

RESIDENTIAL PLANNING TIMELINE WITH FOOTNOTES (FIRST PUBLISHED IN PREMIER YOUTHWORK MAGAZINE)

Print this timeline out and stick it to your wall. The timescale is approximate. You may need to adjust it for your situation, for example if you need to book up your venue earlier. Ticking off as you do each one will allow you to tell at a glance what you need to do next and where you are behind schedule. There may be items that you need to do which aren't on the list - we have to book a ferry - but other items should remind you to do them.

Item/Action	H-12 mths	H-6 mths	H-5 mths	H-4 mths	H-3 mths	H-2 mths	H-6 wks	H-4 wks	H-3 wks	H-2 wks	H-1 wk	H-1 day	H day	H+1 wk	H+2 wks
Visit venue ¹															
Fix date with venue															
Ask church leadership to approve event															
Book venue ²															
Inform young people and parents of dates															
Book visiting speaker if required															
Book transport ³															
Invite leadership ⁴ & catering team															
Book any special activities															
Arrange dates for planning meetings with leaders															
Check certificates ⁵															
First planning meeting ⁶															
Check insurance for residential & for individual activities															

¹ What can you do in the space that you have? What activities outside/inside/nearby? Look at health and safety. Do you need to cater for yourselves? How will you divide boys/girls for sleeping? Toilets/showers? Where will leaders sleep? Is the meeting room big enough for you? What about AV facilities?

² It can be difficult getting a first weekend or week. Many venues have regular customers in regular slots. Christian centres are good starting points. Boarding schools may be available but often only during longer holidays. The way in is to book as early as you can and to be as flexible as you can be.

³ Transport will significantly add to your costs. If your venue is under an hour away, you may consider asking parents to drop off young people. This also makes it easier for set-up as all the leaders can arrive earlier. One of the benefits of travelling together is that it increases the shared memory time. People can get enthusiastic on the way and debrief together on the way back. Do book early though and barter the price. Ask around for a reliable company. One year we had a coach not turn up and that put pressure on the programme for the rest of the weekend.

⁴ Start with your current leaders. If you need more, this can be a good time to attract new leaders. An ask for a weekend may be easier for some than an ask for every Sunday for the next three years! Once they've been, maybe they'll commit to every week. If you need a catering team, try people who don't normally lead youth. If you get desperate, parents of teenagers who don't mind their parents being around may be your only answer. Joining with a neighbouring youth group may also help ratios.

⁵ You don't want to get to the day before the event and realise that one of the leaders' police check certificates has run out, so check as people are added to the team. If you're having a visiting speaker, check their certificate. If you're taking a catering team who don't normally help with youth ministry, do they have one? If you need a minibus driving, first aid or food hygiene certificate, check them now.

⁶ Key decisions to make at this stage are to decide the theme (which should filter through to your publicity), key roles (including speakers for talks/seminars and worship leader) and the general programme. Details can come later but now is the time to change everything if you want to.

Budget event ⁷																			
Produce publicity																			
Book van for equipment (if required)																			
2nd planning meeting ⁸																			
Produce programme ⁹																			
Send out leaders' roles and instructions																			
Closing date for bookings ¹⁰																			
Ring round young people who you might have expected to book up but haven't																			
Write risk assessments																			
Arrange with service leader to have feedback Sunday after residential																			
Inform catering team of dietary requirements																			
Kit list and final details to young people & leaders attending with health and photo form																			
Worship team organised (if applicable)																			
Send directions for venue to coach company & leaders ¹¹																			
Draw up dorm lists/teams/small groups ¹²																			
Draw up buddy list if necessary for newer members ¹³																			
Create a feedback form																			
Video clips, presentations, song words put on laptop (if required)																			

⁷ Be realistic about costs and numbers expected! Some costs you know exactly (for example the price per person per night), some will be a guess e.g. how many people will come that you can divide any transport costs between. A key decision is whether leaders will pay themselves or you will cover their costs from central funds or by young people paying more. To cover everything, work through the programme. A sample budget is included in the Raising the Bar book.

⁸ Run through the programme. Do you know who is leading each item? What are wet weather alternatives? What do you need for sessions/games?

⁹ Send the programme to the leadership team, catering team and venue. If you can't have breakfast at 8.30, you want to know before you get there!

¹⁰ Now is the time to check whether transport is big enough for the bookings. Hopefully you haven't overbooked for the venue either!

¹¹ We did once have the coach company get lost on the way.

¹² The nightmare of every youth leader. Easiest is a small youth group in a venue with one sleeping room for boys and one for girls. Leave this task as late as you can. Two weeks beforehand is perfect, but be aware with a larger group, you are likely to totally rewrite as someone books in the day before you leave. If you will accept late bookings (if not, why not?) then leave this job to the right moment but ask for help from other leaders/young people unless you are so in touch that you know who isn't talking any more. Make it easier by asking on your booking form who young people want to share with.

¹³ If you have people coming on the residential who have never been to the group, why not pair an older group member up with them to look out for them while they're away?

