you'll need to think about what kind of event you want to run and how it will work in detail.

Put together a 'killer pitch' template that you can amend for each proposed event. Spend time making this document as strong as possible – it'll save you time in the long run. Make sure you get someone else to look over it: perhaps an experienced publicist, or your sales rep; or your BA Mentor. Also, Kate Gunning, Head of Membership Development at the Booksellers Association, formerly a 'pitch doctor' at Penguin Random House, would be happy to look over your pitches to publishers.

**[kate.gunning@booksellers.org.uk](mailto:kate.gunning@booksellers.org.uk)**

Back your pitches up with photos, reports and details of book sales from previous events. This will give the publisher confidence in your track record. If this is your first event, don't worry. Be honest with the publicist but demonstrate that you've thought through all the details to make the event a success.

Don't be scared to ask for big authors, while at the same time being realistic. Don't assume that just because you may be in an out-of-the-way location that you don't stand a chance of getting an author to your shop. If you don't try, you'll never know!

Pages of Hackney say:

**"Don't be afraid to ask big names to come to your little shop. Back in 2008, I approached Alain de Botton at a book conference and asked him if he'd come and speak at my not-yet-opened shop - and he said yes! Small events can take just as much organising as big ones. Don't view every event as an income generator - so long as you're breaking even on them and there's good energy in the room, they're worth doing."**

Publishers will appreciate a thoughtful and enthusiastic pitch and if you're unsuccessful for one author, they may think of you again for another.

The first step is to approach the author's publicist at the relevant publisher well in advance of the event. Publicists in-house generally start working on their campaigns six months in advance of the publication date, but events can sometimes still be arranged with a few months to go. Generally, you are more likely to secure an author for an event if they have something new to promote, so do bear this in mind when pitching.





# How to Find the Right Contact for the Author

To find out who the right publicist is for your required author, firstly check the press release for the book which may be on the publisher's website. Your rep might also be able to help; or check the AI (Advance Information) sheet for the book; or check with the relevant publicity director.

Alternatively, you can check with the PPC (Publishers Publicity Circle). This is a professional body of publishers' publicists that meets once a month and publishes a monthly newsletter. If you want to start hosting events, a notice in the newsletter is an easy way to tell publicists you're on the map. The contact for getting notices in the newsletter can be reached at their email address here: **[publisherspublicitycircle@gmail.com](mailto:publisherspublicitycircle@gmail.com)**

The PPC produces an invaluable directory with contact details for all book publicists. This is downloadable from the PPC website: **[www.ppcdirectory.org](http://www.ppcdirectory.org)**

In our research for this guide, we asked publicists how they organise author events. This is what they said:

- **97%** pitch events for authors to bookshops
- **70%** progress pitches from bookshops for their authors
- **57%** of their authors organise events themselves.

The publicists surveyed said that, in the past year, they had organised the following events with UK bookshops:

- **92%** Author talks – sole event
- **83%** Author tour – multiple UK events
- **73%** Panel discussions
- **30%** Author/poetry readings
- **19%** Storytime events for children/young people
- **24%** Children's author events

- **58%** Book launches – public
- **92%** Book launches – invitation-only
- **26%** Schools events.

Do publicists set out an agreement with booksellers before an event, outlining terms such as author care, expenses and stock management?

- **62%** said Yes
- **38%** said No.

Your reaction to receiving an event proposal from a publicist might be to automatically say yes. However, if you don't believe that the author is right for your bookshop/audience, don't be afraid to say thanks but no thanks. And always be open to the next offer!

Remember to cc the relevant publisher's rep on all emails. They can help chase requests if you are not getting the right answers.

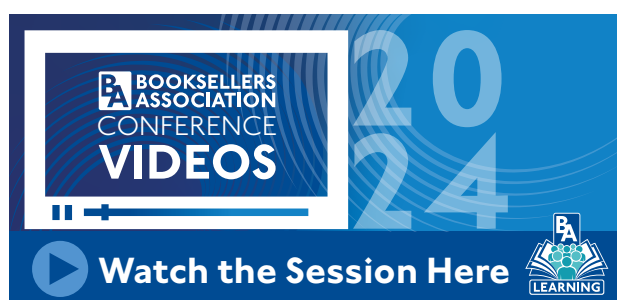


# Networking with Publishers

Along with its programme of Bookshop Socials, where booksellers meet up regionally, the BA runs conferences for Irish, Scottish and Welsh bookshops (as well as the main conference in September) – with publishers’ presentations at each.

More details here:

**[www.ipgskillshub.com/courses/ba-conference-2024-videos-u4mo](http://www.ipgskillshub.com/courses/ba-conference-2024-videos-u4mo)**



A small number of publishers have dedicated contacts for independent bookshops. HarperCollins, for instance, has the Indie Thinking team offering news, POS and proofs from @HarperCollinsUK for indie booksellers in the UK and Ireland. Their email is here:

**[independentthinking@harpercollins.co.uk](mailto:independentthinking@harpercollins.co.uk)**

and their website is here:

**[www.indiethinking.co.uk](http://www.indiethinking.co.uk)**

Richard Green is the lead contact for the Pan Macmillan group of publishers. These include Picador. His email is

**[richard.green@macmillan.com](mailto:richard.green@macmillan.com)**



Sam Brown is Head of Sales for the Faber Alliance. Her email is **[samb@faber.co.uk](mailto:samb@faber.co.uk)**

Elspeth Dougall is the key contact for all publishers within the Penguin Random House group. Her email is

**[Edougall@penguinrandomhouse.co.uk](mailto:Edougall@penguinrandomhouse.co.uk)**

Remember that the publisher’s rep can also help with author invitations. The rep might call regularly at your shop to keep you informed about new titles. If not, then email them directly saying you are interested in hosting events and asking how they can help. Most publishers will list their reps in the back of their catalogues, and/or on their websites. Google the relevant publisher’s catalogue, for instance “Verso 2024 catalogue”; on the back page is a list of their reps.

The publisher’s rep will often know whether the author might do an event. They may be willing to share with you some tips to include in your email. Build good relationships with your reps, as they can become good allies..



Truman Books, Leeds: 2024 Farsley Literature Festival. DJ and author Patrick Clarke in conversation with journalist, broadcaster and musician John Robb

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# Planning the Event Pitch

Events require a lot of organisation, especially if you're just starting out, so it's best to give yourself plenty of time. There will be occasions, though, when the event is secured at short notice, and this brings its own challenges.

Amanda Truman, owner of Truman Books, says:

**"Ideally, we would have events booked six months ahead of time."**

Remember that there are many bookshops, both independents and chains, that ask for author events. The earlier you can submit your pitch, the greater the chance of success. An early 'yes' from the publisher allows you plenty of time to plan the event.

We would suggest that the moment you know about the forthcoming title is the ideal time to ask for an event. Also, if you have read an advance copy of the book, loved it and believe it will appeal to your audience, email the pitch then, being sure to write about how much you enjoyed the book.

Tips from Alison Barrow:

**"Publicists often plan book tours at least six months ahead - it is good to get in early, as soon as you hear about a new book coming. But first come doesn't necessarily mean first served. The publicist will need to scope out a journey plan and allow for the time that they are allocated with the author, so please be patient on that. You should expect at least an acknowledgement of your event request."**

**Clarity from the outset (audience size expectations, format, venue, ticket price and ticket model - whether book-with-ticket, etc) - is really key for a publicist to understand your ambitions for the event. We will be realistic but also have demands on us from our business, author, agent, to deliver an impactful and sales-driving experience. We do want to work with you!**

**It is always helpful if you show which authors/style of events you have hosted before. If you have successfully hosted**

**20-30 people at a coffee morning for writers, and sold books on the back of it, it may well be just what we are looking for - you could offer options, and perhaps partnerships with other shops which are geographically located close to hand (Booka in Oswestry and Lingham's in Heswall do this, several of the Welsh booksellers also offer lunchtime/afternoon/evening combinations to max out on author travel time).**

**Not all publicists travel with writers, so we will want to be assured that our author is going to be well looked after - this could include anything from being met at a train station, being escorted to the event/ a nearby hotel, being offered a cup or glass of something, being given a quiet space before the event, having a taxi booked for afterwards, or the offer of a sandwich - depending on the time of day. I think it is always worth remembering that publicists do talk with their colleagues and with publicists from other businesses and we are always recommending good venues to go to for events so if the experience is a great one, it will encourage others! Also: authors talk with other authors about their good (and ahem not so good) experiences, so do consider that when you are planning: one event can lead to another. If you have landed a lovely event and it has been a success - do ask the publisher/publicist/author for an endorsement - these will be willingly given and will help encourage others to partner with you."**

Remember that the publisher might not be aware you are interested in hosting events. Building a relationship with publishers is critical to letting them know that you are interested.

