

# Festival of Communities

Saturday 8 June 2024

Guide to taking part



## What is the Festival?

The Festival of Communities was started in 2016 to bring people together in Tower Hamlets, celebrating living and learning in the borough.

The Festival attracts a lot of local families with varying ages of children, with the majority under 10 years old.

In 2022 and 2023 we saw around 7-8000 visitors attend over two days.

The 2024 Festival will be a one-day event and will take place on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June in Stepney Green Park.



## Applying to take part

If you would like to run an activity at the Festival of Communities, we are asking you to put together a short pitch. Taking part in the Festival is very popular, and we don't always have space for everything everyone would like to do. Use this space to tell us about what you're planning to do and why you think this will be interesting to our visitors.

You may find it useful to ask yourself the following questions:

- What's the key message that you would like visitors to take away?
- Why will your activity be interesting to our visitors? How will you draw them in?
- How are you going to adapt your activity for young children, teenagers or adults?
- Are there things you can incorporate to make your activity inclusive and accessible?

Tip – name your activity something short and snappy that will entice people to want to take part whilst explaining what you'll be doing. We'll be using these in local promotion, on our website, and on social media.

You will also be asked about:

- Your space and furniture requirements – so we can ensure there is enough space for you to run what you would like to whilst providing a positive experience for our visitors.
- How many people in total will be supporting your activity – this is important for us to gauge how many people we need to provide lunch and refreshments for. We want to prevent food wastage, so it's important we get as accurate an idea as possible.  
We understand you won't have the people confirmed as yet, but consider how many people will be needed to deliver each part of your activity and base your figure on this.

- For Queen Mary staff and students – tell us how your activity is linked to your work or the work of Queen Mary - through research, learning, a Queen Mary initiative or project linked to Strategy 2030, or an activity of the Students' Union (this can include societies, sports clubs, volunteering groups etc).

## Space options:

There are four space options available to choose from. Please be aware that we have limited availability for the groups of three tables and one table with an empty space.

One table, two chairs



Two tables, four chairs



Group of three tables

*So people can sit around with you.  
8-10 chairs.*



One table with an empty space

*You have equipment that needs space.  
2 chairs.*



## Tell us about any risks

If your activity involves animals, chemicals, biological samples, food tasting, open flames, valuable equipment or other potentially hazardous or high-risk activities, we will need to include this on our risk assessments.

Tell us as much as you can about these and we'll be in touch about specific risk assessments that may be needed. If you have risk assessments completed already for similar outreach activities, please email them to [festival@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:festival@qmul.ac.uk) and clearly label them the name of your activity so we can match them up to your pitch.

Please don't be put off by risk assessments – we've had many activities feature animals, chemicals and fire in the past (although not all together!). The Festival team will work with you to make sure your activity can take place safely.

## What to expect

### Running an activity



We discourage lots of text and reading for visitors to take part in your activity – there's so much happening in the Festival environment to keep people's attention, and for many residents English is a second language with varying levels of comprehension.

Giving visitors something to take away with them is popular and works well as a reminder of the topics and new things they have discovered that day. This doesn't have to be substantial or expensive!

Tip - Plan to keep people's attention for **3 minutes** – it's going to be difficult to keep people engaged for much longer when there are going to be so many other fun activities for people to take part in.

### Space

We build a small village of tents and marquees in Stepney Green Park to house activities within on the Saturday.

The Festival team will allocate your location based on the information you give us in your pitch. Most of our spaces are in large marquees where you will be with other exhibitors.

### Furniture

Tables and chairs will be provided within the 4 options available. See page 3 for more details.

All activities will have access to either a wall or poster boards to display banners and signs behind you.



## Water

Stepney Green Park does not have a running water supply, and it is unlikely we will be able to bring in a stand-alone supply for this event. If access to water is essential for your activity, please plan to bring this with you.

