

Arts Connect

Research: Family Access Scheme

Results and Analysis

Carol Jones

Director, Wales | Cyfarwyddwr, Cymru

carol.jones@theaudienceagency.org

07885 367 848

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1. Introduction

This research presents the results from a mixed research programme of desk and qualitative research and mystery shopping with low and non-attending families, particularly those from more deprived areas.

The research was commissioned by Arts Connect, a collaboration of the Arts Services of Caerphilly, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Bridgend, Merthyr and the Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council, who work together to develop and improve the range, quality and breadth of arts opportunities across the defined region.

The qualitative element of this research concentrated on families drawn from Rhondda Cynon Taff and Caerphilly with the aim that findings and recommendations will be shared with Bridgend CBC to aid the development of family friendly arts programming, audience development and marketing initiatives, through sharing expertise and skills.

The research programme focussed on providing insight to support the Arts Connect venues meet one of their key priorities - Family Friendly audience development by providing a deeper understanding of actual and perceived barriers that can prevent family groups attending its venues.

1.1 Research aims

The aim of the consultation was to understanding the barriers (whether actual or perceived) that can prevent families from attending our theatres through:

- desktop research into previous studies
- primary research with individuals and organisations that have, or are currently, tackling the same issue
- develop connections with CCBC's and RCTBC's Families First programmes, in order to gain support to identify families for consultation
- qualitative research with families drawn from deprived areas of both CCBC and RCTBC

1.2 Recruitment strategy

The research focussed on understanding the barriers to attendance of a very specific part of Arts Connect audience: non-attending and very infrequently attending families from more deprived areas.

We were guided by CCBC's Theatre & Arts Service Manager and RCTCBC's Arts & Creative Industries Development Manager to develop connections with their Families First programmes, in order to gain support to identify families for consultation.

Families First aims to support and work with low income families to help them overcome challenges by working with communities and through family focused projects ensuring the families' needs come first and to help them provide the best possible environment for their children so they can achieve their potential.

We worked closely with a number of Families First agencies to ensure robust and targeted recruitment and in particular Flying Start in RCTBC (Caitlin Davis McBride) and The Parent Network based in CCBC (Michelle Jones and Amanda Jones). The Parent Network also supported recruitment of the mystery shoppers.

Participants were recruited from families already attending Family First programmes (to ensure they met the low socio-economic criteria) and to also meet the following:

- unengaged families completely new to the Arts connect venues
- families who have visited before as adults but not as a family
- lapsed families who have not visited in the last three years

A £20 incentive for attendance was offered for each family.

2. Methodology

The data for the qualitative research was collected at two focus groups, one at Rhydyfelin Children's Centre, Pontypridd and one at Blackwood Miners' Institute, before and after a performance of The Tap Dancing Mermaid. A previous focus group at the Parent Network office in Bargoed was cancelled due to severe weather.

Each focus group lasted approximately 90 minutes and was facilitated by Carol Jones of The Audience Agency. Each focus group was recorded and transcribed. The transcripts are attached at Appendices 4 and 5. Children were welcomed at the focus groups with 12 attending at the RCTBC group (accommodated in a mobile crèche opposite the focus group) and 26 attending at the CCBC group (accommodated in the same space with toys and activities provided).

The Participant's Information Sheet and Release Form can be found at Appendix 2.

All participants were offered a £20 High Street Shopping voucher to thank them for their participation.

A mystery shopping exercise took place on 24th February at Blackwood Miners' Institute. The Mystery Shopping Assignment Sheet can be found at Appendix 3.

Transport (coach) was arranged for participants at the CCBC focus group and the mystery shopping.

The table below contains key data relating to the delivery of the primary research.

Date of Focus Group	Location	Recruitment Group	Number of participants
10/02/2016	Focus Group Rhydyfelin Children's Centre, Pontypridd	Flying Start RCTBC	8 (+ 12 children)
18/02/2016	Focus Group and performance Blackwood Miners' Institute The Tap Dancing Mermaid	The Parent Network CCBC	12 (+ 26 children)
24/02/2016	Mystery Shopping Blackwood Miners' Institute The Shiny	The Parent Network CCBC	9
Total			29

2.1 Focus Group Participant Profiles

The table below gives a demographic profile of each of the participants along with a pseudonym.

Pseudonym	Number of children	Gender and geographic base	Interest in further research
P1	1 (under 5)	Female, Rhydyfelin	Yes
P2	2 (1 under 5, 1 between 5-11)	Female, Rhydyfelin	Yes
P3	2 (2 under 5)	Female, CF37	Yes
P4	2 (2 under 5)	Female, Rhydefelin	Yes
P5	3 (2 under 5, 1 between 5-11)	Female, CF37	Yes
P6	1 (under 5)	Female, Rhydefelin	Yes
P7	1 (under 5)	Female, CF37	Yes
P8	2 (under 5)	Female, Rhydyfelin	Yes
B1	1 (under 5)	Female, Fochriw, CF81	Yes
B2	1 (under 5)	Female, Phillipstown, NP2	Yes
B3	2 (1 under 5, 1 between 5-11)	Female, Aberbargoed CF81	No
B4	3 (1 under 5, 2 between 5- 11)	Female, CF81	Yes
B5	3 (5-11)	Female, Pontlottyn, CF81	Yes
B6	3 (1 under 5, 2 between 5-11)	Female, NP24	Yes
B7	2 (1 under 5, 1 between 5-11)	Female, Abertysswg, NP22	No
B8	2 (1 between 5-11, 1 between 12-15)	Female, NP22	No
B9	1 (under 5)	Female, NP22	Yes
B10	5 (3 between 5-11, 2 between 12-15)	Female, Rhymney, NP22	No

B11	3 (under 5)	Female, Phillipstown, NP24	Yes
B12	2 (under 5)	Female, NP24	No

2.2 Focus Group Discussion Guide

A discussion guide was used to facilitate each focus group. The same broad discussion guide was used in each group. The table below shows the question areas, method of facilitation and any prompt questions.

Topic area	Facilitation Method	Prompts
1. Introductions, current social family activity	Discussion	What do you enjoy about it? What kind of facilities do they have/ What sorts of people go there?
2. Attitudes to Arts and Arts venues Marketing Channels	Discussion	Online? Social media? Local press? Word of Mouth? Other?
3. Awareness and perception of arts venues	Discussion	Been before? Where/what? Experience? Enjoy? Why/why not? Weekend/holiday? Why/why not? Barriers? Cost, transport, interest, not for me, facilities, risk, time, age range
4. Awareness and perception of cultural facilities in region	Discussion	Who goes there? What happens there?, What puts you off going? Publicity?
5. What would reduce risk	Discussion and feedback on print/copy	What kind of events would you like to see/ Information need? Facilities wanted? How would you book?

6. Ideas generation

Discussion

What things would you like to see arts venues do to encourage you to visit as a family?

3. Current Social Family Activity

This section presents an analysis of the feedback from the focus groups that relates to the participants' current family social activity (including any arts activity), what they do, what they enjoy, what facilities they expect and their perceptions of what types of people do the same thing.

3.1 Walks and parks

Most respondents cited walks and visiting parks as their main social activity as a family. This activity was positively associated with several factors: it is free or inexpensive, often little planning is required, there are few worries about children's behaviour disturbing others and it gives the children exercise, allows them to let off steam, run around and get tired out.

"We do anything that's cheap really you know. Go to the park and walking."

"They can run riot and you don't have to worry about it do you."

" [I] take my family for walks, up the mountain, to the park if it's a nice day"

" It's nice to know that you can have a good day out and...you don't have to take any money with you."

"Barry Sidings [Barry Sidings Countryside Park, Trehafod] is great. I love Barry Sidings. It's lush."

"Ponty Park [Ynysangharad] is lush now they've renovated it. It's free but you have to wait for tickets to become available and you can't book online. There's one hour slots."

3.2 Playgroups

Playgroups, those provided free and those that charge entrance, are another popular activity amongst most respondents. Again many appreciate the ability for their children to "run riot" and that it gives parents the time to relax knowing that their child is in a safe environment.

"We go to softplay and walking and things that don't cost too much."

" You know your kids are safe. They can run riot and you can relax for five minutes."

"It's soft play, it's friendly. You can sit there. It's safe you can just let them go."

They also appreciate the ease of access, usually by walking or bus and that many commercial playgroups cater for a range of ages with separate areas.

" Weekly I go to Tiny Tumblers or Funtastic in Caerphilly. I get there

by bus - it's easy by bus"

"There's different areas for different ages. That's important."

The different areas are close together. You can say: This is where I'm sitting. You know where I am. You can just sit with the younger ones."

However, some respondents found the cost of play centres outside their close locality a barrier to attendance.

"For me with three kids. It's expensive. It's hard work. From Ponty it's £3 each or £3.65 for a day ride. That's a lot."

Respondents identified with the other families who go to play centres and stated that this made the outing more enjoyable.

"The people who go to the soft play places are the same as us."

Play centres mentioned included: Mambo's and Jump in Cardiff, Rumble in the Jungle (Clydach Vale), Funtastic (Caerphilly), Tiny Tumblers (Church Village).

3.3 Cinema

The groups had very different views and attendance patterns for cinema. None of the RCTBC group had attended a cinema in the last year.

