Rail Delivery Group

National Rail

RDG Guidance Note:
Planning for Special Events

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About this document

Explanatory note

The Rail Delivery Group is not a regulatory body and compliance with Guidance Notes or Approved Codes of Practice is not mandatory; they reflect good practice and are advisory only. Users are recommended to evaluate the guidance against their own arrangements in a structured and systematic way, noting that parts of the guidance may not be appropriate to their operations. It is recommended that this process of evaluation and any subsequent decision to adopt (or not adopt) elements of the guidance should be documented. Compliance with any or all of the contents herein, is entirely at an organisation's own discretion.

Other Guidance Notes or Approved Codes of Practice are available on the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) website.

Executive summary

This Guidance Note provides advice on operational, safety and contingency factors to take into consideration when planning for special events.
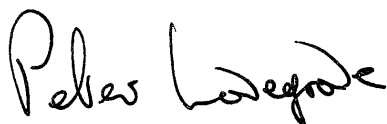
Issue record

Issue 1 of this document was published as ATOC/GN026 and Issue 2 as: RDG-GN026.

Issue	Date	Comments
1	May 2015	Original version as an ATOC document.
2	October 2017	Periodic review and also reformatted as an RDG document
3	August 2022	Following periodic review

This document is reviewed on a regular 3-year cycle.

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Contents

1   Purpose and scope

1.1   Purpose

The purpose of this guidance note is to provide a list of factors to take into consideration, along with suggestions as to how each may be addressed, when planning for special events that are likely to have an impact on a railway undertaking's business. It focuses primarily on operational and safety aspects and associated contingency arrangements – it does not seek to address purely commercial considerations such as ticketing or revenue protection arrangements. Its content reflects examples of good practice identified through a review of individual railway undertaking arrangements.

1.2   Scope

This guide is produced for the benefit of all member organisations of the RDG Train Operators' Operations Scheme.

2   Introduction

Major special events – such as sporting fixtures, music festivals, royal occasions and other high-profile events – result in an increase in the number of people using the rail network.

This is not a new phenomenon, but the growth in the number of customers in recent years means that this is imposed on a much higher level of base demand than was previously the case. As of the date of publication of this Guidance Note, the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic are still being felt with regard to commuting and, in particular, business travel but many routes and services have seen leisure travel return to or exceed pre-Covid volumes.

Special events impose even greater pressure on trains and stations which are already routinely operating at close to maximum capacity with associated risks, for example those at the platform train interface, made all the more acute.

It follows that greater resources need to be dedicated to managing special events, both in the planning phase and on the day, to ensure that these risks are appropriately identified, mitigated and managed.

3   Definitions

Within this document, the following terms have the meanings below.

Term	Definition in the context of this document
Emergency services	The statutory fire, police (including British Transport Police), ambulance or coastguard services in whose areas an incident occurs.
Event Manager	A manager from the lead railway undertaking appointed at the Tactical level of command to oversee the practical implementation of the planned arrangements and the ongoing operation for the station.
Rail Incident Officer (RIO)	The nominated and certificated person charged with the roles of i) on-site command and control of all rail related organisations and their support; ii) co-ordination of all on-site rail activities; and iii) overall responsibility for the safety of people in respect of GB mainline railway hazards, at the whole incident site. Appointed by Network Rail, this is a Tactical level role.