## Power

On the Saturday in Stepney Green Park, we hire generators to provide access to power for activities to utilise. It is sometimes difficult to guarantee power for activities requiring large frequent bursts of power (e.g. kettles, hairdryers) or are 100% relying on power for their activity to be successful (e.g. lots of tech). It's not impossible if we know in advance what you're bringing with you, so please provide as many details as possible in your pitch. We may be in touch to discuss your requirements.

## Wi-Fi

Stepney Green Park does not currently have public WiFi provision, so if access to the internet is essential for your activity to work well, e.g. the need to constantly upload/download from a cloud platform or play games online, you will need to re-think your activity. Next year we hope to return to the two-day Festival format with one day in the park and one day on the QM Mile End campus, so if WiFi is essential you may want to wait until next year to take part when you'll be able to make use of a reliable internet connection.



## Your equipment

We will be setting up a drop-off point on the Queen Mary campuses in the week leading to the Festival for any activity equipment/kit which needs transporting to Stepney Green park.

Specific details on the logistics of storing and transporting will be shared with successful activities in May.

## Your team

We recommend all activity leads build a team of people (at least two others) to help support them over the day, to ensure everyone can get away for a break when needed and to see the rest of the Festival.

Previous activity leads have recruited colleagues from their team/wider department, external partners/collaborators on a project, Queen Mary student volunteers, alumni volunteers, and volunteers from their community groups/charities.

All Queen Mary staff hoping to take part in the Festival should seek approval from their line manager to take Time Off In Lieu (TOIL) for hours worked over the weekend. Part-time staff are able to apply for funding to cover additional days worked if they are not able to take Time Off In Lieu or the Festival falls outside of their remit.

This year we are trialing a new approach where all PhD students are paid for their time. You will be asked about this when you submit your pitch, more details about what can be covered can be found in the funding guidance document.



Queen Mary staff participating in the Festival are contributing to university life, citizenship and inclusion; the latter two are formally recognised via the Academic Promotions Process, and via the citizenship objectives of professional services staff via Appraisals.

## Sustainability

We are working hard to make the Festival as sustainable as possible.

- Consider reusing, repurposing or borrowing equipment before you buy anything new.
- Try to limit waste, and plan to separate your recycling
- **Do not bring balloons, glitter, plastic sequins or similar as they end up in the park environment and are very difficult to remove.**
- If your stand will have giveaways, try to consider sustainable options.

Tip – try asking your colleagues if you're not sure what equipment might already be available.

## Frequently Asked Questions:

### Can I bring my own gazebo or tent structure?

There is space for you to tell us if you'd like to bring your own gazebo structure if your department/organisation have them – this can allow for good visibility in a crowded area and provide dedicated space you can take over. Public Liability Insurance and a risk assessment will be needed.

### Can I run an activity not linked to my work or studies?

Due to the nature of where the Festival funding comes from we are unable to fund activities where this is based on a personal interest of the Queen Mary staff member or student and doesn't link back to Queen Mary strategy. We welcome applications of this nature for the Festival, but we are unable to provide funding for them.

### Can I run a tour or guided walk?

Tours of an area of the Queen Mary campus have worked well in the past– but as we are only running a one day Festival in Stepney Green Park this year, tours will not be possible.

### Can I give a talk, dance, screen a film or showcase an exhibition?

Due to the busy nature of the Festival, we have found over the years that workshops, talks, exhibitions or short film screenings do not work as well in the environment, so we aren't able to accommodate these pitches.



### Can I do something else that doesn't fit into the space requirements on page 3?

No. This is because the time taken to support these different activities is much greater than the time we have available, and as a team we don't have capacity to do them justice.

### I'm flexible with my space requirements, which option should I pick?

If you're able to design your activity to fit the space available, it's worth bearing in mind that we have more of some space options than others. For example there are fewer spaces to fit "grouped" tables in the Festival footprint, so the availability of these spaces is likely to be competitive. 1 table or 2 table pitches have the greatest availability so we expect to allocate more of these.

### Why don't you ask how many chairs we will need?

Chairs will be allocated based on the number of tables you have in your space (e.g. two tables with four chairs behind it) and we will try to give you more chairs on the day if you need it.