

A simple guide to finding a free meeting space for your community group v1.0

If you are trying to get a place for free,

- **Get organised** - have your name, email and phone details written down
- **Be clear** - about what you want the space for, and why their venue is ideal
- **Be realistic** – ask what is possible/easy for them and try and fit around them
- **Make a connection** – understand what is in it for them, and tell them - if you've shown you understand what they do, you'll get further
- **Be creative in how you return the favour** – try and find a win/win situation where you can do something of value for them, and they can do something of value for you (and your group).
- **Say “thank you”** – everyone likes to be kind, and everyone likes to be thanked. Forgetting to say thank you will make some people upset, and make it harder to get a place next time
- **Don't get in the way** – be aware of your surroundings and try not to become a problem. If you are quiet and discreet, most people will leave you alone

Venue	What's in it for them	What's in it for you?	Potential drawbacks
Café/Pub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are seen to be supporting their community • Busy places look more successful • It potentially introduces them to new customers • Offering you a quiet time costs them nothing • Pay as you feel cafes always want new customers, especially from minority communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting a local business • No need to organise catering/ refreshments • Cups of tea are cheaper than room hire • Chance to meet new people for your group • Choosing a café with an upstairs can be a good way of getting a private space • They generally won't care what your group or organisation are about 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only welcome during unpopular hours • Refreshments cost money (Most Starbucks have free rooms, but the coffee is expensive) • Maybe not much privacy • Pubs/places that serve alcohol are not always suitable for some groups
Lobbies of (budget) hotels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often have a café or bar area • Always pays to look busy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anonymous type of space • No need to organise catering/ refreshments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a one off you can usually get away with it. They'll start noticing if it's a regular thing

Venue	What's in it for them	What's in it for you?	Potential drawbacks
Place of Worship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are seen to be supporting their community • It potentially introduces them to new customers • Might be part of their “mission” • Space is often unused during the day/midweek • Often difficult to clean/keep tidy – so any help is appreciated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often well equipped (sound/projectors) • Offering help to clean up/litter pick outside in exchange for time inside can be a good bonding exercise for a group • Used to operating outside of office hours • Sometimes have decent crèche/kitchen facilities • Can usually accommodate several hundred people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They may wish to push the religious angle • They may be suspicious if none of you regularly attend
Fire stations/Police Stations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire service often find it hard to reach out to BME communities – so it's good for their monitoring if they meet you/deliver a session to you • Community rooms often go unused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community rooms often well equipped • Good way of introducing your members to fire safety • Parking is usually decent • Long working hours make getting a meeting in the evening more likely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They'll probably want to talk to your group about fire safety at some point • Some members might be put off by the fact that it's the police.
Big charities or community organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some organisations often find it hard to reach out to BME communities – so it's good for their monitoring if they meet you/deliver a session to you • They get to “sell” their services to your members • Some charities have “community development” or “capacity building” in their mission – so you are a gift to them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often well equipped (sound/projectors) • Sometimes you can get free refreshments • “Head office” will usually have a fair amount of meeting spaces from 2 or 3 to 20-30 people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You'll have to show them how what you're doing fits in with their mission • They're under increasing pressure to charge for room hire/space. • Not easy to get them to open up on an evening
Parks and green space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The measurement of a good park is how many people visit it • Parks and leisure services love the idea of BME accessing and using green spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If it's sunny, why not? • There are often play areas for children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If it's not sunny, parks can feel a bit grim • Sometimes there's not many places to sit down

Venue	What's in it for them	What's in it for you?	Potential drawbacks
Museums or Libraries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Museums often find it hard to reach out to BME communities – so it's good for their monitoring if they meet you/deliver a session to you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interesting environment Sometimes have cafes that are very quiet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They're under increasing pressure to charge for room hire/space. Museum cafes can be expensive Libraries sometimes want you to be quiet
Schools and colleges and universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools often find it hard to reach out to BME communities – so it's good for their monitoring if they can accommodate you Student Unions often have huge venues and meeting spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often well equipped (sound/projectors) Sometimes have cafes that are very quiet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They're under increasing pressure to charge for room hire/space. Not easy to get schools to open up on an evening
Community Arts venues/theatres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arts organisations often find it hard to reach out to BME communities – so it's good for their monitoring if they can accommodate you They like to look busy with a “vibrant” clientele 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many have cafes and drinks areas that are not in much use during the day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some theatre cafes can be expensive Lots of creative people around
Community Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some organisations often find it hard to reach out to BME communities – so it's good for their monitoring if they meet you/deliver a session to you Some charities have “community development” or “capacity building” in their mission – so you are a gift to them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many have cafes and drinks areas that are not in much use during the day Some places like Shine will offer an hour for 3 people at a time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They usually want to charge at some point – this is their business model
Indoor Markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having lots of people is generally a good thing. They call it “footfall” Every new user is a potential customer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open from early until teatime Good access to cheap refreshments There's often a presentation space, or picnic type space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes bored security guards ask a lot of questions.