Safety Advisory Group (SAG)	SAGs are usually co-ordinated by a local authority and made up of representatives from the local authority, emergency services, other relevant bodies and the event organiser. They may be event or location specific but otherwise tend to be based on local authority boundaries.	
	Their purpose is to provide a forum for discussing and advising on public safety at an event. They aim to help organisers with the planning, and management of an event and to encourage cooperation and coordination between all relevant agencies. They are non-statutory bodies and so do not have legal powers or responsibilities and are not empowered to approve or prohibit events from taking place. Event organisers and others involved in the running of an event, retain the principal legal duties for ensuring public safety.	
Station Incident Officer	The nominated and certified person charged with the role of on-site command and control of all rail-related organisations and their support for an incident involving a station. Appointed by the Station Facility Owner – which may be either Network Rail or a railway undertaking – to take responsibility for managing the operation of a station in the event of an incident at that station. This is an Operational level role.	
	The Station Incident Officer will call together representatives of all rail-related organisations at the station and provide accommodation, facilities and staff as agreed to operate this Code. In some circumstances the RIO may assume this role.	
	For an incident that affects both the route and a station, the RIO assumes command of the incident and the Station Incident Officer reports to that RIO.	
	Where the 'incident' is a pre-planned special event (as is the case here), the Station Incident Officer will report to the Event Manager and may themselves be appointed as the Event Manager.	
	Note: Station Incident Officer should not normally be abbreviated to SIO to avoid confusion with Senior Investigating Officer (as used by the police).	
Train Operator Liaison Officer (TOLO)	Person appointed by a railway undertaking as the lead representative of all those railway undertakings affected by an incident, in this case a special event. The TOLO will report to and liaise with the RIO on-site or to the Station Incident Officer for station related incidents. This is an Operational level role.	
Travel Demand Management (TDM)	In the context of a special event, TDM is the application of strategies, policies and tools to influence travel behaviours to redistribute travel demand in space or in time.	

4 Early identification of events

4.1 General plans and processes

Many railway undertakings already manage major public events which occur on a regular basis and have established plans and processes for the review and revision of those plans.

Many have also found it helpful to have an 'event calendar' onto which details of forthcoming events with the potential to have an impact on train/station operations can be recorded. Each event may additionally be 'categorised' to indicate the assessed likely impact on operations from 'business as usual' to 'major event plan and significantly enhanced train service required'. This categorisation may be further subdivided into impact on train planning, crowd management, station staffing, security, road traffic/parking managements on the station approach, etc.

4.2   Liaison with local authorities

Railway undertakings should endeavour to make sure local authorities are aware of their requirements and limitations with regards to the provision of train services for special events. The principles of this should be raised by railway undertakings at their respective Local Resilience Forums.

For some larger events, railway undertakings may be asked to participate in the SAG. Such participation is recommended as it provides a mechanism for giving feedback on the proposed plans (see below).

4.3   New and one-off events

There are also occasions where a new or one-off major event is taking place. In such cases, railway undertakings need to be involved in initial consultation with event organisers in conjunction with other key stakeholders (such as the British Transport Police (BTP), Network Rail and other agencies) to understand the dynamics of the event and also the crowd profile. Understanding the crowd profile is essential when it comes to assessing potential risk.

The organisers of such events may not have had previous comparable experience on which to draw and hence may fail to anticipate the impact on the rail system. However, it is highly probable that they will have had an early engagement with the local authority concerned through the SAG process and hence it is recommended that railway undertakings develop a good working relationship with local authority special event leads and encourage them to share such details as they have of future events at the earliest possible opportunity.

As a general rule, it is easier to assess the potential travel demand for ticketed events as the event organisers will have a lot of useful data on who is coming and from where. This may extend to information on what mode of transport people coming to the event are planning to use. For un-ticketed events, it is much harder to evaluate and understand the transport impacts.

Some stakeholders may not be immediately obvious. For example, the annual Army v Navy rugby union fixture at Twickenham involves a Military Police presence in addition to the BTP and Metropolitan Police.

A timeline should be drawn up for planning and implementing the arrangements with key milestones identified. An example of such a timeline is provided as Appendix A, though it should be noted that this is indicative only and that timescales are necessarily relative rather than absolute as larger/more complex events will require planning to start sooner than those which are smaller/simpler.

5   Assessing the risk

5.1   Introduction

Assessing the risks that could potentially arise from the holding of a major public event is a key driver for determining necessary control measures. These will, in turn, form the basis for the railway undertaking event plan, including the train service plans required to meet the anticipated demand for rail travel to and from the event.

5.2   Factors to consider

Major events may significantly increase the level of passenger flow, both on trains and at stations. In both cases, specific control measures will be required to provide effective management and prevent the potential for overcrowding and congestion with the consequences of personal injury through crushing and slips, trips and falls, particularly at the platform train interface.

Establishing a good working relationship with the event organisers is a very useful way to gather information about potential numbers, demographics, timings, transport from the station to the event (e.g. any special bus services, etc.), all of which will be factors to consider in the planning.

For some specific events, particularly those which are being attended by very high-profile VIPs, etc., the security concerns may mean that information can be difficult to obtain and normal levels of multi-agency working and joint planning may not apply. This can make things more difficult to assess.

