



Creating Successful Family Friendly Programming

Published by All About Audiences

February 2011

This guide summarises the contents of a family friendly forum which took place in February 2011 where ideas and learning around family friendly initiatives were shared. You'll find a checklist of things to think about when programming for families, useful family friendly partner organisations and links to case studies from the participating organisations who shared their success stories.

The Audience Agency is a not-for-profit organisation created out of the merger between All About Audiences and Audiences London Plus in 2012.



Programming for families

Headlines:

- Think about / use the space you have available differently e.g. Victoria Baths screened a film in their pool.
- Create an experience that can be shared by the whole family and is not simply aimed at children.
- Create a strong thematic link between activities, e.g. Manchester Art Galleries screened films about Greek myths, held a Family Friendly exhibition about mythical heroes and led workshops for families to create their own mythical stories.
- Storytelling sessions have been very successful with under 5's. Most storytelling sessions start around 11am and last between 30 to 60 minutes.
- Attract over 10's with events or activities that:
 1. Ask them to contribute in some way by actively engaging in a role with some kind of responsibility, i.e. interview War Veterans for IWMN.
 2. Explored hidden areas where they are usually not allowed, i.e. backstage tours or when museums, theatres etc are closed, i.e. sleepover at the Museum.
- Programme activities that link with what is currently in the media or that has a known brand. Different organisations that held activities or events linked to known brand or characters reported it relatively easy to get good numbers, i.e. Doctor Who or Harry Potter events at the John Rylands Library.
- Link your family programme with the ongoing school curriculum.
- Plan activities in your venue as if in a 'supermarket', i.e. make families walk past all relevant on offer before getting to the desired activity.
- A consistent programme is key to build up your family audience.

Agenda:

1. Family friendly updates
2. Family programming
3. Family Friendly update from AAA
4. Family Friendly update from attending organisations
5. Attenders and contact details

1 Family friendly updates

Following from the decision at the previous forum to use a common Twitter hashtag for Family Friendly tweets, it was agreed to start using #familyfriendlyNW. If this is too long just make sure the word 'family' is included in the hashtag.

Following National Family Week (<http://www.nationalfamilyweek.co.uk>; 30 May - 5 June), organisations fed back on their experiences.

All organisations present at the forum said they maintained their own programmes of activities and used National Family Week to further promote their ongoing family programme – the whole initiative they reported felt more like a branding exercise. People didn't think it was too useful in terms of bringing in more people, but they did point out National Family Week does provide some merchandise like balloons, stickers etc.

A useful point of reference regarding children, families and young people is National Children Bureau (NCB). NCB is the leading national charity which supports children, young people, families and those who work with them. They aim to improve the well-being of children and young people across every aspect of their lives. For more information please visit: www.ncb.org.uk/

NCB also offers some interesting free resources among which:

- NCB guidelines for research with children and young people
<http://www.ncb.org.uk/PDF/Guidelines%20for%20research%20Oct%202009.pdf>
- Communicating with Children
<http://resources.ncb.org.uk/resources/free-resources/communicating-with-children-during-assessment>

2 Programming for families

Below is a quick overview of AAA's key learnings from our experience programming the Family Friendly Film Festival:

- The age bracket 6-10 is the easiest to programme for. Under 5's and over 10's are more of a challenge.
- Always make sure the activity you've programmed is really suited to the age you're aiming to target, i.e. make sure children can actually do the activity and won't get frustrated by having to ask parents to do it for them.
- Any interactive activities like workshops are highly valued by children and adults.
- Think about / use the space you have available differently e.g. Victoria Baths screened a film in their pool.
- Create an experience that can be shared by the whole family and is not simply aimed at children.
- Organise activities that link with/enhance the building/space you have available or your ongoing programming, e.g. People's History Museum screened Mary Poppins / John Rylands screened Harry Potter.
- Create a strong thematic link between activities, e.g. Manchester Art Galleries screened films about Greek myths, held a Family Friendly exhibition about mythical heroes and led workshops for families to create their own mythical stories.

Attending organisations were divided in two groups and asked to share and discuss their experience of successful family programming and what were the characteristics that they thought made it successful.

Here below is an overview of the points that were raised:

Under 5s

Storytelling sessions have been very successful with under 5s.

Some examples:

- People's History Museum holds storytelling sessions with puppets called "The Little PHM": <http://www.phm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/01-PHM-Events-Exhibitions-April-Sept-11-FF.pdf>
- IWMN also holds storytelling sessions for under 5's: <http://north.iwm.org.uk/server/show/conEvent.3711>
- Manchester Museum holds sessions called "The Magic Carpet": <http://www.museum.manchester.ac.uk/whatson/families/>

Most storytelling sessions start around 11am and last between 30 to 60 minutes.

Tip: When holding storytelling sessions, try to link stories to each others to encourage families to come back to the next storytelling session.

Finally, as under 5s sessions tend to be quite short – it might worth checking whether there are young families living in your local area as families might not find it worth it to travel far for these activities as they tend to be quite short.

Over 10s

Organisations suggested attracting this audience with events or activities that:

- Ask them to contribute in some way by actively engaging in a role with some kind of responsibility, i.e. interview War Veterans for IWMN.
- Explore hidden areas where they are usually not allowed, i.e. backstage tours or at times when museums, theatres etc are closed, i.e. sleepover at the Museum.

