

# What Makes a Successful Family Friendly Event?

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We're often looking for creative ways to attract low or unengaged audiences into our venues. This family friendly film festival aimed to introduce new families to cultural venues which they may not have normally visited, by creating an exciting, affordable holiday experience. Running in summer 2010, the festival showcased films and activities across twenty different arts venues around Greater Manchester. This fact sheet provides a snapshot of the key learning points and headlines from the project evaluation, outlining top tips for how to make a really successful family friendly event.

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



## Hosting events for families & Learning from the Family Friendly Film Festival 10

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### Headlines from this year Family Friendly Film Festival Evaluation Report:

- The majority of families attended more than one event, with 47% booking 3 to 5 events.
- 24% of families who attended this year's festival had also attended in 2009.
- 38% of families were new to the venue where the event was held.
- The festival was successful in attracting the Arts Audiences: Insight segment Time Poor Dreamers, a typically non-engaged segment.
- The majority of respondents attended with 5-7 year olds. There were also high proportions of respondents attending with 8-10 and 0-4 year olds.
- The majority of visitors were from the Manchester, Trafford and Stockport boroughs.
- In most cases the decision to attend the festival came from adults in the group or was a joint decision by adults and children.
- The main barriers to attending more events at the festival were lack of time and tickets having already sold out.
- The festival creative (the monsters) received very positive responses.
- Programming also received praise, with foreign language cinema and craft activities being singled out for particular praise.
- The professionalism of venue and festival staff, together with the opportunity to see a film in a unique environment, emerged as aspects that left a particularly strong impression.
- Value for money was highlighted as an important factor for family friendly activities.
- Interactive activities and workshops where adults and children participate together, or where parents can watch their children enjoy the films, were highlighted amongst favourite memories.

### Key factors that make a good Family Friendly event:

- **Activities:** always offer an interactive activity for parents and children to jointly take part in. Families were particularly keen on activities where they could make something to take back home or exhibit. Discovery trails and hunts were also popular.
- **Family time:** always offer opportunities for parents and children to have fun and interact together in a friendly environment.
- **Kids' enjoyment:** feedback suggested the ultimate priority is that children should enjoy the event and be entertained.
- **Atmosphere:** a positive, relaxed and friendly atmosphere is very important. Feeling self-conscious embarrassed and under-pressure is commonly experienced by families in public

spaces – events should specifically look to avoid circumstances or scenarios that evoke those feelings.

- **Social opportunity:** families value the opportunity to mingle and interact with other families.
- **Alternative venue:** the opportunity to watch a film/do an activity in an alternative venue or unexpected environment was highlighted as a big hit.
- **Whole day event:** having a full packed day of events located closely together and that families can easily navigate was strongly valued.
- **Value for money:** families are happy to pay for activities and events, but it's very important they all provide excellent value for money, so keeping prices as low as possible is important.
- **Staff:** families particularly value staff who are enthusiastic, helpful, well informed and ready to go the extra mile.
- **Film choice:** quality programming is very important in family activities.
- **The extra special details:** families highlighted extra special details that made them feel they'd been specifically catered for. Among the examples highlighted were goody bags, rugs for children to sit on the floor and picnic areas for families to have snack breaks.
- **Themes:** Families like thematic threads bringing together different events and giving everyday locations and activities an 'extra imaginary' dimension.