"The nearest cinema is Nantgarw. I'd never go."

"My friends have been and you've paid £30 just buying tickets and then you buy popcorn and drinks and that's another £30."

"I download films onto it [my iPad]. It's better than the cinema."

Of the eight respondents in the RCTBC group, five subscribe to Netflix and one subscribes to Amazon Prime. A monthly subscription was seen as a much better option in terms of cost, comfort and additional expense. It also avoided any embarrassment that might occur if the children were disruptive.

"I took [my son] to the cinema once. The worst thing ever. He wouldn't keep still, kept wanting to go all the time. Huffing and puffing. So embarrassing."

In contrast many of the CCBC group were regular cinema-goers and ten of the twelve respondents were attending regularly since the opening of the Maxine cinema in Blackwood.

"I think the cinema in Blackwood has made it affordable for families. It's brilliant."

"You spend £10 on a takeaway and you can take them to the cinema for that."

The low ticket cost was an influential factor to attendance:

“I took mine last night and it cost me £11.00. If I went to Merthyr it would have cost me the best part of £40.”

The ability to take your own food and drink into the cinema, the friendliness of the staff, the range of films suitable for different ages and the ability to go in and out of the different screens were also seen as important.

“If they want to see different films they let them stay in on their own as long as you ask them. I knew he’d be safe.”

“It’s important that it’s something they’ll all enjoy. There needs to be some choice otherwise we can’t take all the kids so we can’t go.”

“ You’re allowed to take your own snacks in and you can come in and out whenever you want. They’re not fussy about that at all.”

One respondent commented that they valued the fact that they could take alcohol into the cinema.

“And you can have a drink while you’re watching a film. Trust me to think about the alcohol.”

Ease of access by public transport (bus) was commented on by those living in the same valley but seen as a negative by those living in other areas e.g. New Tredegar, Abertwyswg, Aberbargoed. Few had been to the multiplex cinemas at Nantgarw and Merthyr and the reason given for this was expense.

3.4 Regular classes including sports

Local classes and regular sports activity were popular. Factors such as ease to get to, price and the ability to stay with the child, at least at first, were all seen as important. Organised sports activity (martial arts, football, rugby, gymnastics) were seen as a way to ‘get aggression out’, release energy and teach discipline.

“I take my daughter to gymnastics every week. £4.25 for an hour, which is really good. It’s close and I can stay with her.”

“Something to get his aggression out. I wouldn’t do craft things - he’d do it to the teachers. It [rugby] teaches them discipline.”

Experienced teachers/trainers who could spot a child’s potential and support their growth was also seen as important.

“They’ve got a squad so if they see potential in them they can go further.”

3.5 Other activities including organised trips

Other family activities included swimming, cheerleading, board games, local discos and blackberry picking. Many went on organised trips to places of interest that included Weston-Super-Mare, Disney on Ice, Folly Farm and Walnut Tree Farm near Newport.

Castles and heritage sites were popular ‘treats’ with many respondents. Again key factors included cost, range of activities and ability to run around in the open air.

“St Fagan’s in the summer. We pack a lunch. It’s free to do. There’s a big park with lots of events.”

“Castle Coch is free and there’s a nature trail. It’s open every day I think.”

Special events with TV characters were also mentioned:

“Breakfast with Paw Patrol. There’s a fire engine one and a cycling one. They’ll be dressed up as the characters. Mine will love that. I do love it, I do.”

One respondent in each group undertook very little, if any family activity outside the home.

“I’ve never been. I don’t go nowhere.”

“ I usually stay in my pyjamas and watch TV.”

3.5 Existing arts and wider cultural activity

Attendance at arts activities was limited in both groups (This had been part of the recruitment strategy). However in both groups it was clear that the word ‘arts’ was associated with visual arts and craft and, to a lesser extent museums, and for most did not include any type of performance including pantomimes and family theatre.

“ Is it [arts] dancing and everything? Is it?”

“The only thing that I go to is what my daughter has done at school. You know when they’ve done the drawing.”

The National Museum of Wales in Cardiff was mentioned by a few respondents in both groups.

“Oh, I’ve been there about ten years ago. Maybe even longer.”

“[My son] only liked the dinosaur bit.”

Taking the family to see a pantomime was an annual activity for a small number from both groups. Sometimes this was with a school group or with a member of the extended family. Only

one respondent took their family to The New Theatre, most attended at local venues: The Muni in Pontypridd (before it changed hands) and a community pantomime in Abertysswg were both mentioned.

“ We go to the pantomime [at The New Theatre] because I always went there when I was growing up.”

“I always take them on Christmas Eve [to a pantomime]. It’s part of their Christmas present.”

For one respondent taking the family to a pantomime was something they thought about.

“I know they do them here [Blackwood Miners’ Institute] every year and every year I say I’m going to book tickets but I never do.”

See also *Awareness and Perceptions of Arts Venues* at point 5 below.

4. Marketing Channels and Attitudes to Arts and Arts Venues

Word of mouth, through friends and existing family networks and groups like Flying Start, was cited by all respondents as their key way of finding out about family activities. All respondents also cited Facebook as an important way to keep in touch about events. Trust was an important part of the process - respondents wanted assurance that the activity would be suitable and recommendations from friends, whether in person or through Facebook, was seen as a way of reducing any associated risks.

4.1 Word of Mouth

The importance of word of mouth from a trusted source was seen in action in both groups with participants actively promoting up-coming events. At least one person in each group self-identified themselves as promoting events.

“I tell them [friends and members of groups] about all of them [up-coming trips].

“I love it there so I put it on Facebook [so that my friends could see]”

“Tickets were only printed today so they should have some left. I’ll check and let you know.” [Tickets to Paw Patrol]

“They do that down at Hawthorne every Thursday. It’s 5-6pm.”

“I find out when somebody tells me, they find out about it and organise it.”

4.2 Facebook and other digital and social media

Facebook was the only social media platform mentioned by respondents and was actively used by all but one respondent. Information about social activity was mainly through comments by friends on their own Facebook Page, Facebook likes, Facebook prompts about what events their friends were attending and also to a lesser extent Facebook advertising.

“Facebook - that’s the only place I’d find it [upcoming family activity]”

“If you want to know anything look online or Facebook.”

“I just saw it pop up on Facebook...so we booked - [dance classes at Inspire, Nantgarw]”

“Sometimes it’s ads on Facebook but it’s mainly friends sharing things. When there’s lots of likes or they’re going to something [I’ll want to take the kids too]”

“I found out about it through Facebook [Barry Sidings]”

The platform was overwhelmingly accessed via Smart phone with some accessed through tablets. See 4.5 below.

“ Everything I hear about is through Facebook on my phone.”

A small number of respondents also used websites to find details of upcoming family, social events including the RCTBC site and Wales Online, though this was rare. More common was the use of discount platforms - see 4.3 below.

4.3 Email through discount platforms

Many respondents in both groups were signed up to discount platforms like Amazon Local and Wowcher.

“ Sometimes email - like I’m going to Disney on Ice. Well it’s on the tele now but ages ago I got an email from Amazon Local so I booked it. I wouldn’t have booked it otherwise.”

4.4 Housing Associations and other groups

In the RCTBC group Hafod Housing Association was seen as a trusted source of information on family trips. Again this was seen as a trusted provider, recommended by friends and enabled families to attend in groups.

“I have a Hafod Housing Association place. They do lots of trips - they have a noticeboard. They’re brilliant. I’ve booked to go on that one next week [to Walnut Tree Farm]”

“They do about five trips a year. They’re brilliant. They’ve got a good reputation. Very cheap, safety - they’ve got it all in place.

“They are trips for kids. I’m taking all the kids.”

4.5 Use of Smart Phones and Tablets and online buying

All respondents in the RCTBC focus group had Smart phones and all but two in the CCBC group. Some respondents in both groups also had tablets but these were used mainly for watching films and games although one respondent used their iPad for most of their activity.

“ I do everything by phone. Online Banking, everything.”

“ If I get my iPad out my 4-year-old wants it.”

“My iPad’s my life. I love it.”

Very few respondents had desktop computers or laptops and these were rarely used.

“I’ve got a computer as well but I can’t remember the last time I used it.”

“My laptop’s on top of my cupboard. I can’t remember the last time I used it.”

The majority of respondents bought things online and saw many benefits from this.

“It’s easier and cheaper. I can shop around. It’s cheaper. No petrol, no parking so it’s better buying online.”

4.6 Use of other Marketing Channels

Neither group saw the local press as a source of information about family activity.

“I only look in it if my daughter’s in it.”

“The local paper comes through the door and goes straight in the bin.”

Two respondents in the RCTBC group mentioned general publicity:

“I see notices on walls - mainly the play centres, in here [The Children’s centre, Rhydefelin], play school, libraries. The doctor’s have lots of them.”

Both groups respond to communications from the schools that their children attend.

Neither group expressed an interest in direct marketing activities with only one respondent expressing an interest in door-to-door drops.

“Things that come through the post I just chuck in the bin. They [all the leaflets] get put inside one and it goes straight into the recycling.”

5. Awareness and Perception of Arts Venues

There was a lack of awareness of both local and regional arts venues in both groups.

“We don’t go to the theatre and anything because there’s not anything around here [Rhydyfelin], not that I know of anyway.”

