PlaceCal Handbook

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Contents

What is PlaceCal?

1.1 Philosophy

PlaceCal is a community events calendar designed to help people find out everything that's happening near them, all in one place.

1.1.1 Founded on research

The PlaceCal pilot emerged as part of a large scale co-research project. It was responding to the need for older people, community organisations and institutional partners to work together more effectively.

This project was a collaboration between Dr Kim Foale (Geeks for Social Change), Prof. Stefan White (PHASE@MMU) and the Manchester Age Friendly Network (MAFN).

Phase one

The research first established that many older residents could find nothing to do in their immediate area.

Using word-of-mouth and literature searches over the following months, we discovered **literally dozens of events and activities** on every day. That clarified the problem as not the lack of events, but a lack of high quality, up-to-date, accessible and complete community data about events.

Our solution was to share the information with interested parties. Initially we distributed it manually using a Google Calendar.

This method quickly became unmanageable as every event had to be added to the calendar by the small and time-limited MAFN team. Information given to us was incomplete, contradictory or out of date, and Google Calendar couldn't allow filtering and sorting for high numbers of events.

Phase two

We realised we needed a dedicated service to publish and manage this information, which was called PlaceCal.

The project started between MAFN and Kim Foale of Geeks for Social Change. Kim had previously worked on the initial development of Street Support Network, an information service for homelessness run by Viv Slack.
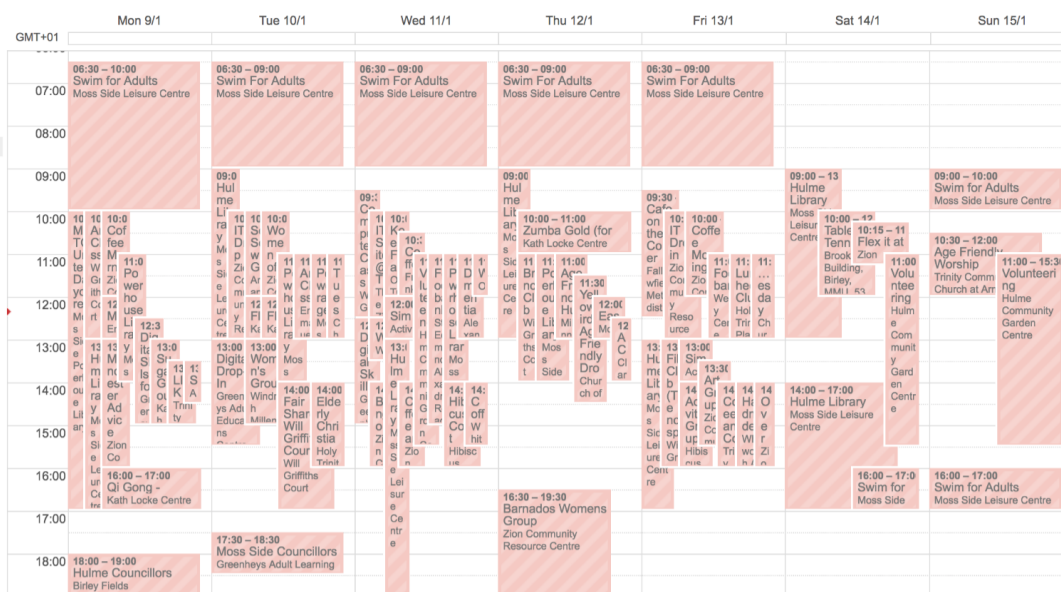
Fig. 1: PlaceCal definition

Figure 1: Google Calendar screenshot

Fig. 2: Original Google calendar

Through this partnership, we gained funding from CityVerve to launch a PlaceCal pilot.

1.1.2 Social isolation and loneliness

The PlaceCal pilot addressed the issues of social isolation and loneliness in one of the MAFN areas, Hulme and Moss Side.

Research shows that loneliness and social isolation can damage our health. Lacking social connection puts you at risk for early death just like smoking 15 cigarettes a day, being obese, or physically inactive. Loneliness increases the likelihood of mortality by 26%. (Campaign to End Loneliness)

This makes PlaceCal a crucial solution for improving community health outcomes through tackling the problem asset mapping and enabling social prescribing.

1.1.3 Event discovery

PlaceCal connects community residents and service providers with the small everyday events. These events are usually quite hard to discover, but can be lifesaving for socially isolated older people. They could be coffee mornings, sewing groups and computer classes.

Many GPs want to socially prescribe instead of prescribing drugs, but are currently struggling with a lack of quality information. Find out more about our *social prescribers*.

1.1.4 Place-based

PlaceCal overcomes the usual limitations of similar programs which have typically been 'user-centered'.

Fig. 3: PlaceCal promotes events

We move on from these individualistic approaches to more effective 'place-based' ones. We do this by working in both social and technical spaces to join up people who would otherwise never find each other.

PlaceCal's vision is for information infrastructure to be controlled by communities – not for profit, but for the benefit of their residents. The PlaceCal Foundation will own the intellectual property, maintain the open source code base, and ensure it's fair use for all.

1.1.5 Delivering a program

What does PlaceCal look like in reality?

Fig. 4: PlaceCal community

PlaceCal delivers a community development program that connects people and organisations with culture, health and social housing institutions in neighbourhood communities. It tackles social isolation and promotes wellbeing.

It does this by enabling community partnerships to create and share joined-up information about services and events in their area. The program is an innovative blend of community partnership building, education and IT infrastructure.

1.1.6 Digital inclusion

By working in this way, we support organisations (who otherwise wouldn't have a website) to publish high quality and up-to-date information. This information is shared widely across their local area, increasing both their breadth and depth of reach.

All this requires very little additional effort from organisations – beyond the initial setup. The costs are minimal compared to every community organisation providing their own IT resources.

We directly engage with our target audience, older people, by easily providing legible, printed listings and enabling other accessible formats and translations.

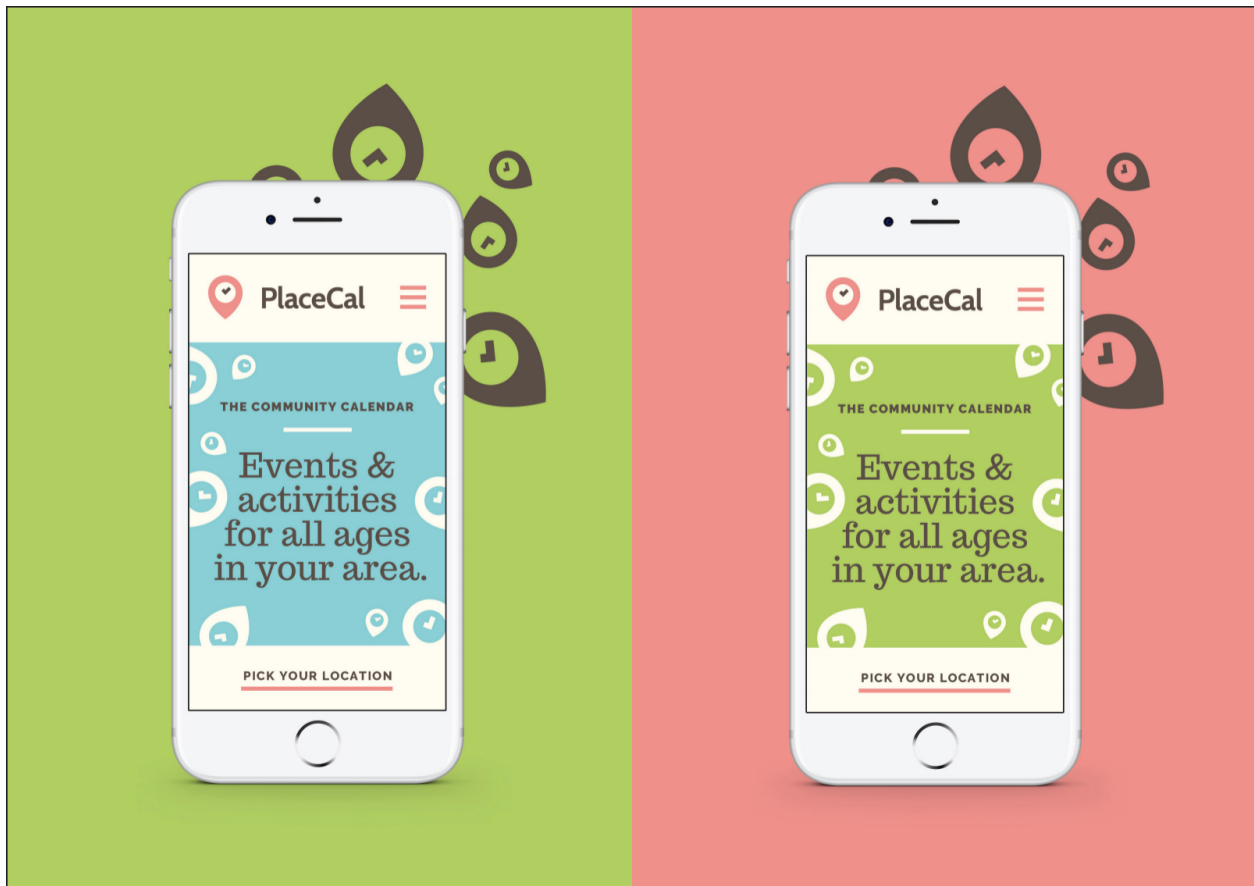Find out more about PlaceCal's approach to *digital inclusion*.

Fig. 5: PlaceCal on a smartphone

1.2 Why use PlaceCal

PlaceCal is community calendar that is updated by the local organisations themselves instead of centrally managed. It's a self-sustaining initiative that's exactly what communities have been waiting for.

Using PlaceCal, communities can improve their social connection by getting people out of their homes, and tackles the wider health that result from isolation.

PlaceCal has a broad range of specific benefits:

1.2.1 1. It works with existing resources

PlaceCal is both service and software but it requires nothing new. It works by helping organisations create and publish *their own content* promoting their events and services using software they already have.

This could be Google Calendar, Outlook and Facebook, or existing organisation websites. PlaceCal then aggregates this data for you, resulting in citizen-curated, reliable, up-to-date listings of neighbourhood events in ways that can be accessed by everyone.

Our people will work with you to ensure your listings are being included in PlaceCal as part of the service.

1.2.2 2. It saves a lot of time

PlaceCal massively reduces the overhead of organisations and individuals who are currently keeping track of events ("asset mapping") in old school formats like Word or Excel.

PlaceCal has been enabling people to work together better by making it easy to see at a glance what's going on. It eliminates the need to double up on effort because the listings are continuously synchronised in one place.

1.2.3 3. It has a wide reach

Our website PlaceCal.org shows events from our pilot area Hulme and Moss Side in Manchester, UK. It was launched in December 2017, and we're currently expanding to Moston and Mossley.

As a hub for event information, it is frequently used for print-outs and adapted for posters, flyers, brochures and community radio broadcasts which can reach people who may not be as digitally connected.

1.2.4 4. It's proven to work

The pilot has had an enormously positive response from both residents and institutional stakeholders. There is clear demand for a roll-out from both individual neighbourhoods and institutional partners, as well as a number of neighbourhood and larger area commissions in negotiation.

The bigger PlaceCal grows, the better our service gets.

1.2.5 5. It improves communities

PlaceCal delivers a community development program that connects people and organisations with culture, health and social housing institutions in neighbourhood communities.

It tackles social isolation and promotes wellbeing by enabling community partnerships to create and share joined-up information about services and events in their area.

It is an innovative blend of community partnership building, education and IT infrastructure.

PlaceCal ticks all the boxes and we're with you every step of the way. Find out more about *our principles*.

1.3 What does PlaceCal do

We define PlaceCal as:

> A co-constituted combination of software and training. These two elements work together to support a neighbourhood-level community calendar. It's aimed directly at neighbourhood groups and the institutions who want to work better with them.

Fig. 6: PlaceCal program diagram

The PlaceCal platform and program is made up of a number of different elements, which we'll go into now.

1.3.1 The technical side of PlaceCal

The PlaceCal software is the technical stack and infrastructure of our core program. PlaceCal imports and connects information from neighbourhood institutions and organisations who have signed up to be part of our program. As long as partners input their data regularly, PlaceCal will import, aggregate and publish on to the PlaceCal.org website automatically.

PlaceCal brings together existing calendar tools and IT infrastructure – which are tools that organisations are already using to organise themselves. This process drastically reduces the current manual workload of keeping event information updated and reliable, as well as synced across multiple partners.
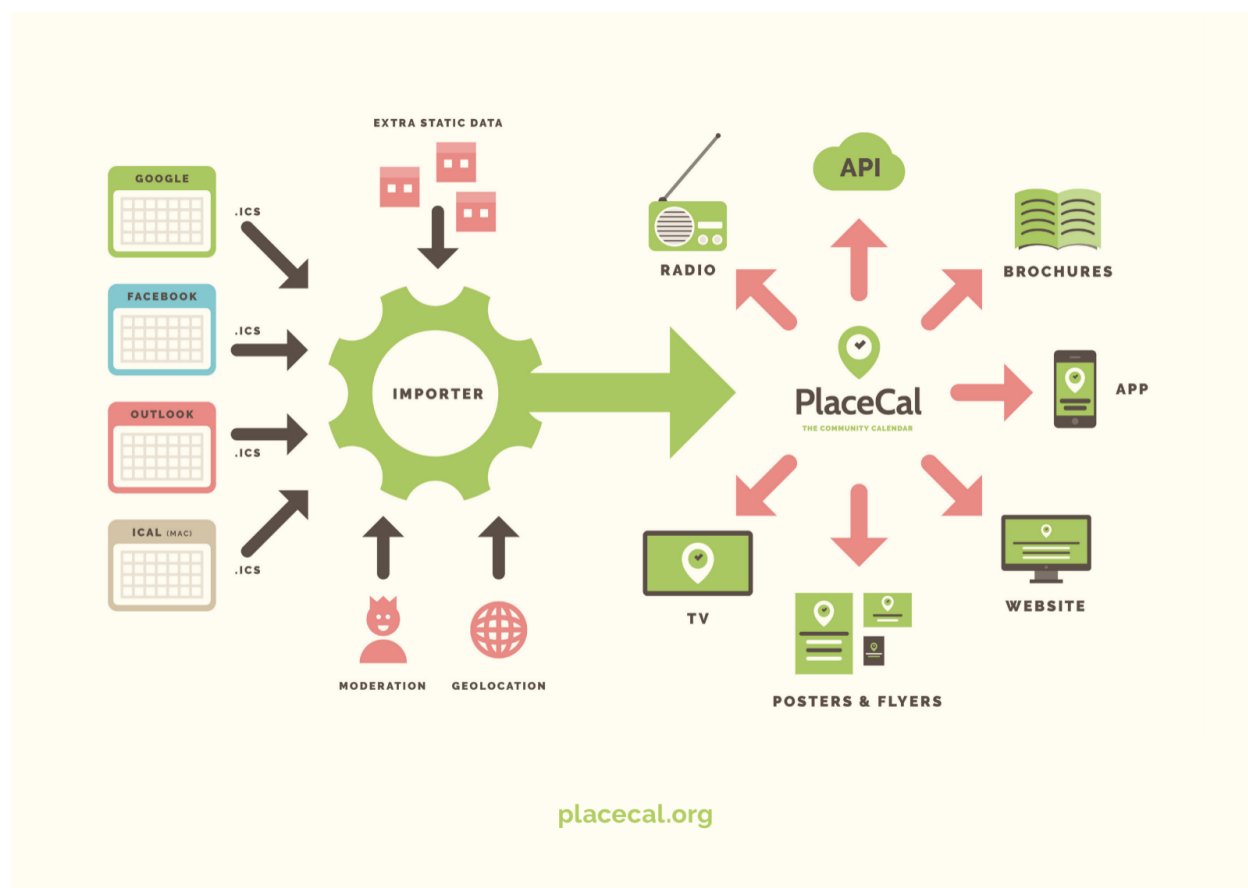
Fig. 7: PlaceCal technological infrastructure

1.3.2 What does PlaceCal look like?

At its most basic, PlaceCal is a shared community calendar. It's a community of people working together to share information about their events. This community looks like this:

Seven Core Roles

Citizen: **socially isolated, over 50, multiple risk factors, Nielson level 0. Wants to find something to go to.**

