



The Family Arts Campaign and the Family & Childcare Trust have developed the Family Arts Standards to address a need for guidance on how best to welcome families to arts organisations. This case study is part of a series that supports the Family Arts Standards and accompanying guidance for arts organisations. To find out more about the Family Arts Standards and how to implement them visit familyarts.co.uk/family-arts-standards.

Restaurant & refreshments tips sheet

When consulting families about the Family Arts Standards food was a hot topic. It might seem like a secondary consideration to the activity you are offering but it can be make or break for families as to whether they visit an event or activity.

Much of the advice below can be applied to a range of refreshment provisions e.g. a restaurant, a café, a snack or drinks kiosk.

If your refreshments are provided by an outside company you may want to use this information to help you in conversations about your needs or during your procurement process.

In the standards we list two basic essentials for visiting families related to refreshments:

- Healthy food and drink options suitable for families (if refreshments are available).
- Free drinking water.

Family activities can sometimes fall into the trap of assuming they are a treat and that that means families will want 'treat' foods. However, many families often want to be able to choose healthy foods and drinks. If they want to add a 'treat' this should be a choice, not the only option.

'I try to give my children a balanced diet but often in cafes and restaurants, kids meals come without any fruit and veg.'

Healthy offerings could include unsweetened yoghurts, sandwiches, pasta, sugar-free jelly, fruit and vegetables.

'Things that are often presented as healthy snacks actually aren't healthy e.g. cereal bars, fruit juices, sweetened yoghurts. All contain a lot of sugar. So it would be good if they also had options of unsweetened milk, water, fresh fruit and veg.'

Small portions of soft fruits are often welcomed – cut up bunches of grapes into small hand sized portions, or include a satsumas and or bananas which are also popular. If you're looking for fruit



with a long shelf life stock packets of raisins.

If you have a website, it can help to put a sample menu up there so families can see what's available (even if it's just a sample menu with wording to explain that 'menu options change daily').

Other things we recommend you consider include:

Affordability

The cost of food has to be factored into a family visit. If you are able to provide affordable food options for families they are more likely to stay and use your café and it may mean they can visit you in the first place.

Consider portion sizes – young children often have small appetites. If you are providing smaller portions this can help keep prices low.

Choices

Some families want chicken nuggets (with chips and/or veg) others want healthier choices, so if you can provide a choice that's ideal.

Many children prefer simple foods. Think about whether you can adapt current items:

'A small cheese sandwich with tomato is perfect but often cafes serve large sandwiches with lots of fillings such as pickles, mayonnaise, so they are no good. He won't eat them and they're expensive'. Mother of 3 year old.

Consider offering half or full portions so children (or anyone, including the elderly) can choose a smaller portion. Avoid age restrictions on your menus. This can be particularly relevant to children with special needs who may need a smaller portion or eat a limited range of foods but don't want to be labelled as a child or break 'rules'.

If you are using several providers e.g. for a festival, you may want to request a minimum provision from each provider or have a several providers to offer a range of different options. But be mindful that queuing at lots of different distributors can be difficult for families.

Cleanliness

Families stressed that cleanliness was very important – areas get dirty quickly with lots of children about. Your catering staff may need extra time to clear up, wipe down tables, high chairs etc. You can help by choosing easy-clean furniture i.e. plastic, wood or leather.



Can families bring their own food?

Some families may need a picnic area (indoor/outdoor) for cost reasons or because of their child's food preferences e.g. weaning, gluten free, small portions, plain foods etc.

If you have 'picnic' areas or seating areas where visitors can bring their own food then advertise this – it's a real selling point.

You may find that by offering this you attract more family visitors and a more diverse range of families.

Help keep children entertained

Consider providing crayons and paper to help keep children occupied whilst they wait for their food or whilst adults enjoy their food after the children have eaten. If you provide toys, they should be wipe-clean and cleaned daily.

If you have space your café can be a great place to put a 'Tell us what you think' board, asking for families' ideas and experiences. Provide some pens, crayons and pre-cut cards. It's a good idea to display some of the changes you have made, to show that you're listening to families' views.



Case Study: CUBE café bar at Déda

The CUBE café bar at Déda is popular with families who use the café regularly. Some are visiting Déda for dance events and activities, others come just to use the café. By expanding their offer outside of the main Déda programme they attract lots of new families into the building and boost income for the café.

The café design is bright and spacious, so families can enjoy the space and move around easily.

'It's important that everything can be easily cleaned. We have wipe clean tables and chairs, high chairs, floors, toys and leather sofas.' Catherine Ward, CUBE Manager.



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CUBE café runs its own programme of social events for families including:

- **Storytime** – Interactive story time for little ones and their grown-ups, with signing, puppets and craft.
- **Treats and Tots** – Offers free manicures, massages and makeup tips plus fun for your little ones in our child-friendly space

Catherine was keen to stress the need to find activities which could be run free of charge: the person running the activity benefits from using it as a promotion opportunity. Storytime runs weekly, it's a collaboration with Usbourne books who also bring along books to sell. Treats and Tots runs twice a month, during term-time only. Catherine finds local home or mobile beauticians who offer their services for free and use it as self-promotion.

Some one-off craft activities have been successful with participants paying £1 to cover the cost of materials e.g. making Easter bonnets or Christmas decorations.

The café regularly attracts families visiting other activities nearby and is very busy on Fridays when lots of children attend dance classes at Déda.

CUBE café also offers children's parties, offering a party tea with an activity such as dance, crafts, music or magic.



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