

INFORMATION FOR ARTISTS

Countdown to Devon Open Studios



1. Behind the scenes

Publicity for you and the event is a top priority for the committee and organisers.

We are working hard to engage the national and regional media and to create a 'buzz'.

30,000 of the Event Guides will be distributed early to mid August, with copies circulated to Devon Tourist Information Centres, libraries, local council offices, advertisers and major arts venues. Artists will need to collect their allocation from regional drop off points, to distribute via their own client lists and to local contacts and venues e.g. hotels, shops, community centres etc.

Our promotional team is working hard to get the word out. You can help these efforts by reading and responding to their advice and requests for information, and by actively sharing social media to your contacts.

Use the graphics we provide to cut and paste into your emails or to create your own posters if you have the know-how.

2. What can you do to make your event a success?

Many of you are already actively involved and experienced in self-promotion. For those with less experience in this field, there are some helpful tips on this information sheet.

3. It's up to you!

Past evidence shows that if you do not do enough to promote yourself and your open studio, space or event, you can expect far fewer visitors. Surveys carried out during previous open studios events in Devon clearly show that those artists who worked hard on publicity and promotion achieved higher visitor numbers and higher sales or commissions for work and projects. It makes sense – so what can you do?

4. Raising your profile

We have a series of Artist Guides to help you promote your event. Do check them for helpful hints and ideas.

With an event that lasts for this length of time, it important to keep information flowing to the press and DAN will be doing this centrally as well. However, the press are interested in individual stories, especially about someone who lives in their target area. Consider contacting your local or village newspaper – telling them how you are preparing for the event; then during DOS - how many visitors you had on the first weekend, sales made, commissions agreed, what visitors can expect to see and the warm welcome they'll receive. Give them some enthusiastic quotes from your first visitors. Send them a digital photo if you can – perhaps of yourself putting the final touches to your exhibition/installation, or of the first groups of visitors looking round your venue. See our **Artist Guide to Creating Images** for more ideas. For more information about how to make your story newsworthy, see our **Artist Guide to Telling Your Story** or attend one of our online workshops. Our **Media Officer, Gillian Taylor** can advise on writing a press release or help you tease out stories – contact her on 07761 546075. Her role is part time, but she will get back to you as soon as she can.

Try to follow up a press release with a phone call: Are they using it? Do they need anything else?

5. Devon Open Studios Leaflets and Posters

Keep an eye on Tourist Information Centres, cafés, shops, hotels, bed and breakfasts, cafés and other venues in your immediate locality to ensure they are displaying the guide and to keep them stocked up. If you run out of guides, let Sarah Chapman know and she will provide more.



Use the A4 hard copy posters that accompany the guides to write details/directions for your own studio or adapt the model poster from the website with your own details and image. These are particularly useful for displaying in your own local café or shop, to tell customers that your open studio is just round the corner.

6. Promoting your venue

Make sure your site is easy to find! Download and print direction arrows from the website. It is advisable to have a good quantity of arrows (signposting at each junction), since these are the most helpful way of finding a venue for solo visitors who aren't able to read directions or a map whilst they are driving.

[Please read the Signage Regulations for Devon Open Studios and the accompanying Devon County Council Guidelines carefully. There are restrictions you **MUST** follow.](#)

When you've read the regulations, plan carefully where you are going to place your signs, bearing in mind that Devon County Council has asked us to keep signage to a minimum. Work with other venues in your area if necessary to ensure that junctions don't become overloaded with signs! Also bear in mind that our signs are not waterproof, so laminate or put them in a plastic sleeve. There is nothing more frustrating to the lost visitor than a limp, wet sign not doing its job!

Get someone else to check the main routes to your venue. A less familiar eye will see where people are most likely to get lost. Place your signs accordingly. Ask your visitors whether they found you OK.

Remove your signs overnight if you possibly can, and remember to take them all down when the event is over.

Make sure you have directions available for your visitors to direct them to the other open studios immediately around you – and make sure the studios near you have directions available to yours. Supplying nearby studios with a map to your studio they can hand to visitors can be particularly useful.

7. Word of Mouth is a powerful marketing tool!

People are bombarded with advertising these days. They may not believe it or they may simply ignore it! However, people do trust other people. Talk to as many people as you can about your open studio. Talk to your family, friends, neighbours, colleagues and the parents of your children's school friends. Talk to people who are well respected and trusted in the local community, and who have good networks. Distribute information in person to your local cafés, pubs, hotels, post offices, etc, and invite them to your preview.