In addition, the station infrastructure at the nearest railhead to an event may not be capable of dealing with significantly increased customer levels. There also needs to be consideration of any impacts of railway engineering works, other concurrent events on the same line of route, etc.

Increased passenger levels may well introduce other hazards and risks, for example the use of road transport between the railhead and event location, anti-social or unlawful behaviour, increased amounts of litter/other rubbish, potential damage to station infrastructure or trains, station security compromised and staff exposure to verbal/physical assault.

The potential impact of the weather on the day should also be considered – this applies not just to extreme weather (hot, cold, wind and heavy rain) but also the potential for a shower or onset of more general rain to trigger a mass exodus rather than a more staggered drift away from open-air events.

Consideration needs to be given to arrangements for the event overrunning (such as a football match going into extra time), being cancelled at short notice or ending early (as a result of such as a safety issue, terrorist alert or bad weather).

The risks associated with train service disruption, for example resulting in customers being late for the event, and the consequences of any incident that may happen at the event itself, should also be taken into consideration – this again highlights the importance of communication between the railway undertaking and event organiser.

Control measures may include delaying event start times for example, though it should be noted that no such flexibility is likely to be available for events that are being televised live.

The profile of those attending an event should be considered too and the possible implications of opposing people meeting en-route to or from either the same or two different events needs to be recognised (e.g. rival football supporters).

It is recommended that the risks associated with the event are jointly assessed by the lead railway undertaking/Network Rail Route involved and all key stakeholders, including other railway undertakings, likely to be significantly affected.

6 Planning for the event

6.1 Overview

An event risk assessment should be the basis of any major event plan. All such event risk assessments should be carried out by a person who is suitably qualified and competent in risk assessment, with input from those who are relevant, such as local station management, etc.

Planning should be undertaken in conjunction with the event organiser and with the active involvement of all key stakeholders, who will include, as appropriate:

   i.   The BTP
   ii.   Respective Home Office police forces (and other police as appropriate, e.g. Military, etc.)
   iii. Local emergency services
   iv.   Network Rail
   v.   Other railway undertakings (including operators of charter trains)
   vi.   Local authorities
   vii. Interfacing transport operators (e.g. bus companies, metro systems, etc.).
   viii. Contracted crowd management companies
   ix.   Operators of associated venues involved
   x.   Organisations involved (i.e. event promoters, participating sports clubs etc.)

The planning process should determine accountabilities and responsibilities, both within and outside of the railway boundary, to ensure that stakeholder plans are aligned, seamless and where necessary, integrated. Such plans should also include the communication arrangements and what locations may require rail staff in addition to the affected station, such as any local "event control".

Control measures to mitigate against the potential risks should be determined at this stage, with any specific actions allocated to the relevant stakeholder. It may be necessary for a railway undertaking to use contractors who specialise in event and crowd management.

It is essential to determine a robust command, control and communication structure that is easily understood by all parties and is agreed and documented within each stakeholder plan.

The suggested content of event plans is covered in the following Sections 6.2, through to 6.8, though their content should not be regarded as exhaustive.

Every organisation responsible for event planning should subject itself to the scrutiny of the respective local SAG. Failure to do so will leaves it open to criticism and liability in the event that things go wrong.

The SAG can also advise and inform other relevant parties of the respective organisations' limitations and requirements.

6.2   Command and control

Command and control arrangements should be set out, including the communications interface with key stakeholders necessary to ensure there is a clear channel of communication between the relevant railhead and the event site – this should include identifying any potential communication 'blackspots' and arrangements to overcome these.

There should be a robust command and control structure in place to manage the event. Generally accepted best practice is to establish a three-tier command structure comprising Strategic, Tactical and Operational levels to implement and manage the arrangements. These are often still referred to by their previous names, i.e. Gold, Silver and Bronze.

It is usually, but not exclusively, the case that the relevant Control Office undertakes the role of Strategic Command – this may involve a specific 'event team' which will deal exclusively with managing the strategic requirements of the event in conjunction with the Tactical Command Team (see below) whilst the remaining personnel in the Control Office manage the rest of the network.