Social prescriber: **GP, library assistant family member. Wants a list of high quality and up to date events to refer people to.**

Partner Manager: **Runs a community organisation.**

Partner Admin: **Does the work of putting the information online (critical role!).**

Secretary: **Worker with an "asset mapping" or social prescribing remit.**

Commissioner: **Anyone who wants to have a PlaceCal in their area.**

Developers: **People wanting to use their own copy of PlaceCal, or contribute to core. People building other sites or apps that want API access.**
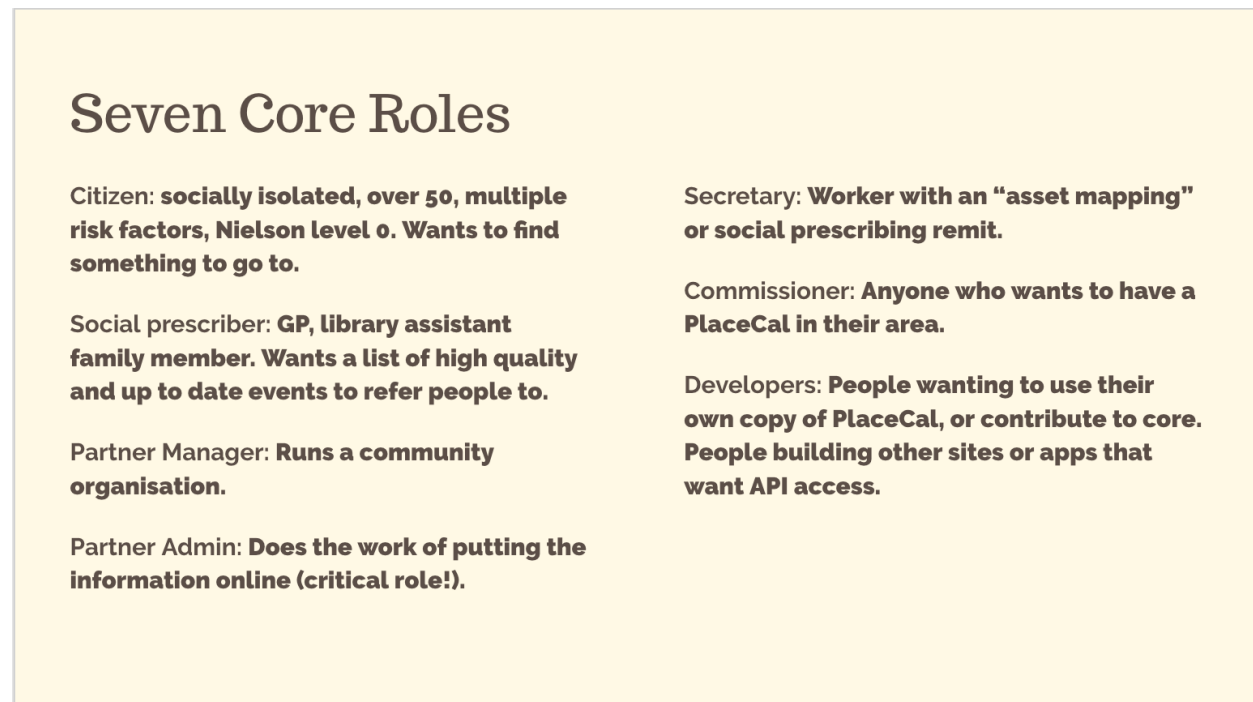
Fig. 8: PlaceCal seven core roles

These PlaceCal roles are clearly defined and each type of person uses our calendar in a different way:

- **Citizen** – someone living in a community who directly benefits from the PlaceCal events listing
- **Social prescriber** – someone who's job can be made easier by having access to the events listing
- **Partner Manager** – someone who otherwise struggles to share their events with the wider community
- **Partner Admin** – someone who is updating an internal events calendar with listings anyway
- **Secretary** – someone working in the community whose job is to "asset map" current events across organisations
- **Commissioner** – someone responsible for improving the health and social outcomes in their area
- **Developers** – someone interested in using the PlaceCal software or API for their own purpose

Find out more in the *PlaceCal glossary*.

PlaceCal delivers more than 220 events per week – and that's just in Moss Side! It currently has more than 17 partners publishing events, with more in the process of being trained.

1.3.3 PlaceCal training program

To ensure people are getting the most out of the software and have the right skills, we have also developed a custom PlaceCal training program based on extensive field research.

The PlaceCal training program is an in-depth education package delivered as a standard part of our service. Our targets are the community groups, regional providers, and community organisations involved in PlaceCal.

Fig. 9: PlaceCal software map

These groups are already invested in gathering information about local services and events in their area, but currently struggling to manage this process efficiently. They lack a coherent way of creating, storing and sharing their information collaboratively.

Our training tackles this problem by giving key workers the tools they need to collaborate, which capitalises on existing resources.

These local workers and residents take on key roles, some of them acting as a 'secretary'. Secretaries are the active curators who ensure that the community is in charge of its local information. They ensure that the information produced is trustworthy, which can then be recommended back to local health and community organisations.

Find out more about *who uses PlaceCal*.

1.4 Who is using PlaceCal?

PlaceCal has already been rolled out in Hulme and Moss Side. Now it's being piloted in Moston.

PlaceCal is used by many different people in these communities, but a few particular individuals find parts of their jobs are transformed by using the platform.

Here are two key examples of people who are now benefiting from using PlaceCal in their role already.

1.4.1 User 1: Alasdair, GP in Moss Side

Alasdair is a GP at Moss Side Health Centre and he sees dozens of patients a day. We would consider him an end user of PlaceCal.

Alasdair's problem

Many of Alasdair's patients have problems with their breathing, aren't able to exercise, or are lonely.

His lonely patients are sometimes the most difficult to help, and he's only got 7 minutes in which to do it. For example, some patients call for more than 40 ambulances a year to take them to hospital – just to get the opportunity to see another human being.

This type of behaviour places an immense strain on the health services, and sadly it doesn't really fix the problem.

Alasdair knew what the solution was – but he lacked the infrastructure for it.

Social prescription

Alasdair wanted to "socially prescribe". This means he would refer people to services in their community instead of only offering medical solutions. The services he could refer them to might be a local group where they can do gentle exercise, or find some social support.

1 in 5 GPs already socially prescribe, and 40% would refer if they had more information about what's available. (July 2017, GP Online Survey)

It's was previously very difficult for Alasdair to find out more information about what's happening in Moss Side. The issue wasn't a lack of events going on, but the fact that there was no centralised place where he could browse events. Many community groups don't even have a website.

Health workers have the job of maintaining sprawling spreadsheets or emailing out PDF documents periodically. Unfortunately, these documents have several drawbacks:

- They get out of date very quickly

- Many people are duplicating work or missing out key events

- They aren't easy to use in the 7 minute average GP's appointment

How PlaceCal helps

PlaceCal is the perfect alternative to these cumbersome spreadsheets and PDFs. Now Alasdair has access to PlaceCal, he can quickly pull up a listing of everything going on in Moss Side for the next few weeks. PlaceCal for Moss Side has hundreds of events listed at any one time.

Image caption: Example of the PlaceCal calendar

The calendar can be displayed constantly on one of his computer screens during his appointments. This means it now only takes about 30 seconds for him to work with a patient to help them find one of the dozens of events that take place every day.

As a result, Alasdair can now: * Socially connect his patients to local community events * Enable people to find an alternative to taking more medication * Get people moving again after they may have been sedentary for some time

Image caption: Alasdair using the PlaceCal calendar in his practice

Find out more about what PlaceCal offers social prescribers like Alasdair

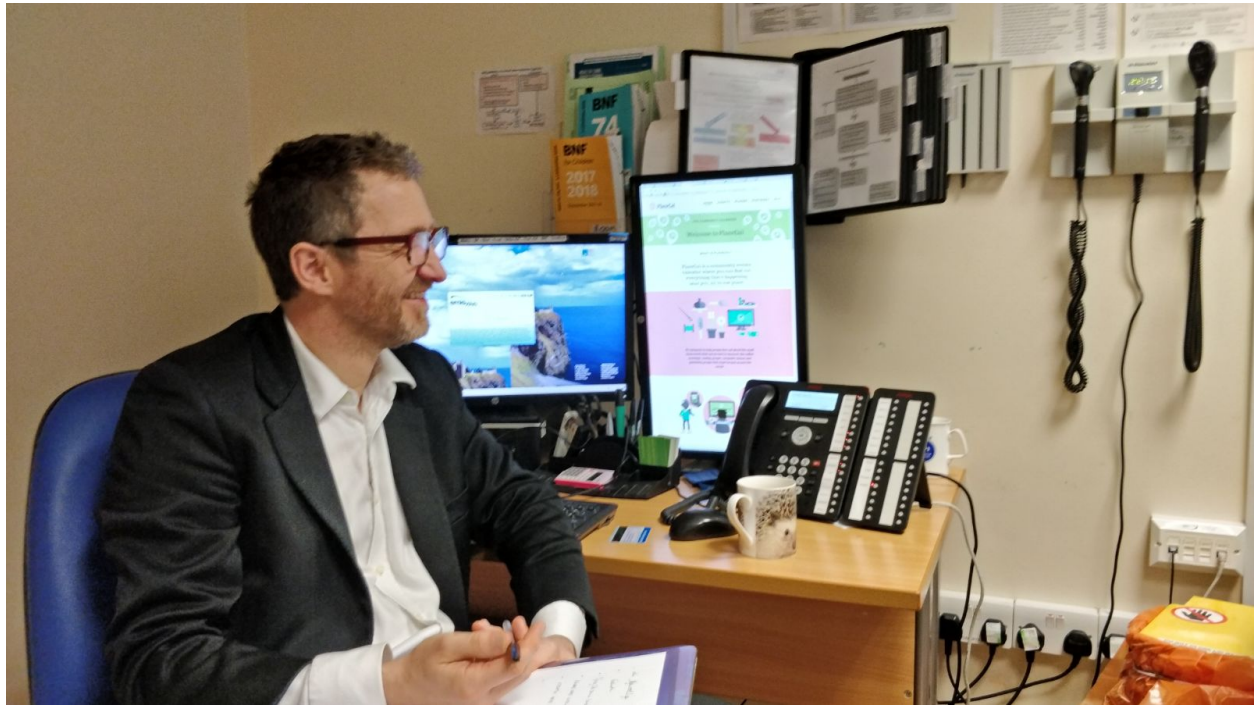Fig. 10: Example of PlaceCal calendar

Fig. 11: Alasdair using PlaceCal in his practice

Fig. 12: Buzz – Manchester Health & Wellbeing Service

1.4.2 User 2: Patsy, Neighbourhood Health Worker in Manchester

Patsy is a Neighbourhood Health Worker working for Buzz, Manchester's Health & Wellbeing service. Her role is to work people in Manchester communities to improve their health and wellbeing. Patsy is an example of someone who helps others to promote their events using PlaceCal.

Patsy's problem

Part of Patsy's job is "asset mapping". This means working with local community organisations to find out what they have available, and keeping an up-to-date list of what's going on.

She sends these listings to people she works with in the health service – people like Alasdair, the GP we talked about in the previous section.

The existing tools Patsy had to work with all had their limitations. They were spreadsheets that weren't easy to keep current or share, and local council websites that were hard to update and not really used by anyone anyway.

How PlaceCal helps

Now by using PlaceCal, Patsy can train up organisations to input and update their own event information. This creates a centralised information source maintained by the people who own the events. Patsy doesn't have the endless struggle of chasing people to find out what's on anymore.

Organisations in the community are more digitally included by having access to PlaceCal. They can reach more people for their events, so it keeps everyone happy.

PlaceCal also reduces administration overhead for the area. It helps Patsy to coordinate her work with other people doing asset mapping as well, drastically reducing the amount of duplicate information held by different organisations.

Find out more about PlaceCal's role in promoting Digital Inclusion.

1.4.3 Community groups using PlaceCal

Patsy and Alasdair were examples of end users benefiting from the PlaceCal platform. Now we'll look at some of the community groups promoting their events through PlaceCal.

Here are a few examples of setting up a new calendar in practice.

1.4.4 Example 1: Big Life Centres

Big Life Centres currently manages two health and wellbeing centres in Hulme. These are the Kath Locke Centre and the Zion Centre.

The problem

Before becoming a PlaceCal partner, each venue already had a dedicated staff member who would create a printed events listing every month. However, neither hosted the information on their website. They weren't reaching as many people in the community as they would have liked.

How PlaceCal helped

We came along with the aim of helping Big Life Centres to set up a brand new events calendar for both venues that we could import into the PlaceCal system.

First, we created a calendar for each venue using Microsoft Outlook. One calendar contained every Kath Locke centre event, and the second calendar had the Zion Centre events.

Since all the events for each centre were held on the same premises, we didn't necessarily have to use the Location field in Outlook. All we had to do was set the location in PlaceCal at the same time as we imported the events.

In the end, we decided to use the Outlook Location field to store each event's room number, because these were large buildings. Every event can now display an accurate location and room number with minimum effort from the Admins.

The outcome

The Big Life Centres now have one combined events listing for every event in both centres, and they also maintain separate directories for each venue.

It's much easier for the Admins to list their events and, by ensuring a wide coverage, they are attracting more members of the community to their centres than ever.

1.4.5 Example 2: Hulme Community Garden Centre

Hulme Community Garden Centre brings the local community together through gardening through providing free access to education and skills training.

The problem

Hulme Community Garden Centre were using Facebook to list their big public events like gardening festivals and open days. This was working well, but it meant that people following them on Facebook were struggling to find the right information since it was hard for them to list their smaller events.

How PlaceCal helped

They were already using Google's GSuite tools, and so we helped them create a second calendar using Google Calendar. They shared this calendar with every staff member for their weekly events, which included regular groups like home education lessons, and groups for people with learning difficulties.

We imported both of these calendars into PlaceCal, along with the Facebook events. This approach means that they can still use Facebook to promote their big events, while publishing comprehensive listings on PlaceCal. A bonus is that they can list every event from both Facebook and Google Calendar together on PlaceCal.

The outcome

Hulme Community are now attracting more people to their smaller events, and they haven't had to use anymore new software. It's easier for their staff to organise their groups and communicate the information to their attendees.

1.4.6 Example 3: The Old Abbey Taphouse

The Old Abbey Taphouse use Facebook for all their events due to the great sharing features in Facebook, as they mostly host events for other people that already use Facebook. Facebook allows people to create events and then link them to their Facebook Page afterwards, so all the venue has to do is approve the events. PlaceCal reads directly from Facebook so no further configuration is needed.

1.5 Our Principles

1.5.1 Capability-based

Education and partnership working are at the core of everything we do. PlaceCal works by training and supporting organisations to publish their information, creating and supporting local resident-led partnerships to help people work together, and providing the PlaceCal platform to manage it all and respond to people's needs.

This holistic approach to community technology creates a low social capital social network for real world interaction: a radically decentralised, transparent initiative managed directly by it's citizens. This creates both spatial and digital inclusion: fairer and more inclusive neighbourhoods both on and offline.

1.5.2 Communities of place

Our primary intended audience for PlaceCal are communities of place. These are neighbourhood partnerships representing anything from a single tower block to a small town. These groups work because they have a 'real world' relationship of geographical proximity, typically up to around 6,000 people.

Neighbourhood partnerships form the interface between residents and health, housing and local authority providers who then have a coordinated way to work with people locally. What makes PlaceCal unique is that it combines knowledge in an area across many different siloed stakeholders and across geographic scales.

Open source

The PlaceCal source code is free and open source: all our development is public and transparent. All our training materials and expertise are available under a Creative Commons license, allowing you to make your own versions for your needs. Our technical support enables communities to own and manage their own information.

Having all this information in one place means that it's the perfect information source for social prescribers like doctors, nurses, library assistants, and social care workers to find good things to do for their patients.

1.5.3 Digital Inclusion

The core goal of PlaceCal is to create well connected neighbourhoods that work better for older people, reduce social isolation, and increase active citizenship. Measuring the success of our interventions is not a simple task and has required an approach that can consider the entirety of the relationships and information in an area.

PlaceCal is not about teaching people to use the internet as it is, or teaching "digital skills". It's about redesigning the internet with a new model that appeals to humans from all backgrounds with a wide range of interests and needs.