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# Writing the Author Invitation/Pitch

A rule of thumb is that, if the author is promoting a new book, there is unlikely to be a fee for them doing the event. If the author is not doing a promotional tour, you should expect to pay an appearance fee.

## Be clear in the first paragraph – it might be all the publicists will read

NAME OF YOUR BOOKSHOP would like to invite AUTHOR to NAME OF YOUR TOWN/VILLAGE to talk about NAME OF THE BOOK.

If you have a quote from your publisher's rep, this is a good place to add it, along the lines of: "Amanda Dean, cc'd here, suggested I contact you about this event idea."

At this stage remember that not everyone you are emailing will know about you, your bookshop and where you are. Add in the town, county and Post Code/Eircode. Drop in nearby towns/cities with relevant distances and include information about public transport.

## Share any past experiences (good ones) of events you have held

Include sales figures and photographs and indicate the size of venue that events were held in and the audience numbers. Clarify the ratio between audience size and book sales (the conversion rate).

NAME OF YOUR BOOKSHOP has held events in the past with OUTLINE SOME EXAMPLES HERE.

## Outline what the event is

An example might be:

We are proposing an in-conversation event which would last around an hour and a half in total, including time for a managed Q&A and book signing. It would be a thrill for us to host an event with XXXX. The event will be hosted in CONFIRM WHERE THE EVENT WILL BE HELD which has a capacity of SHARE THE VENUE CAPACITY NUMBERS people.

Explain who is going to introduce the author; is it an 'in conversation' event and, if so, with whom? Who will interview the author, how experienced are they, who will pay for the interviewer?

Tell the publicist why you want to invite the author, share with them your enthusiasm for the book and the author.

## Ticket sales

Will the event be ticketed? Will there be a book and ticket deal? Will you charge for tickets? Outline how tickets will be sold: Eventbrite, Ticketsolve, Ticketsource, etc. See chapter nine for ticketing ideas.

## Provide a suggested itinerary if the author must travel to your bookshop

If the author is travelling a distance to your bookshop, suggest a travel plan: train stations, how far to the bookshop/will you collect the author? Suggest other bookshops along the way where the author could stop off and sign stock (check with the bookshops before committing them). Give suggestions as to where the author might stay and confirm who is going to pay for that.

## Outline to the publicist how you will look after the author

Will you provide a meal (confirm who pays for that), what drinks are on offer, what will happen after the event. Does the author have any special requirements, e.g. food allergies/intolerances, mobility issues?



## Book sales

Confirm how you will source the book stock for the event. Mention which backlist titles you are also considering having on sale at the event. Do you have an account with the relevant publisher? How much stock are you anticipating having for the event? Will you be keeping back stock for the author to sign afterwards?

## Publicity for the event

Outline what publicity you are proposing for the event, mention window and in-store displays and any noticeboards, bellybands, flyers and other point of sale you might be using. Share with the publicist details of the social media channels you have, the number of followers and how you will market the event to them. Is there a bookshop website? Will you use it to publicise the event/book? Will you let the local media know? Do you want the author to do any local publicity? On the BA Learning Skills Hub there is a guide to getting publicity for your bookshop. Read it in full here:

**[www.ipgskillshub.com/learn/article/publicity-pr-with-hannah-bright-anna-zanetti](http://www.ipgskillshub.com/learn/article/publicity-pr-with-hannah-bright-anna-zanetti)**



The email invitation is now ready to be sent. Consider phoning the publicist to say you are sending the invitation. Don't forget to cc the publisher's rep.

It might be some time before you receive a reply, if any. Don't despair: publicists are as busy as booksellers. Be prepared to chase by email and phone.

You might also organise events directly with an author – in fact, 56% of publicists told us their authors organise events themselves. Author Kate Young told us:

**"As an author it has been incredibly important to build relationships with bookshops beyond my publicist."**

However, it is still important that their publicist is informed. This should come from the author, but it's best practice for the bookseller to prompt the author to do so.



The Book Warren, Dumfries: Harry Potter event held at Burnside Tea Room, included activities, wands, snacks, a goody bag and a chance to meet some real owls!!!!

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# Stock Management, Nielsen Bookscan and Book Sales at Events

## Stock Management

Keeping track of book sales at an external venue can be tricky. BatchLine and Gardlink can make this process easier. Scanners for recording book sales at the event are available, as are reports and the option to record the event sales on return to the bookshop.

Contact the team at BatchLine who can talk you through the external set up. For more information visit:

**[batch.co.uk/web/meet-the-team](http://batch.co.uk/web/meet-the-team)**

For Gardners, visit:

**[www.gardners.com/Retailer-services](http://www.gardners.com/Retailer-services)**

## Nielsen/Bookscan

BookScan is a data provider for the book industry and compiles sales data for books. Reporting book sales to Nielsen is critical for everyone. If the event is part of a new book promotional tour, the publicist is tasked with maximising book sales on that tour. For publishers, it is vital that book sales appear as part of the weekly Nielsen data.

If your book sales do not register with Nielsen Bookscan you will probably find that publicists will decline your event pitches, so it's well worth contacting Nielsen to sign up. In return, you will gain access to BookScan Lite, which gives you regular market information and an ability to tailor sales data.

Advice from Simon Armstrong:

**Simon Armstrong, Press and PR Manager for the BA Group, and formerly a publisher's publicist, comments: "Publicists are of course concerned about author care; but increasingly, they are just as preoccupied by book sales at events. For context: publishers' publicity budgets have not gone up in line with the inflation of costs for trains and accommodation, so an event will be running at a loss if the right amount of sales aren't there. I know of no publicist who would rather have a 300 person event with 50 books sold, than a 100-person event with 70 tickets sold."**

For the bookshop, it is vital that stock records are correct. Recording sales enables you to see over a year which events sold well, and which didn't. This helps future decision-making.

If the event is held in the bookshop and you have a stock management system there (e.g. BatchLine or Gardlink), the book sales will be automatically recorded through the till and fed back to Nielsen.

If the event is held at an external venue, it is essential to have a robust process in place to record the books out of and back into your system.



### Tips from Nielsen Bookscan

The most fundamental criterion for events reporting is that we only take sales from our validated panel members/ festivals, we do not track non-panel members, pop-up events, authors' school visits and the like. This is because neither authors nor schools are bookshops and, equally, corporate events do not qualify as they are not publicly accessible trade events. Panel members operating at 'off-site' events can report sales (e.g. Mr B's goes to Glastonbury). Bulk author/ corporate/institutional purchases are NOT admissible, as they are not to the consumer.

### Nielsen also recommend that you check with the publisher:

- That the correct ISBN is on BookData Online
- Whether the event is before or after publication date (because "BookScan tracks which books are in readers' hands, NOT publication dates, so if the event is before publication date we do not 'hold over' sales to the 'right' week, that's gaming the charts!").

### Nielsen BookScan also recommend that:

- Bookshops check that recent files have been delivered correctly in recent weeks. Gardlink and BatchLine may not necessarily know if the files have been delivered correctly
- When bookshops change EPOS systems, they should NOT change Standard Address Numbers, as the SANs are the unique geolocation numbers used by Nielsen to identify individual shops. If for some reason the SAN has changed, the bookshop should tell BookScan so that they can adjust the relevant settings
- Bookshops are welcome to check in with Sara Mulryan at BookScan to see if their event sales have come through OK. It is best to get in touch before Monday lunchtime (when the week's results are processed).

### In terms of processing book sales from events, Nielsen advise the following:

- Process them as sales transactions, at the time of the event, not as pre-orders (otherwise they flow straight through into the 'sales' charts at a time when the book may not even have been published yet). Again, BookScan do not police publication dates
- For an 'off-site' event for registered TCM / ICM panel members: put sales through the till as soon as possible after the event so that they are captured in the right week. Bear in mind that BookScan measures sales logged between 0:00 hrs Sunday morning and 24:00hrs Saturday night; so Saturday events are problematic, as some manual additions may not be put through tills until Monday and are therefore included in the following week's data.

If you want to check your book sales are being recorded correctly, email Sara Mulryan at [sara.mulryan@nielseniq.com](mailto:sara.mulryan@nielseniq.com) for more information.



**Pages of Hackney: Social media post for upcoming event - Trans Femme Futures: Nat Raha & Mijke Van Der Drift in conversation**

# Cost of Events

Regardless of your objective for hosting events, it is advisable to cost them before you pitch to the publisher. Understanding the costs involved will help in your negotiations with the publisher.

Calculate all costs associated with the event. These might include:

- Staff overtime/time in lieu: either way, it is a cost for the bookshop
- Interview fee (for staff and/or external host)
- Catering (e.g. glass of wine/soft drink for customers)
- Printing/promotional materials
- Venue hire (include associated costs, e.g. audio equipment, security, catering, transport/couriers)
- Anticipated postage cost of returning unsold stock.