5.1 In RCTBC

The focus group in RCTBC was held at The Children’s Centre, Rhydyfelin and as such the respondents were more familiar with the offer in the south of the authority area. Two in the group had heard of The Park and Dare, Treorchy and described it as being ‘like The Muni’ but none had attended.

“Is it like a park? I know there’s a big park up there”

Again the same two respondents had also heard of The Coliseum in Aberdare and one had attended in the past. Again the venue was mistaken for a park:

“Is that the park? Aberdare Country Park [Dare Valley Country Park] is brilliant - I love going up there.”

One respondent had been to Pontypridd Museum:

“I’ve been to Pontypridd Museum, when they did a Thomas the Tank Engine exhibition with all the trains and stuff.”

In reply to where Pontypridd Museum was located from another member of the group:

“Just by the bridge. It’s only a little one. It’s a walk away.”

Most in the group had heard of The Muni in Pontypridd though few had attended (3).

“The Muni was too expensive, then they shut it down, now it’s back open again. You never know what’s going on there anymore because they don’t advertise it.”

Most of the group knew that The Muni was no longer run by RCTBC.

“They closed it down because of the cuts. Somebody independent runs it now. You’d only know if there was something going on if there’s posters outside.”

Three in the group had been to The Muni as a family group in the past, all three for the pantomime and one for cinema.

“My son’s really quiet and quite shy but he’d love to join in with stuff like that. And would cry if he didn’t get picked to go on stage.”

Experiences and perceptions of The Muni varied amongst the group. One was negative:

“ There was a mix up with the seats. I’d paid for three but there were only two and one of them had to sit on my lap. There wasn’t much leg room. We were sat the back and they didn’t offer me my money back and I was too embarrassed to ask. It was frustrating.”

Others were positive.

“It was cheap and it’s local so if I’ve got to bring him home [son with ADHD] it’s quite close.”

5.2 In CCBC

Only three respondents had previously attended Blackwood Miners’ Institute and only one of them for a family event.

“I’ve been to The Stute before - I can’t remember when though.”

“I came to see a comedian years ago. It was Billy Connolly and that was £14. It’s difficult to get a babysitter if you come on your own.”

“I’ve been to The Stute before. There was nothing wrong with it and we did enjoy it but we didn’t pay for it.”

Respondents were intrigued by the description of The Tap Dancing Mermaid:

“How’s this mermaid tap dancing with no feet? Tap flapping?”

“I’m looking forward to seeing this thing tap dancing. I like the idea that the kids can meet the puppets.”

There was a certain amount of anxiety about what to expect - what the theatre would be like, would they be welcome, how well the staff would respond if the children played up, would they be sitting together. One respondent was anxious when she found out that the audience would include other families.

“Will it just be us in the show? Oh I don’t like that [that there would be other people]. There’ll be other people with their kids. All the yummy mummies and my kids will be a bit wild like and they [the rest of the audience] will be all [pulled a snooty face].

The focus group continued after the performance of A Tap Dancing Mermaid.

“The kids felt like they were part of the show. I’d never been before. I was worried. The kids loved it. If it was like that I’d go more often.”

“It was different from what I expected. I thought it would be puppets behind a screen.”

“The kids liked it. They all laughed.”

“It wasn’t too long so the kids didn’t get distracted.”

Most of the respondents thought that coming back to see similar performances would be expensive and that this would put them off coming back.

“I would come back if it was cheaper. How much was it £15 - £20? [a ticket]”

Most of the respondents thought that the actual price [£3.50/£14 for a family ticket] was good value and affordable. Many were surprised that it wasn’t more expensive.

There was general agreement that they would prefer to come again as a group and not as a single family, perhaps combining it with food and making ‘a day of it.’

“Because we come as a group and we’re all the same kind of people it was right. It’s not like you’re on your own with the posh people.”

All the group were put off by an event that happened at the end of the performance when the children were invited onto the stage to meet the puppets. This was also used as an opportunity for the theatre company to sell books, CDs and other merchandise. Many felt pressurised into buying something and felt resentful of this.

“it’s hard work if some mothers buy a book and some don’t.”

“You need to know what to expect. Three of these books would cost £22 and you haven’t got it. They’ve had to do with one between them but they didn’t like it.”

“I thought I could meet the puppets but she was selling CDs. That’s where they get you.”

The group didn’t have an issue with the selling of merchandise but just the way it was done. They thought that the selling of merchandise should be discrete and not laid out on the floor and presented to the children and that parents should be notified in advance that there would be merchandise on sale, the cost and where it would be.

“It would have been cheaper to come again than to buy a book.”

“You need to know the total cost. The books were on the floor and she wasn’t showing the puppets.”

However, even though many of the respondents commented that this had ‘really upset some of the kids’ most still said that they would be more likely to visit the venue again. Anxiety about what the experience would be like and if this was an event for people ‘like them’ was dissipated by the friendliness of the staff and the quality of the performance.

5.3 Other Venues

Other venues mentioned included Wales Millennium Centre, Sherman Cymru, The National Museum, The Grand Pavilion Porthcawl, Techniquet and The New Theatre.

The most popular of these was The National Museum that had been visited by approximately half the respondents in both groups.

“It’s free and there’s the mammoth. The six-monthly visit to the mammoth!”

“[Wales Millennium Centre]...is that the one down The Bay? I went there as an apprentice. I wouldn’t take the kids.”

“I’ve been to Techniquet. That’s expensive. That’s lovely mind.”

6. Reducing Risk

6.1 Welcoming Staff and Family-Friendly systems

Welcoming staff who went out of their way to help and venue systems that were family friendly were seen as vital to a good experience. Many respondents had had negative experiences at arts venues in the past and all had heard of negative experiences from friends. None of them had complained about the negative experiences directly to the venue but all said that they wouldn't go back.

“Every half hour the people on the side changed. One of them was really horrible and I couldn't keep taking him in and out. She had a torch and the torch would follow us up and follow us back. We stayed outside for most of it because he wouldn't go back in there.”

The group [RCTBC] reacted strongly to the following negative experience even though it wasn't a personal experience. One person said that they would have forced their way back in and kicked up a fuss until they let them in, others saying they would have left straight away. All said it would put them off visiting any theatre not just the one mentioned.

‘[My friend] went to [a Cardiff venue] with her friends. She took her little boy out to go to the toilet and they wouldn't let them go back in. [It was] 45 minutes before they let them back in. That's put her off now. She won't go again. It was a Christmas panto.’

“Hearing the story about [the Cardiff venue] I wouldn't go there.”

6.2 Perception of Arts Activities as expensive

Most respondents had a perception that arts activities, particularly going to the theatre was expensive.

“It's the price that puts us off [going to the theatre]. Having such a large family it's too expensive. By the time we go in and then they want ice cream at half time, so it's cheaper for me to take them to the park.”

“My 4-year-old loves theatre and stuff so we do tend to do that but it's quite expensive so it's only on the rare occasion but he does love getting involved with stuff like that.”

“He loves dancing. He'd love to do that but it's just so expensive. A lot of these things you have to pay for ten weeks and I think what if he doesn't like it.”

“ For the kids it was £9.50 and between £11 and £13 for the adults so quite cheap really.” Response from another respondent: “But that’s a lot. That’s why I didn’t go to The New Theatre.”

6.3 Concerns over how children need to behave

All respondents were concerned about venue expectations of how their children needed to behave particularly in terms of keeping still and being quiet. This was made more astute by previous experiences at arts venues or those of friends.

“We enjoy going out as a family but it’s hard when you’ve got a kid because they have to listen and half the time they don’t.”

“If you go to the theatre and stuff like that, you’re shouting at them all the time to sit down, don’t move, don’t make a noise.”

“ We will go out for food but that can be difficult because he’s got to keep still and half the time he doesn’t.”

“He’s not the type to sit still. I’d worry that he’d interrupt them and things. In the cinema he’ll climb over the seats.”

“ People say to my son, ‘You’re a naughty boy aren’t you’, and that annoys me. All kids play up - you don’t say that.”

Some respondents in both groups had children who had been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and this exacerbated their concerns about how their children would behave and the venue’s response to this.

“ I can’t take my oldest son to many things because he has ADHD and his behaviour is extremely bad.”

“ I’ve been to theatres where they say at the beginning that if your child starts crying or anything along those lines can you please leave the room. I understand where they’re coming from but they’ve got to understand that they’re catering for children. They need to know that children do this kind of thing. Especially children with extra needs or special needs in any way. They need to cater for that.”

“If you’re a single parent with two kids you can’t be taking both out of the theatre because one is crying. You’d be afraid to leave one in there and stuff. You can’t be doing it. It’s not good.”

“Well I wasn’t going to stay in with him crying for every one else to keep looking at us. I wasn’t going to do it.”

6.4 Perception of others

Many respondents were worried not just about their children’s behaviour but also about how their family would be perceived by other, more regular, arts-goers. A significant minority thought that the arts were not for them, not because they wouldn’t enjoy the experience but because they wouldn’t fit in, wouldn’t know how to behave and would feel uncomfortable and unwelcome. Some of the respondents compared themselves unfavourably to other more privileged family groups who were better educated, had better behaved children and ‘knew how to behave and what to expect.’

“ A lot of posh people come to paces like this [Blackwood Miners’ Institute]. You can tell like. They’re well behaved.”