1.5.4 Curated by humans

Each neighbourhood or interest group has it's own Secretary, who is the human face of PlaceCal. Secretaries are the "curators" of PlaceCal, working with organisations to promote events in the area as a whole.

1.5.5 Based on existing capacity

PlaceCal works with your existing technology and staff time, helping you set something up if needed. This means that it hooks into your existing event management software, updating itself automatically when you're set up.

Most people use Google Calendar, Outlook 365, or Facebook. We can also work with your custom CMS or event API.

1.6 Why PlaceCal was founded

PlaceCal started as part of a research project at Manchester Metropolitan University.

The aim of the project was to look into making cities more friendly for the over 50s, and reduce social isolation.

The research looked at communities, places, facilities and people in four areas of Greater Manchester:

1.6.1 Our research findings

One of the first things we found was that people thought there was nothing to do in their areas. This meant they were stuck at home, alone.

We wondered if that was really the case, however. Perhaps there was a lack of information?

We went out to see if the assumption that there was nothing to do was true. After talking to dozens of organisations and community members, we discovered there was a huge variety of activities to take part in.

The focus therefore became not the lack of events, but a lack of high quality, up-to-date, accessible and complete community data.

1.6.2 The problem of communication

It became clear to us that the problem is one of communication.

Mainstream social media sites like Facebook and Twitter are aimed at a specific type of event: large, well promoted, one-off events, generally for younger people.

We realised we needed a way for small organisations to promote the more day-to-day events for less socially mobile and older people – it was here that the idea for PlaceCal was born.

1.6.3 PlaceCal as the solution

PlaceCal is a technological and social solution.

PlaceCal was aimed at organisations of all sizes with social goals. The platform enables them to promote their events with the minimum possible fuss, using their existing technology.

We also started it to improve community technology infrastructure overall. We created a solution where the social, technical, and training aspects are all intertwined.

PlaceCal uses a model that can be scaled and adopted by others. We hope PlaceCal becomes one of many apps that use this approach.

PlaceCal helps people in Greater Manchester become more socially connected with one another through attending free local events.

PlaceCal is both a software tool and a partnership of community organisations, charities, social housing providers, government services, health providers, and citizens. We're working together to create really great neighbourhood information sources that enable community wellness and active citizenship.

1.7 What do people use it for?

People can discover small local groups that organise regular free events for their community. These events are often difficult to find without people being told out about them or having digital skills. They might be coffee mornings,

sewing groups, computer classes or gardening groups. They're highly valuable for people, but are often run by organisations with little to no budget or staff time to devote to promotion beyond posting them online.

1.8 What are the benefits?

When people can't find events near them, they may become lonely and isolated. This often results in mental and physical deterioration which only comes to attention when they eventually interact with healthcare services. PlaceCal ultimately works to prevent these outcomes by improving the physical and mental health of people in the community, as well as their overall wellbeing.

1.9 How does it benefit the community?

It works over clearly defined areas called "neighbourhoods", such as Hulme.

Our holistic social and technical toolkit is designed to improve the quality, quantity and accessibility of community information within an area. This approach helps us to create smarter, more resilient, and better connected neighbourhoods – all with the resources already available.

These neighbourhoods work better for everyone, but especially people who are currently digitally excluded.

1.10 Who can use it?

Our tools can be used by everyone from older people to social prescribers such as doctors and library assistants. It's not a top-down approach, as the platform is maintained and kept up-to-date by local experts. These are the people in your community who know the area inside out.

Commissioner Guide

2.1 Key benefits of PlaceCal

PlaceCal has a number of benefits for commissioners.

2.1.1 "Asset mapping"

Commissioners often have problems with asset mapping (who really knows what asset mapping is, anyway?) for their community. This means they're unable to clearly identify and communicate the strengths and resources already available in their domain. The information is there, but no one can find it.

PlaceCal was developed as a tool that enables a Commissioner's smaller community groups to publish their information online easily. It's the missing link between existing directories (like Facebook or EventBrite) and the people who need the information.

PlaceCal is not a directory in and of itself. Unlike other directory or listings services, which require top-down maintenance from a central team, it works alongside existing directories. PlaceCal aggregates information from separate, unrelated sources to improve information-sharing.

We produced a table to show how PlaceCal differs from other product-based solutions, as an asset-based approach.

Product-based (deficit) Approach	PlaceCal (asset) Approach
Start with technological lacks	Start with existing facilities, staff and skills
Respond to problems	Identify opportunities and strengths
Provide services	Invest in training and support
Emphasise role of technology/software	Emphasise role of community knowledge
Focus on individuals	Focus on neighbourhoods
See people and clients and consumers	Enable people to be co-producers creating what they need
Treat people as passive and "done-to"	Help people decide what's important to them
Fix people	Support people to do what they want
Implement products as the solution	See people as the answer

Instead of adding more on to the mess of information we have already, PlaceCal links people to what's already available in an organised, efficient way.

2.2 Digital & spatial inclusion

One of PlaceCal's primary aims is to connect communities through the use of digital technologies. However, many people are currently excluded from the use of such technologies.

2.2.1 What is digital exclusion?

Digital exclusion is when people do not have access to the internet and digital technologies. The government defines it as:

> Digital inclusion, or rather, reducing digital exclusion, is about making sure that people have the capability to use the internet to do things that benefit them day to day - whether they be individuals, SMEs or VCSE organisations. (Government Digital Inclusion Strategy, 2014)

Digital inclusion is about:

- Making sure people can access the technologies they need or want

- People having the right connectivity infrastructure such as access to the internet

- People having materials and resources online that actually interest them

2.2.2 Effects of digital exclusion

Unfortunately, the reality is that many people are suffering from digital exclusion – especially elderly people and those on low incomes.

Even 40% of working age people struggle with basic tasks like deleting emails, which is even worse for older people. 4.2 million people in the UK aged 65+ have never used the internet.

Digital exclusion of people and organisations has led directly to **social exclusion**. This has in turn made it very hard for organisations to cope with even day-to-day information sharing needs.

2.2.3 How PlaceCal tackles the problem

PlaceCal is a digital inclusion tool that raises the level of technical capability in a neighbourhood. It helps to create and support local resident-led partnerships by empowering people to work together better.

Residents in local communities can't find out what's going on if they're not socially connected to start. This causes people who are already socially isolated to become even more entrenched and hard to reach. It's not possible for such people to just "go online".

The benefit of PlaceCal is not requiring its users to be able to use the internet, since other individuals (such as GPs) can *socially prescribe* to them. On the other hand, if individuals want to use our website, it's easily accessible in multiple ways, such as automatically displaying in a large font.

PlaceCal is a resource that has been created directly for older people who could actively use the website on a regular basis. It's user-friendly and accessible so users can get the most out of the platform.

2.2.4 From digital to spatial

PlaceCal does not exist in a digital vacuum. By being rooted in places, this gives PlaceCal staying power and motivates people to actually use it.

Our primary intended audiences for PlaceCal are communities of place. These are neighbourhood partnerships representing anything from a single tower block to a small town. These groups work because they have a 'real world' relationship of geographical proximity, typically up to around 6,000 people.

We are currently live in Hulme and Moss Side, and expanding to Moston. Each area has its own website with a calendar of events, updated regularly with multiple listings.

Find out more about how to *get started with PlaceCal*.

2.3 Co-creation: developing the PlaceCal prototype

PlaceCal has already been researched thoroughly so we know that there's a need for it in Greater Manchester.

Read on to find out more about the PlaceCal prototype.

Funding from CityVerve

Before we even started, PlaceCal needed funding.

Working together with resident-led Age Friendly Hulme and Moss Side Partnership, we secured innovation funding for a PlaceCal MVP. It came from CityVerve, a Smart City accelerator program in Manchester.

The two awards from CityVerve totalled £86,000 which was enough to get started with a pilot. It enabled us to explore the issues surrounding information sharing and dissemination with a range of different stakeholders.

These included older adults, community group managers, and local authority employees.

2.3.1 Identifying a need

During the exploration phase we conducted extensive fieldwork.

Our CityVerve PlaceCal fieldwork shows that there are many different incomplete, inaccurate and poorly produced information sources in a neighbourhood. These range from flyers and posters, to bulk email chains and poorly maintained websites.

Even worse, many small local organisations and venues are *not at all able* to publish information about their activities. There's a distinct lack of IT training, infrastructure, and suitable tools for these community groups.

50% of community organisations don't have a website at all, let alone an up-to-date one. That means many residents can't find out what's going on if they're not already *socially connected*.

2.3.2 Budget-friendly

Money for resources is a huge barrier for community organisations. Under-resourced and extremely time-strapped, most don't have the budget or time to effectively commission and maintain websites.

They're also not yet supported to work locally with others who can. That means it's extremely hard for standard, single-approach interventions to become established with many organisations duplicating efforts.

We needed a cost-effective way for these groups to work together in a timely and efficient manner.

2.3.3 Helping the NHS

We found that many older people are approaching the health services out of loneliness. GPs want to connect these people with local events but lack the resources to do so.

An NHS England survey found that 40% of GPs would "socially prescribe" – send patients to community groups if they had access to the right information.

Check out our case studies for PlaceCal users.

2.3.4 Field research

Many software tools needed to publish information online already exist. It quickly became clear from our research that these tools were not suitable for most small groups' use, that there was a chronic lack of tech skills across the sector, and that there was a lack of access to joined-up information sharing services.

We realised PlaceCal's success would hinge on finding a method by which the social development could work in unison with the technological.

The goal is fruitful collaboration across providers in a way that benefits older residents, that is budget-friendly and avoids duplication.

2.3.5 PlaceCal launch

After four months' fieldwork, gathering direct input from older people into the design, development and training requirements, PlaceCal emerged.

Our specific 'capability' research approach enabled us to discover and respond to the complex capabilities, barriers and opportunities for the creation of organised, reliable community information between residents, community groups and institutional stakeholders.

In December 2017 we launched PlaceCal in our pilot area, Hulme and Moss Side, at a joint community event attended by hundreds of residents, schools and religious organisations.

2.4 Getting started for commissioners

Getting started with PlaceCal can be broken down into 7 steps.

1. **Initial assessment:** Complete an initial form to assess who in the community running events and groups might be interested in the partnership.

2. **Initial workshop:** Work with the PlaceCal team to conduct an initial workshop together inviting everyone who might want to get involved in the partnership.

3. **Create neighbourhood team:** Work with the PlaceCal team to agree on who is to become Secretaries (someone who manages PlaceCal in your area), and work with other organisations to set this up.

4. **Meet partners:** Arrange for your Secretaries to contact all potential Partners (community groups), and ask to meet up. Fill out this form to get started.

5. **Conduct interviews:** We arrange for the Secretaries conduct the initial interviews with potential area Partners, and ask them to sign the onboarding form so we can get their information into one place.

6. **Create shared system:** Secretaries go on to work with each Partner to get all their current event and organisation information into the PlaceCal system (assisted by PlaceCal).

7. **Periodic updates:** Secretaries periodically check back with each Partner to keep the PlaceCal system up to date, and monitor the area as a whole for changes.

And that's it! Once all the positions have been filled, PlaceCal runs smoothly with up-to-date events listings always available for your community.

2.5 PlaceCal capability model

Our impact measurement framework is therefore based on the capability of people in a neighbourhood to be able to find information, do their jobs effectively, or one of a range of other skills. We have based it on the "capability approach" promoted by the UN Human Development Programme that aims to ensure work is undertaken in an inclusive and outcome-focussed manner. This methodological approach formed the foundation of MAFNs age friendly research, and draws on world-leading research into place-based community development from our UK partners The Wellcome Trust Centre for Cultures and Environments of Health.

2.5.1 Table

Role	Description	Example task
Citizen	Residents using PlaceCal. Typically over 50s who have multiple risk factors for social isolation, and very little technical skills. It's important to note that the other core capabilities are citizens as well: for example, most managers who run groups for over 50s are also in this category.	
Prescriber	Identify opportunities and strengths	
Manager	Invest in training and support	
Admin	Emphasise role of community knowledge	
Secretary	Focus on neighbourhoods	
Commissioner	Enable people to be co-producers creating what they need	
Developer	Help people decide what's important to them	
	Support people to do what they want	
	See people as the answer	

Role: Citizen

Description: Residents using PlaceCal. Typically over 50s who have multiple risk factors for social isolation, and very little technical skills. It's important to note that the other core capabilities are citizens as well: for example, most

managers who run groups for over 50s are also in this category.

Example task: I can find out what institutions, organisations and groups there are in my area, and what they are doing.

Role: Prescriber

Description: A range of roles such as GPs, library assistants, neighbourhood workers and family members who want a list of high quality and up to date events to refer people to. This is a key role for the platform: many non-computer users will be using it with assistance.

Example task: I can find out everything there is to do in my area this week in a reliable and consistent format.

Role: Manager

Description: People who manage community organisations on all scales from large national institutions with local offers, to unincorporated community groups running a coffee morning out their living room.

Example task: I can make sure that information about who we are and what we are doing is published and promoted.

Role: Admin

Description: Organisational workers who add and update their information on PlaceCal directly. They work with secretaries to create a listing of their organisation on PlaceCal, and add their event feed to the centralised daily events listings.

Example task: I can publish information about who we are and what we are doing in various forms

Role: Secretary

Description: People working in an area to bring organisations and people together. They could be local community workers, health workers, or community organisers delivering PlaceCal on the ground. We discussed this role in the "development process" section.

Example task: I can work with organisations to help them publish their information and make sure the right people know about it.

Role: Commissioner

Description: People and institutions who fund the PlaceCal platform. They can either be community groups looking for a tool to bring their neighborhood together, or city or health authority managers looking to help their staff work in a more networked way. We explored this role in the "market potential" section.

Example task: I can enable my team to find out who the local experts are in an area when using an asset-based approach.

Role: Developer

Description: People working on the PlaceCal platform, adapting it for their own area or need, or working with PlaceCal's API feeds.

Example task: I can access local information about places and events programmatically to build my application.

2.5.2 Meaningfully addressing exclusion

A place-based and community engaged process is essential to meaningfully address exclusion for vulnerable and socially isolated individuals and groups. By tackling social and digital inclusion through the training and software combined, our process enables removing the specific barriers in either domain by giving people the capabilities to do what they need.

Here's our full guide for commissioners who are using or interested in using PlaceCal.

2.6 What is PlaceCal for Commissioners?

A Commissioner for PlaceCal is someone who funds PlaceCal and want to use it to help people work together in their region. They are often overseeing large statutory organisations, who are our main target audience.

For Commissioners, PlaceCal is not just a platform or a piece of software. It's a holistic social and technical toolkit designed to improve the quality, quantity and accessibility of community data.

PlaceCal helps us to make smarter, more resilient and better connected neighbourhoods that work for everyone. It's targeted especially people at risk of being left behind by the "digital divide".

By tackling digital inclusion with our specific approach, PlaceCal opens the door to healthier and happier communities – using the existing resources at hand.

Together, we are working to improve the quality, quantity and accessibility of community data to make better connected neighbourhoods that work for everyone.

2.7 Presentation

Here's a presentation explaining exactly what PlaceCal does:

Secretary Guide

3.1 Getting Started

This page takes you from project conception to conducting the initial workshop. It looks at:

1. Setting up your tools

2. Choosing your contacts

3. Setting up your calendar

3.1.1 1. Setting up your tools

You'll need a system of simple tools to manage the project. Here are the steps you need to go through to get set up:

- Spend time before you begin thinking about how you will record meetings, engagements, followups, etc. – detailed notes are important.

- Start your project in either a spreadsheet or use a copy of our Airtable reporting tool (we'll provide you with this), depending on which technology you'd prefer.

- You can choose between software such as Google Calendar, Office365 or your own website software as a means of recording events. PlaceCal works with your existing tools.

3.1.2 2. Choosing your contacts

Now we'll cover choosing your contacts and deciding what to say to them.

- Ask yourself who are the people you need to talk to? What are the main places you need to visit?

- Make a list of all the key people and organisations you want to get on board.

- Think about each person or org and what they might need from you when you get in contact.

- Start out with the easier targets and bigger organisations since having "social proof" will make it easier to later convince other people to join.

- Add any events you discover along the way to your Google Calendar. This calendar can later be printed or shared with other people and will become a useful resource.

3.1.3 3. Setting up your calendar

Creating an initial calendar is crucial to get the project started.