## Calculating the Cost of Author Events

At the 2023 BA Conference Nic Bottomley (Mr B's Emporium) and Fleur Sinclair (President of the Booksellers Association and owner of Sevenoaks Bookshop) shared with us how they calculate the costs of events. They supplied template spreadsheets which you can adapt to calculate the costs of events for your bookshop.

This is a small sample of Fleur's spreadsheet. Both Fleur's and Nic's full spreadsheets are available to download from the BA Learning Skills Hub here: [www.ipgskillshub.com/learn/article/analysis-cost-of-events-with-nic-bottomley-and-fleur-sinclair](https://www.ipgskillshub.com/learn/article/analysis-cost-of-events-with-nic-bottomley-and-fleur-sinclair)



Author	xxxxxxx	£0.00
Host	xxxxxxx	£0.00
Venue	xxxxxxx	£0.00
Tech	xxxxxxx	£0.00
Staff	xxxxxxx	£0.00
Refreshments	xxxxxxx	£0.00
Gifts	xxxxxxx	£0.00
Stock	xxxxxxx	£0.00
Orders	xxxxxxx	£0.00
Returns	xxxxxxx	£0.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>£0.00</b>

Remember to include the costs of audio visual (AV) equipment, if needed. For events attended by more than 35 people, it is a good idea to use microphones and speakers to amplify the conversation. Small, portable PA systems (with microphones and speakers) can be purchased for as little as £200 and may be a good set-up cost if you're planning to run regular events.

### Top tip

Ensure that your host and your author are properly briefed on how to use their microphones, including how to hold them, to ensure a good quality sound.

Make sure that you and your staff are trained in setting up these systems safely and get them PAT tested annually.

Most authors are contractually obliged to do around a fortnight of promotion for any new publication; the publisher absorbs the cost of events that take place during this initial period. If you are pitching for an author event, you should ask for it to take place around the publication date, when the author will be touring.



If you want an author to come to you outside of the publication month, this is unlikely to happen unless you can pay a fee, and potentially also travel and accommodation costs. If you are expecting publishers to cover costs, then you need to send your event request via the publisher, rather than directly to the author e.g. over social media.

For an idea of author fees, there is a useful document on the Society of Authors website. Visit: [societyofauthors.org/advice/rates-fees/](https://www.societyofauthors.org/advice/rates-fees/) to get more information.

## Choosing Your Ticket Model

In the research to create this guide, we asked bookshops what kind of ticket options they use. Here are the ones they mentioned:

- **41%** Ticket only
- **38%** All free
- **36%** Book + ticket option available
- **25%** Ticket price redeemable against the price of the book.

If you've sold or given away, say, 100 tickets, you know you'll probably get at least 75 people turning up. But if you've only managed to shift three tickets a week before the event, it's probably better to cancel.

Once you understand the costs associated with your event, you can select your ticket pricing. A good practice is to decide a set pricing structure for all your events – this will help your customers' expectations and enable simpler profit/loss calculations.

You might want to combine this ticketing with a discounted book offer to encourage sales beforehand. For example:

- Ticket £10
- Book + ticket £10 + [75% of the book's RRP]
- Concession tickets £6: make sure you are clear in outlining the different categories of concession (e.g. student, unwaged, local, carers) and the concession rates that apply.

## Ticketing Software

Ticket Tailor: [www.tickettailor.com](https://www.tickettailor.com), Eventbrite: [www.eventbrite.co.uk](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk) and TicketSource: [www.ticketsource.co.uk](https://www.ticketsource.co.uk) are all easy to use, and can be embedded into your website. You should decide whether to include (e.g. booking) fees in the ticket price or to charge extra for them. Many bookshops create products on their website as a way of selling tickets for events.

Sheryl Shurville, owner of Chorleywood Bookshop, says:

"The model that is working well with us is a ticket price which allows entry. It tends to be £15 for a big name; otherwise £12. Occasionally £10 or lower, depending on what we are trying to achieve. However, the bit that is great is Book and Ticket. As books have gone up in price, we are doing 'Book with Free Ticket': so the RRP of the book is what the customer pays to get both the book and a ticket for the event. We don't give discounts on the night; people know that they need to pre-book, which is great! This approach means no VAT is incurred - VAT is chargeable on tickets, but not on books. We also pay VAT on the drinks we sell, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic."

If your audience base is in a lower income area and book sales are your priority, you can also allow for the ticket price to be redeemed against the price of the book and/or offer free tickets. Many ticketing platforms allow a Pay What You Can option, enabling your customers to decide the ticket price according to their budget.



## Setting up Ticketing Using an Online Option Such as Eventbrite

Attendees value events listings that provide all the relevant and necessary information to them prior to the event. To ensure you're clear with your audience, Eventbrite recommend including the following:

- **Brief outline of the event**
- **Venue:** include how to find it, and details re accessibility
- **Timings:** start time and end time; how long is the talk/interview, and how much time is allocated for questions, and for the signing, if there is one?
- **Line-up:** names of author(s), interviewer, reader(s), host, etc
- **Any age requirements** (e.g. 21+)
- **Refund policy:** As the event organiser, you're responsible for setting a clear refund policy and responding to all refund requests in a timely manner
- **Frequently asked questions (FAQs):** you can create FAQs for your bookshop events which will appear on all events.

Make sure you use an image that is compatible for mobile phone viewing. For the Eventbrite lead image, only a 400 x 400 pixel square is visible in the thumbnail preview. This is the image that anyone searching on Eventbrite for events will see. Make sure it has the book jacket, date, time and venue.

Remember that many people search for events in their local area. If your event is set up on a platform such as Eventbrite, it will appear. This might be the first time they've heard about your bookshop and the event. All the necessary information needs to be available to them at this stage.

Once the event is created you can use the 'embed' code to set up the event on your website. You'll find the embed code under the 'Marketing and Embed Checkout' option on Eventbrite.

## National Book Tokens Discover

Add the event to the National Book Tokens Local. Your events will be emailed to National Book Tokens subscribers living within a 10-mile radius of your bookshop. As well as being emailed to readers near you, your listings will also automatically appear on National Book Tokens' bookshop search, and the Books Are My Bag site. Email National Book Tokens for more information [marketing@booktokens.co.uk](mailto:marketing@booktokens.co.uk)

## Ticketing for Events With a Children's Author

Ticketing for events aimed at children creates some challenges. It is highly likely that each child will be accompanied by an adult. There are several ticket options. What is key is that you track the total number of people for the venue, regardless of whether they are an adult or child. Ideally you want more children than adults to create an exciting event and sell more books.

## What do Other Bookshops do?

Vanessa Marsh, Founder of Pop-Up Bookshop, and of the Great Big Read initiative, said:

"I would do a standard ticket as 1 adult, 1 child, then have an add-on for an extra adult / extra child. If you anticipate adult-only sales as well, then maybe you could prioritise children by having pre-sales to families for a period, then opening to general sales? 'Family' tickets are a minefield. But for every couple that brings one child, you'll have another single adult bringing two or three children, so I'd have thought it would balance out overall."



Pop-Up Bookshop set up for an event

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# Choosing a Host or a Chair for Author Events

Having a confident and capable, well briefed bookseller chairing the event is a great way to connect the bookshop and the author – though it's a lot of work to prepare questions and a big responsibility to take on, so consider what overtime payment or additional fee is appropriate for this role. Remember you should always aim to pay the interviewer. Even – especially! – if that chair is you.

Before you embark on events, think about recruiting a local journalist or two to be your lead interviewers. You may end up with three to four regulars who you can call on to host your events. If the interviewers are local, you could consider giving them a voucher to spend in the bookshop in lieu of a cash payment.

**"We expect booksellers to take the lead on suggesting names for event chairs. It's always brilliant to work with bookshops that have a curated, go-to list of local chairs they work with regularly. We're usually able to contribute to or cover these chairs' fees, but for the initial suggestion or even invitation to come from the bookshop itself is great." - a Senior Publicity Manager**

Ensure you are considering the suitability of the chairperson to the subject-matter or author. For more issue-led programming, you may wish to engage someone from the relevant field to interview your author, to ensure their understanding of the topic.

## Chairing an Event

Make sure the chair reads the author's latest book and familiarizes themselves with their previous works and background.

Preparation should include:

- Preparing insightful questions that will engage the author and the audience
- Giving guidance to the chair as to which topics you would like them to focus on, how they can gather the required information
- Using any relevant and useful details from the publicists
- Sharing the questions in advance with the chair
- Sharing all details of the preparation for the event, including the time allocations for the reading, discussion, and the Q&A. Everyone should be working from the same planning document: bookseller, publicist, author, agent (if involved), chair/interviewer, venue manager, technician/sound engineer
- Understanding and responding to the author's preferences and any specific requests they may have
- On the day/night, being prepared to repeat or paraphrase audience questions if necessary to ensure everyone can hear
- On the day/night, keeping track of time to ensure each segment (reading, discussion, Q&A, signing) stays on schedule. Also being prepared to gently steer the conversation if it starts to drift off-topic or run on too long.

