



Making your arts venue family friendly - Getting started

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The Family Friendly initiative

Imagine has received funding from the Scottish Arts Council to run the Family Friendly Initiative over two years. The aim of the initiative is to improve children and families' access to and participation in arts activities by encouraging and supporting Scottish art venues to become more child and family friendly.

Getting started

To make our arts centres more child and family friendly we need to strengthen our relationships with our existing and potential family audiences. To do that we need to:

1. Understand the concept of family friendliness and how it applies to arts in Scotland
2. Look at our venues from a child and family friendly perspective and assess its strengths and weaknesses
3. Identify what needs to be done to become more child and family friendly and develop plans for action.

Understanding the concept of family friendliness and how it applies to arts in Scotland

Why be family friendly?

For too long parents with children have been discriminated against and dismissed as of no value to the business world. How wrong those businesses were....being child friendly makes commercial sense. It increases trade, encourages visitors and adds to the quality of life.

Child Friendly Edinburgh Guide

Becoming more child and family friendly makes good sense for arts venues for a number of reasons, including:

Artistic development - work for families offers artistic and programming challenges and can lead to a range of exciting activities in a venue.

Audience development - Scotland's arts organisations have an important role to play in engaging children and families in experiencing, enjoying, participating in and valuing the arts. Children are an important audience for arts organisations today and in the future.

Income generation - being Child and Family Friendly makes good sense financially for arts organisations. The financial importance of the family/children market should not be underestimated - *a family with two or three children born two or three years apart will spend approximately fifteen years with one or more dependent children under the age of 12. The arts cannot afford to lose the revenue from this market for that protracted period of time.* Sarah Argent report, 2000

Social inclusion - providing arts for children and families increases opportunities, broadens experience and stretches aspirations as well as helping to overcome some traditional barriers to participation.

Rights of the Child - The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 31 states that children have the right to '.....participate freely in cultural life and the arts' and that parties 'shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.'

Scottish Arts Council policy - Most of us are fortunate enough to be part of a family - extended, nuclear, sole parent... whatever the variation on the theme, by considering the needs of the family, we are considering how to include everyone in sharing the pleasures and benefits of the arts. The Scottish Arts Council is totally committed to the principle of access, of making the arts in Scotland available as a matter of choice whether as audience member or participant. The Family Friendly Initiative offers the exciting prospect of setting new standards, of sharing good practise, and of challenging the stereotypes of how the arts are presented. And we already have examples to be proud of; in macrobert as a venue, in Imagineate as a festival, and in Wee Stories as artists, to name just a few.

Jim tough, Scottish Arts Council

What is family friendliness?

Sarah Argent provides a useful definition of family friendliness in the Research Study into a Network of Centre for Arts for Children and Young People in Scotland, 2000. She uses the phrase 'child and family friendly' as shorthand for venues 'in which children, young people and their families and carers feel comfortable and welcomed....demonstrated in the physical space and its facilities

and in the attitude of the staff...(it is) a space in which work programmed and created for these groups can be seen to its best advantage without being compromised artistically.'

Making Britain Family Friendly

The National Family and Parenting Institute (NFPI) launched the UK wide Family Friendly Campaign in October 2003. The campaign is all about society and its structures and about what it is like to bring up children in the UK in the 21st century.

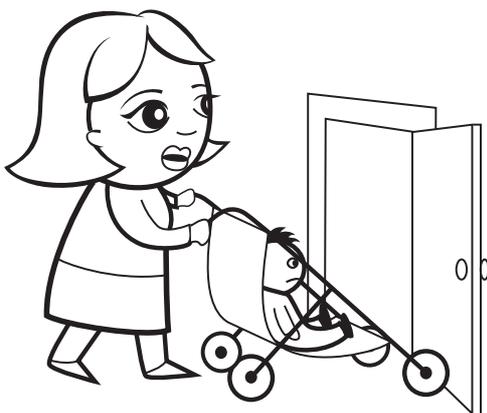
Parents involved in the NFPI Family Friendly Campaign have stated that family friendly is:

- Being taken for granted that your child would be with you and welcomed
- People treating all families, whether 2.4 or single, the same
- Better and cheaper transport to take the kids out
- Employers being relaxed about a parent taking time off to deal with sick children
- Shops providing children's play areas
- Workplace crèches
- Using an employee's remuneration package to provide for childcare as an optional benefit
- Planning space for children in new buildings, e.g. wider doors
- Creating more neighbourhood projects where parents and neighbours can offer a listening ear and a helping hand

NFPI: Tel: 020 7424 3460 E: info@nfpi.org W: www.nfpi.org

STEP 2

Look at your venues from a child and family friendly perspective and assess its strengths and weaknesses



The first step to developing a Child and Family Friendly approach is 'really wanting to become more child-friendly and being willing to make changes!'

Child Friendly Edinburgh.

Before you start you should look closely at your organisation and your audiences to see what lessons you can learn from within the organisation.

Conduct a "family friendly audit"

It is useful to carry out a "family friendly audit" - the Family Friendly Initiative has produced a self assessment checklist and action plan to assist venues in doing this. The checklist considers the following key aspects:

- The physical environment
- Services and facilities
- Customer care
- Policies
- Programming
- Marketing and communications

When carrying out your audit it is worth while bearing in mind that:

- Many of the aspects in the checklist overlap and each area should not be considered in total isolation.
- The checklist provided is not exhaustive - but should act as a trigger to aid discussion and future plans - there are many more ways to make an arts venue child and family friendly
- The ways in which child and family friendliness can be improved will vary from one arts centre to another

The checklist can be downloaded free from The Family Friendly Initiative website at: www.family-friendly.net

Consulting with families and children

Consulting with children and families helps you look at your venue from a child and families' perspective and assess its strength and weaknesses. It is worthwhile investing time and energy in strengthening your relationships with families to find out their needs. A guidance sheet on consulting with families is planned for the future, and will be available on the The Family Friendly Initiative website, in the meantime it is worth considering how children and families could get involved - you might want to ask children and families:

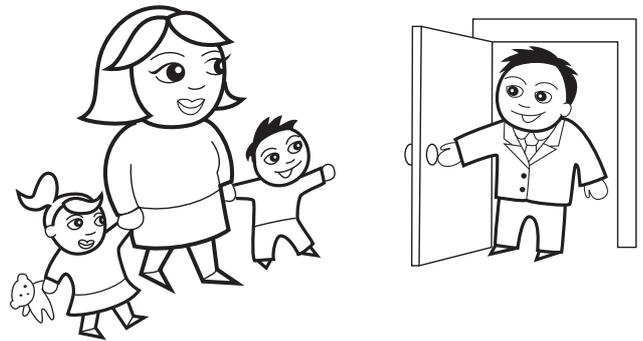
- to help design a new project or initiative
- to be involved in training new staff members
- to comment on information or publicity written for their peers
- to tell you about their experiences and use these to inform your work
- to directly advise you on what subjects you should be focussing on

It is a good idea to bring in people who have specialist skills in consultation where possible. Otherwise, you will need to learn about different techniques and how to use them, including 'child-friendly' ones. Try to make sure your consultation process is as inclusive as possible and don't stop consulting once the first task is completed - keep children and families involved to give them some ownership and to make sure you keep adjusting to their needs.

Organisational commitment

Commitment to families has to run throughout the organisation. This should begin with invigilation/front of house staff's acceptance of and involvement with family audiences, and run through to an empathy requested by visiting curators, programmers and artists.
Arts About Manchester Family Friendly Project Final Report

Your family friendly initiatives will only be truly successful if the concept of family friendliness, as a way of working, is shared throughout your staff and integrated into your organisation's way of thinking. This might mean change for your colleagues and their working practises. Take time to consider your current attitude to family friendliness and the impact any changes may have on staff. Do staff feel positive towards the idea of more family groups coming into the venue and what experience do they have? What training needs might they have?



The manager/director

Ideally the desire to commit to family audiences should be championed from the top. A fully committed director will drive the changes required as well as help realise the funds. The director should also be in the position to positively support staff through periods of change.