- Using Google Calendar or similar, create a Google Calendar for the area.

- If you don't have a Google account then register one now – you'll need it sooner or later and we find Google Calendar to be the best all-around software for the task.

- Start with one master calendar where you publish everything on behalf of the organisations. You can get started more quickly since it will take a while for organisations to start publishing their own data.

[Coming soon: AirTable template]

3.2 Initial Workshop

This is the first step in engaging the local partnership with PlaceCal. You will:

1. Introduce people to the project and give them an overview of the objectives.

2. Decide who is going to do the work, and make a plan for delivering it.

3. Work together to decide who will be in the initial cohort, and how best to contact them.

4. Agree on the training materials to be used to do deliver the project.

3.3 Initial onboarding

This page deals with how secretaries can best approach onboarding new organisations to become part of the PlaceCal Partnership. Secretaries nominate their own organisations, find them through referrals or through research in the community.

For each new organisation you identify, you will need to:

1. Conduct initial research to determine suitability.

2. Decide who to meet (the potential PlaceCal Manager) and think of what to say.

3. Meet with your representative, introduce the person to PlaceCal, and help them decide if they want to join the Partnership.

4. Work with your representative to publish information about their organisation on PlaceCal.

5. Identify the key contacts who will manage and maintain the information (Admins).

6. Agree a schedule for adding event information, and optionally creating a news article.

3.3.1 Initial contact

Before meeting up with your potential Manager, it's important to find out as much as you can about the new organisation before you begin. This will save time for everyone involved by ensuring that the group is suitable and you're meeting the right person.

A partial checklist of relevant information to research is:

- Information about the group as a whole.

- Website, Facebook and Twitter links.

- What kinds of events they organise and places they manage. If any of these are currently published online.

- Paper posters or flyers you might have been given.

- Recent news stories.

- An idea of who you're meeting with and what their job involves.

Create a ticket in your chosen project management system (for example, Trello) with all this information to later review with the group when you meet.

When your preliminary research is complete, contact the group. Explain the benefits of the PlaceCal project for both the neighbourhood and the group itself so they are more motivated to meet with you.

[Coming soon: boilerplate introduction emails]

3.3.2 First meeting

While it's possible to do it in less time, we advise setting aside two hours for initial meetings. In these meetings you will:

- Introduce the PlaceCal initiative

- Complete the paperwork and onboarding process, filling in relevant consent forms.

- Review the group's information based on your initial review and publish it on PlaceCal.

- Identify who will be responsible for keeping the information up-to-date

- If possible and time allows, set up a calendar feed. If not, schedule up a followup meeting. If the organisation already has a custom website, refer it to Geeks for Social Change.

- Update your project management system as needed.

We will work with you to conduct the first few onboarding meetings to help you through all these stages.

3.4 Calendar Onboarding

1. Decide on the best platform(s) for each organisation.

2. Create iCal or event API feeds.

3. Ensure event information is correct and high quality.

3.4.1 Test the feed

Import the ICS feed into your Google Calendar

Look at event info and decide if it looks complete If it's not go and bug them about it until they do it When the feed is done, update Calendar status in Airtable to "ready for signoff" and let Kim know

3.4.2 Presentation

You may use or adapt the following presentation for this process.

3.5 Followups

1. Deciding how often to check back.

2. What to look for.

3. Things to consider.

Checking back on information

Keeping track of staff changes

Secretaries are the human face of PlaceCal. These people work with the resident-led partnerships to support neighbourhood organisations to publish their information. They can be anyone but they are usually nominated by the commissioner who supports PlaceCal locally.

They can be thought of as "neighbourhood curators": working with local organisations and partnerships to decide what information needs be listed on the PlaceCal neighbourhood websites they manage. They are comfortable with using the commonplace technologies that PlaceCal runs on – Google Calendar and Microsoft Excel for example.

Secretaries manage the news and information for the PlaceCal neighbourhood. They create and update Places, Partners and Calendars, and create user accounts for the relevant people in those organisations. They're available on the phone or by email for one-to-one local support.

The Secretary Guide has the following sections:

1. *Getting Started* looks at the tools you'll need to use and how to kick the whole project off.

2. *Initial Workshop* explores what to expect at your initial partnership meeting, and how to get the project off on the right foot.

3. *Initial Onboarding* takes you through each meeting with a group, and shows an example flow and what kinds of information you need to collect.

4. *Calendar Onboarding* demonstrates how to get groups' events onto PlaceCal.

5. *Followups* has suggestions for how to ensure information stays up-to-date and complete.

You'll also want to read the *Manager* and *Administrator* guides in order to understand the materials you'll be teaching.

In flowchart form, these stages are represented as follows:

(Source - Dia format)

Initial workshop with local partnership

Introduce project

Create contact list

Initial workshop with each group

Make contact with groups ── Rejected / Postponed ──▶ Mark as uninterested

Accepted

Initial meeting

Join the Partnership? ── Rejected / Postponed ──▶ Update project CMS with reasons

Joined

Create basic information

Followup work

Create news story

Has event feeds? ── Yes, existing website ──▶ Refer to GFSC

No

Set up feeds

Get feed data publishable

Add information to PlaceCal

Fig. 1: Onboarding

Manager Guide

4.1 Benefits

4.1.1 Who you reach

Who uses it

Who approves of it

People who might be invisible to you atm

4.1.2 Where the information is used

Xmas leaflet

Ideas for future work

Want to print something?

Radio, TV, vus stops

4.1.3 Immediate benefits

Accessibility: AAA, Aria, colour scheme, screen readers (can we get accreditation?)

Print mode

API / Linked data if you like

Embed in your exising website

Might be all you need for a website

4.1.4 Support we offer

Followups

Phone/email

4.1.5 Privacy and security

Don't store data we don't need

Only use Analytics

No targetted ads/cookies

4.2 How do I join PlaceCal?

Firstly, we'll come and have a conversation with you to talk about your capability and suitability for the program. This conversation generally takes less than an hour, and helps us understand your technical staff, facilities, training programs, needs, and service offers. It also helps us get to know you better and highlights any pitfalls you might have.

Our technology is designed to work with yours. We'll look at how you can integrate your events most easily with PlaceCal. Right now we support Outlook.com, Google Calendar, and Mac Calendar for publishing events. You can either share your existing event information with us, or create a new public events calendar if you've got concerns about privacy.

If you don't have any existing calendar system, or use pen and paper, we're more than happy to help you set something up. Get in touch for a chat.

4.2.1 How do I join?

Get in touch with your regional secretary - explain method

What if you're not in a region

We come and have a chat - explain why

About the partnership

4.3 First steps

4.3.1 Get in touch

Either known or unknown person

Quick intro to PlaceCal

Ask here briefly if they have a calendar

Set up meeting with calendar admin and organisation admin

4.3.2 Initial interview

First we meet in person...

We do a survey because...

From this we can...

This takes up to an hour

Find out if you are...

- Small org. <10 events a year.
- Larger org. 11 - 50 events a year.
- Big org. permanent community centre, regional providers.
- Institutions. MCC, One Manchester, etc.

4.3.3 Setting up your calendar

Assign a named contact for events administration

Either:

- Create a new calendar then and there
- Figure out how to use your existing calendar
- Go away and think of something else

4.4 Support, training and maintenance

4.4.1 Follow-up support

When they have a calendar, period of time where we work with them to get the descriptions right before publishing.

4.4.2 Ongoing checks

Quarterly checks to see if things are still being updated etc

Managers are the people who manage the day-to-day running of their organisation (Partner). They might be involved in the legal structure of the organisation, or not. They run events like gardening clubs or venues such as churches.

For Managers, PlaceCal is a social and technological initiative to help you easily reach more people in your community. By becoming a PlaceCal partner, you make sure that local citizens, neighbourhood teams, and social prescribers like GPs and library assistants know everything you're doing.

We will publish your events online in one more more regional daily events listings (PlaceCal), and occasionally in printed material on your behalf. We are also working to get local information onto local radio and newspapers, and even new digital bus stop signs!

This guide contains:

1. *Benefits*: ways PlaceCal will help your organisation and who will use the information hosted by PlaceCal.

2. *Joining*: the practical process of getting your information and events online and what to expect from PlaceCal.

3. Management: what kind of skills you will need in your organisation to make PlaceCal work, and how to fit PlaceCal into your existing capacity with very little effort.

4. *Support & Maintenance*: how we will work together to keep your listings on PlaceCal up-to-date.

4.5 How much work is it to use PlaceCal?

Once PlaceCal has been set up, it's almost no effort to maintain on an ongoing basis. It's not another event platform like Facebook or Eventbrite, since it works by simply reading your existing calendar software. If you organise your events with a paper diary, we will help you set up a digital calendar using software you probably already have in-house.

[Link: See how it works in admin guide]

Administrator Guide

5.1 Supported Event Sources

PlaceCal supports a number of sources for events, including ICS feeds and site-specific feeds. These include:

- Columbia Systems (via XML)
- Eventbrite (via link)
- Facebook (With caveats)
- Google Calendar (via ICS)
- ICloud (via ICal ICS)
- Outlook (via ICS)
- Ticketsolve (via XML)
- Teamup (via ICS)

In general, anything that outputs an ICS feed should be viable as source of events. Please refer to the site-specific pages in the sidebar, or your calendar system's documentation, for specific details on how to acquire feed links.

5.2 Google Calendar

5.2.1 Creating a new calendar

Firstly, let's create a new calendar for all your Public events. This makes it really clear which events are going through to PlaceCal.

Go to the "+" symbol on the left hand side of the screen.

Click on "New calendar"

Give your calendar a name and a description if you like. Check the timezone is correct (London).
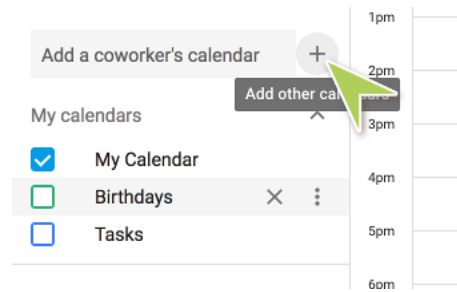
Fig. 1: Click 'Add other calendars' button
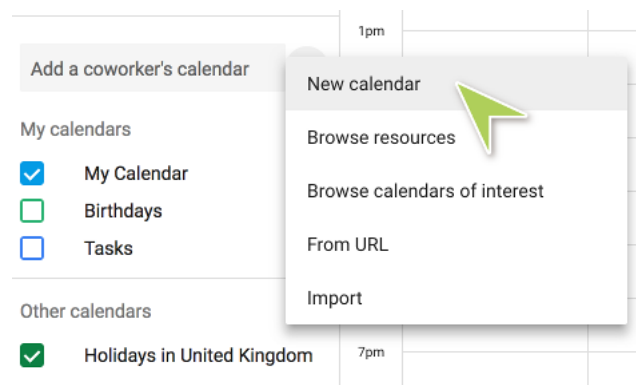
Fig. 2: Click on "New Calendar"

Fig. 3: Fill in the details for your new calendar

Click the back arrow in the top left to go back.

Fig. 4: Click back

Now you can add events to your calendar. Click in the calendar grid roughly where your event is – don't worry if it's a bit off, you can change this later.
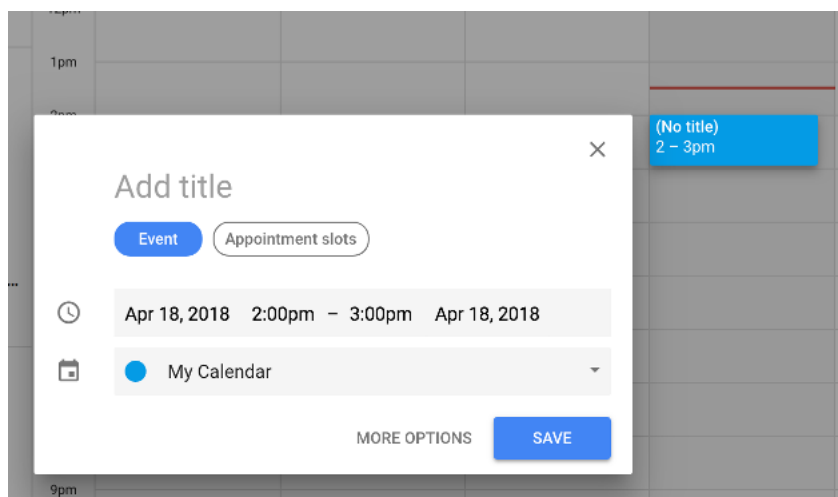
Fig. 5: Create an event

Make sure that the event is being created on the right calendar.
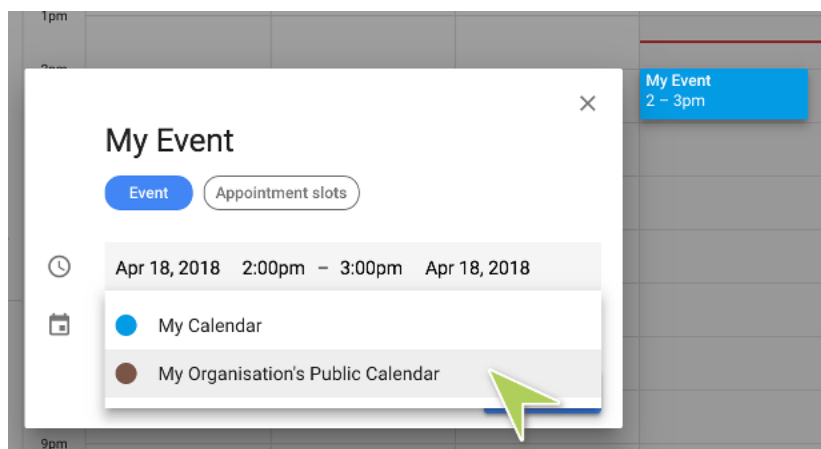
Fig. 6: Check the calendar

Once it's created, click the pencil to edit the event information.

If your event calendar covers multiple venues, add the venue. Be sure to use the autocompete to set the location: having the name correctly here helps PlaceCal make sure the event goes on the correct pages.
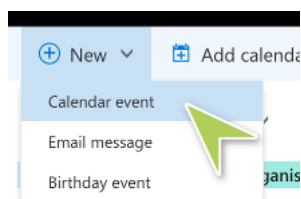
If your calendar is entirely for one venue, you can either skip this step or use it to store a room number.