However, for this respondent they were surprised at how well they fitted in and at the reaction of staff at the venue and other families.

“ My kids were rummaging about and throwing things. Nobody minded.” [After the performance of A Tap Dancing Mermaid, Blackwood Miners’ Institute.]

6.5 Need to know what to expect

Both groups expressed the need for detailed information about what to expect from both the performance and the venue. Not knowing what to expect was seen as a major barrier to attendance. This included full details of what the performance would be like, how the theatre was laid out, venue facilities and access.

“He’d gone before with the school so he knew what to expect.”

“I didn’t know what it would be like. That’s why I shouldn’t have taken him because he doesn’t like dressed up characters. As soon as the beast came on stage he was screaming and I had to take him out. It was really hard work.”

“ We didn’t know there was a car park at the top of the hill. It was too much with the kids really [getting up the hill].

Both groups wanted to know the total cost of any activity before they made a commitment to attend including all incidental and any ‘hidden’ costs. This is also a key deciding factor for non-arts events and any type of group or class activity.

“By the time you buy the uniform, the bags and stuff. Spray tans, make-up. It all adds up.”

“I went to a theatre in Cardiff and bought Maltesers and M&Ms and it was £6. That’s extortionate.”

Even offers will not be taken up if the secondary spend on food and drink etc. is perceived as being expensive.

“I’ve got 2 for 1 tickets from Compare the Market but I still won’t go - it’s too expensive.”

6.6 Importance of staying together as a family and building confidence

Most respondents wanted to attend events as a family (and most as a group of families) and didn’t want to leave their children unaccompanied particularly if this was a new activity.

“ I took him into a theatre group. Some of them are quite expensive but this one was only £5 a week. He was so excited to go but when I took him I wasn’t allowed to stay and it was his first one. If he went more he’d build up confidence...So he didn’t want to go again.”

“I took my 2-year-old for the first time so that was quite stressful.”

6.7 Safety and facilities

The assurance of the provision of baby-changing facilities and excellent hygiene was mentioned by most respondents. As mentioned above parents need to be assured that their children are safe at all times and are looking for activities that bring the whole family together. Having a café that serves hot food and drinks or a combined arts and food offer was seen as important for most respondents.

“It makes a difference having a café. Some are good, some are rubbish. I like having food everywhere I go.”

6.8 Doing things as a group

Attending arts activity as a group with other family was seen as an easy way to minimise the risk of attending a venue. It also increased the opportunity to socialise as parents.

“Getting to do things as a group is good. Like The Flying Start Group.”

“It’s easier in a group on a minibus.”

“The social side of it is important. Not just the kids but talking to other parents and having a conversation.”

“I’d prefer to come as a group and get food afterwards and make it into a day out sort of thing.”

7. Conclusions and Ideas from the Groups

At the end of each session respondents were asked for comments and ideas about how arts venues could reduce the risk of attendance and make their offer more attractive to them and similar family groups.

7.1 Type of provision

The majority of respondents in both groups were keen to attend a wide range of arts events but were wary of previous negative experiences and concerned about a range of issues: total price, that it needed to be 'for people like us' and that any provision was suitable for a range of ages.

"Around here if there was arts stuff in this kind of area people would go. There used to be a play bus with drawing - that was great.

"[Any arts activity needs to cater for]... a range of ages so you can take all the kids and there'll be something for them all to do."

"Dancing I'd like to see. Classes. Obviously you've got to pay but at a reasonable price."

It was seen as important that any offer wasn't just aimed at children but was a family offer that all could enjoy.

"There needs to be more for the kids around here. Not just that but something for the adults to do with the kids."

7.2 Timing of Offer

The timing of the offer makes a difference, especially if the offer is regular or weekly. Most respondents in both groups preferred weekday activity in the late afternoon/early evening - something that fitted in after school but finished early enough so that the children could wind down before bedtime.

"Saturday morning is a bad time. I prefer to do something on a weekday. Weekends are bad."

"5-6pm is the best time. Not too late. You need time to chill out and wind down."

7.3 Combined food offer

There was considerable interest from both groups for an offer that combined food in the cost. The benefits of this were seen as social, bringing parents together to talk and relax; important

for families who struggled providing food for their family (particularly breakfast); a way to control the cost of things that surround the arts offer as well as providing an enjoyable activity for the whole family.

“Food encourages people to go a lot of the time and drinks. It brings people together for the food. Plus it’s an advantage if you haven’t got enough to feed the kids.”

“I wouldn’t consider myself as poor but I can’t afford to go to places. Everything is so expensive. Everybody says affordable but affordable to who?”

“A breakfast arts club would be interesting...doing breakfasts, pay £1.”

“They used to do it in The Top Club. You’d pay £1 to get in, you’d get pop and sweets and watch a film. That was great.”

7.4 Desire to be involved in organising opportunities

There was a marked desire in both groups to be involved in organising family arts activity. This came independently from both groups and was not prompted by the facilitator.

“Mothers should be able to access some sort of funding so that a group of you could come together with ideas and make it happen. They need to show us how to do it - things like health and safety.”

“It should be like volunteering but it wouldn’t be a chore because we want that service anyway. We would be the ones providing it in a way.”

The RCTBC focus group identified a possible venue where they could organise arts activities:

“Up the top here we’ve got a centre but it’s very rarely used. It could be used more. There’d be food and a lot more going on. It’s just an empty building.”

8. Mystery Shopping

A mystery shopping pilot exercise was undertaken around the performance of The Shiny at Blackwood Miners' Institute on 24th February 2016. The Mystery Shopping Assignment Sheet can be found at Appendix 3 below. There were nine mystery shoppers who were recruited by The Parent Network, Caerphilly in accordance with guidelines given by The Audience Agency. All were given access to publicity for the event either through the venue website or season brochure.

8.1 Before the visit



Eight respondents had heard of Blackwood Miners' Institute before they became a mystery shopper, one had not. Two expected it to be welcoming, one expected it to be busy, one expected it to be good. The others had no expectations of the venue.

From what the shoppers had been told or read about the performance of The Shiny, one thought it would be 'OK', one was worried about its suitability for a 9-month-old baby, seven expected to be seated in a row of seats like conventional theatre seating.

8.2 Age range of children and getting to the venue

Each mystery shopper was accompanied by one child. The ages of the children ranged between 9 months and 4 years.

On this occasion the mystery shoppers arrived together as a group by minibus so there were no specific comments on the ease of getting to and finding the venue.

8.3 The Building - entrance

All shoppers found it easy to find their way into the venue and thought that the entrance was clearly signposted.

Six shoppers thought that the entrance was very welcoming, one thought it was good, one thought it was great, one thought it was OK.

Six shoppers thought it was easy to get into the building, three didn't comment.

8.4 Venue Staff

All shoppers found it easy to find venue staff and that they were easy to identify.

Six shoppers thought that the venue staff were 'very welcoming', one thought they were 'lovely, very helpful', one thought they were 'very nice'.

Six shoppers were approached by staff to volunteer their assistance or knowledge.

No members of staff made a negative impression.

8.5 Building - facilities

Eight respondents noted that there was an area for them to leave buggies and coats, one wasn't sure as they didn't take a pushchair.

Seven thought the building was pushchair friendly, one didn't.

All the shoppers thought it was easy to find their way around the building including finding the toilets and the entrance to the theatre.

Five shoppers thought that the building was children friendly, four thought it was not.

None of the shoppers noticed any hazards such as trailing wires or sharp edges etc.

8.6 Availability of publicity

All the shoppers thought that there was a good range of leaflets with information about the venue and its events and six shoppers picked up leaflets at the venue.

8.7 The Theatre

All shoppers thought that the theatre was easy to get to.

Impressions of the theatre ranged from:

‘It was bigger than I remembered.’

‘OK’

‘Big, clean and tidy.’

‘Ladies were lovely’

‘Wasn’t expecting to sit on the floor.’

‘Surprised they was all sitting on the floor.’

All shoppers thought that the theatre usher was warm and friendly.

All shoppers thought that the theatre was clean and comfortable.

None of the shoppers recorded that anything had spoilt their enjoyment of the performance.

Five shoppers commented on age suitability:

‘My daughter loved it.’ [22 months]

‘And could be for older children.’

‘Was great.’

‘All ages.’

8.8 The Toilets

Six shoppers used the toilets during their visit. All of them commented that the toilets were clean and tidy. All six thought there was enough toilet roll, soap and paper towels and the the toilets were suitable for their requirements. Four of the six noticed that there were baby changing facilities.

8.9 Conclusions

All shoppers stated that they enjoyed their visit and there were the following additional comments:

‘Fun, bright and colourful.’

‘Was great for parents as well.’

‘I really enjoyed.’

All shoppers would visit Blackwood Miners’ Institute again.

All shoppers would recommend the venue to friends. There was one additional comment:

‘Posted on Facebook how good it was.’

All shoppers thought that overall they had a positive experience.

Further comments included:

‘There were boxes in the show that the children weren’t allowed to touch. It would have made more sense to put them out of the way on the stage.’

‘Nothing was excellent.’

‘Brilliant.’

‘Loved it.’

