

What laws do I need to consider as I plan my event? Will I need any licenses or other sort of permissions?

The Licensing Act 2003, which took full effect on 1st November 2005, informs us on what we need to consider when putting on a musical or entertainment event.

There are three potential legal issues you may need to consider when it comes to running a carol singing event:

- If a license is required

A spontaneous carol singing in the street or elsewhere does not require a license (for example people in a pub spontaneously singing). However, if the event is arranged a license is required (although often the license that the premise already holds will often be sufficient). A special license could be required to sing in a supermarket or shopping area by arrangement. We would suggest considering what licensing the venue you are using has and contacting your local authority if you do not believe their license will be sufficient for the event you are planning.

- Nuisance

A nuisance can be two different offences: civil or criminal, both would be a common law offence. A nuisance is “an inconvenience materially interfering with the ordinary comfort physically of human existence, not merely according to plain and sober, simple notions among the English people” (Walter v Selfe [1851]). In practice if you annoy someone in your household it would be a private nuisance whereas annoying a neighbor would be a public nuisance.

Someone not enjoying your singing or having a general distaste for carols would not be considered a nuisance, it would be necessary to prove that you are unreasonably preventing them from enjoying their property. So, something like an extremely prolonged carol service or significantly amplified music would likely be a public nuisance.

There are no laws against singing or playing instruments on pavements, traffic islands or even in the middle of the road (although we would not suggest doing this!). It is however criminal to obstruct the road by stopping free flow of pedestrians or vehicles. You would not only be responsible for the obstruction you may cause but also if you attract a crowd that causes an obstruction.

- Collecting money

To collect money at your caroling event you will need a collecting license under House to House Collections Act 1939. This is issued by a senior police officer, however as this law is often ignored with impunity you may struggle to collect this form from the police station so be patient and pursue it with plenty of time.

The collector at your event, according to the regulation above must be:

- At least 16 years old
- Wear a badge identifying the person as a collector
- Carry a certificate signed by the collector and an officer of the charity

Although it would be important to consider that there is no known case of carol singers being prosecuted.

This information has been collected from 'The Guild of Church Musicians', for more information on anything above we suggest reviewing their article on licensing: [9. Everything else | The Guild of Church Musicians \(gcm.org.uk\)](#).

What do I need to do to use a public venue?

For the use of government owned venues and public spaces you will need to get in touch with your local council as rules and procedures may differ from area to area. We would suggest considering the following questions before getting in touch with your local council:

- What is the location you would like to use and are there other alternatives you may consider? (e.g. if there is a local park you would like to use are there any alternative parks you may consider if that space is booked)
- When are you planning to have your event and what will the duration be?
- How many people are you expecting at the event? (will there be a need to consider traffic management?)
- Will there be a fee to come to the event?

What do I need to do to use a private venue?

For use of a private venue, you will need to obtain permission from the owners of the venue. Each private owner will have different expectations, so the first step will be to get in touch with them. Some things that we would recommend thinking about before getting in touch with them would be:

- Are you willing to pay a fee to use the space? Would the private owner consider letting you use the space for free to fundraise?
- Would you want to use the whole venue or is it the use of a room?
- When are you planning to have your event and what will the duration be?
- How many people are you expecting at the event? (will there be a need to consider traffic management?)

Is there anything I need to consider if I am doing the event at my own venue?

The primary consideration in a venue that you own is if you are causing a nuisance. Refer to 'what laws do I need to consider as I plan my event? Will I need any licenses or other sort of permissions?' for more information.

Do I need insurance?

There are no laws that demand you have insurance for community events like carols, but you may consider having insurance to cover anything that may go wrong or if claims are made against. You may consider getting public liability insurance.

For more information on insurance you can visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/can-do-guide-for-organisers-of-voluntary->

[events/the-can-do-guide-to-organising-and-running-voluntary-and-community-events#what_is_public](#)

Can I use any Christmas song?

When picking the set list for your event you may want to consider copyright. The good news is that songs that were published before 1928 or have no known composer are likely public domain which means you don't have to consider copyright (this will likely include many of your favorite Christmas Carols!). If you use songs that are not within the public domain you should be aware of the 'Copyright, design and patents act 1988' which states that you need to get permission from the copyright holder to perform the song in public. You need to consider this especially if you are planning to live stream your event as using songs without the copyright will lead to your video being taken down.