When this is done correctly, it will show up in the Location bar with a postcode.
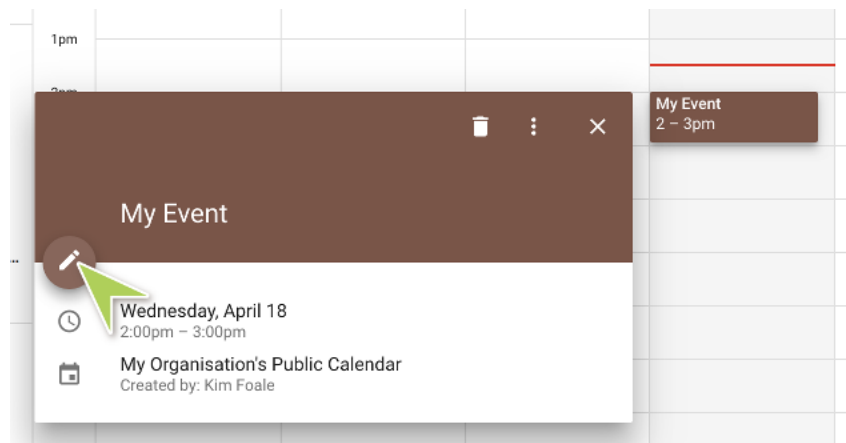
Fig. 7: Click the pencil
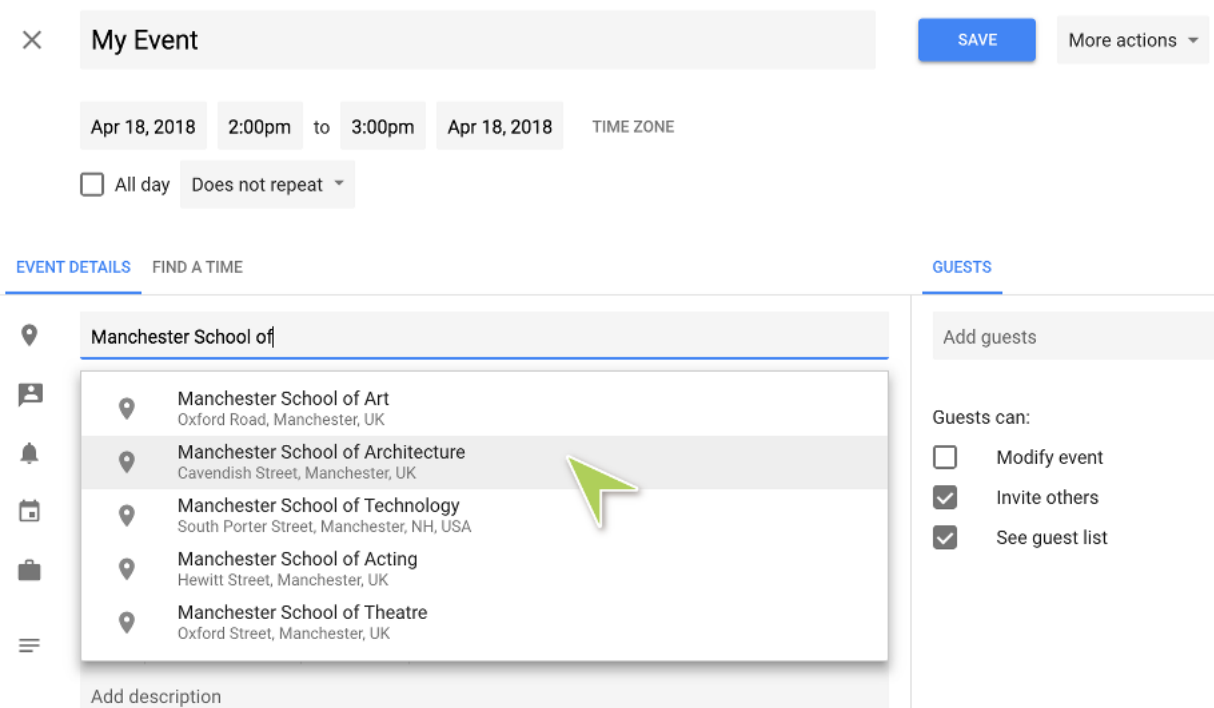
Fig. 8: Select the venue

Fig. 9: Venue selected

If appropriate, add in details about how often the event repeats.
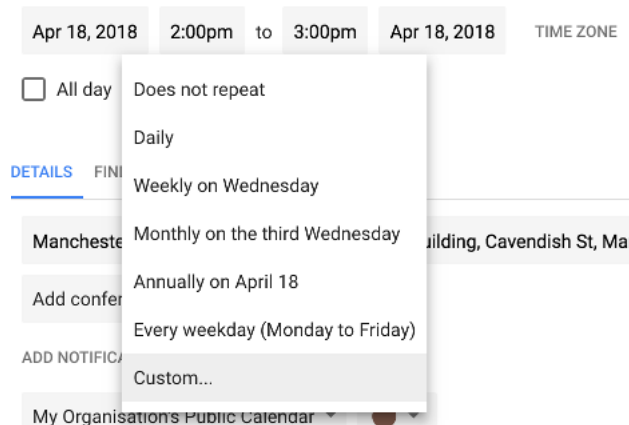
Fig. 10: Repeats

Add a description – the more detailed the better. Descriptions support Markdown syntax if you're comfortable using that. Links will automatically be converted into clickable links inside PlaceCal.

Your event listing is complete!

Repeat this process for your other public events.

5.2.2 Sharing your calendar link with PlaceCal

Your calendar is now up and running and can be updated either with a desktop browser, or using the Google Calendar phone or tablet app. Now you need to share this information with us so we can import it into the site.

Go back to the main screen, click on the three vertical dots next to your calendar name, and click "Settings and sharing"

Select "Make available to public".

This will bring up a warning – this is fine and is just warning you this information will now be public.

Scroll to the "Integrate calendar setting". Copy the "Public address in iCal format" field and email it to support@placecal.org.

You're done! We will get your calendar live as quickly as we can.

5.3 Outlook 365

5.3.1 Creating a new calendar

Firstly, let's create a new calendar for all your Public events. This makes it really clear which events are going through to PlaceCal.

Click "Add calendar" then "Secondary calendar".

This will bring in a little box in the left sidebar to type the name of your calendar in. This is a little hidden!

Now you can add events to your calendar. Click on "New" and then "Calendar event". Give your event a name.

If your event calendar covers multiple venues, add the venue. Be sure to use the autocompete to set the location: having the name correctly here helps PlaceCal make sure the event goes on the correct pages.

Fig. 11: Description text

Fig. 12: Settings and sharing 1
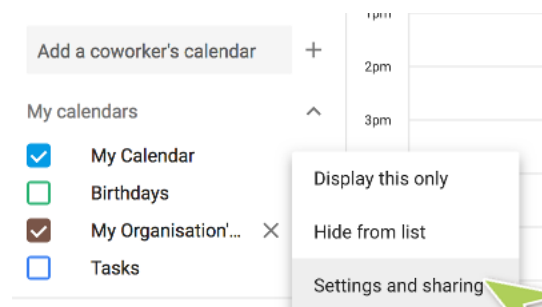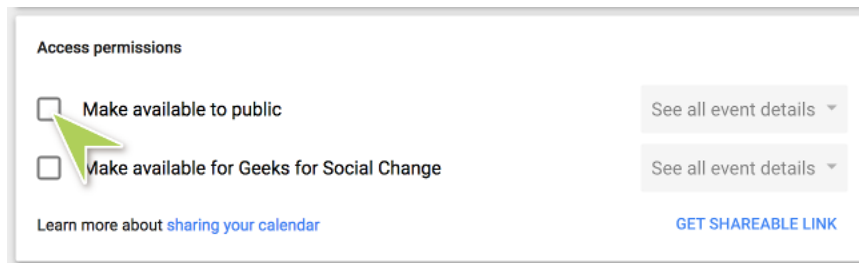
Fig. 13: Settings and sharing 2

Fig. 14: Make available to public

Fig. 15: Public warning

Fig. 16: Email this link

Fig. 17: Create a new calendar
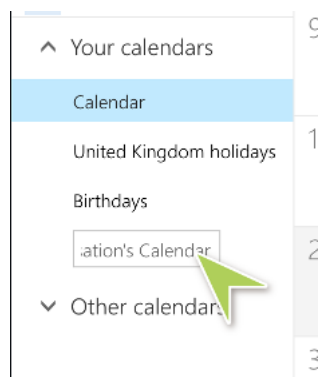
Fig. 18: Add your calendar name

Fig. 19: New event

If your calendar is entirely for one venue, you can either skip this step or use it to store a room number.
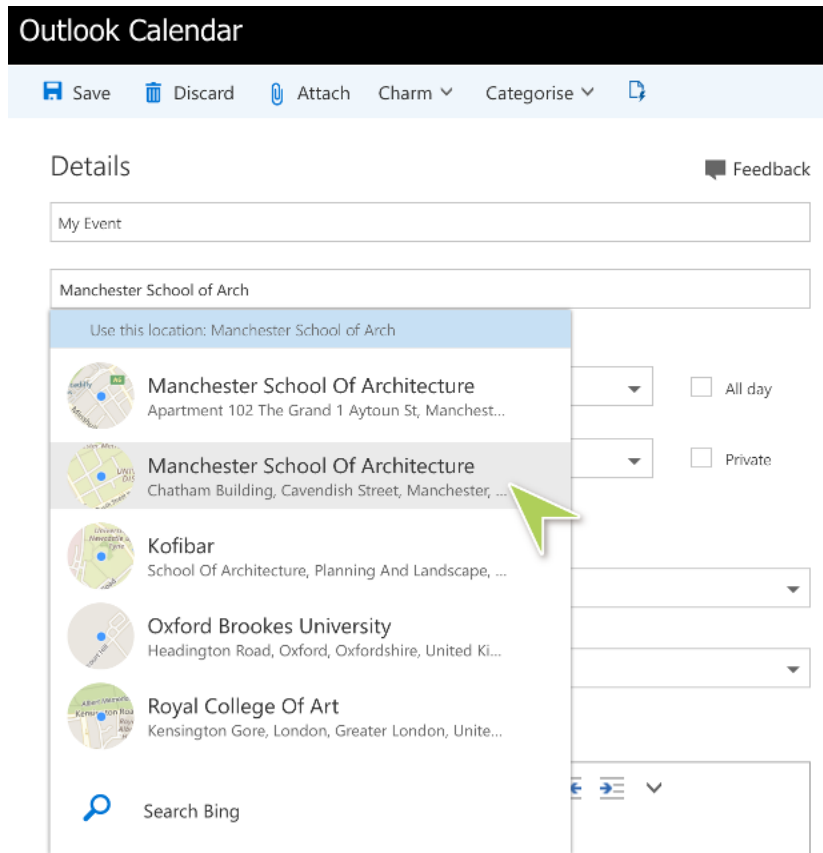
Fig. 20: Pick a venue

Add relevant information about how often this event is, if needed.

Make sure that the calendar is set to the new calendar you just created, and not the default one in Outlook.

Consider turning off Reminders if you use Outlook a lot. If this is the only thing you use it for it might not matter.

Add a Description and check everything looks OK. When you're ready, click "Save".

Great! You've added your event and it should show up. Repeat this for your other events.

5.3.2 Sharing your calendar link with PlaceCal

To get your events on PlaceCal we need to go through a few more steps.

Click the cog at the top right of the screen.

Go to "Options".

Go to "Calendar publishing" in "Shared calendars".

Select your calendar from the dropdown list.

Right click the "ICS" link and click on "Copy link address". Email this link to support@placecal.org.

Thats it! We'll get your events live as soon as we can.
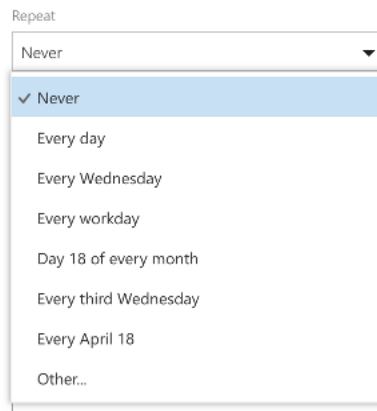
Fig. 21: Repeating events settings
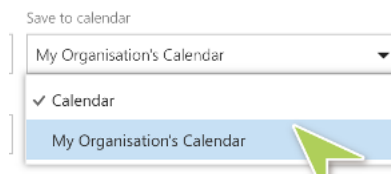
Fig. 22: Select your new calendar
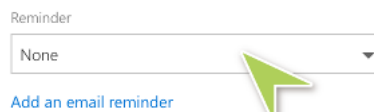
Fig. 23: Disable reminders

Fig. 24: Check event

Fig. 25: Click the cog

Fig. 26: Click Options
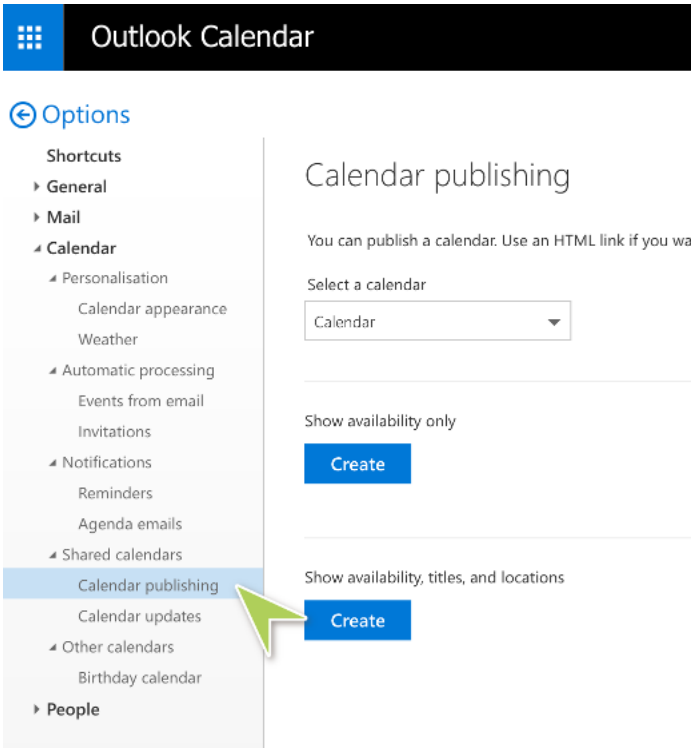
Fig. 27: Calendar publishing

Fig. 28: Select calendar to share

Fig. 29: Copy link

5.4 Mac Calendar

This is the default "Calendar" software if you are using an Apple Mac, iPad or iPhone.

1. If there's no list of calendars on the left, click "Calendars" button in top left to show them.

2. Create a new calendar with "File -> New Calendar -> iCloud" (alternatively, use an existing calendar).

3. Add some events to your calendar, and give it a useful name like "Your Organisation - Public"

4. You can move events between calendars by clicking the small coloured square in the top right.

5. Click on the icon that looks like a wifi symbol next to the calendar name, and click on "Share calendar".

6. Copy the URL starting with "webcal://" it shows you, and email it to support@placecal.org.

5.5 Facebook Events

Adding Facebook listings is now a bit harder than it used to be due to the company over-reacting to the GDPR legislation. Hopefully in the future, this becomes simpler but we have worked out this workaround for now. It takes up to ten minutes to set it up.

Please note this currently only works for Page events and not Group events!

You will need a PlaceCal user account to follow this guide. Get in touch with a PlaceCal admin if you don't have one.

Note: Jan 2020: We've had reports that Facebook has added additional verification steps for new accounts registering Developer accounts and you may have to upload a scan of your identification to create an app as described below. We're seeing if there's anything we can do about this.

5.5.1 Create a Facebook App

First, we're going to create a Facebook App. This should be done by a **Page Owner** or **Page Admin**.

- Go to https://developers.facebook.com/
- In the upper right hand corner, click on **My Apps**
- Select **Add New App**
- Fill in a name that'll help you remember what it is and a contact email
- Click **Create App ID**