Staff experience

Your staff may have families of their own. They may be a very good source of ideas and information about the needs of families, based on their own experience. Bear in mind that their needs as family members may clash with your desire to produce family work, e.g. they may need time off at half term to look after their own children, just when you are wanting to launch a programme of family activities.

Canvass the views of your staff who do not have families as well: they may bring a fresh look, or they may need coaching to see themselves as part of a family friendly initiative.

Colleagues

Think about colleagues from other organisation who may be further down the family friendly route than you. Their views and opinions could be invaluable.

Adapted from The Family Factor, produced by East England Arts, 2002

STEP 3

Identify what needs to be done to become more child and family friendly and develop plans for action

Using the self assessment checklist (available free on the family friendly website, www.family-friendly.net or by email: familyfriendly@imagine.org.uk) you will start to get a picture of what you need to do to become more child and family friendly and how to go about doing it.

Creating a family friendly plan is similar to any other business plan. A clear understanding is needed of why the plan is being implemented, what will be done as a result of the plan, and who will do it. This process can be broken down in 5 key steps:



Using the self assessment checklist

The checklist offers suggestions and good practice indicators that venues can use to trigger thought and discussion when assessing how family friendly they are. The intent of the checklist is to raise the profile of families and their needs. It is intended to encourage arts venues to assess what they currently provide for children and families and where improvements can be made.

When completing the checklist use the guide to assess how your venue rates and where the strengths and weaknesses lie. If you identify ideas for improvement, mark them down. It may be useful to get key staff or departments within the venue to complete the assessment to get different view points and to assist future discussions and planning.

Setting priorities for action

When you have completed your audit, it is time to prioritise what needs to be done, when and by who. You can use the action planning sheet included at the end of the checklist to help you do this. Again it may be useful to include key staff in this stage to help reach agreements about what can be achieved. The action plan sheet asks the following questions:

- What needs to be done?
- What will this help to achieve?
- How important is it?
- How are we going to do it?
- By when?

- Who will do it?
- What Funding and resources are required?

At the end of your planning session it may be useful to ask the following questions:

- Where do we go from here?
- Who will follow up to ensure that the identified action plans are being implemented?
- How will you keep the momentum going?
- What funding implications need to be addressed and who will be responsible for this?
- Are there other people who may be useful to talk to about your plans?

Your family friendly action plan should then become part of your overall organisation plan and should be monitored and evaluated using the same processes that you use for your overall plans.

Keeping it going

Just like any other business plan, you have to review, evaluate and improve your family friendly plan in order to continually meet the needs of children and families. Make it part of your plan that the Family Friendly Checklist is reviewed and actions revised at regular intervals.

Useful publications and websites

The Family Factor, written by Catherine Rose, published by East England Arts, 2002, t: 01223 500202,

Family friendliness, audit of recent research and recommendations for the development of family audiences in the arts, Pamela Pfrommer, Arts Council of England, 2002

Family Friendly Final Report, Arts About Manchester, 2001, t: 0161 238 4500, w: www.aam.org.uk, www.familyfriendly.org.uk

Websites

The Family Friendly Initiative
www.family-friendly.net

Centres for Curiosity and Imagination:
www.curiosityandimagination.org.uk

Engage - The National association for gallery education:
www.engage.org

Macrobert WOW project:
www.macrobot.stir.ac.uk/wow

Audience development website:
www.audiencedevelopment.org

Children's Museums website:
www.childrensmuseums.org

Hands on Europe:
www.hands-on-europe.net

The Family Friendly Initiative

The Family Friendly Initiative is funded by the Scottish Arts Council to support and encourage arts venues across Scotland to be more child and family friendly. The Family Friendly Initiative will support venues through:

Training - conferences and seminars throughout the year
Advice and information - on all aspects of being family friendly
A website - for free and up to date access to advice and details of events

Visit the website at: www.family-friendly.net

Future Family Friendly Initiative Guidelines planned:

- Family friendly services and facilities
- Family friendly customer care
- Programming for families
- Consulting families / knowing your audience
- Marketing to families
- Providing for children with special needs
- Keeping your venue family friendly
- Others as requested by network participants