8. Previews and Private Views

Previews and Private Views are an excellent way to get your event off to a flying start. Invite all your previous customers and clients and your friends who are already big fans of your work – and invite them to bring their friends too, introducing a new audience to your work.

9. Business Cards and Postcards

Your business cards and postcards are easy for visitors to pick up – so make sure you have plenty available. Even if visitors can't buy artwork at the time of their visit, we know that many contact artists long after the event to buy or commission something – don't let them leave empty-handed.

10. Use your mailing list – and if you don't have one, start one during Devon Open Studios

It's extremely important to create and use a good mailing list of your customers and clients. If you already have a list, send a leaflet/or invitation to come along to everyone on it, telling them when you're open.

Devon Open Studios will supply some visitor forms for you to use to collect the names and addresses of all your visitors for future contact. [This is for your use, for you to keep, and can be used for your own mailing list - Devon Open Studios only needs to know how many visitors came to your studio, not who they are.](#)

The Data Protection Act means that you have to let people know what you will be using their information for – so include a notice near your visitor sheets that does this. An explanation of what visitors' details will be used for is on the form we have provided. There is a tick box on the visitor sheets for visitors to tick to show they agree to you using their information in this way. Make sure you only use the information for the purposes your visitors have agreed to, don't, for example, pass the details on to another artist to use.

See our Artist Guide to e-newsletters for more information about making the most of your mailing list.

11. Selling your work

Enlist the help of a friend if you feel uncomfortable selling your work or services. It's often easier for others to sell your work than it is for you to do it yourself. Set a fair price for your work, reflecting how much it cost to make both in materials and your own time. Don't offer discounts too easily – remember this is your livelihood! If you are prepared to offer discounts, decide in advance what the maximum discount you will be prepared to offer (taking into account your costs) – and stick to it!

- Prepare in advance by printing a list of the works you are offering for sale - with prices. Also include the media used, the year the work was made and the dimensions (in case potential purchasers need to measure up their available wall space!).
- Place a label next to each piece of work with the name and number of the piece, the price and the media.
- Make sure you are clear about what forms of payment you will accept – display these on a notice.
- Online payment facilities are useful especially if your work requires a large outlay. Sum Up and iZettle are two popular online tools that can take payments via your smart phone.
- If you must take cash, keep some change handy, and make sure you can secure your cash box.
- Ensure you have a receipt book available or offer to email them a receipt.
- Keep your packing materials and red 'sold' stickers ready.
- If you do not have objects to sell – if you are an installation artist, for example – make sure you have plenty of portfolio information available for potential project partners, funders or commissioners to look through – together with your contact details and some other information they can take away with them.

12. During the event

Make sure you are ready to chat to your visitors if they want to know more about your work, your methods, your inspirations, etc. For many visitors this is the attraction of open studios and talking to those who want to talk will always elicit a more positive response to your work.

Be sensitive to visitors who would prefer to look around quietly. You will probably be able to tell instinctively which visitors just need a friendly smile and greeting to put them at their ease.

You can always offer refreshments to keep visitors at your venue longer. Remember if you are preparing food you need the relevant health and hygiene certificate – simply buying some biscuits or sweets and being ready to put the kettle on or offer a glass of fruit juice may be more appropriate.

Consider having something to keep children occupied while parents browse. We normally suggest a basket of toys but coming out of the shadow of Covid, and wanting to encourage creativity for all ages, how about a printed sheet of paper and a sanitised pencil for a treasure hunt or a colouring sheet children can take away with them.

Offer some written and visual information about yourself for visitors to look through. Give them some background on your work, previous exhibitions, commissions, experiences – it may help start up a conversation. Perhaps make a display including photographs of other work, portfolio pieces, press cuttings, reviews and visitor/client comments.

13. After the event

Make sure that you follow up any leads as a result of your exhibition. Many people will have expressed an interest in your work and, if they have given permission, may appreciate further communication. A simple card or email is a good idea – ‘glad you came to my studio yesterday, it was good to meet you. If you would like any more details of my work or future projects, please let me know’.

14. Information Gathering

We will be asking you to provide information on how many people came to your studio, what they bought or commissioned and what they thought of Devon Open Studios in general. This information helps show that Devon Open Studios has an economic impact on the region.

We will also be asking you what you thought and presenting all this information for discussion at the AGM in the autumn.