5.5.2 Set up the app

- Once your app has been created you will be taken to the **Add a Product** screen.
- Select **Facebook Login**
- Click on the **"www"** bubble.
- Fill in **Site URL** with **placecal.org**
- Click **Save**
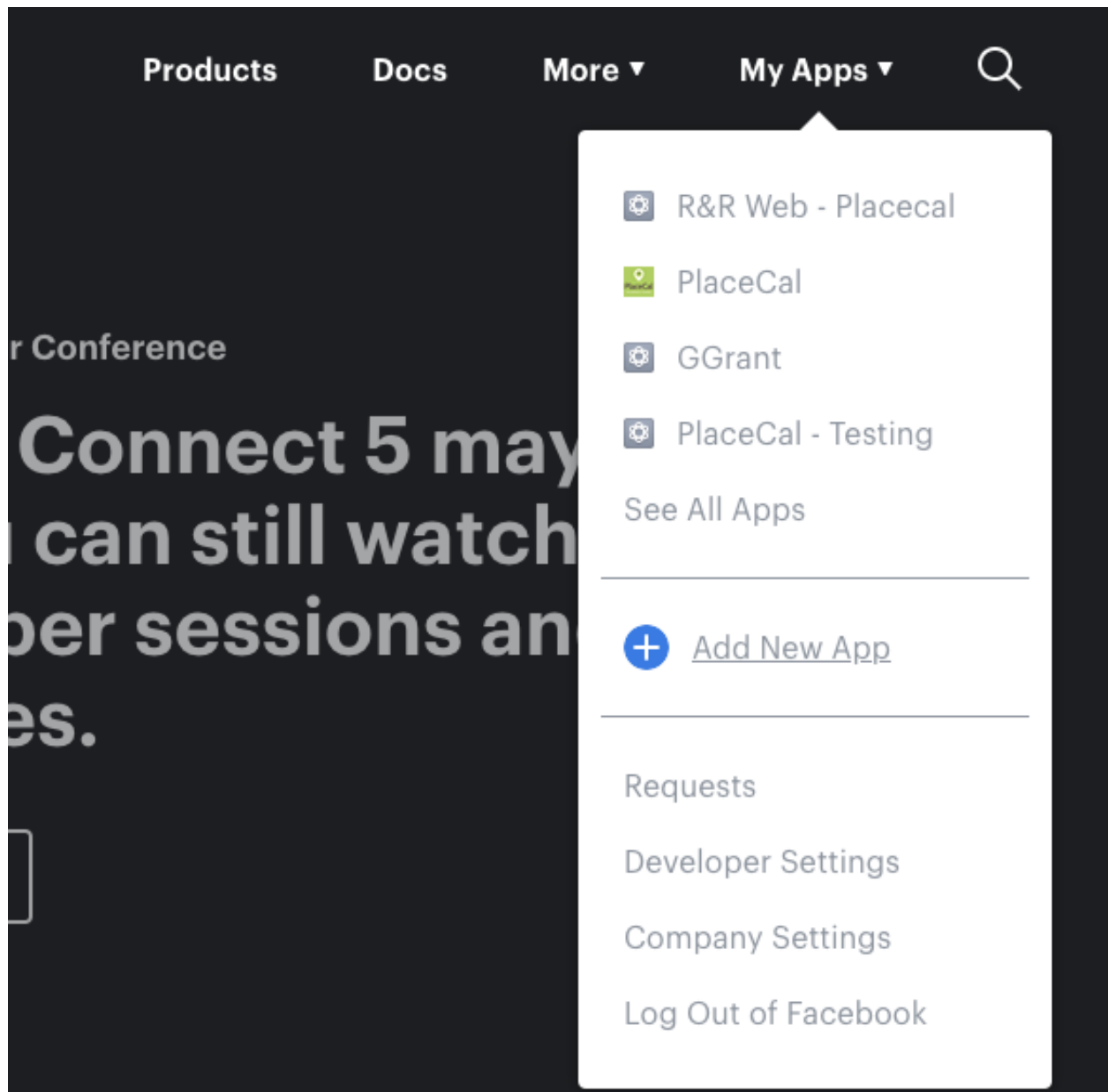- Under **Facebook Login** in the left menu, click on **Settings**.
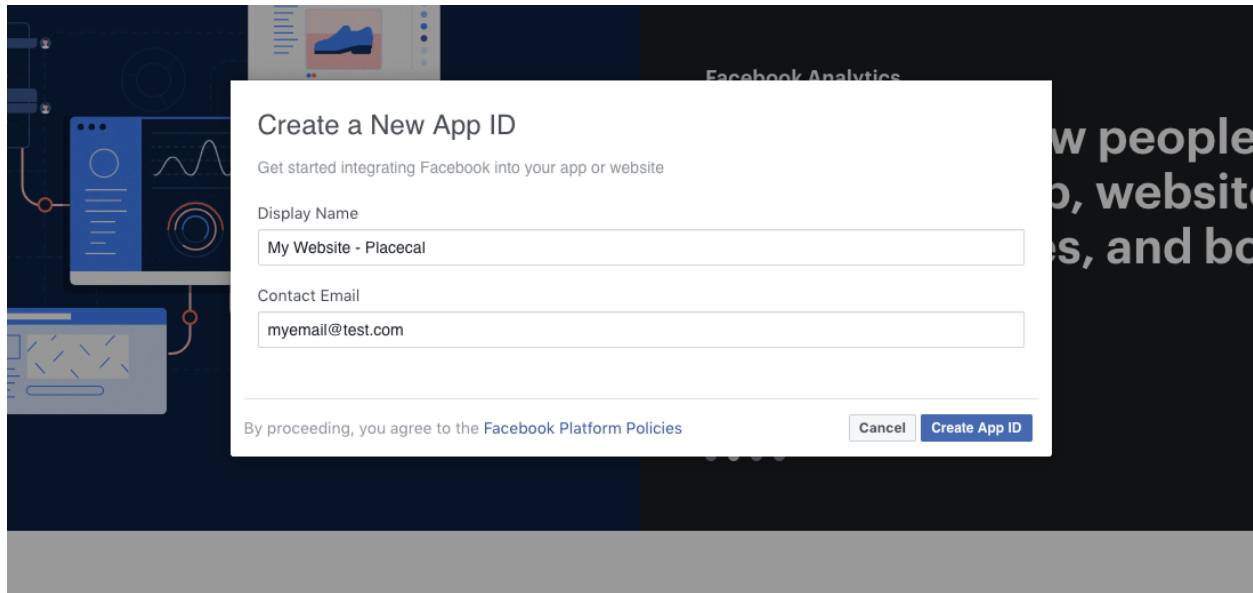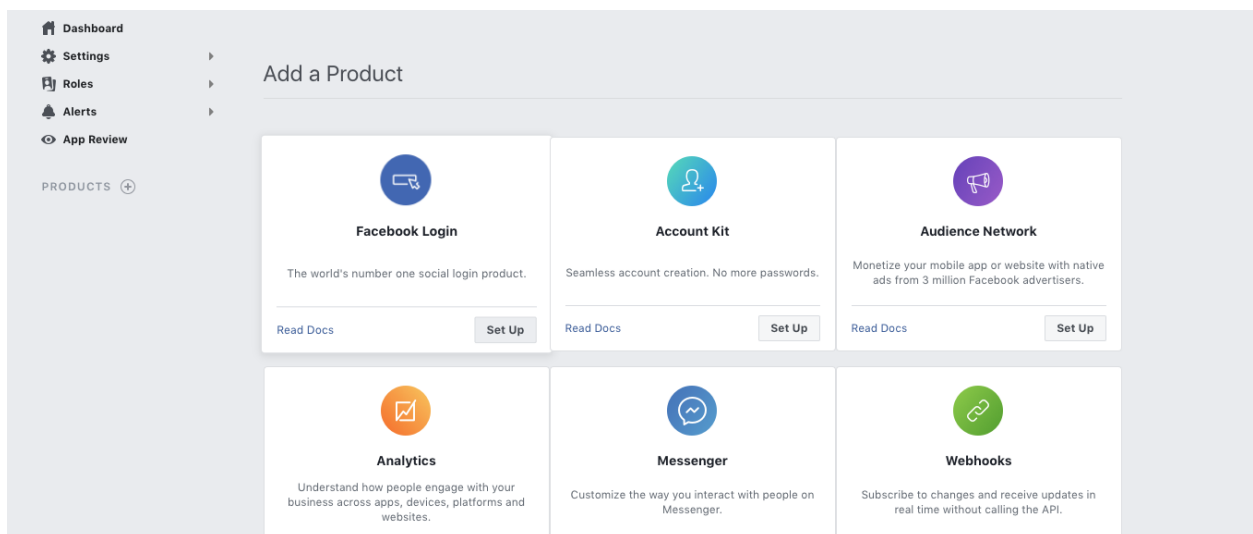

Fig. 30: Add new app
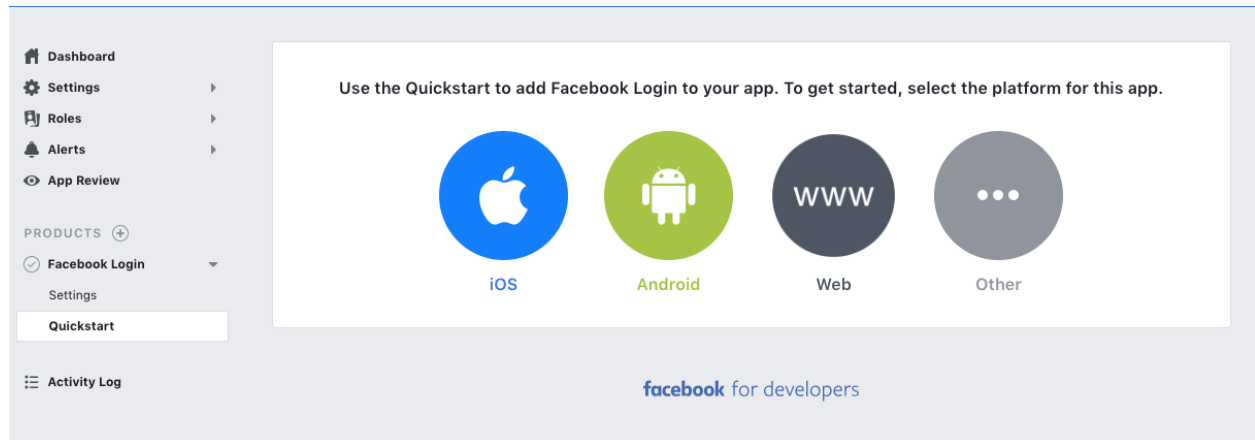
Fig. 31: Add contact info
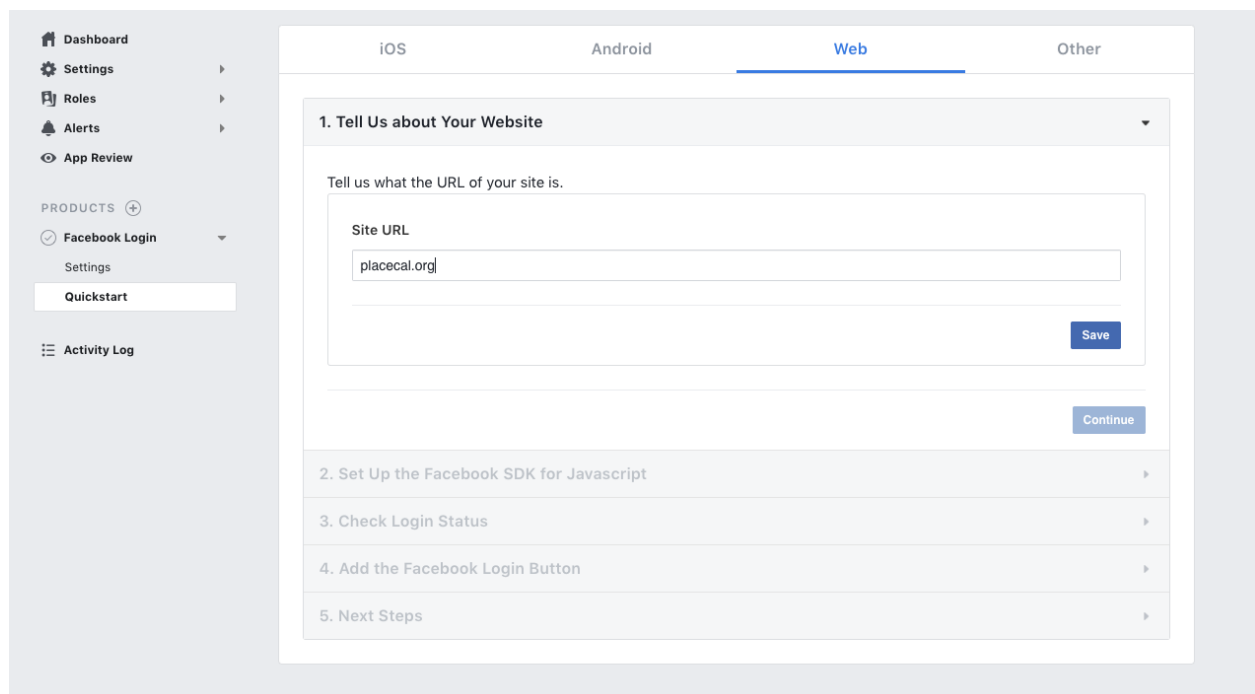

Fig. 32: Facebook login

Fig. 33: www button

Fig. 34: Set URL

- Set **Valid OAuth Redirect URIs** to https://admin.placecal.org/users/auth/facebook/callback
- Enable **Use Strict Mode for Redirect URIs** and **Enforce HTTPs** if they are not automatically set to that already.
- Click **Save Changes** at the bottom of the screen.

Fig. 35: App settings

- Under **Settings** in the left menu, click on **Basic**
- Fill in **App Domain** with **placecal.org**
- Fill in **Privacy Policy URL** with https://placecal.org/privacy
- Click **Save Changes**
- Click **Show** in the **App Secret** field. You may have to enter your password.
- Keep the tab open! You're all done.

Fig. 36: Set URL

5.5.3 Add the calendar to PlaceCal

- Log in to your account at https://admin.placecal.org
- Go to your profile https://admin.placecal.org/profile
- Copy the **App ID** and **App Secret** from Facebook.
- Click **Add New Calendar From Facebook**

Fig. 37: Add new calendar from Facebook

- Follow the prompts to add your calendar.
- You're done! Your events should start to import in the next ten minutes.

5.6 Writing good event descriptions

5.6.1 Think about who you are trying to reach and what you are offering

5.6.2 Writing a good summary (event title)

Consider renaming your event with something more expressive and or less ambiguous if appropriate. For example, is it an "Exercise Group" or an "Over 50s morning workout"?

Equally, consider simplifying the name if it makes what it is clearer. "Manchester Community Qigong (Women only sessions)" could be simplified to "Qigong for Women", for example. You can use the event description to elaborate.

It's better to spell out acronyms. For example, instead of "N.A." write "Narcotics Anonymous" . It's OK if the acronym is explained, for example "PARS: Exercise group for women". If in doubt, spell it out!

Avoid forward slashes and try and only use colons, commas, and ampersands as punctuation. "Coffee Morning/Food Voucher Service" is better as "Coffee Morning & Food Voucher Service".

Make sure if things are on more than once the naming and capitalisation is consistent.

5.6.3 Creating a complete description (event body)

What it is and who its for

Referral info
Contact info

Markdown guidelines

5.6.4 Use repeating events correctly

5.6.5 Adding an image

5.7 Common Concerns

5.7.1 What calendar software should I use?

PlaceCal is designed to work with the tools you already use for your events. Usually this is part of your web-based office suite, such as Office 365 or Google's G Suite. We've consciously designed it this way to need as little extra training as possible on your end. You can also stick with your existing accounts and settings – if you already use Outlook 365, GMail or G Suite, your calendar application can integrate with other applications.

In most cases if you don't currently use anything or have a pen and paper solution, we recommend using Google. You can create a simple GMail account for free that has all the functionality you need. We think Google Calendar is the simplest to use, and it also has the best sharing and collaboration options to make it easy to work with other people.

The one exception to this guideline is that If almost all your events are organised by other people it is worth considering using Facebook for events. For example, if you are a pub, theatre or general open community space, and most of your events are organised by people who already use Facebook, then this might be a better option for you. Facebook allows other people to create events and add them to your calendar in a well-formatted way. This route requires regular use of Facebook to get the most out of though.

5.7.2 What are the risks associated with publishing my data?

It's normal to have concerns about publishing information. Don't be too scared though: it's the same level of risk as publishing a poster or a flyer – and you can update it retrospectively. As long as you make sure that all the information you publish doesn't contain any sensitive information you'll be fine.

If you already maintain a calendar for your organisation, it's likely that it contains a lot of information unfit for public consumption. In this case you have two choices: either to create a second public calendar (recommended), or edit all the sensitive information out of your existing one.

Creating a new calendar. Most software supports having multiple calendars visible at the same time, usually in different colours. We suggest naming one calendar "Your Organisation - Public" and one "Your Organisation - Private". This means you can have a clear separation between your public information and any notes you might have on your private version. Instructions on how to do this are later on in the document.

Using an existing calendar. In many cases it will be fine to have the same information as public and private information – you just need to make sure that people in your organisation are aware that everything on what might seem like an internal system are being published to the web.

It's worth noting there is nothing to worry about here. It's likely you release exactly the same information already on your flyers, posters and other communications such as Facebook or Twitter. We do our best to spot any potential problems before they happen – don't hesitate to let us know if you have any privacy concerns.

5.7.3 I'm struggling with capacity, should I add my events anyway?

Some events have a limit on how many people can show up. We're not providing ticketing facilities yet, so this is something to bear in mind.

If your event is already at capacity, then maybe don't add it to the calendar. If your event is nearly at capacity then maybe put a note in the event description asking people to ring ahead.

In general though, we'd suggest erring on the side of publishing – being on the internet by itself will not suddenly mean hundreds of people turn up! PlaceCal is in very early days and we expect it to be more of a gentle trickle than a stream.

5.7.4 How do I keep my information up to date?

It's important to think about how you will keep information updated. Think about how you can integrate it into your organisational workflow. For example, maybe whoever is responsible for booking rooms makes a mental note to update your calendar each time, or maybe once a month you go through it to see if anything's changed. Also have a think about how you will make new employees and volunteers aware of your events calendar – maybe make it part of your induction process.

The key is that the events listing should help everyone by being a canonical source of information for your organisation. By putting a little bit of time into keeping your calendar updated, everyone benefits from up-to-date and accurate information.