A manager from the lead railway undertaking should be appointed as an Event Manager to oversee the practical implementation of the planned arrangements at a Tactical level. Recognised best practice is to establish a Tactical Command Team to support the Event Manager. The Event Manager role allows for the management of the station and the management of any impactive incident within that station to be separated, with the Event Manager retaining the lead for the areas of the station that are outside of the areas being affected by the incident, which are then part of the incident response being led by the Station Incident Officer. This option can work for larger stations which can be sectionalised.

The planning process should identify the roles required and the resources needed to fulfil them. There will also be a requirement to identify specific rail industry skill sets at the Tactical and Operational levels of command so that both the planned arrangements can be effectively delivered and a timely response to incidents with the potential to seriously disrupt the planned arrangements can be deployed. This may include:

i.   Network Rail Mobile Operations Manager (MOM) / Rail Incident Officer (RIO)
ii.   Railway undertaking or Network Rail Station Incident Officer – this role could be one and the same as the Tactical Commander
iii.   Railway undertaking Train Operator Liaison Officer (TOLO)
iv.   Railway undertaking fleet engineering staff (for dealing with train faults)
v.   Station announcer
vi.   Queue Manager(s)
vii.   Revenue Manager
viii. Platform Manager(s)

These roles are representative but not exhaustive; the planning arrangements will determine exact requirements. They will undertake their duties as designated within the event plan and station incident management plan, with which the event plan needs to be aligned as far as reasonably practicable.

For some large or high-profile events, plans may include the point at which the command and control of the event would move from the event team to another agency who would take command at that point, e.g. any handover of control to the respective police commander.

6.3 Staffing

Staffing plans should include details of where resources will be positioned and their roles and responsibilities, and the arrangements for the briefing of same.

Plans should also detail what other railway staff may be allocated to support the event, e.g. if a Network Rail Mobile Operations Manager (MOM) and/or infrastructure fault response staff or rolling stock fitters etc. are to be located within a station or if a rail management representative is required to attend the local event control, etc.

6.4 Crowd management

All stations should have crowd management plans which can be implemented if required, but for larger events these may need to be at a level above what is normal, with additional resources and prepared queuing systems, etc.

Crowd management arrangements for events should include the supplying of relevant information to customers – this may include providing leaflets to those on the inbound journey which explain any requirements for queuing into the station on the return journey.

For major events, it may be appropriate to employ Travel Demand Management (TDM). TDM has worked well for some events (e.g. the London Olympics in 2012) but less well for others.

6.5 Security

Security arrangements should be drawn up and include specific references to any changes to DfT Land Transport Security requirements. In some circumstances stations that are the nearest rail station to a high profile event may get a higher level of security designated for a set period of time.

During the planning process, the nature, location and profile of the event all need to be considered so that the security elements can be identified. BTP should flag up if there are any particular security concerns or specific security requirements such as access for searches, parking for specialist vehicles, etc.

Where there are large numbers of people coming through a station and these are likely to be people unfamiliar with that station, it may be worth considering the use of rail staff volunteers in high visibility tabards to engage with them and so free up station staff to maintain their security checks within the station.

The profile of the event and those attending may also require changes to the normal security regime.

6.6 Operations

Operational arrangements should be identified, such as the train plan, station specific platform workings and requirements for managing the platform train interface and train dispatch.

6.7 Customer care and assistance

Requirements for customer assistance (able bodied and mobility impaired), and including first aid provision, should be set out, along with provision of toilet and catering facilities and train and station cleaning arrangements. Again, the profile of the event may influence the level of first aid provision and assistance resources required to support the event passengers and also help reduce potential delays.

6.8 Emergencies and contingencies

In addition to the normal station incident response plans, event specific contingency arrangements should be drawn up to take account of any reasonably foreseeable emergency or degraded situations affecting the station, infrastructure or train operations during the event, aligned to its profile and likely passenger numbers, etc. These should include train service and crowd management contingencies, along with requirements for the evacuation of the premises and meeting the needs of passengers stranded on trains. Such plans should be aligned with and supplement the normal station processes to minimise potential confusion of roles, etc.

It should be recognised that the specific nature of some emergencies may require the direct intervention of the BTP or local police – the plan content should reflect this requirement and the arrangements for the transfer of command and control.