9. Desk Research and Case Studies

Desk research brought together an overview of the key issues affecting the engagement of family audiences with cultural programmes and organisations. It also highlights examples of best practice that illustrate practical application of these principles including The Woodland Trust, The Halle, Lakeside Arts, Manchester Art Gallery, The Whitworth, Ikea, Eureka, Compton Verney, The Beamish Museum, Odeon Cinemas and Warwick Arts Centre. The desk research can be found in a separate report at Appendix 6 below.

An interview with Guy O'Donnell who leads the Sherman 5 programme can be found at Appendix 7 below.

The findings from the desk research and interviews with Guy O'Donnell and Michelle Jones combine with the focus group and mystery shopping findings to inform the final recommendations.

Other existing reports, interviews and research that have fed into the recommendations include:

Anne Kellaway, (Research and Evaluation Manager), Peter Gregory (Head of Night Out), Sally Lewis (Portfolio Manager), Arts Council of Wales; Deborah Keyser, Creu Cymru; Ceri Jones, Fieldwork (Family Arts Campaign Wales).

Fusion: Tackling Poverty through Culture - The Pioneer Area Programme Pilot Year 2015-16

<http://gov.wales/docs/drah/publications/150521-fusion-en.pdf>

The Children's Omnibus Survey 2015, Arts Council of Wales

<http://www.arts.wales/what-we-do/research/annual-surveys/childrens-omnibus-survey>

Cultural Participation for Children and Young People Experiencing Poverty: Research Seminar Report and Resource Pack, National Museum Wales

http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/transforming_futures/research_seminar_report/

http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/transforming_futures/toolkit/

Culture and Poverty, Harnessing the Power of Arts, Culture and Heritage to promote Social Justice in Wales, Baroness Kay Andrews for the Welsh Government

<http://gov.wales/docs/drah/publications/140313-culture-and-poverty-en.pdf>

Final Evaluation of the Family Arts Campaign 2012 - 2015, Catherine Rose, Catherine Sutton, Pam Jarvis: <http://www.familyarts.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Family-Arts-Campaign-Evaluation-2012-2015.pdf>

10. Recommendations and The Way Forward

The recommendations below outline key areas and issues that are currently preventing families from the lowest end of the socio-economic scale from attending Arts Connect venues. They also suggest potential ways forward and posit initial ideas for initiatives that could supplement and enhance the work of Arts Connect in this area.

Set up a 'Family First Night' Initiative

This research identifies two successful models: Sherman 5 and Mousetrap Theatre Projects that give potential ways forward for Arts Connect to develop new audiences from non-attending family audiences from the lowest end of the socio-economic spectrum. Drawing on these two programmes Arts Connect should develop its own model taking into account the different venues, their programme and objectives and the particular circumstances of this family group throughout the local authorities.

First steps should include: identifying potential funding to run a pilot programme, workshops with key staff across Arts Connect to hone and develop individual action plans, checklists and templates, identifying partner organisations as well as disseminating this research.

Appoint Venue Buddies/Ambassadors

Trust is a vital component to engagement by this group. The research shows that these groups value the recommendations of friends and often rely on 'initiators' to come up with ideas and support the planning of family activities. The Venue Buddies could be recruited from existing networks in the first instance like The Parents Network and Flying Start and also promoted through Facebook.

Arts Connect could also explore the possibilities, with other teams within their local authorities, of how to support families to organise and manage their own events. See 7.4 above.

Target groups of families not individual families

Prioritise targeting groups of similar families instead of individual family units. This reduces the risk of attending the arts event, provides opportunities for social interaction for parents and reduces concerns that the family will 'fit in' with other audiences who are perceived by this group as being better educated and as having children who are better behaved. This could be done by organising a series of trips to one or more of the Arts Connect venues promoted by the

Venue Buddies and including transport and a food offer (or allowing families to bring their own food into the venue).

Mystery Shopping by Target Segment

Make mystery shopping a key plank of each venue's customer satisfaction strategy across all venues. The mystery shoppers should be recruited from the target group. Extending a mystery shopping programme across all venues will allow for benchmarking performance and progress not just within each venue but across Arts Connect. To our knowledge this would be the first initiative of this kind in the UK, drawing mystery shoppers from a specific target group, in this case low income families with little or no previous arts engagement, and across local authority areas. This programme could form part (alongside customer care training/development of a Buddy scheme) of a funding application to the Arts Council of Wales lottery fund or a trust or foundation prioritising audience development e.g. Paul Hamlyn.

Maximise mobile and use of Facebook

The research confirms the prevalence of Smart Phones and the use of Facebook as key tools and platforms. We recommend the setting up of a specific Facebook group to compliment existing Facebook pages and in the longer term ensuring that all venue websites are optimised for mobile. There is evidence that this group also responds well to Facebook advertising as another form of promotion but we suggest in the first instance priority should be given to the setting up of an active Facebook group.

Time Credits

There is evidence of the success of using time credits to increase engagement with and loyalty to arts venues by families from Community First areas e.g. the Sherman 5 Family Project, Sherman Cymru. Parents from the targeted families could earn time credits for various aspects of volunteering including ushering, being a Venue Buddy etc. This has the added benefit of giving participants new skills, strengthening links with the venue and increases employment prospects. Families from low socio-economic groups are also often suspicious of free offers and respond better to a relationship that is based on principles of 'the more you give, the more you get.' Participants earn their credits and can exchange them for tickets for any events (not just family specific). It is also worth considering a 'Time Credit Takeover' where a whole performance/activity is available only through the redemption of time credits. This could be maximised by including a suitable food drink offer.

Avoid the word 'arts'

The word 'arts' is not in itself a barrier to engagement but it does bring with it some negative perceptions often compounded by previous bad experiences at arts venues. These include the arts not being 'for people like me', that arts events are attended only by 'posh people' and that they are likely to be looked down upon or patronised by venue staff and the wider audience. To the majority of respondents in this research the term 'arts' was misinterpreted to mean drawing, painting, exhibitions and museums.

Welcome Pack

A variation of the information already provided for relaxed performances would be useful for this group and will help reduce many of the risks associated with arts attendance. This should be detailed and include all necessary information in one place about both the venue and the specific performance. This should include everything from how to enter the theatre, where to sit, the venue lay-out, age suitability, total cost etc. (See 6. Reducing Risk for details).

Customer Care Training

Existing customer care training should explore the specific needs and concerns of low socio-economic families. The training should be developed using the findings of this research and regularly refreshed and updated informed by findings from the mystery shopping programme.

Combined Arts and Food offer

Consideration should be given to the development of a combined food and arts offer. Suggestions from the group included a regular breakfast club and there is evidence that a combined food and activity offer often encourages attendance and engagement. This is a very popular option for other non-arts family activities e.g. commercial Play Centres.

Develop Partners outside Arts Connect

Linking up with other cultural venues, particularly in the South-East Wales region will enable Arts Connect to maximise its resources, share and benchmark its progress and benefit from the work of other venues in developing family audiences from Communities First areas.

Family Open Days

Family Open Days, ideally combined with a suitable event, will help demystify the venue and give parents a wider understanding of what to expect when they attend an Arts Connect venue.

This could include a tour of the venue, a chance to talk to staff, a look behind the scenes etc. and based on previous consultation with the Venue Buddies.

Appendices

1. Desk Research report - Barriers to Engagement

Introduction

This report gives an overview of the key issues affecting the engagement of family audiences with cultural programmes and organisations. It also highlights examples of best practice that illustrate practical application of these principles.

Its insights are reported around Jerome McCarthy's four Ps of marketing: Product, Place, Price and Promotion. These are the four key tools available to marketers to encourage audience engagement and the report aims to highlight key issues to make each tool particularly successful at engaging family audiences.

While this report looks in detail at how to maximise each tool, it is also important remember to successfully engage family audiences marketers need to equally balance their work on each of the four Ps. This is particularly key for family audiences, who tend to value more than other segments the 'total experience' of a visit. This means that for family audiences the journey to and from a venue, the environment and facilities, customer care, refreshments and merchandise are just as important as the show or exhibition they may have come to visit.

A coherent and equally balanced review of your overall offer is therefore key to consistently attract and engage family audiences long term.

Product

Interactive provision

Parents and carers' major concern on a day out is that children are engaged. For this reason interactive and participatory activities are at a premium and key to attract and engage family audiences long term. The Woodland Trust have for example come up with a range of interactive activities arranged by age auditability to engage families with their sites:

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/naturedetectives/>

Depending on their programme and facilities, different organisations have developed a range of activities and programmes for families.

Performance arts venues and organisations such as orchestras tend to have time specific programmes specifically aimed at families, e.g. Christmas concerts:

<http://www.halle.co.uk/family-concerts.aspx>

Key to these times specific programmes is their regularity, not necessarily their frequency. Families tend to respond positively to programmes of work that they can rely on without having to continually check your brochure or website. This might be the regular once a month workshop activities at the local theatre or the once a year Christmas concert at the local concert hall.

Other organisations, such as museum and art galleries, often offer on top of specific programmes for families, self-led activities for families to undertake independently. These often involve a range of trails prompting families to undertake specific activities along their visit. Mementos are often awarded at the end as a reward.

<http://www.lakesidearts.org.uk/take-part-learn/families.html>

Age suitability

Age suitability is often a challenge especially for families with children of different ages. A flexible family programme that can offer something engaging for a toddler and a 7 years old is highly sought after.