Manchester Museum has attracted this audience by programming workshops around forensic science. Similarly, through working in partnerships with the Manchester Science Festival (www.manchestersciencefestival.com), Carisma (www.carisma.me.uk), Salford University and GM Police they held workshops where old recycled guns were turned into dog tags.

Technology in particular was suggested might be a good way to engage with this older audience.

Tip: GeoCaching (www.geocaching.com) – a real world treasure hunting game – could also be a good way of engaging this kind of audience. The treasure hunt can be held in urban settings and could ultimately lead families to your venues.

Family programming

- Have a youth/family board to advise you on programming, i.e. Manchester Museum for example has a youth board - they have split it in Junior (8-11) and Senior (11 -20's).

- Programme activities that link with what is currently in the media or that has a known brand. Different organisations that held activities or events linked to known brand or characters reported it very easy to get numbers, i.e. Doctor Who or Harry Potter events at the John Rylands Library.
- Link your family programme with the ongoing school curriculum.
- Plan activities in your venue as if in a 'supermarket', i.e. make families walk past all relevant on offer before getting to the desired activity.
- A consistent programme is key to build up your family audience.

Tip: A good example of a flexible and ongoing activity that can be held relatively cheap comes from the Waterside Art Centre.

They held an event where families helped build a tree which has been displayed in one of the galleries and every season an activity is held to help decorate the tree.

Common issues:

Organisations that attended the forum raised also some interesting issues regarding family programming:

- How to manage attendance at drop-in events
- Do you offer your activities for free; ask for a donation or charge?
- Does really good quality print make a difference in engaging families?

To further discuss these issues, input your experience and get some tips, please visit the Online Family Friendly Forum:

<http://www.allaboutaudiences.com/forums/familyfriendly>

3. Family Friendly update from All About Audiences

Family Friendly Weekender (4-7th August)

For more information, visit:

<http://www.allaboutaudiences.com/projects/familyfriendly/filmclubweekender>

Online Family Friendly Forum:

Don't forget to visit the Online Family Friendly Forum for more tips and ideas:

<http://www.allaboutaudiences.com/forums/familyfriendly>

Family Friendly Marketing opportunities:

- Goody bags handed out at Piccadilly train station at start of summer holidays (25th/26th July). For an inclusion please contact Chris Payne on chris.payne@allaboutaudiences.com
- 10,000 Family Friendly Summer Postal Mail-out. For an inclusion please contact Chris Payne on chris.payne@allaboutaudiences.com

4 Family Friendly update from attending organisations

John Rylands

They organised a Dragon Easter Egg Hunt which proved very popular.

They will be holding a Harry Potter Day as part of the Family Friendly Film Club Weekender.

They will also be holding regular storytelling sessions once a month on a Saturday. For more info, visit: <http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/deansgate/>

Bolton Museum, Archive and Aquarium

They will be holding an exhibition about Nat Lofthouse and are therefore looking for football themed activities.

They will also be holding events as part of Archaeology week (16-31 July):

<http://festival.britarch.ac.uk/>

As part of the library, they will also hold a summer reading challenge:

<http://www.summerreadingchallenge.org.uk/>

Bridgewater Hall

On the 31st of July they will be screening “The Adventures of Prince Achmed” with live soundtrack:

<http://www.bridgewater-hall.co.uk/performance/16620.aspx>

For October half-term, they will also be screening “Peter and the Wolf” with live music.

IWMN

There will be family activities practically every day throughout the summer:

<http://north.iwm.org.uk/server/show/nav.3632>

They will also be holding some events for older children in partnership with Media City.

They have also organised adult events in conjunction with the current exhibition ‘War Correspondents’: Martin Bell will give a talk on the 27th June and Kate Adie on the 10th October - <http://north.iwm.org.uk/server/show/nav.3630>

Vic Baths

Their next open day is coming up on 3rd of July – as part of this they will be holding a vintage fair.

They are also running a project specifically targeted at the local community called “Arts for kids”.

They will also take part in the Family Friendly Film Club Weekender.

They are also holding a Tea Dance this summer.

People History Museum

They will be holding a Busy Bee summer craft table throughout summer.

As well as holding Little PHM events for under 5s every month.

For more information visit: <http://www.phm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/01-PHM-Events-Exhibitions-April-Sept-11-FF.pdf>

National Football Museum

They will take part in the Weekender in October.

They are also holding two activities at MOSI over summer.

They are currently working on developing their family brand.

Manchester Museum

They will be developing further their adult programme.

They will be holding a series of themed events linked with their new gallery “Living worlds” and closely related to allotments.

They will be holding drop-in days almost every day over the summer, plus some bookable events. Big Saturdays events will also be continuing.

In September they will be hosting ‘Extinct’ exhibition about endangered species. October will be the opening of the “Unearthed exhibition”.

6. Attendees & contacts

Contact	Email
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Heather Helme Family Friendly volunteers, Victoria Baths	hetnsteph@hotmail.com
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Next Forum is Thursday 10th November 2011, 2 – 4 pm

RSVP to Gin (ginevra.jacobucci@allaboutaudiences.com)