7 Plan timelines

The plan should contain a timeline for implementation of the arrangements. As an example:

i.   6 weeks prior to event – commence media/public information campaign.
ii.   Not less than 10 days prior to the event – undertake tabletop exercise with all key stakeholders.
iii. Produce a plan for the implementation of any actions arising from the tabletop exercise.
iv.   1 week prior to event – carry out deep clean of station(s).
v.   2 days prior to event day - close station car park(s).
vi.   1 day prior to event day - erect crowd management barriers.
vii. 1 day prior to event – install portable toilets in station car park(s).
viii. Early morning on day of event - erect informational signage.
ix.   Early morning on day of event – undertake final inspection of premises and arrangements.
x.   Early morning on day of event – brief early turn staff and volunteers.
xi.   14.00 on day of event – brief late turn staff and volunteers.
xii. End of day of event – hold 'hot debrief' with staff and volunteers.
xiii. Within 5 days of event being held – undertake review of arrangements with event planning team.

NOTE: The above list is intended to be neither prescriptive nor exhaustive.

8 Staff briefing packs

To support the event plan, a staff briefing pack should be compiled for imparting the arrangements to the managers and staff who will be in attendance. The briefing pack should contain as a minimum:

i.   An overview of the event and plan arrangements.
ii.   The arrangements for command and control and lines of communication.
iii. Any specific risks associated with the event, and how these will be managed.
iv.   Details of the crowd management plan and staff responsibilities.
v.   What to do in the event of an emergency.
vi.   Contingency arrangements for the event plan.
vii. Information on train service provision, 'where to change' information, local interfacing details (such as local bus routes and pedestrian routes to the event site).
viii. Information on local facilities (such as toilets, ticket purchasing points, catering outlets, cash points, etc.).
ix.   Clear detailing of anything which is a change to normal station processes and procedures.

NOTE: The above list is intended to be neither prescriptive nor exhaustive.

9 Informing the public

9.1 Media

It is important that advice of the event is communicated prior to the event occurring. The media used for this purpose will be wide and varied and may include:

    i.   Company and National Rail websites
    ii.   Social media (such as Twitter)
   iii. Customer Information Systems at stations and on trains
   iv. Leaflets (given to passengers arriving at the station on their inbound journey)
    v.   Via the promoter, venue or other organisations involved with the event, e.g. football club, music promoter, etc.

9.2 Content

This will cover various aspects, including:

    i.   Travel advice to customers intending to attend the event itself.
    ii.   Travel advice to customers whose normal journey patterns may be affected by the event.
   iii. Changes to the access and egress arrangements at a station.
   iv. Advance warning of potential queuing times back into a station which intending customers should take into account for their journey planning.
    v.   Advice of additional or altered train services.
   vi. Advice of any specific facilities being provided at stations for the event.

10 Exercising the arrangements

The plan arrangements should be tested prior to the event.

The most common method is the table-top style with participants from all interfacing agencies.

The exercise should identify any shortcomings or omissions with the planned arrangements, which should be recorded, and amendments to the plan agreed. The plan should then be reviewed by stakeholders and 'signed off' for publication.

11 Implementation of the plan

The arrangements to manage the event should be implemented in accordance with the agreed content, including the requirements for briefing all personnel involved, including those in the Control.

It is important that the lines of communication for command and control are practically tested. The adequacy of mobile phone signals should be assessed sufficiently in advance of the event for alternative arrangements to be put in place if these are found to be needed. A further check should take place on the day of the event to ensure that back-to-back radios work, mobile phone numbers are correct, batteries are charged and any other potential communications related issues are identified.