Manchester Art Gallery offers a range of interactive activities for children of a range of ages, from babies to eleven years old:

<http://manchesterartgallery.org/learn/families/art-clubs/>

Some organisations have also developed specific programmes particularly aimed at key age ranges, e.g. for babies and toddlers:

<http://www.whitworth.manchester.ac.uk/learn/earlyyears/babies/artbabymusicbaby/>

An area of work though currently underdeveloped is work for families with early teenage children. Z-Arts and the Manchester Family Arts Network have developed the following map for teenagers and their families to do together:

<http://www.z-arts.org/teenagers-blaze-a-trail-around-manchester-with-our-new-map/>

Intergenerational dialogue

Those activities which enable social interaction between family members - during and after the visit - are also highly valued. Providing materials that stimulate dialogue - from notes about the work to mementos from the show - are small touches which make a huge impact. Also, intergenerational activities that are able to engage a range of ages is becoming more and more key as extended family is brought to provide childcare at times of financial stress.

The National Trust have for example developed volunteering opportunities specifically aimed at the entire family: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer/ways-to-volunteer/family-volunteering/>

Grandparents weekends have also started to appear across a range of heritage and visitors' attractions:

<http://www.heritage-motor-centre.co.uk/event/grand-parent-weekend/>

Place

Planning a family outing is far more demanding than planning for adults - the more advance information families have the more likely they are to choose to attend an event or venue and the more likely they are to return. Parents and carers need honesty and they need detail; - you essentially need to lower as many perceived risks as possible. Key issues are:

- Information about travel and access
- What to expect - from the length of a show to refreshments on offer
- Accurate age guidelines
- Plenty of background information to inform pre-visit
- How to behave

Facilities

Ikea is often referred to by families as a prime example of family friendliness. Each Ikea store in fact provides detailed information on the facilities they provide for families - from a dedicated play area, to suitable toilets and a children's menu at the café:

<http://www.ikea.com/gb/en/store/warrington/services>

Eureka also offer lots of detailed information on their facilities for families ahead of their visit:

<https://www.eureka.org.uk/visit-us/>

Killhope Museum have also created a useful guide on how to get the most out of a visit to their museum: <http://www.killhope.org.uk/Pages/GettingtheMostOutOfYourVisit.aspx>

As under 4 years old can't visit the mines part of the museum, the Museum has therefore written a brief blog entry, illustrating the range of activities available for small children:

<http://www.killhope.org.uk/Pages/NotBigEnoughfortheMineTour.aspx>

Crompton Verney offers another good example of a detailed overview of their offer and facilities:

http://www.comptonverney.org.uk/plan_your_visit/families.aspx

Transport and access

Families really appreciate as much detail as possible on how to reach venues. This ranges from the transport facilities available, to parking charges and walking distances from the closest car park or train station.

The Beamish Museum for example offers a really detailed “Getting here” page which also highlights ways families can save money on transport:

<http://www.beamish.org.uk/getting-to-beamish/>

Café

Simple adjustments can make your café’s offer more family friendly -some of key development you can make are:

- Develop a children’s menus
- Offer healthy options and affordable snacks
- Provide highchairs and a microwave to heat up baby’s food
- Have free water available

Also, provide information in advance so families can make a choice whether to bring a picnic or eat at the café. Also, always offer a picnic area for families to help with the costs of a day out. Killhope museum have a whole page dedicated to explaining what to expect from their cafe:

<http://www.killhope.org.uk/Pages/Shopandcafe.aspx>

Families also find it helpful to see the menu in advance of their visit so they choose whether to bring their own picnic. The World Museum in Liverpool offer this choice:

<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/wml/visit/Documents/WML-Coffee-Shop-menu--March-2015.pdf>

Price

Perceived value for money is a major factor for families, with keen price and value comparisons between all sorts of activities making a big impact on the decision to attend and then on levels of satisfaction after the event. Also, party size has a big impact when it comes to family outings, it is therefore key to consider the total costs of any tickets rather than viewing single ticket prices in isolation.

Recent research with families by Baker Richards has also recently found there is greater expectation of and preference for a discount for children rather than family ticket.

Whichever model organisations choose to adopt though, it is important it is easy to understand and for families to work out at the entrance.

A good example is Odeon's family ticket where "Adults go for kids prices":

<http://www.odeon.co.uk/family-value/>

Another interesting example comes from Minor Entertainment who worked out a flexible ticketing system which offers different prices according to seat location and according to time of day. Prices also increase according to demand. This allows families to compare prices and obtain a cheaper price ticket if needed.

Minor entertainment ticketing: <http://www.minorentertainment.com/minor-tickets/>

Some museum have also adopted a family membership for a year:

<https://www.eureka.org.uk/visit-us/prices/>

Promotion

Families respond positively to a dedicated channel for family promotion whether this is a dedicated section in your brochure to families or a page on your website. This is an area where they can find out all the key information and relevant offer without having to scroll through all your marketing material and piece together relevant information.

The Lowry Theatre has created a page dedicated to families gathering in one place all the information families are likely to look for:

<http://www.thelowry.com/plan-your-visit/family-visits/micro/info/>

Eureka also offers this information straight away on their front page:

<https://www.eureka.org.uk/>

Different ways to promote your family offer:

Warwick Art Centre - Family ambassadors: <http://www.warwickartscentre.co.uk/about-us/ambassadors-2/family-ambassadors/>

Joint campaign and working in partnership with other providers such as Sure Start Centres:

<http://familyexplorers.co.uk>

Key channels:

- Promotion through Google
- Listing on websites such as Netmums
- Social media and personal recommendations

2. Interview with Guy O'Donnell, Sherman 5, Sherman Cymru, Cardiff

Launched in October 2014 Sherman 5 is a five-year, free membership scheme funded by The Paul Hamlyn Foundation designed to give people from Communities First areas who have never attended a performance at Sherman Cymru in Cardiff the chance to do so. Their definition of a first time attender is someone who has not attended in the last five years.

It is open to residents of Communities First areas across Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan, Rhondda-Cynon-Taf and Bridgend, Newport and community groups that supports people who face barriers and/or disadvantage such as Age Cymru, Young Carers, The Salvation Army etc. The community group itself needs to be registered with Sherman 5 in order for individuals to join as a group member and the first booking needs to be through/with the group leader.

Individuals must also register in order to gain a Sherman 5 Card that gives them:

- Free first visit to a Sherman 5 night
- Reduced ticket costs for subsequent visits for Sherman 5 nights: £5.00 (£2.50 for under 25s)
- Free coach transport from Communities First areas on Sherman 5 nights (limited availability)
- Up to 75% discount at Sherman's Café Bar
- Exclusive Free Sherman 5 activities and events
- The opportunity to join as a Sherman 5 rep to experience working in a theatre and earn Time Credits

The Sherman 5 offer was developed in response to consultation with members of the Communities First communities over the previous year, led by the newly created post of Sherman 5 Coordinator, Guy O'Donnell. This led to the development of Memorandum of Understanding, which Guy feels was an important part of the process, developing understanding and building trust. Key things that came from the consultation were the need for subsidised transport, ability to come in groups (knowing that other Sherman 5 members would be there i.e. people like them) and that Members could give something back. Sherman 5 members agree to meet regularly, give regular feedback and act as advocates for the scheme, giving out flyers, running events in their areas and posting on social media.

By February 2015, Sherman 5 had a total of 542 members, and during the Sherman's autumn season September - December 2014, a total of 839 Sherman 5 tickets were used.

Sherman 5 Members can volunteer on a self-selected basis to usher at performances or a variety of other activities e.g. Sarah, a single mum from Splott runs a Lego Club from the

Sherman foyer on a regular basis, Ceri who wants to be a photographer takes photographs of rehearsals and shares them on social media. Volunteers are rewarded with credits as part of a Time Bank scheme and these Time Credits can be redeemed for tickets. During autumn 2015, 248 Time Credits were used in this way. Guy also organizes Time Credit Takeovers that includes 'buying out' a whole performance, includes a food and drink offer and uses Sherman 5 members to work on the day.

Guy feels strongly that Time Credits are a key part of the success of Sherman 5: people had previously rejected their free ticket offer as not for them, were suspicious of Sherman Cymru's motives, didn't want to be patronised and thought there was an 'agenda' that they didn't want to buy-in to. The transactional nature of Time Credits allayed many of these concerns.

Guy also stressed that it was important not just to give access to 'easy' parts of the programme or programme thought to be 'accessible'. Comedy for instance has been one of the less successful offers and Sherman 5 members are open-minded and want to be challenged.

Attached to the Sherman 5 scheme is a specific strand, Sherman 5 Families. In autumn 2014 the Sherman formed a partnership with local newspaper The South Wales Echo to invite families who live in the Communities First areas of Cardiff to apply to become Sherman 5 Families. Over the year, The Echo followed their experience of going to the Sherman Theatre for the first time, and they shared in the paper their experiences of visiting the Sherman and reported on what they have seen. Many families have been active on the scheme since *Romeo and Juliet*, attending several productions since then and introducing other families to the scheme.

