

## Case Study 6: A Community Mental Health Event

### Lecturer notes

#### A note for lecturers

This case study is designed to give students some practice in considering issues associated with reporting or communicating about mental illness and suicide so they will be better prepared to deal with such a situation, should it arise, when they are working as journalists or public relations practitioners. Mental illness and suicide are very sensitive and complex issues, and it is natural that some people may feel uncomfortable talking about them. Usually, these feelings are temporary and do not cause serious distress. Talking about mental illness or suicide in an educational and supportive environment provides lecturers with an opportunity to advise students about counselling and other services available on campus, and to encourage students experiencing problems to seek professional help by talking to a GP, health professional or call a crisis counselling service such as:

- Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800 (5-25 years)
- Lifeline 13 11 14
- Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467

For online information visit: [www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au) and [www.reachout.com](http://www.reachout.com)

For further information and advice about preparing your class for this case study, you should refer to the document 'Discussing sensitive issues' which can be found on the *Mindframe* for journalism and public relations education website at [www.mindframe-media.info](http://www.mindframe-media.info)

### The Scenario

You work for a mental health organisation that has been approached by a family who would like to hold an event to raise funds and awareness in memory of their wife/daughter, who recently lost her life to depression. The young woman was a music teacher and composer, so the family have decided that it would be appropriate to hold a free music festival to celebrate her life and to raise awareness about seeking help for depressive illness. They would also like to raise money to support the prevention of mental illness in the local area via sponsorship and donations. It is hoped that the festival will be an ongoing local event. For the purposes of this exercise, the following should be assumed:

- The family have already secured a date, time and an outdoor location for the concert, as well as a licence from the council to hold the event;
- Through their contacts, the family have secured well known local and touring music acts to play on the day and have organised staging, lighting, stage manager, crew and food vendors;
- The event has no budget and will therefore be relying on sponsorship to cover costs;
- The event date is three months from now.



The key messages for the event are:

- This is a local event that will promote wellbeing within the community by celebrating life, music and community spirit;
- The event aims to increase community understanding of mental health issues;
- The event aims to increase awareness of local and national services and encourage help-seeking behaviours.

## Using the Scenario

Provide students with the Student Notes for Case Study 6: A Community Mental Health Event. This exercise will allow students to think about the different strategies they might employ to plan and promote a local community event – including stakeholder management, branding and promotions, and communication of key messages. While exposing students to the key components of event planning and management, it will also allow students to explore the particular aspects that make a mental health event different to other activities they may need to handle in the future.

You can set this task as a group or individual exercise. You can ask students to look at all of these questions or a selection only. In considering the scenario and questions, you should refer students to the document *Issues and Impact: Communicating mental illness and suicide* for an overview of key ethical and public relations issues involved in managing communication about suicide. This resource and further reference materials are available on the Response Ability website ([www.mindframe-media.info](http://www.mindframe-media.info)).

This Case Study can be used as the basis for a class exercise in subjects such as Campaign Strategies, Event Management or Community Development.

### A. Identifying and managing stakeholders and publics

**1. List all the possible stakeholders you will need to engage and manage for this event? Encourage students to name as many stakeholders as they can. Some suggestions might be:**

- The event organising committee, which include family and friends of the lady who was being honoured by the concert, as well as staff from the participating mental health organisation;
- Event partners such as local and national mental health organisations, the Local City Council, event sponsors (and potential sponsors);
- Local media – radio, television and print media;
- Contracted workers (stage, sound, lighting and camera crews; performing artists, graphic designer, t-shirt manufacturer, etc);
- Event volunteers;
- Local residents and participants on the day;
- St. John's Ambulance, the local surf lifesaving club or other first aid providers;
- Food and drink vendors.

**2. How might you develop and manage relationships with these stakeholders?**

Some brief ideas about suggested answers are provided below. These are provided as a guide only.

**a) Before the event?**

- Briefing and planning meetings between the organising committee and relevant stakeholders;
- Development of promotional materials and communications channels – e.g. development of the website and social networking sites, letterbox drops etc.
- Clearly identify the benefit of each stakeholder being involved in the event to gain support. For example, what will sponsor get out of their involvement, what will local residents get etc.
- Develop plans to meet all requirements that satisfy key stakeholders – e.g. a safety plan for the council and police, a recycling and waste management plan for lobby groups, a site plan giving prominence to sponsors and supporters etc.

**b) During the event?**

- Acknowledgement of sponsors and supporters with signage and announcements throughout the day;
- Safety, noise and waste management to satisfy council, police, and local residents;
- Clearly defined roles for staff and volunteers to ensure smooth running of the event and opportunities to engage with participants, sponsors, artists and other people on site;
- Media relations manager and talent for media interviews identified;
- Clear mechanisms for communication and easy identification of staff and volunteers.

**c) After the event?**

- Debriefing meetings with key stakeholders to gain feedback about the event and suggestions for future years;
- Appreciation given to sponsors, supporters and volunteers;
- Promotion of the event success and monies raised (through media and website);

**B. Fundraising strategies**

**3. What strategies could you use to raise funds from this event? Answers should include:**

- Event Sponsorship;
- Donations on the day;
- Donations before or after the event (either online or through a bank or other organisation) from businesses or community members;
- Merchandise sales on the day;
- Support from organisations providing 'in kind' support to reduce the costs of hosting the event.

**4. How will you identify and attract potential sponsorship?**

- Brainstorm with your team who might be appropriate sponsors for this event. Consider any conflict of interest given the aims and nature of the event;
- Contact potential sponsors outlining the benefits for their organisation and the exposure the event will provide them – they must perceive value for money;



- Sponsors may be more likely to come on board if they have a vested interest in the local community or the issue being raised – for example, research indicating the cost to business of people experiencing untreated mental health problems.