### Top tip

Ask the chair/interviewer to send their briefing paper to you in advance. This gives you the chance to review it, but also, if they cannot make the event at the last minute, you can use their questions.



When you confirm the host, get their headshot and biographical details so that they can be included on your event page.

None of the publicists who responded to our questionnaire expected booksellers to cover the costs (author's travel and accommodation, etc.) associated with events; this indicates that, for bookshop events taking place within the publication date 'window', best practice is for publicists to manage author expenses.

Emma Corfield-Walters, owner of Bookish, says:

**"If you're chairing an event, be as personable as you can and involve the audience to make it feel like you're all having a chat rather than them watching a straight back-and-forth interview."**

Book-ish: Social media post for an upcoming event



Book-ish, Crickhowell: A fabulous evening with John Boyne in the Book-ish Loft



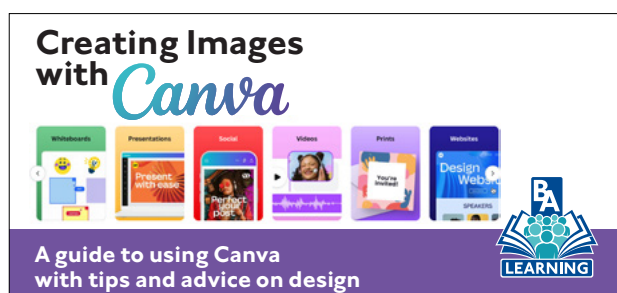
# Good News! The Event is Confirmed

Once you have agreement from the publisher that the author event is confirmed, you will need to set everything up.

In the research for this guide, we asked publicists if they set out an agreement with booksellers before an event, outlining terms such as author care, expenses and stock management: 62% said Yes, 38% said No. It is likely, therefore, that you'll get some sort of agreement from the publicist once they have said yes to the event.

- Once the formalities are sorted, ask the publisher for high-resolution images of the author and book jacket and for the book blurb. Ask if the publisher will put you in direct contact with the author
- Write the copy for the event. When writing the copy, remember you are selling the event idea to your customers. Ideally use the same copy for your ticket sales and website. This copy can also form the basis for social media posts
- If you are using an online ticket website, set up the event on it. If you have a website, add the event to it
- If you are using an outside venue, formally confirm the booking with them. And if they agreed to market the event to their mailing list, provide the necessary assets
- Create images and posters in Canva. Canva has a free subscription service, and we have a guide to creating great designs here:

**[www.ipgskillshub.com/courses/canva-creating-great-images](http://www.ipgskillshub.com/courses/canva-creating-great-images)** If possible, save all the images, etc. in the cloud so they are accessible anywhere



- Set up a Cost of Event spreadsheet specifically for this event.

## Keeping the Publicist Up to Date

Once everything is set up, email the publicist to let them know and ask them to confirm all the details are correct and to alert the author. For the publicist, the primary consideration is author care. It's useful for a bookseller to bear in mind that, just as bookshop customers are their number one consideration, so, for publicists, authors are their number one. It is critical that every aspect of the event is outlined in the timeline for the event to avoid any confusion.

Remember that publicists will appreciate it if you're proactive and let them know how ticket sales are going.

Draw up a schedule with a timeline and details of who is doing what and when. This document should cover all the tasks before and after the event, as well. This will reassure you, as you'll have all the details in one document; and it will inspire the confidence of the publicist, as they will see that you are organised and a professional.

## Advice From a Bookseller

Mel Griffin from Griffin Books, says:

**"A detailed schedule for the event is essential - who's going to do what and exactly when. As with anything else, the more planning you do beforehand, the more smoothly things will run on the day. Look after authors and their publicists and they will look after you."**



## Example Schedule

### Best Bookshop: Event Schedule with Charles Dickens

#### Event Contacts

##### Contacts on the day are:

- ☐ **Bookseller name:** Sally Brooks
- ☐ **Tel:** 07768 123 456
- ☐ **Email:** bestbooks@bookshop.com
- ☐ **Bookshop address:** Best Bookshop, Main Street, Lovely County, Post Code/Eircode

##### Author/Contact:

- ☐ **Author Tel:** Please could we have a contact number in case we need it on the day?
- ☐ **Author Email:**

#### Event Details

- ☐ **Author:**
- ☐ **Chair:**
- ☐ **Date:**
- ☐ **Start Time:**
- ☐ **Venue (Address):** (If different from the bookshop address, and link to a map with a clickable link such as: <https://disart.ie/map-how-to-find-us/>)
- ☐ This event will be live-streamed/recorded (if this is happening) and the recording will be available on our YouTube channel afterwards.  
**Your event is listed on the bookshop website here:** xxx

#### Event Schedule

- ☐ **1.20pm** Author to arrive
- ☐ **2.00pm** Event will begin with an introduction by XXX
- ☐ **2.00pm** XXX will introduce both the interviewer/chair and the author
- ☐ **2.35pm** XXX will end the conversation and open the Q&A
- ☐ **2.50pm** XXX will end this part of the event with thanks to everyone
- ☐ **2.50pm** Book signing will take place (state location)
- ☐ **3.00pm** Event ends

#### Refreshments and Dietary Needs

- ☐ Still and sparkling water will be provided for the event. Please let us know if the author has any further requirements.

#### Book(s)

- ☐ **Title(s):**
- ☐ **Publisher:**
- ☐ We will order YY copies of BOOK TITLE from XX (publisher/wholesaler). We also plan to order TITLE(S) from their backlist. Are there other titles we should have at the event?

#### Other Key Information

- ☐ (In this section include other information relating to author care: transport information; directions; details and location of accommodation, if the author is staying overnight; restaurant suggestions; options for onward travel the following day.)

#### Remember

It is unlikely you'll include too much information. The better the communication, the happier everyone will be.

#### Next Steps

- ☐ **Announce your event** to your customers, local media and across your social channels.
- ☐ As you begin to promote the event, draft a plan of action so that you **schedule the social posts and emails on a regular basis**. (More information below).
- ☐ **Keep the publisher informed of ticket sales.**
- ☐ **Confirm with your staff who it is who will be working at the event.** For any of your own booksellers who are working it, make sure you arrange with them their time in lieu.
- ☐ **Brief everyone working in the bookshop about the event** and why it will be great. They will have the opportunity to talk to customers about the event and encourage ticket sales.



# Event Promotion

## In-Store Promotion

Use posters, flyers, and point-of-sale displays to promote the event within your store. Use your shop window(s) to publicise the dates and times of upcoming events; create special table displays; and place leaflets for customers to pick up at tillpoints.

## Email Marketing

Send out announcements and reminders to customers on your mailing list. Include a compelling subject line and key details about the event. Build your mailing list using platforms like **mailchimp.com** or **substack.com**; or just use your existing website. Your customer database will ensure that loyal customers find out about your latest initiatives. Also remember that Edelweiss360 can easily produce newsletters including the book jacket and blurb. And it's free. For more details visit:

**[www.edelweissplus.com/edelweiss-uk](http://www.edelweissplus.com/edelweiss-uk)**

## Cross-Promotion of Events

Promote one event on the back of another. Make sure that, on the night of each event, you have flyers on each chair promoting the rest of the events in your seasonal programme. Use your website to publicise events, set up your tills so that receipts print out with a message on them publicising forthcoming events. Work with other local indie businesses to promote each other's events. Have an A-frame outside the shop or a blackboard/noticeboard inside the shop with all forthcoming events listed. Authors can also promote events on their own websites/blogs/social media.

## Local Media

Reach out to local newspapers, radio stations, and community websites to feature your event. Send them a press release with all the pertinent details. Local media can be champions of your shop, and may help promote your events, if you strike up a good relationship with them. Familiarise yourself with the local papers and radio. Find out which outlets cover arts and events stories, what the opportunities for coverage are, and where interviews with authors might be placed. Consider inviting local journalists to events and offer them author interviews. The local paper might consider a pre-event interview or include a Q&A with the author. Check with the publicist as to what publicity the author might be prepared to do before confirming anything with local media.



Book-ish, Crickhowell:  
Annie Garthwaite signing  
The King's Mother at the  
author event in store

# Writing a Press Release

To obtain press coverage, you'll need to issue a press release, and to make it stand out. It's worth spending some time getting this right, as once you have the right template, it will make publicising future events much easier.

## How do you do this?

Consider your audience – what might appeal to a busy journalist? They will want something punchy and newsworthy, with facts, statistics, and an author photo, if possible.

- Date the press release at the top
- Include your store logo at the top
- Get the content right. You'll need to tick the following boxes: *Who, What, Where, When, Why, How, How much?*
- Proofread the release for sense and spelling and double-check the facts
- Keep the release to one side of A4 paper, 10 or 12 point font
- Start with a brief summary of the event; background information should follow on from this
- Use the release to flag up other key events which have been a success or promise to be exciting
- Include a quotation from the owner or manager about how they're looking forward to welcoming the author, or what they love about that author's work.