They also participated in the Sherman's first Audience Panel, an in-depth family consultation session where they talked about how they see coming to the Sherman. As they get to know the theatre and its team in person, and see a range of shows, this allows an open conversation, which helps to explore the way that theatre is seen as being 'for the likes of other people'. The Sherman 5 families have experienced a shift in thought about this for themselves, and now perceive a visit to the Sherman as something they look forward to doing regularly.

Proactive Sherman 5 families are invited to see performances free for a whole year at the Sherman Theatre. In return the Sherman 5 Families write reviews and consult with the Sherman Theatre on their experience of visiting the theatre and what they can do to make Sherman 5 more rewarding for all of our members. The Sherman renews its applications for Sherman Families once a year and nine families have been chosen for 2016. You can find details of the families here: <http://www.shermancymru.co.uk/sherman-5-families/>

Guy has worked with families to develop an information pack that breaks down each part of the process: how to enter the theatre, what to expect, where to sit, food and drink. All parts

of the organisation are involved including actors, administration, as well as front of house. He has also developed the Sherman foyer area into a 'third space' which is family-friendly and where staff are happy for boisterous kids to burn off energy and play.

Sherman 5 Families have set up their own Facebook Group called The Family, which promotes the scheme and gives regular hints and tips and includes posts of videos and photographs. Guy confirmed that although they had a presence on various social media platforms including Twitter and Instagram, Facebook was the only one that had actively been taken up by Sherman 5 members.

At the start families feel 'at risk' and everything can be seen as a barrier: the entrance, the foyer, how to behave, what to wear, where to sit etc. It's very important to break down each element and approach families in groups before trying to get them to come on their own. Specific Sherman 5 performances and Time Credit Takeovers support this approach.

Guy is particularly proud of how the scheme has successfully opened up all parts of their mixed programme to Community First families and also given families a range of other benefits which is summed up by one of the parents, Beth: "Sherman 5 provides a voice for people like me."

3. Research Extract - Culture on Demand, Engaging Broader Audiences, FreshMinds

Commissioned by the DCMS this research looks at how demand is formed for an arts event or activity, what drives attendance and what influences audience / visitor behaviour from a range of participants and in particular from those in traditionally hard-to reach groups. Here we have extracted findings that look at lower socio-economic groups:

- Socialising is a crucial component of engagement. Evidence shows that these groups consider the opportunity to socialise as an important motivator for attendance. Attending in a group is a more important feature of attendance than average.

This echoes the findings from the Arts Connect research and underlines the importance of marketing to groups of families and providing wider opportunities for parents to socialise.

- They are more likely to want a sense of fun rather than learning or educational outcomes. These relative priorities are inverted for lower socio-economic groups compared with ABC1 audiences.

Although 'fun' is a driver in the Arts Connect Research both this and particularly the Sherman 5 case study indicate that families from Communities First areas look for a much deeper set of benefits and are open to challenging work and experiences that will allow their children to not just enjoy themselves but to learn and grow.

- Experiences resonate strongly with this group. Embedding cultural activities within familiar environments or turning culture inside-out have been shown to have a positive effect on perceptions of culture.

This also echoes the primary research and underlines the importance of stressing familiar elements, programming regular group events, high standards of customer service and regular consultation with families.

- Trust is a fundamental issue. Studies show that institutional or public service provision is viewed with scepticism and mistrust. Alternative channels assume a greater importance here than for many groups with social networks and familiar locations being important drivers for attendance and participation.

Both the primary and secondary research for Arts Connect shows that families are suspicious of offers and events that might have 'an agenda' and that free events will not guarantee attendance. Positive word-of-mouth from peers and their existing trusted networks (friends, groups like Parent Network or Flying Start or Housing Associations) are needed before a first step to engagement will be made. The need for a transaction, to give as well as get, was also shown as important to this group for longer-term engagement.

- Issues of local interest or activities on offer close to home also receive proportionally greater levels of interest. They are less likely to travel to spend leisure time and attendance is at locations no more than 30 minutes from the place of residence.

Location and transport costs also showed strongly in the Arts Connect research particularly the desire for events that included transport (for groups) to and from the event and clear information about public transport costs and options.

4. Research Extract - Museum of London Docklands, Family Festival Marketing and Messaging Research, The Audience Agency 2016

The Museum of London Docklands was keen to build on the success of its new family festival programme by engaging more widely with families in the museum's target boroughs. The research focused on families from low socio-economic groups who did not currently attend but might offer potential for development as a festival audience.

Common themes that emerged in the descriptions of an ideal family day were having a **variety of activities to do throughout the day**, and the **central role played by food** in a day out with the family. Food was mentioned both as a necessary part of the day, either being able to bring a picnic or having access to good facilities that were not too expensive, or with reference to mealtimes as having an important role in shared family time.

Related to this, the results also indicate that **cost is a factor** for these families when planning a day out. Almost two thirds of the respondents (65%) cited 'that it's free' as being very or quite important in terms of the information they need to know before deciding to attend an event. It may be helpful to note, however, that this element was rated less important than knowing that the activity would be fun (93%) and would offer opportunities for the family take part together (95%).

As part of the variety of activities which form an ideal family day out, **time spent outdoors** came out strongly in the literal responses. Park visits were the most prominent family activity undertaken by the respondents, with 85% saying they had been to a park in the last two years.

The most prominent sources of information about family activities cited by respondents were **friends and family, including children**; 91% gave these as a recommendation source. They were also the most frequent and most influential sources. Recommendations from their children are the most frequently received recommendations for this group, with 82% receiving these at least once a month and 23% at least once a week.

Almost two thirds of respondents said they '**always**' or '**usually**' acted on recommendations from friends, family or their children; the strength of 'pester power' is indicated by the high number of respondents (61%) who cited that they always or usually act on their children's recommendations.

Three main themes emerged in the reasons given for the high levels of trust given to some recommendations:

- **Authority:** the information comes from a known source who understands the respondent's family needs and interests

- **Authenticity:** the recommendation is based on recent or previous direct experience of the activity, location or organisation involved.
- **Clarity:** the information is detailed and outlines what to expect from the experience

Overall, whilst the most important element of a family day out appears to be the opportunity to spend time together, for these families the findings indicate that decisions about what to do are focused on, and led by, their children.

The findings throughout the research clearly indicate that decision making for these families appears to be **child focused and led**, with less importance given to adult-led elements and learning opportunities.

Alongside the influence of their children's suggestions for activities '**that it sounds fun**' was rated as 'very important' or 'important' by 93% of respondents and 'fun activities for the children' was rated as the most or second most important element of a family activity by 31% of respondents - second only to 'spending time together as a family' (40%).

This may be compared to ratings for 'that it has a learning element' and 'it links to something being studied in school' which had ratings of 'very important' or 'important' by 81% and 61% of respondents respectively. 'An opportunity for children to learn' was the most or second most important element for 22% of respondents.

These findings are supported by the relative importance given to 'The main thing is that it's fun' compared to 'The main thing is that it links to things being studied at school' in response to questions about the theme and nature of activities - 46% of respondents rated fun as being a more important main element, compared to 13% rating a mainly educational experience as more important; 41% rated them equally important.

5. Research Extract - Beyond Barbican, The Audience Agency 2015

This research followed a survey of audiences at the Barbican's free and offsite events over the summers of 2012, 2013 and 2014, and some informal focus groups with local community groups in 2014. A survey was delivered through interviews conducted by ambassadors at events, and three focus groups were conducted with attenders and non-attenders of Barking Town Square Street Party (BTTSP) and Walthamstow Garden Party (WGP).

One of the objectives was to understand the audience for the Beyond Barbican programme in terms of those with low cultural engagement and included specific research with families from Barking, which has the highest unemployment rate of any London borough.

Participants heard about creative and local events at local community venues including Tesco, library and schools as well as word of mouth were the main ways, which reflected their suggestions about how the Barbican should promote its general family offer. They felt **local trusted gatekeepers would play an important role in helping facilitate and promote visits to local arts venues.**

Creative events that **combine food, a range of activities and attract a diverse range of people** were popular with the participants. By far the most popular kind of events for the majority of participants are outdoor arts events and festivals - **the more local the better** if they were taking their children.

Key motivators for attending events are **being able to spend time together as a family and having something the children will enjoy.**

Cost, the convenience factor, travel times and parking availability were also things that impacted on the decision to attend, but these can be overcome if the benefits outweigh.

Barriers to engaging with cultural events expressed by the groups included cost.

Travel was also a barrier to a certain extent, but most agreed they would make the effort for a special treat. Most of the participants spare time was determined by their children, so going to the park and swimming were popular activities. Shopping, music and gardening were also popular pastimes.

Two of the participants had been to Broadway Theatre but apart from that the only local venues most of the group had been to was cinemas on the A13. Despite this there was strong consensus that arts and culture is very important to their local community, but the majority of them had not visited local creative organisations.