PlaceCal Administrators (admin) support the Managers. They are the people who update the events listings and other information directly. They might also be responsible for other tasks like running the reception desk or answering phone calls. It's possible to be a Manager and an Admin.

As an Admin, you're ultimately responsible for updating your organisation's listings in PlaceCal. The main way you will be doing this is through the calendar software you are already using. In the future, you'll be able to update general information about your organisation as well.

This guide walks you through some of the core concepts behind how PlaceCal works. You'll find detailed advice on publishing events and learn new tips about getting the support you need.

5.8 Update once, publish everywhere.

The core design principle of PlaceCal is to make it as simple as possible for you to get your events in front of the largest number of people.

Unlike other platforms such as Facebook or Eventbrite (which require you to use their own app), PlaceCal works directly using the software you already have in your organisation. This means it can take a little bit longer to get set up – but once you're rolling everything you update is imported automatically into PlaceCal.

Before getting started with any new software, think about how it might be easiest for you to keep events updated. Let us deal with the rest.

If you already publish a complete and up-to-date events listing on your organisation's website,then stop here and send us an email. It's possible that you already have everything we need work with. We can instruct your IT person or team how to import the information directly from your website.**

If you already have a partial online calendar that has some – but not all – of your events, we can use that as a starting point. Maybe you use Facebook for all your big events, but don't include smaller the day-to-day events as it's too much hassle.

If you don't have any online calendar at all, then check out our guides on how to set one up using technology your organisation probably already has.

Developer Guide

6.1 PlaceCal Glossary

Partners are the organisations who work in an neighbourhood. They might be health providers, unincorporated community groups, housing associations, tenants' groups, or other groups with a social cause.

Partner Managers (or simply **Managers**) manage the day-to-day running of their organisation (Partner). They might be involved in the legal structure of the organisation, or not.

Partner Admins (or simply **Admins**) are often delegated to by Managers and are the people who update the information directly. They might do other tasks such as run a reception desk or answer phone calls. Sometimes they do it themselves (and are both Managers and Admins).

Places are physical locations open to the public that Partners are based in or manage. These Places are often the public face of a Partner, often being the physical building that the Partner inhabits. Sometimes, the Partner and the Place have the same name – this can get confusing!

Events take place in Places. Events map directly from your online calendar to PlaceCal.

Calendars are powered by your existing event management software such as Google Calendar, Outlook 365, or Facebook. If you're a larger organisation this might be a bigger system like Artifax, Jadu, or Drupal, or a custom website just for you. Calendars create Events, which can be assigned to Places and Partners, allowing Citizens to look at all the events in one Place, or all the events organised by one Partner.

Secretaries support Partner Managers and Admins. They are local community development workers who help Partners get all the information about their organisation and their Places on PlaceCal. Secretaries can create Places and Partners in PlaceCal, create user accounts, and are available on the phone to chat to for support.

Sites are the individual PlaceCal instances (like `hulme.placecal.org`) that residents use. They show information about the area and who is managing it, and a range of Turfs.

Turfs are the neighbourhood regions (Hulme, Moston) or interest groups (Cycling, Age Friendly) that Secretaries manage. These allow Secretaries to decide what to show on their Sites.

Commissioners are the people who fund PlaceCal and want to use it to help people work together in their region. They commission one or more Turfs, by funding us to train a Secretary (employed by you or us), and funding our **PlaceCal Developers** to update and maintain the site.

6.2 User Access

PlaceCal's primary customers are **Commissioners**: generally public sector organisations charged with supporting (or "asset mapping") a **neighbourhood** or **interest**, and often both. For example, "Age Friendly Hulme and Moss Side" is a commission in an neighbourhood (Hulme & Moss Side) *and* with an interest (age friendly). "Greater Manchester Cycling Forum" has an interest (cycling) and a larger area (Greater Manchester). We refer to neighbourhoods and interests together as **Turfs**: territories over which the comissioner is responsible for.

We help each Comissioner hire and train one or more **Secretary** to identify and train relevant organsations within their turf. Secretaries are effectively the "curators" of PlaceCal, who decide what goes in and what doesn't, and support organisations in creating good event descriptions. Later on this person might take the role of a local journalist, adding news and updates about the turf directly.

Turfs are created by the PlaceCal team, and then are assigned to your Secretary. A Secretary is therefore defined as any User who has been assigned one or more Turfs. Secretaries can do the following within the PlaceCal admin interface.

- Create and update Partners in any Turf they have been assigned
- Create and update Places in any Turf they have been assigned
- Create and update Calendars
- Create new User accounts for Partners
- Link User accounts to Places
- Link Places to Partners
- Link Calendars to Partners

Partner Admin accounts allow individual Partners to update their information without needing to contact the Secretary. Later on, this will show more useful information about the Partner's events, allowing ticketing options and regular printoffs for example. A Partner Admin is therefore defined as any User who has been assigned to one or more Partners. A Partner Admin can:

- Update their Partner information
- Create and update their Partner's Calendars
- Update their Partner's Places

6.3 PlaceCal v0.2 Roadmap

6.3.1 Overview

The goal for the the next round of development is to modularise PlaceCal, creating separate sites (or sub-sites) that target each set of capabilities.

The current site will be split into the following components:

- `placecal.org` becomes the hub for PlaceCal as a whole, aimed at potential partners, developers, etc. This then accepts all event data we can get our hands on.
- `admin.placecal.org` becomes a unified administration frontend for administrators and moderators.
- `hulme.placecal.org` will become aimed more directly at Hulme residents. (We've yet to resolve the "Hulme, Moss Side and Rusholme" mouthful issue.)

We can then start considering more subdomains for each of our Age Friendly Neighbourhoods and other curious regions, based on a subset of the PlaceCal.org database:
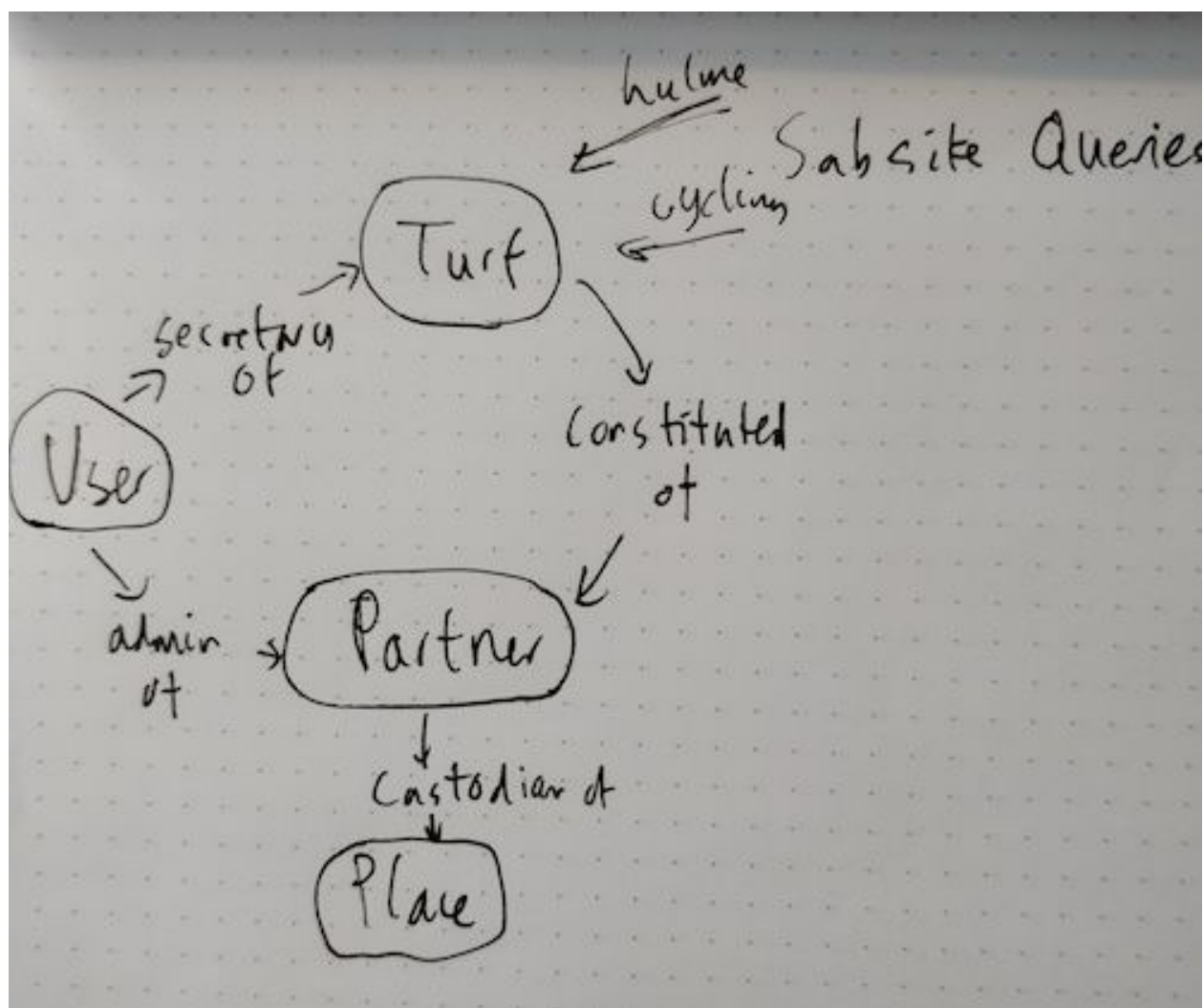
Fig. 1: PlaceCal access control diagram

- `moston.placecal.org`

- `milesplatting.placecal.org`

- `burnage.placecal.org`

- `mossley.placecal.org`

Finally, we are beginning to consider interest-based platforms as well:

- `cycling.placecal.org` or cyclemcr.org (for example), showing cycle routes over a larger area

- `agefriendlyhulme.org` (for example), showing the Hulme data but restricted to age friendly data, with more information about the board and how to get involved.

As part of this work we will also consider the suggestions and feedback to date.

6.3.2 PlaceCal.org

Audience

Neighbourhood leaders, health commissioners, city councils, interest groups, local partnerships. Anyone looking to set up PlaceCal in their area or for their interest.

Objectives

- Explain what PlaceCal is and how it works

- Find local PlaceCal instances for your area or interest

- Create a directory of partners, regions and places that are on the platform

- Find out about how to develop websites or apps with PlaceCal data (inc API docs)

- Updates and news about the project as a whole

Work to be done

- Update current promotion material (website, slidedeck etc) to be more generic (i.e., not tied to Hulme).

- Review website information architecture, probably removing the Events listings and replacing with a list of active PlaceCal instances (currently just Hulme).

- Provide clear link to admin resources

- Add a blog with project news and updates

- Create a report based on the first round of tech audits to inform and refine the above

- Begin a basic overview of developer documentation (probably a placeholder for now)

6.3.3 Admin.PlaceCal.org

Audience

Regional admins (secretaries) and potential or current partner admins.

Objectives

- Partners can add calendars and places

- Secretaries can add calendars, places and partners, and edit partners in their region

- Get help adding information to PlaceCal for partner admins (docs)

- Get help adding partners and calendars for secretaries (docs)

- Find out contact information for PlaceCal as a whole (technical support)

- Partners can find out what's involved in PlaceCal as a whole

- Ensure compliance with new Data Protection rules, and create a clear onboarding process with identified people

- Give secretaries and partners automated updates about their event data to improve reliability and validity

Work to be done

- Train a new calendar secretary

- Create training materials and documentation for partners

- Begin creation of training materials and documentation for secretaries

- Create secretary user interface

- Create partner user interface

- Create comprehensive onboarding process considering GDPR

- Support more APIs that came up in the Hulme research (Jadu, Artifax, Tribal Calendar. . .)

- Create notification system for admins

##Hulme.PlaceCal.org

Audience

Hulme residents, organisations, businesses, and partners.

Need to resolve what to call this – probably three aliased sites to begin with [hulme/moss-side/rusholme] which all have the same data.

Objectives

- Single, joined-up source of all events, places and partners in the area

- Information about Hulme as an area and how to get involved in the neighbourhood partnership

- Promotion of Hulme-based activities as a whole

- Review user feedback to date

Work to be done

- Reconsider home page of Hulme site

- Resolve naming issues

- Address front end bugs and tweaks for Hulme site

- Complete onboarding all Hulme organisations as admins

6.3.4 *.PlaceCal.org

Audience

Future region or interest-based groups - cycling, yoga, age-friendly, etc.
Objectives

Consider the costs and tech commitment in setting subsites up
Create one or more as a pilot

Work to be done

- Make sure the subsites are well documented

- Create a report on the commitment involved

6.4 Database structures

This page covers the high level relationships as described by the database schema. These schema were mainly derived from following the core actions in the PlaceCal application and discerning how the data is gathered before being sent to the user.

6.4.1 Sites

Sites represent the entry point for users to see what is going on in their local area. It is derived from the url domain so *hulme.placecal.org* has the site of *hulme*.

![Image of Site relationship](img/db-sites.png)

Sites have a primary neighbourhood indicated by a field on one of the SiteNeighbourhood records. I don't think there is any logic stopping more than one site_neighbourhood from being flagged at a time.

Neighbourhoods are recursively self-referential: this is how areas can contain areas like regions having many postcodes.

The hierarchy of the unit field in the Neighbourhood model is: country->region->county->district->ward.

primary_neighbourhood

Site

SiteNeighbourhood

Neighbourhood

(self referential tree)

User

Partner

Site

Neighbourhood

Tag
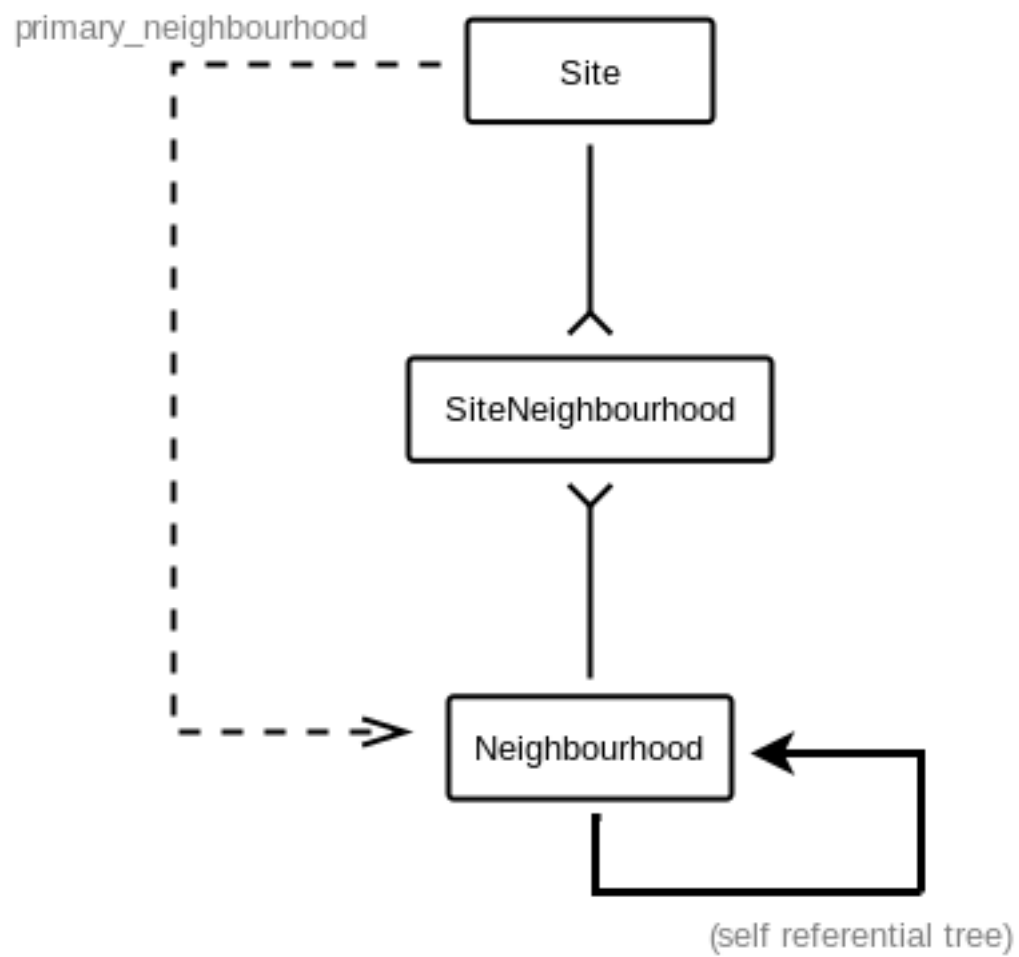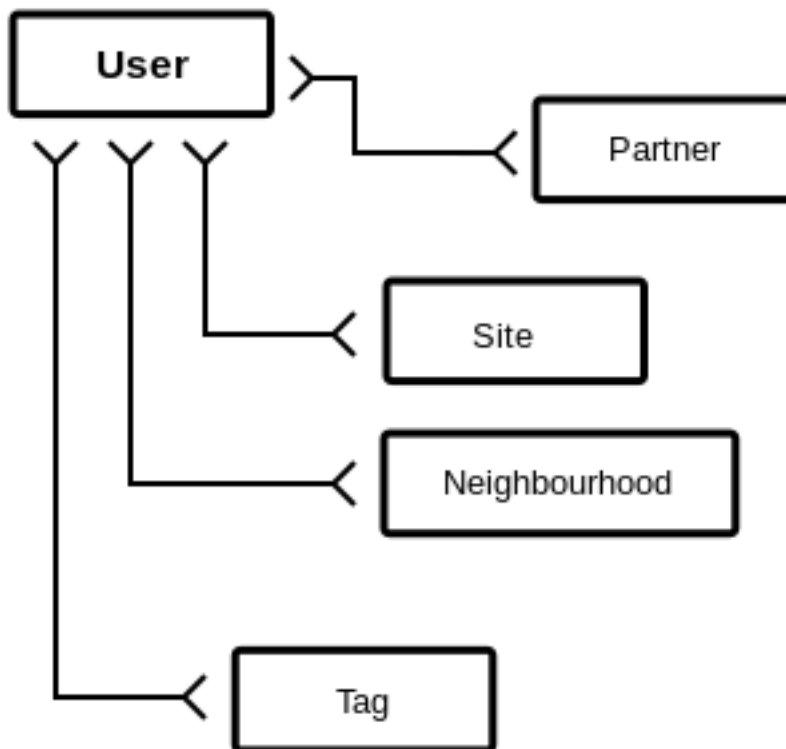
6.4.2 Users