## Style

Keep sentences short but sweet; avoid clichés, jargon and overstatement and stay objective. A press release is used to inform and promote, rather than to make assertions.

Include images – the press love pictures! Images relevant to the event (e.g. of your bookshop, a headshot of the author, and/or an image of the book jacket) would work well. All images must be high res for press (at least 1MB and 300dpi, in a JPEG format).

## Notes to Editor

This is a section at the end which should include:

- Name and address of your shop
- Telephone, email and website address
- Key messages e.g: "X Bookshop is the only independent bookshop in [name of town], with a range of y thousand titles and an especially strong z department. It was founded in xxxx by xxx, and previous authors to have visited the shop include a, b and c."
- Contact for further information: landline and out of hours line.





## Sample Press Release

**[Bookshop Name]** welcomes **[Author]** as part of Independent Bookshop Week Celebrations

**[Use bullet points]**

**[Bookshop Name]** in **[Location]** will be **[insert event details e.g. "hosting an event with X author"]** to mark Independent Bookshop Week.

Taking place on **[date]** at **[time]**, it will be one of hundreds of events happening at independent bookshops across the UK to mark Independent Bookshop Week **[give dates of IBW]**.

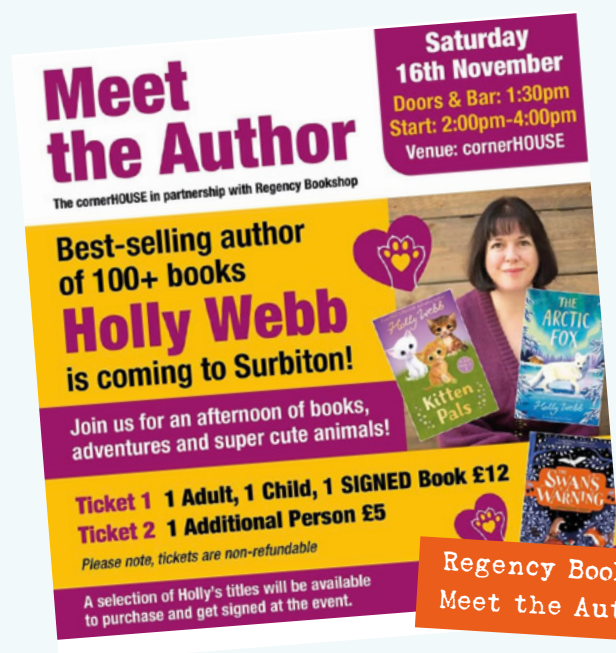
**[Insert image]**

**[Insert additional event details e.g. ticket price, how to book, link to website/social media, etc.]**

**[Optional quote: it's effective to include a quote from you/your bookshop spokesperson about the event or to explain that you're celebrating Independent Bookshop Week, e.g. "We look forward to seeing many of you at [event] to mark and celebrate Independent Bookshop Week."]**

Follow **Independent Bookshop Week:**  
**#IndieBookshopWeek @BooksAreMyBag**

**- Ends -**



## Notes to Editors

For further information please contact:

**[Insert name, email address and phone number for you/your shop]**

About **[Insert the name of your shop]**:

**[Insert a paragraph of information about your shop]**

## Photos

You may be asked to send photos to picture desks (of e.g. newspapers) separately after the event.

If you are sending a picture as part of a preview story, always caption as follows:

**"Author X, who will be signing copies of TITLE OF BOOK at the X Bookshop, at [time] on [date]"**

Take plenty of photos at the event and send these to local picture desks in case they are of interest. Be sure to post these to social media too to promote your events programme and tag the author and publicist so that they can share to their own followers.

On the BA Learning Skills Hub there are several guides and video tutorials on publicising events and getting PR for your bookshop. Search 'PR'.

## Advice From a Bookseller

**"Always make sure that the fact that books are on sale is publicised and mentioned on tickets, websites, on the night, before you pack up, etc."**

**- Aude Bolechala, manager of Nomad Books**

**Regency Bookshop, Surbiton: Social media post for a Meet the Author event in partnership with cornerHOUSE**

# Social Media – How to Plan a Four Week Campaign

Social media is a useful and cost-effective tool for promoting events and gives bookshops an opportunity to reach a wider audience. By using social media to market your bookshop events, you can target specific demographics according to location, interests, etc. and engage directly with your audience. Bookshops can also build excitement for the event by posting behind-the-scenes content, sharing eye-catching visuals, creating countdowns to the event date and collaborating with the author/s and publishers on promotional content. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X/Twitter, YouTube and TikTok allow bookshops to promote their events before, during, and after they actually happen; they are effective spaces which can drive sales and build awareness for your bookshop.

Planning a bookshop event can be time-consuming: there are a lot of elements to organise and promote on social media, which might seem like a daunting task; but it doesn't have to be! If you don't know where to start with promoting your event on social media, you might find the timeline below to be useful.

## Sample Bookshop Event Social Media Timeline:

### Five Weeks Before the Event

#### Prepare for the event announcement:

- Ask the publisher/author to send through a brief author biography, a book synopsis and the relevant social media handles
- Create some eye-catching visuals to maximise engagement. For example: take some beautiful photos of the author's/authors' book in your bookshop; create some graphics using a tool like Canva; or ask the publisher whether they have any assets you can use
- Write some copy about the event to use across various platforms.

### Four Weeks Before the Event

#### Announce the event:

- Share a post across your channel(s) announcing the event, remembering to tag the author/publisher. Create a Facebook Event including all the details and invite your followers to RSVP
- Create a countdown on Instagram Stories and an Event Reminder for Instagram Posts
- Highlight the event on your profile by pinning the posts so that they appear first. You can also save Instagram Stories posts to a "Highlight" on your profile)
- Add the link to the event listing in your social media bio. If you'd like more than one link to appear on your profile, Linktree is a free tool which allows users to promote multiple links
- Get in touch with the publisher/author and ask whether they can post about the event and/or repost your posts (share the links to the posts so they can easily reshare).



### Three Weeks Before the Event

**Generate buzz. Build excitement by sharing some details about the event such as:**

- Information about the author(s) and their book(s)
- A reminder of the event date
- What the attendees can expect: will there be wine? Is the book included with the price of the ticket? Will there be an opportunity to get the book signed? Will there be an audience Q&A?
- A link to find out more about the event/book tickets/pre-order the book
- A bookseller's review of the featured book.

### Two Weeks Before the Event

**Utilise social media ads:**

If you still need to drive sales for the event, consider using social media advertising – there's no need to spend a lot of money. Facebook and Instagram ads can be an effective way to target specific people according to demographics and interests, e.g. location, age, hobbies, activities. It's also possible to create ads by using behavioral targeting related to your audience – e.g. people who have attended previous events at your shop; people who have interacted with your posts/profile in the past, etc.

### One Week Before the Event

**Start a conversation with your audience:**

- Engage with the people that have RSVP'd to the Facebook Event by sharing a post and building anticipation for the event
- Share a post on Instagram with a photo of the author's book(s) and ask your followers a question to increase engagement – remember to keep an eye on the comments so you can like/reply
- Post on X/Twitter asking your followers if they're attending the event – this might inspire other followers to book a ticket.

### Day Before the Event

**Post a reminder:**

- Share a reminder that the event is happening and express how much you're looking forward to welcoming the author and attendees
- If there are any remaining tickets, share the link across your channels to drive any last-minute ticket sales. Where possible, include the link in your post and/or let your followers know that they can find the link in your bio. You can also add a clickable link to your Instagram Stories.

### Day of the Event

**Maintain buzz:**

- Share a behind-the-scenes photo/video of the event set-up
- Post a photo/video of the bookshop team with the author(s)
- Encourage user-generated content by asking your attendees to post about the event on their channels (remember to ask them to tag your bookshop). Invite your audience "backstage" with live updates from the event – use Facebook/Instagram Live and share videos/photos to Instagram Stories.





## Advice From Publicists

**"For event tours, we will promote on our social media and design visual assets. For single events, we boost the social media promotions from the venue."**

**- A publisher's Senior Communications Executive**

Publishers' social media audiences are global and won't be relevant to most individual events, though some publicists will announce a tour with a graphic that displays all their author's dates.

**"Generating an audience is hard without the bookshop helping out too - I always have a better turnout when the bookshop promotes the event as well."**

**- A publicist**

Publishers might support social media promotion, but the most relevant audience will be the bookshop's own community, so ensure that you factor in time for promoting an event properly. It is best practice to maintain communication with the publicist between planning and delivering the event, to keep them up to date on ticket sales. This will help if, nearer the date of the event, you need to cancel due to low ticket sales. Remember to ask if the author is willing to promote the event on their own social channels.