Recognised good practice recommends that the 'Event Manager' or Station Manager leading the station operations on the day/s, undertakes periodic 'time outs' with key personnel to ensure arrangements remain fit for purpose, agreeing any adjustments that may be required. It is suggested that a 'time out' should always be held once the event has begun to confirm the arrangements for receiving return traffic are fully understood.
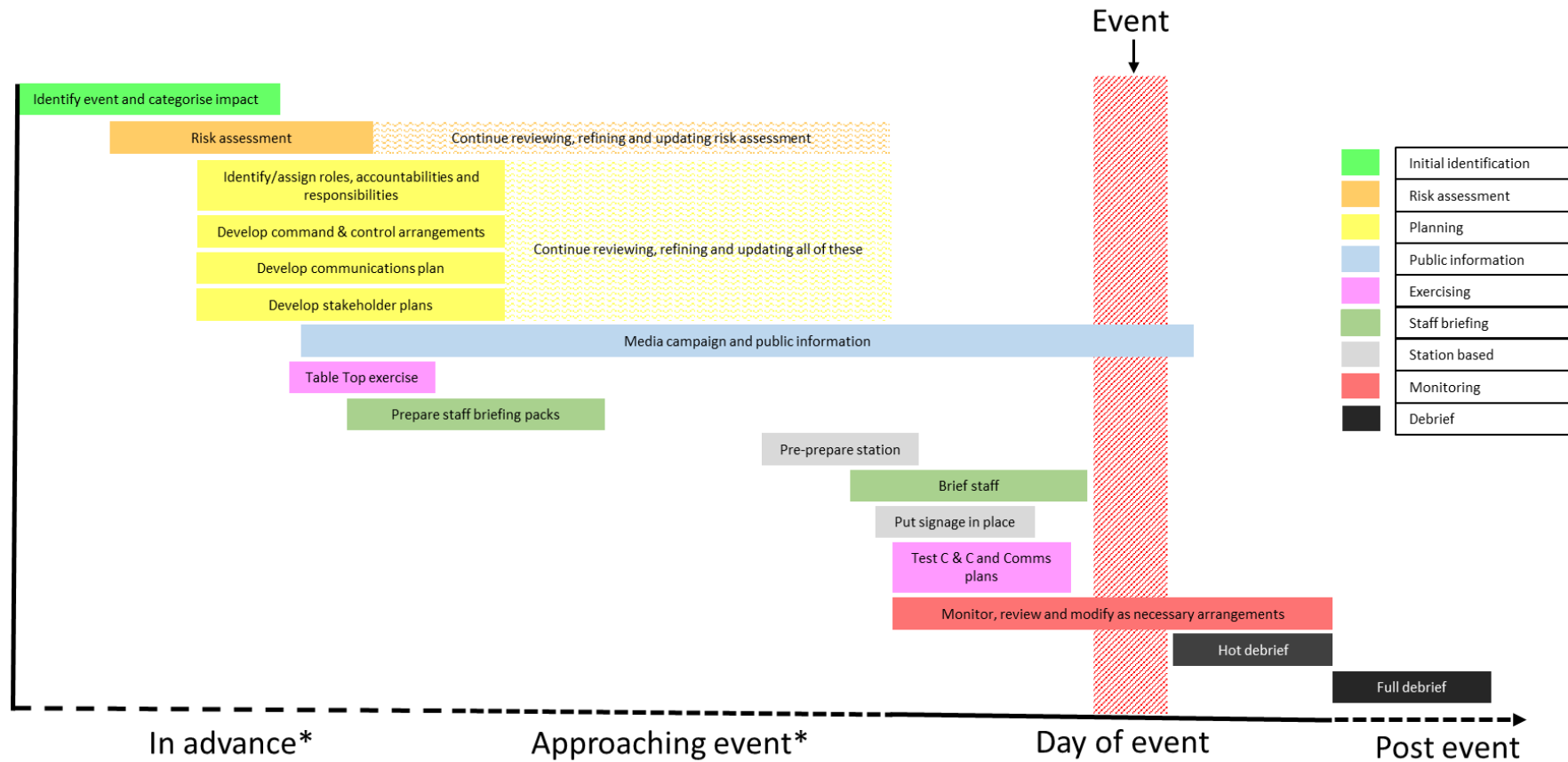
12 Review

Recognised good practice recommends that a 'hot' debrief be undertaken with personnel immediately after the event plan arrangements have been officially 'stood down'. This allows for immediate thoughts and feedback to be captured.

A formal review of the planned arrangements with all key stakeholders should be undertaken within a reasonable timescale of the event date to determine the effectiveness of those arrangements, including areas of concern and development, but also to allow good practice to be identified and built upon. These post event debriefs can then feed back into the plan so that it is refined over time.

The review findings should be recorded in a written report, with any recommendations being actioned and tracked to conclusion, normally resulting in amendments to the documented arrangements.

Appendix A Event planning timeline

* Timescales are relative – planning for major and/or one-off events will need to be started sooner than for smaller and/or regular events

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