#### **5. What kinds of sponsors would be most suitable and least suitable for this kind of event?**

Suitable sponsors would include:

- Sponsors that are relevant to the local community – e.g. businesses that operate in the local area;
- Sponsors that care about the issue;
- Sponsors that can afford the amount being asked of them.

Unsuitable sponsors would include:

- Organisations with a conflict of interest with the event – e.g. pharmaceutical companies (promoting pharmaceuticals to the general community would not be ethical);
- Organisations that are sponsor other events or have products that conflict with the messages of the event – e.g. ‘Crazy John’s’;
- Organisations that have shown little commitment to the purpose of the event – e.g. if a company was being sued for discrimination by an employee with a mental illness.

### ***C. Event promotion and key messages***

#### **6. What strategies would you use to promote the event to the local community? Answers could include:**

- Promotion through the mass media – including a launch or event announcement, media releases and interviews with TV, radio and newspapers leading up to the event, paid advertisements and/or community service announcements.
- Promotion through other forms of media – including the development and promotion of an event website, events pages on social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace, email alerts etc;
- Promotional flyers and posters – displayed in cafés, other prominent places and letterbox drops to relevant areas;
- Word of mouth – through friend groups, work groups etc.

#### **7. Would you involve the media in your promotions? If so, what issues may you need to consider?**

You will need to ensure that the media coverage regarding this event meets best practice standards for reporting on mental illness and suicide. This can be managed through:

- Ensuring that all language used in verbal and written communication with the media is appropriate;
- Managing the way a death by suicide (that led to the idea for the event) is handled;
- Briefings for all media spokespeople (including mental health spokespeople, family and friends, artists and sponsors) about key messages for media promotions and the way to discuss both mental illness and suicide;
- Referring all journalists to the *Mindframe* website at [www.mindframe-media.info](http://www.mindframe-media.info);

**8. Given the key messages in the scenario brief above, what strategies could you use to promote these messages?**

Some brief ideas about suggested answers are provided below. These are provided as a guide only.

**a) Before the event?**

- The key messages could be clearly stated in all promotional activities such as media interviews, promotional flyers, website content and information on social networking sites;
- Local sponsors and partners could be engaged to promote it as a local event and use their networks to increase participation. Including local artists on the line-up will reinforce this;
- Use of local media, mental health networks and forums to promote the event;
- Links to other mental health services and websites from the event website.

**b) During the event?**

- Trade displays where free information about mental health services, fact sheets and other materials (such as wrist bands, fridge magnets) etc. can be given away to the audience;
- Mental health messages played in between music acts, that cover a diversity of issues and target groups (e.g. depression, psychosis, men, young people);
- Messages can be reinforced by the bands (who were briefed before the event) and the MC as well as any spokespeople doing media interviews on the day;
- All volunteers and staff briefed about key messages and ways to get this across at the event;
- Having other local celebrities attend (to promote the local nature of the event) –e.g. the local rugby league or AFL team.

**c) After the event?**

- Messages can be reinforced in post event media releases and interviews;
- Follow-up information on the event website or through letters and emails to people who supported the event – e.g. reporting the amount of information given away or monies raised;
- Ongoing promotion of messages as the lead up to the next event.

**9. What are some of the language issues that need to be considered when promoting these key messages?**

- Avoid outdated negative or colloquial terms in any written or verbal communication. This will mean that spokespeople outside of the mental health field (e.g. artists performing at the event or sponsors) will need to be fully briefed and supported;
- Ensure all written and verbal communication does not label people by their illness. A person may “have a diagnosis of” or “live with anorexia”, they are not “anorexic”. This will mean checking all the information that is disseminated and the language of volunteers and spokespeople;
- Minimise the use of the word suicide, especially in communications with the media. In this case, a decision was made to talk about Julie losing her battle with depression (rather than “committing suicide”) so as not to detract from the promotional messages.



#### *D. Branding and marketing*

**10. This event does not have a name or a brand. Write a brief that identifies key considerations for naming and branding this event. You may want to write down some potential names for the event.**

Students will need to identify the following:

- The name and branding will need to indicate the nature of the event – e.g. a music festival as well as the content of the event – e.g. to raise awareness of depression and other mental illnesses.
- The branding will need to be incorporated into all promotional materials and may need to be adapted;
- The name and branding cannot perpetuate stereotypes and must use appropriate language;
- The actual name for the event this case study is based on was called “Rockin’ the Black Dog”, which has reference to the music and to depression (using a term first used by Winston Churchill when he described depression as the Black Dog). Students may want to brainstorm other potential names.

**11. Given that this is the first time the event has been held, what strategies could you implement to help make the event more sustainable?**

Suggestions may include:

- Promotion of the event as the inaugural event;
- Discussions with sponsors and other supporters about the desire for an annual event;
- Developing an easily identified brand and merchandise for the event – e.g. people will think of it as an annual event if they can remember the name or wear the t-shirt;
- Given the first event did not have a budget, funds from year one could be put towards early planning for the next event.

#### **Optional Exercise**

Provide students with Handout 6A: Rockin’ the Black Dog Music Festival. This handout provides a brief description of an actual event which occurred based on the brief provided to students. Once students have worked through the discussion questions, you can ask them to compare and contrast their approach with the Local Mental Health Event described in Handout 6A. In particular, you may want to ask students to consider:

1. In what ways did your plans differ from that taken by the event organisers?
2. Did the list of stakeholders you identified differ from those identified by the event organisers?
3. What do you think were the strengths and weaknesses of the strategies employed by the event organisers to promote the event and key messages?
4. What did you learn from looking at the event summary?
5. Were there things about mental health promotion you picked up through reading the event summary?