**"Please please please share the details with your audience and on social media! The more people show up, the better for everyone involved."** - A publicist

**"Often the publisher is relied on for promotion, but we are a tiny team, and it is difficult to schedule social media posts for one-off events (sometimes these events won't be relevant for our audience as a whole). We rely on the venue for promotion but understand that bookshops themselves are often working with the same limited resources and staff members."**

**- A publicist**

**"The most successful events happen with active author support."** - A bookshop owner



Griffin Books, Penarth, Wales: At the Penarth Literary Festival

# Ordering Stock

If you have an account with the publisher, it could prove more profitable to order direct from them. You are likely to receive a higher discount and the entire event order will be supplied sale-or-return. However, it will take longer to receive the books from the publisher than from a wholesaler.

Ordering from Gardners might prove easier. Gardners offer full sale-or-return, though conditions might apply. Contact your local Gardners rep or Ruth Gardner:

**Ruth.Gardner@gardners.com** to discuss arrangements, including the possibility of extra discount. Gardners offer fast next-day delivery for mainland UK accounts and can deliver direct to the event venue.

Remember the 'halo effect': copies of the featured book will, in all likelihood, sell well in the period running up to the event; and also, if there are signed copies, sell strongly after the event.

Leave yourself plenty of time to get the stock in. When the stock arrives, unpack it and check that the books supplied are the correct titles, in the correct quantities, and that they are undamaged and not already signed. It may also be important for you to check that they are first editions.

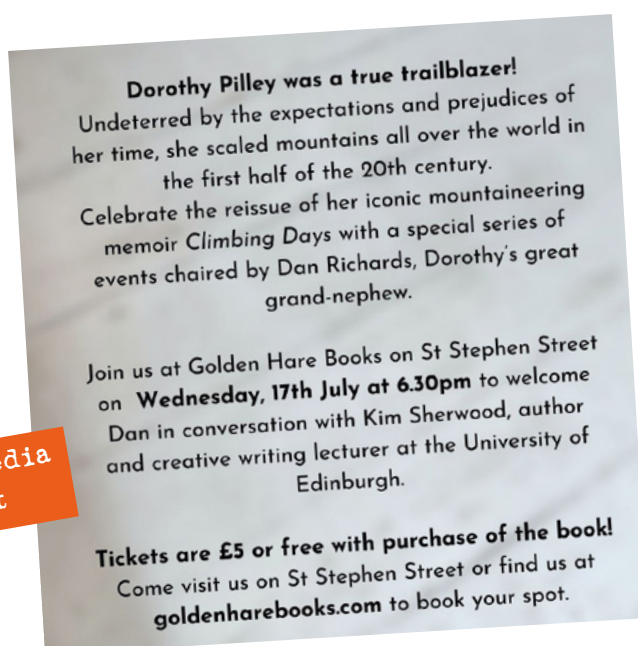
Decide if you want to order any backlist titles by the author. Confirm with the publicist which titles will be at the event. Consider a pre-event offer to estimate demand. For instance, consider a book + ticket deal for the event. This is an easy way to gauge book sales.

Set up in-store and window displays for the book, if it is available. This can help create a buzz around the book, encourage ticket sales and you'll sell copies, both before and after the event.

Send a draft timeline for the event to the publisher and (if you have their contact details) the author.



Golden Hare Books, Edinburgh: Social media post for in-store 'meet the author' event



# Preparing the timeline for the event

Here is a suggested checklist – you should ensure that this is all agreed between you, the publicist and author at least a week before the event:

- ☐ Date and time of the event.
- ☐ Full address (including postcode/Eircode) of the bookshop/venue and your mobile number.
- ☐ Directions to the bookshop/venue.
- ☐ What time should the author/publisher arrive at the bookshop/venue?
- ☐ Who will introduce the event, and at what time?
- ☐ How long will the event run for?
- ☐ Who will manage the Q&A? Confirm how it will work and whether there are microphones. And who will manage the microphones between questions?
- ☐ How will the event be wrapped up, who will take the author to the book signing table?
- ☐ Will the author sign bookshop stock afterwards, or maybe before the event starts?
- ☐ Give an indication of when you think the author and publicist will be able to leave the bookshop/venue. Confirm how they can return to the train/bus station, if they are not driving. Confirm who will pay for any taxis that are taken.
- ☐ At this point ask if there are any refreshments requests, allergies, dietary restrictions, etc. You might like to consider offering sweet or savoury snacks.
- ☐ Will the author be accompanied? Increasingly, authors travel alone, leaving the bookseller solely responsible. Might an author need collection (by car) from a railway station? Booksellers should be sure to offer this service in their pitch. Also: does the author have any access requirements? Attention to detail is crucial and will win the respect of publicists.
- ☐ Check the date for delivery of the event stock. Mark the bookshop diary and check it arrives as promised.
- ☐ Buying the author a small thank-you gift is a lovely touch. You could check beforehand with the publicist to see what might be appropriate. If you have your own bookshop tote bags or gift vouchers, you should definitely include one of those, as well.

## One Week Before the Event

- ☐ Email/call the publicist to confirm everyone agrees with the timeline of the event. Share that with anyone working at the event.
- ☐ Update the publicist on ticket sales.
- ☐ If using a ticketing system, schedule a reminder to anyone who has purchased a ticket, making sure they have the event details.
- ☐ Using the event task list, allocate duties to everyone working at the event. For the person doing social media on the night, make sure they have all the log-in details for your social accounts (most now require two-step authentication, which can be tricky off-site) and that the photos taken at the event are automatically saved to the bookshop cloud files. (See our business continuity planning on the BA Skills Hub on why you should have cloud filing for all bookshop documentation.)

**"A detailed timeline for the event is essential: who's going to do what and exactly when; the more planning you do beforehand, the more smoothly things will run on the day."**

**- Mel Griffin, owner of Griffin Books**



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# Cancelling an Event

With a week to go before the event, review the ticket sales and update the publicist (or author if the event is booked direct). No one will want to cancel the event, but it does happen occasionally.

If ticket sales are below 20% of what you promised it is unlikely you are going to achieve the 100% target in the coming seven days.

If you need to cancel, phone the publicist. If you have been keeping them informed of ticket sales, they will already be aware there is a potential issue. If that's not an option/they are unavailable, email with a high priority or WhatsApp them. Outline everything you've done to publicise the event and that only XX tickets have been sold.

Alison Barrow, PR Director at Transworld says

"This (cancellation) is a reality for all of us and never a happy outcome, but sometimes it is the best thing to do. It should always be done in consultation with the publisher, never as a unilateral decision. It may well be that the publisher/author is happy enough with a smaller than expected turnout because they are on tour, en route to somewhere else and it is better to press ahead - if you are all willing and staff are open to it - with smaller numbers, rather than turn away those customers. However, publishers will not want to turn up to an event where 60 were expected and there are rows and rows of empty seats, so realistic and timely (a week before) communication is much the best thing. You should say something along the lines of 'take-up has been less than we anticipated'.

After the bookseller/publicist consultation, the decision might be taken to cancel the event; or you might prefer to press on with more promotion - author posts on social media etc. - and make a decision closer to the date of the event. This is why realistic and regular communication is helpful for managing expectations."

Simon Armstrong, comments

"Bookshops understandably get scared if tickets aren't selling. However, proactive and problem-solving communication from booksellers is something publicists value very deeply. When I was working as a publicist, if a bookshop ever got in touch to say that ticket sales were lower than expected, outlining what they were going to do to promote the event further and asking me how we could support them (through our socials or whatever), I never thought badly of them. If booksellers withhold information or underplay the situation, publicists begin to hear warning bells. So I'd urge all bookshops to be open and honest about ticket sales, and proactive in offering solutions. This actually helps the bookseller's relationship

with the publicist and will count in their favour next time they pitch for an event. And it will mean that pulling the plug on the event (as long as it's done far enough ahead) will be viewed positively by the publicist."

To avoid disappointing customers, if the event is cancelled, the publisher should be quite willing to provide signed and dedicated copies of the book. A handy alternative is to use book plates which avoid costly postage and the risk of the books arriving damaged.

You could still agree that the event goes ahead, but it is critical that everyone involved is aware of the situation and that you manage expectations.

### Advice From a Bookseller

"We had an event planned in the shop and it hadn't sold very well, even though we'd promoted it heavily. We let the publicist know and the two authors agreed to support the event. On the night of the event six people didn't show up, so an already small event became tiny. Both authors were hugely supportive and the event itself was incredibly intimate but very memorable. The sell-through from the event was great, all five attendees spoke about the book to their friends and family and consequently we received more orders and also a surprising level of buzz considering the number of people actually present on the night. The authors were amazing and we will never forget their support, good nature and encouragement."