Users come in two varieties: *root* and *citizen* where root is an application wide administrator of PlaceCal itself and citizen users exist to administer a given partner or site.

Not sure if Tags is used? (See Tags section below)

6.4.3 Events

Events are the core resource that has the most utility for the end-users: people who are looking for things to do near them.
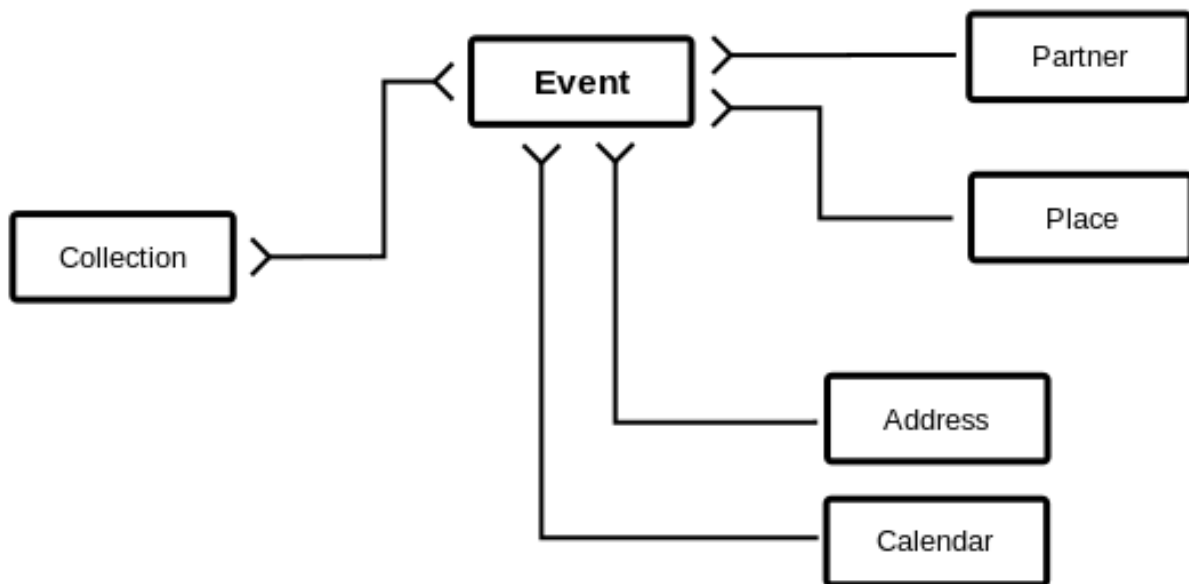
via path

Events as described by the */events* action.

This is one of the primary paths that events are returned to the user. It is tied to Site, which in turn is derived from the domain (see above).
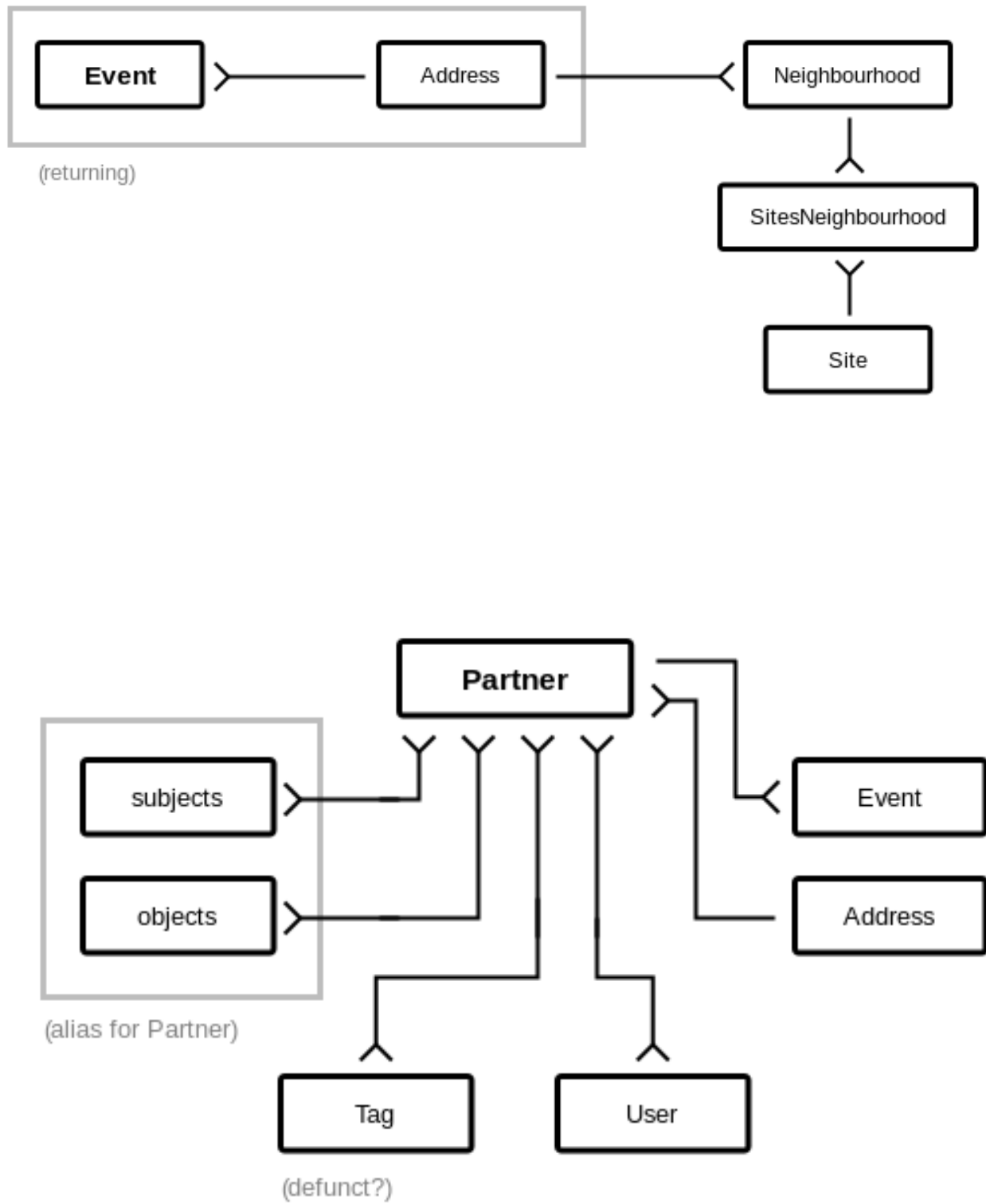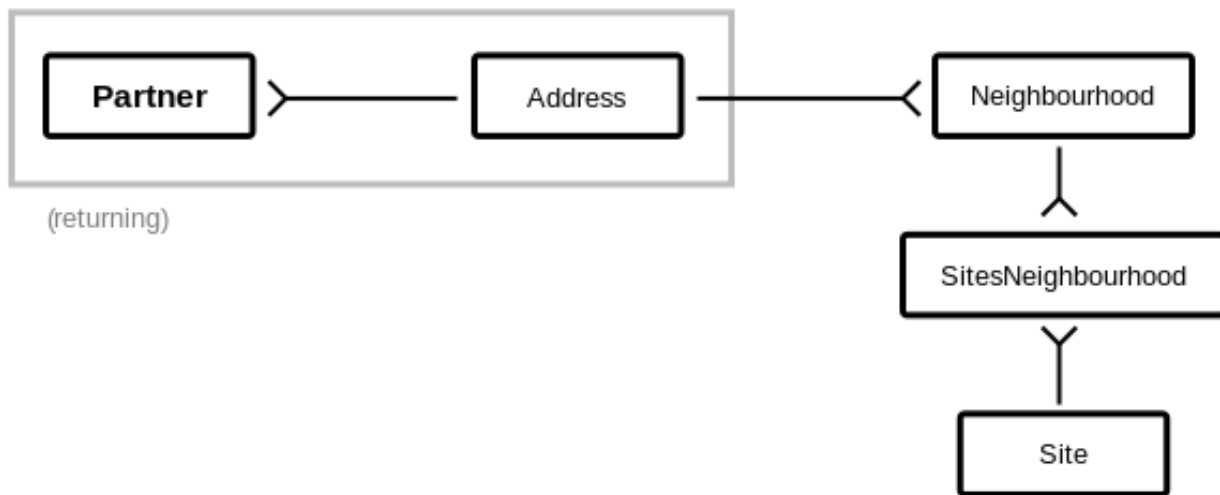
6.4.4 Partners

Partners are the entities that actually host the event. So a coding challenge (the event) will be hosted on a college campus (the partner).
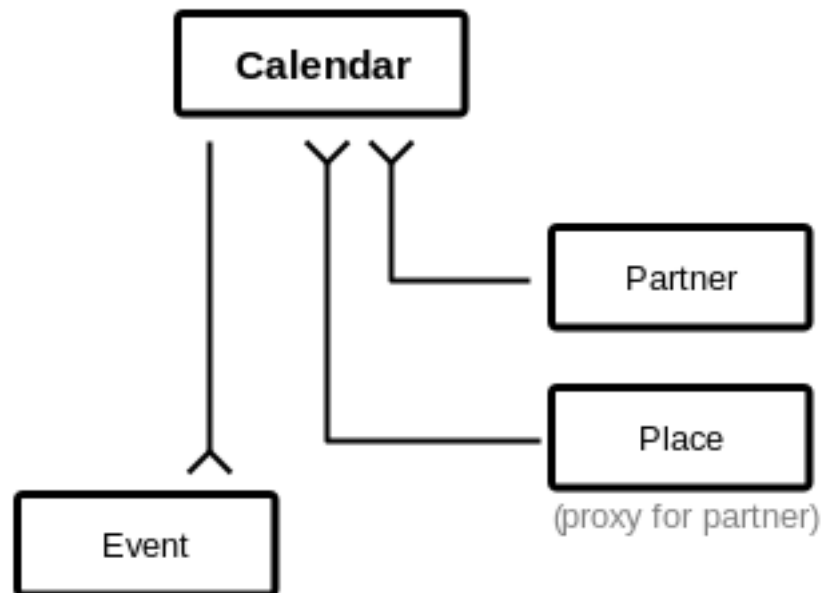
(More description of partner)

via path

End users can also access Partners via the action */partners*. Has the same pattern as Event above.

6.4.5 Calendars

Calendars are created by Partner admins to import events in bulk from an online calendar service.

6.4.6 Collections

(TBD)

6.4.7 Tags

(currently non-functional)

Tags allow Site admins (coordinators) to associate a Partner with a set of properties.

6.5 Routing

This page describes all the routes of PlaceCal. It builds on what is described in data-structures by explaining how the data is handed to or taken from the user.

6.5.1 Public

The public facing routing paths that can be used by non-logged-in users.

(TBD)

6.5.2 Admin

Admin routes. Unlike the public routes all admin routes sit on `admin.placecal.org`

(TBD)

6.6 Getting started

Read the *Glossary*.

6.6.1 Tools

We use:

- Trello for project management
- Sketch + Dropbox for UI files (get Kim to set you up).
- GitHub for code
- Rollbar for error reporting
- Sign up on PlaceCal and get Kim to make you an admin.

6.6.2 Hosting / Environment

- Rails 5 / Ruby 2.4 / postgresql
- `rails db:setup db:migrate seed:migrate`
- `rails import:all_events`
- To log in you need to go to `/users` and then `/superadmin` (for now!)
- Prod server is a Digital Ocean box running this setup

- `master` branch auto-deploys to our staging server http://placecal-staging.org. `production` branch deploys manually to the production server.

6.6.3 Notes

We're using the Mountain View gem for frontend components. Anything and everything reusable should be encapsulated in a component and given some mocks to test it. Components are at https://placecal.org/styleguide. For each component add a line to `test/controllers/components_test.rb`: easy tests!

Important information should be added in a seed migration.

Ideally the Sketch art should export directly into our repo file structure somehow, so if we can work towards having a master Sketch file for anything live then take the time to do it.

6.7 User access

See the *User Access Guide*.

6.8 Roadmap

See the current *Roadmap*.

6.9 Getting API access

This is still in development. Drop us an email to have a chat about it.

The Team

PlaceCal is currently run by Geeks for Social Change, a social enterprise formed by Dr Kim Foale to create community-led technical and social interventions.

PlaceCal is developed by Geeks for Social Change and PHASE@MMU. It was initially funded by Smart City accelerator CityVerve, with additional support from Manchester City Council.

We're working towards co-operative status and the creation of a PlaceCal foundation: watch this space!

PlaceCal is both a software tool and a partnership of community organisations, charities, social housing providers, government services, health providers, and citizens. You can see it in action on our website.

Our handbook is split into sections depending on your role in the PlaceCal project.

Commissioners

Commissioners are the people who fund the PlaceCal platform. This can either be community groups looking for a tool to bring their neighborhood together, or city or health authority managers looking to help their staff work in a more networked way.

This handbook is for anyone considering commissioning or partnering with PlaceCal in their area. We look at how PlaceCal can fulfil your asset-mapping remit, and enable a transformational change in the relationships between organisations and institutions in your region.

Read the Commissioner Handbook

Secretaries

Secretaries are the people working in an area to bring organisations and people together. They could be local community workers, health workers, or community organisers delivering PlaceCal on the ground.

Our Secretary Handbook takes you through the stages of delivering PlaceCal from inception to maintenance.

Read the Secretary Handbook

Managers

Managers are the people who run community organisations on all scales from large national institutions with local offers, to unincorporated community groups running a coffee morning out their living room.

This guide outlines the benefits for your organisation and outlines what you'll need to join the partnership.

Read the Manager Handbook

Admins

Admins are the organisational workers who add and update their information on PlaceCal. They will work with a Secretary to create a listing of their organisation on PlaceCal, and add their event feed to the centralised daily events listings.

Read the Admin Handbook

CHAPTER 12

Developers

Developers are anyone interested in working on the PlaceCal platform, adapting it for their own area, or who wants to work with PlaceCal's API feeds.

Read the Developer Handbook