- Pauline Harris at Warwick Books



Warwick Books: Guy Hale event in the shop talking about *The Croaking Raven*, his latest novel



Warwick Books: Ramie Targoff talking about her new book *Shakespeare's Sisters* at Friends Meeting House

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# How to Cancel an Author Event

If everyone agrees that the event should be cancelled, you'll need to:

- Alert the people who did buy tickets. It is useful to have a standard cancellation email outlining the reasons for the cancellation and what will happen next. You can adapt it for each scenario.
- Arrange refunds for anyone who bought a ticket.
- If the author has agreed to sign bookplates, you can offer signed copies in the cancellation email and record who wants one.
- Tell everyone on your team.
- Remember to cancel the event stock order.
- Edit your website listing to show that the event is cancelled. Check any external events listing websites that may show the event and remove the listing.
- On the day, put a notice on the door informing everyone that the event is cancelled. Some customers may have decided not to purchase a ticket in advance, choosing instead to just turn up on the day. The sign on the door will alert them to the fact that the event isn't happening.

"Last year for the first time we cancelled an event. The author had to drop out an hour before the shop signing - something totally out of their control and completely understandable. With such little notice we couldn't do much, but we salvaged the day for families who came along, giving away books and goody bags and making as much of their outing as possible - everyone was very understanding."

- A children's bookseller





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# Day of the Event

## Setting up

Make sure you set up your chairs, signing table, stage and PA at least an hour before your author is due to arrive, and do a soundcheck in advance. Check the books have arrived. If the event is taking place in the bookshop you might have to close early – make sure you alert your customers.

If you are using an external venue, consider a table at the entrance with event programmes, name tags (if applicable), and a sign-in sheet or registration list.

Allocate someone to welcome attendees warmly as they arrive, directing them to seating and informing them of any pre-event activities or amenities. Consider handing out event programmes outlining the schedule, including any special instructions, and information about the author and their work. The flyer could also have details of future events.

## Greeting Your Author

**"First and foremost - look after your author! You need a member of staff dedicated to them throughout the evening, showing them where to go, talking them through how the event will run, making sure their tech works, fetching them refreshments, and staying by their side during the signing so that any 'difficult' audience members can be politely dealt with."**

**- Sasha Drennan, owner of Lindum Books, Lincoln**

Have the 'green room' set up. Having already identified which refreshments the author would like, have those all laid out. Remember to also look after the publicist if they are travelling with the author.

If the event is taking place offsite, pack up everything needed to run the event at the venue: books, bags, book stands, pens, Sharpies, Post-Its, tablecloths, sellotape, water, bookshop signs, bookmarks, phone chargers, credit card machine(s), etc.

Your author(s) and interviewer should have been given very clear arrival instructions. If there is a space for them to put their belongings and sit apart to discuss the event beforehand, ensure that this is set up well in advance of their arrival, with any refreshments they may need.

**"I am nervous doing an event with bookshops that I haven't worked with before as audience numbers are so unpredictable and I want to make sure the author is well looked after."**

**- A publicist**

## Checking in Your Audience

Make sure someone is dedicated to checking in your audience. Often, they will arrive just before or at the start time, so be mindful of this with staffing. Encourage the early arrivals to sit at the front, allowing latecomers to be seated at the back, causing less of a disturbance if the event has already started.

Most ticketing platforms will have an app or site which you can use to check in your audience, or you can print the list and check people's names off on arrival. Remember to ensure that you aren't printing any personal data and that you destroy the printout securely afterwards.

## Filming

Recordings of author events can be excellent marketing material for social media. If you choose to film your event:

- Check with the author/publicist beforehand to see that they are happy to be filmed. They might want to sign a photography release form – templates are widely available online
- Mount the camera/phone on a tripod for steadiness – phone tripods are lightweight and inexpensive
- Set up the camera/phone next to the author for clarity of sound. If you film from across the room, you will pick up the noise of people coughing, etc
- Alternatively use a separate microphone which you can set up near the author and film from a distance
- Remember to put up signage in the bookshop so the audience is aware the event is being recorded.

The Edge of the World Bookshop, Penzance:  
In-store author signing with Nick Harkaway



Lindum Books: Pop-up bookshop ready for Lincoln Book Festival at the  
Lincoln Arts Centre

# The Event Itself

## Introducing the Event

Someone from the bookshop should introduce the event and the speakers. It's a good opportunity to say a few words about the bookshop and what makes it distinctive, and to promote any other events coming up, as well as to give out any health and safety (e.g. fire safety) information, and to let customers know where the toilets are.

Give people a short summary of how the event will run (e.g. reading, conversation, audience Q&A, signing, drinks afterwards).

## During the Event

If you aren't hosting the event yourself, it's a good idea to sit at the back of the room, which will help you keep an eye on how things are going and identify any audience members who may need assistance.

## Q&A Session

Facilitate a Q&A session after the reading/event. Prepare a few questions in advance to get things started and encourage audience participation.

## Thank-You

Conclude the event by thanking the author and the attendees (and the interviewer, if there is one). Encourage attendees to purchase books and remind them of any upcoming events. If the author is happy to sign books afterwards, let everyone know how that will work.

## Post-Event Signing

Provide a proper table and a chair of the appropriate height for the signing.

Plan your customers' route: position the signing table so that customers cannot push or walk behind it and have a clear exit route for customers to use once they have had their books signed.

Provide a selection of suitable pens – not all authors bring their own. If the book has shiny pages, felt pens or fountain pens aren't suitable. Sharpies are best. Also remember to have refreshments on the table for the author.

To avoid confusion, keep the queue for signing and the queue for payment separate. Consider whether you want people to pay first and then have the book signed, or the other way round.

Often it is better not to have a cloth covering the signing table as it can move, creating a trip hazard.

If it's a large queue, have an equally large supply of Post-It notes and a member of staff on hand to write the customer's name clearly on each one and place it on the title page before they get to the author. Get the books open at the signing (title) page in advance. This helps speed up the queue.

**"Keep exuding positivity and energy, and things will work out!"**

**– Matt Steele, owner of The Ivybridge Bookshop**





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# After Your Event

**"Document any mistakes so that you don't repeat them."**

**- Chantal Farquhar, The Little Bookshop**

## After the Event

Continue the conversation on social media as this can lead to more book sales. You can also use the post to boost future events. You might also like to:

- Re-post any user-generated content from the event
- Share photos/videos from the event
- If you have any signed stock available, encourage your followers to visit the shop to collect a copy; alternatively, add the stock to your online shop
- If you have any further events lined up, share that events programme with your followers
- Consider sharing the social media report with the relevant publicist.

## Publisher/Author

Make sure you write to thank the author (and publisher, if you worked with one), and the host, and be sure to let them know the final attendee numbers and total number of books sold. Send any photos of the event to the publicist and ask for feedback on the event. Publicists and sales teams love a photo of a long queue of customers waiting to have their books signed.

## Attendees

Follow-up emails are a tried and tested way to improve attendee engagement, gather feedback and promote future events or book sales. Draft a template follow-up email which can be tailored for each event and send it to the attendees the following day. Include details of how customers can buy signed copies of the book from the previous day's event and sign up to receive your shop's regular newsletter; make sure you include the details of any future events you have planned. Eventbrite's 10 best practices for how to write a follow up email has some excellent

tips. [www.eventbrite.co.uk/blog/tips-for-writing-perfect-post-event-thank-you-email-ds00/#ten-best](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/blog/tips-for-writing-perfect-post-event-thank-you-email-ds00/#ten-best)

## GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation)

Ensure you are storing and/or destroying audience data as required (including any printed copies of the audience check-in sheets).

## Evaluating the Event According to Your Original Objectives

Meet with your team to discuss what went well and what could be improved. Gather feedback from all involved. Compare the results to your initial goals. Look at attendance numbers, book sales, and any other relevant metrics. And of course, what did the audience think? Review any feedback from attendees to understand their experience and identify areas for improvement.

## Social Media

With a bank of photos from the event you can share highlights from the event on your social media channels. Tag the author and link over to your website to encourage further book sales.

## Email Newsletter

Include a recap of the event in your next email newsletter, highlighting the success and any upcoming events. Reach out to attendees with a special offer or invitation to future events to keep them engaged with your bookshop.

**"We also like to share pictures of events in our regular newsletters and on social channels to promote signed stock. This means that we can continue to promote and support the book and author even after the event has finished."**

**- A bookseller**

## Calculate Profit and Loss

Calculate your net income from ticket and book sales (taking into account any discounts) against the costs of the event to find whether your event was profitable. Not all events will be profitable, so keep track on an overall quarterly/annual basis.

### Top tip

Nic Bottomley from Mr B's Emporium recommends including the book sales for the whole of the event's promotional period, as the event will often lead to a greater awareness of the title and more enthusiastic handselling on the part of your shop team.

Remember both BatchLine and Gardlink will have reports to help you in your analysis.

## Returning Stock

If you do need to return unsold stock afterwards, ensure you do so within a fortnight of the event. Remember you might need to get authorisation outside of the normal parameters, from your rep.

Gather all unsold books and check the quantities against the initial stock received for the event.

Check for any damages. Place books in their original boxes or suitable packaging to prevent damage during transport. It is your responsibility to ensure the books are returned in a resaleable condition. Depending on how you handle event stock on your bookshop system you might need to adjust stock levels in the system to reflect the returned books and ensure accurate records.

Follow the agreed return process, including completing any required paperwork or return authorisation forms. Update the publicist and the sales rep that the books have been returned. Mark up the bookshop diary that you should receive a credit for that return and keep an eye out for the credit note. Top tip: check the discount on the credit note to ensure it is the same as on the invoice.



The Heath Bookshop, Birmingham: Leeroy Thornhill talking about his new book *Wildfire: My Ten Years Getting High in The Prodigy*

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# Ideas From Other Bookshops

## The Heath Bookshop, Birmingham: The Heath Bookshop Literature and Music Festival

April 2024 saw a new festival organised by The Heath Bookshop in Birmingham suburb Kings Heath, featuring a wide range of literary and music events for all ages and interests. The festival aimed at encouraging children and adults in this diverse community to experience the written word and music in different ways. Collaboration and partnership with the Hare and Hounds pub, a famous local music venue, was key to the music elements of the festival. The Heath also worked closely with the team at a nearby children's specialist bookshop, How Brave is the Wren, who made sure that children were properly catered for.

The festival line-up included an eclectic mix of nationally known but locally based writers such as Robin Ince, Daniel Rachel, Mike Gayle, and Catherine O'Flynn, and a wide range of musicians including Pauline Black and Richard Norris. Organised across three days, it also featured creative writing workshops, live music, panel discussions and a children's parade.

Keen to encourage new voices, The Heath Bookshop has provided a bursary for one young writer to attend a workshop with bestselling author Michel Faber. Speaking ahead of the festival (to *Birmingham What's On*, issue 447, April 2024) Catherine Gale, co-owner of The Heath Bookshop, said:

**"So many of the events will be something people haven't seen before, and I hope people will be inspired by them. There is something special about having that close contact with musicians and authors."**

Co-owner Claire Dawes, speaking about the community support since The Heath Bookshop opened in September 2022, said:

**"We've been so well supported here at The Heath Bookshop from the day we opened, and this festival is part of us giving something back to the Kings Heath community."**

The festival has received National Lottery funding through Arts Council England; in order to make events as accessible as possible, many are free to attend or low cost. Throughout the three days the festival attracted nearly 2,100 participants including 1,125 children from five local schools.

## The Great North Author Tour

Illustrative of the passionate commitment of indies to children's literacy and cultural lives is the work by several indie booksellers in the Northeast of England and North Yorkshire to develop the Great North Author Tour. This initiative has been running since 2019 and in 2023 took eleven local authors by minibus to indie bookshops and schools across the Northeast and North Yorkshire over two days. It was initiated by DRAKE The Bookshop, Stockton-on-Tees, and has proved immensely popular with authors, children, parents, and schools and the other six bookshops involved.

The collaboration between seven indies in the region has been critical to developing the tour, getting through COVID and ensuring it is now entirely funded by DRAKE The Bookshop, though they (DRAKE) are looking to find some support to run it in a sustainable form. In addition to highlighting the talents of new writers from the local area and ensuring that they are better connected with local audiences, it helps to boost regional cultural life and allows access to an array of writing talent for children in their own communities. It also sends a positive message about culture and literary talent having their roots in their localities.



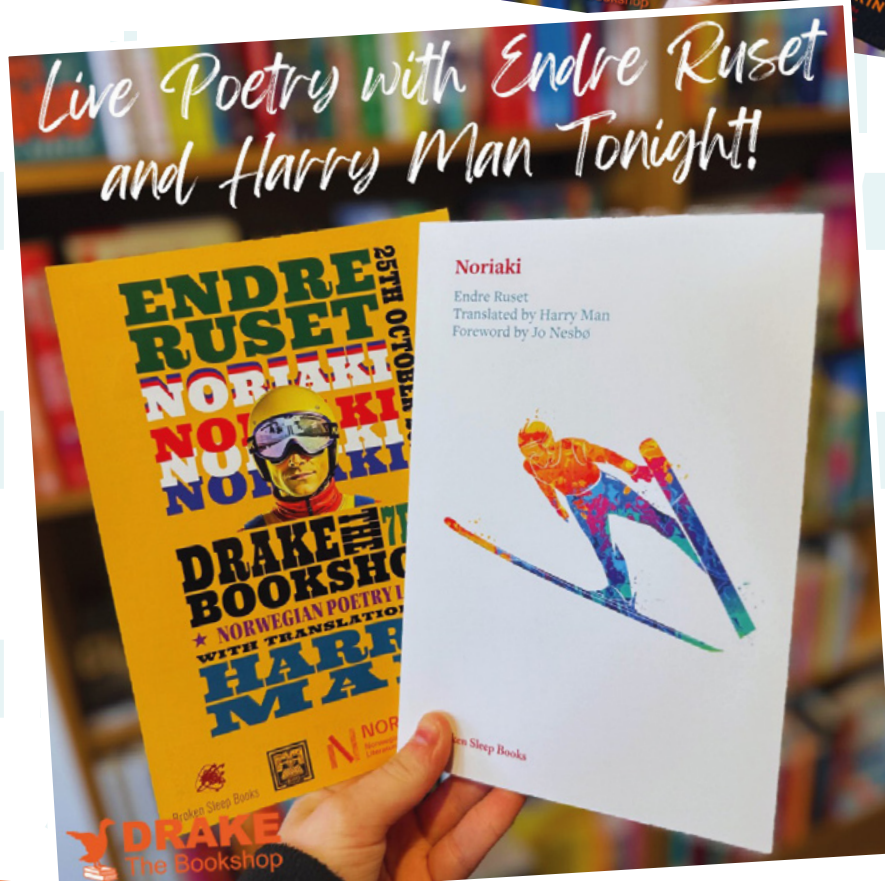
As Richard Drake, co-owner of DRAKE, puts it:

**"Giving children a chance to see themselves in a book is huge and knowing that person is from where they are from is equally, if not more, important!"**

The tour has many other spin-off benefits. For example, it provides authors with the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas, thus giving them valuable professional support and development.

Richard Drake estimates that, to date, the Great North Author Tour has had a total of 22 authors take part with over 3,500 children reached through either author talks or workshops.

DRAKE The Bookshop, Stockton-on-Tees:  
Children's book club social media post



DRAKE The Bookshop, Stockton-on-Tees: Norwegian poet Endre Ruset and Stockton poet Harry Man performing live poetry celebrating the world's oldest still-competing ski jumping champion, Noriaki Kasai

# The importance of Author Events for Bookshops

Bookshop events are a vital element of the UK and Ireland's cultural landscape. The bookshops in England who took part in the 2024 Booksellers Association's Social & Cultural Impact of Independent Bookshops Report (commissioned for Arts Council England) indicated that:

- **92%** of the independent bookshops who contributed to the report run activities and events for their local communities
- **92%** (of those running events) hold author events
- **60%** run book clubs
- **Nearly one in three** indies organise 20-plus events per year
- **One in three** organise 30 or more events.
- **56%** run events in partnership with local arts and community organisations
- **63%** support local literary/arts festivals
- **Nearly four in ten** bookshops organise creative writing workshops
- **27%** organise local literary festivals
- **48%** organise book fairs at schools
- **45%** organise for authors to go into local schools.

In 2024 The Booksellers Association (BA) published the results of a new report commissioned by Arts Council England, about the cultural and social impact, and value of England's independent bookshops. The aim of the research project was to determine how independent bookshops enrich the cultural and social lives of their communities, as well as identifying enablers and barriers, so that this contribution can be strengthened across the bookselling cohort. The research sought to measure and record the ways in which bookshops deliver the key aims of Arts Council England's Let's Create 10-year strategy. Central to that is maximising the opportunities for communities in every part of the country to experience, enjoy and celebrate culture. You can read the full report on the Booksellers Association website.



You may welcome some confidential guidance on running events, or on any other aspect of bookselling. BA Mentoring offers free expert advice from experienced booksellers and provides an invaluable objective eye on your bookselling business. Mentoring is available to all BA members. You can find out more about the bookseller mentoring scheme here: [booksellers.org.uk/Member-Services/Business-Support/BA-Mentoring-Programme](https://booksellers.org.uk/Member-Services/Business-Support/BA-Mentoring-Programme) or email Kate Gunning directly on [kate.gunning@booksellers.org.uk](mailto:kate.gunning@booksellers.org.uk)



The Edge of the World Bookshop, Penzance:  
Social media post for upcoming events

## Notes





Lined area for writing, consisting of 20 horizontal blue lines.





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