Participants were asked to describe what a cultural experience meant to them. Their responses express that the **cultural experiences should provide opportunities to experience and learn about different people and cultures.**

Most participants said they were just not aware of Barbican or what was on there, but a significant number, around a quarter, did say they thought Barbican **was not for them**; a sense that **it was for middle class people** and that you **needed a good prior knowledge of art to fit in and enjoy the offer.**

Most of the participants thought that Barbican could do more to encourage engagement by **working in partnership with local creative organisations**, for example delivering events at local libraries as well as schools, so they would become more familiar with Barbican and its offer. **The idea of taster activities were popular.**

Other approaches participants suggested included ensuring that the promotion of the families offer emphasises what would be suitable for grandparents who are key carers of children; promote the Barbican as a space to bring people from different cultures together; programming 'introduction to the Barbican' events which enable them to experience different art forms that are new to them; and **ensuring the family friendly offer is very clear from the front of house staff.**

6. Case Study: Family First Nights - The Broadway League

The Broadway League's 700-plus members include theatre owners and operators, producers, presenters, and general managers in North American cities, as well as suppliers of goods and services to the commercial theatre industry. The League is a full-service trade association dedicated to fostering increased interest in Broadway theatre and supporting the creation of profitable theatrical productions.

As part of its activity it runs a series of successful education and engagement activities including Family First Nights, a nationwide programme specifically designed to encourage under-served (economically 'at risk') families to attend theatre on a regular basis. Many programmes exist for students to attend the theatre in the USA however, The Broadway League believes that if the experience is not supported and sustained within the students' home environment, there is little lasting impact promoting theatergoing as a lifelong activity.

By engaging the entire family and offering repeated exposure through multiple visits, Family First Nights offers the participating families the opportunity to make live, professional theatre part of their cultural heritage.

Partner social service agencies are responsible for identifying appropriate families, coordinating family participation, and organising transportation and other logistics.

- Family First Nights provide specially-priced theatre tickets for families who may not otherwise be able to attend Broadway and Touring Broadway shows. Families are selected by local partner social service agencies.
- Families commit to attend the theatre together three times per year.
- Each family member pays \$10 per ticket for orchestra seats, often less than the cost of a movie ticket.
- Additional ticket costs are paid for by grants and sponsorships.

Participating families take part in post-performance discussions. They receive family theatre packets including study guides, etiquette information, a guide to who's who backstage, and a CD of the show, if available.

In New York City, The League has partnered with families selected by the Community Association of Progressive Dominicans, Amber Charter School Parent Association, Broadway Housing Communities, Former Council member Gale Brewer's office and the Harlem Children's Zone in Manhattan; the Seth Low IS 96 PTA in Brooklyn; Dunton Block & Civic Association, Inc.

and Maspeth Town Hall in Queens; and YMCAs in Brooklyn, the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island.

In past years, partial funding has been secured from the Friars Foundation, Bloomberg Foundation, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and Department of Youth and Community Development, and the Theatre Sub-District Council, among others.

Family First Nights has also taken place in Appleton, WI; Atlanta, GA; Buffalo, NY; Charlotte, NC; East Lansing, MI; Fayetteville, AR; Hartford, CT; Indianapolis, IN; Jacksonville, FL; Memphis, TN; Milwaukee, WI; Rochester, NY; St. Paul, MN; Tampa, FL; Tempe, AZ; Utica, NY; and West Palm Beach, FL.

Family First Nights was established in 2005.

In 2015 almost 2,00 people participated in Family First Nights including 875 in New York and 1,126 participated in 17 cities across the USA.

7. Case Study: Family First Nights - Mousetrap Theatre Projects

Mousetrap Theatre Projects is a theatre education charity based in London dedicated to bringing the magic of theatre into the lives of young people. They believe in the power of theatre to transform young lives and aim to engage young people through theatre and drama, using it creatively to educate, challenge and inspire them. They serve young people across London and beyond, focusing on those who experience disadvantage - whether economic, social or through a learning or sensory disability.

The majority of their work is with individual young people but they also run a successful Family First Nights programme. Now in its 19th year the initiative gives low-income families the opportunity to enjoy a London theatre production for just £6.00 a ticket.

Each summer, from the end of July and through to the end of August, families are able to access the best seats for a selection of top musicals, plays and other productions. A family can consist of parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, guardians or carers, but must include young people between the ages of 3 and 17. Young people must make up half, if not more of the family group.

Families can only participate through being referred by one of their registered partner organisations and apply through a specific summer leaflet, which they can only take up once.

This initial summer theatre visit is only for new families to provide an entry point to the theatre. However, once families have taken part in the summer programme they are then emailed a variety of Winter and Spring offers.

They work with representatives and ambassadors from community organisations, social service agencies, housing associations, supplementary schools and charities across London and the South-East to identify families to take part in the programme. To register to refer families to the programme support organisations complete a registration form and attend an information event.

Last summer's programme ran from 27 July through to 31 August 2015, and resulted in 666 families attending 33 top London shows. The booking procedure and shows on offer can be found here: http://issuu.com/mousetrap/docs/mtp_ffn_16pp_proof10/9?e=1510555/31700507

Mousetrap Theatre projects worked with 138 social service agencies, charities, community organisations and housing associations who identified families who could benefit from the programme.

They also offer access performances that in 2015 included a signed performance of Gorilla and a relaxed performance of The Gruffalo - this performance was fully booked with 121 families.

They also ran three, free 60 - 90 minute family workshops for a selection of shows including Stomp, Memphis the Musical and Barmy Britain (which included a tour of The National Portrait Museum) in which twelve families (52 family members) participated. For the first time they offered a selection of restaurant vouchers which proved successful and will be repeated in 2016.

The full 2015 evaluation can be found here:

<https://issuu.com/mousetrap/docs/ffn2015condensedevaluationreport/?e=1510555/31701451>

Family First Nights is the longest running example of a ‘test drive the arts’ family initiative and drawing on their experience in 2013 Mousetrap Theatre Projects produced a comprehensive guide to the scheme and developing family audiences. A PDF of the guide can be downloaded here: <http://www.familyarts.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/MTP-Guide-to-Family-First-Nights.pdf>

They believe that Family First Nights’ continued success in reaching non-engaged and hard to reach families is due to their work with partner organisations and their strategic partner development.

They identify three primary drivers that families will consider:

- Time that they will have to invest in organising the outing: how easy it is to find information and book?
- How much money is it going to cost, in direct proportion with the value for money?
- Being able to trust that they are engaging in something worthwhile, and that the ‘risk factor’ is not too high (this is where partner organisations can be a vital asset).

The guide echoes some of the findings of the primary research conducted for Arts Connect:

“ The more questions that you can pre-empt and provide answers for, the more you reduce the ‘risk’ for these families. Furthermore, they will also be looking for ‘the catch’ - people will be cautious and concerned that if ‘it seems too good to be true, it probably is’. The more information you can provide the better.”

“...it wasn’t just the money... I could imagine myself taking my son and showing myself up and not knowing how to behave”

The guide gives a useful checklist of questions that organisations need to ask:

Family’s enjoyment:

- Is this going to engage all of my family, across the age ranges?
- What is the subject matter?

- Is the venue child-friendly?
- Will other members of the audience be families too?

Information:

- How can I prepare my family for the experience?
- How will we find our seats when we get there? (The language of theatre and venues will be alien to a lot of families.)
- I'm nervous about engaging in something I've never done before; what information can I find to help me ease my concerns?

Social or Cultural:

- I've never been to that venue/area before and I am nervous.
- I've never been before, nor have any of my friends or family, so I don't know what I'm getting myself in to.

Value:

- Will the children learn from this? What?
- Will it be fun?
- Will it be beneficial to us as a whole family?
- Are there additional things we can get involved with? (Workshops, Q&A's, talks or interactive sessions) What am I getting for my money?
- Is this a good 'deal'?

Children's reactions & behaviour:

- What if the show upsets one of the children and they disturb other people?
- What if we have to leave the auditorium?
- Is there somewhere they can go to calm down?
- Is there somewhere they can play while the others finish watching the show/viewing the exhibition?
- Will I have wasted £xx if we have to leave within the first 5 minutes (Cross reference: cost and financial risk.)

Food:

- Will they need lunch or supper? Snacks? Can they eat in a café? Or bring packed lunches?
- Sweets and ice-creams at the interval - how much do they cost?
- Does the venue have a café? Are there local places with reasonable prices or meal deals?

Travel:

- How can I travel there? How long will it take? How much will this cost?
- Is public transport easy and safe?
- Is there (free) parking available if I drive?

Facilities:

- Where are the toilets? Are there enough toilets?
- Are there facilities to change a baby?
- Is there storage for buggies, coats, etc.?
- Is there somewhere for kids to play whilst we are waiting? Is there somewhere to get food at reasonable prices?
- Is there somewhere families can eat packed lunches? Are there cushions or booster seats available for smaller children?

Cost:

- How much will the trip cost OVERALL?
Remember that although you may be offering very reduced ticket prices, the family may be a group of up to six or eight people and they also need to consider:
 - Total ticket prices
 - Travel costs
 - Food costs
 - Merchandise
 - Babysitting
 - Prices of snacks, sweets & ice-creams at the venue.

The guide also includes a useful action plan template that covers: objectives, programme structure, target numbers, ticket offers, workshops, legacy, targeting, pricing, barriers and drivers etc.

Contacts

For more information, please contact Carol Jones, Director Wales at The Audience Agency:

carol.jones@theaudienceagency.org

07885 367 848

London Office

2nd Floor, Rich Mix

35-47 Bethnal Green Road

London E1 6LA

T 020 7407 4625

Manchester Office

Green Fish Resource Centre

46-50 Oldham Street

Northern Quarter

Manchester M4 1LE

T 0161 234 2955

hello@theaudienceagency.org

www.theaudienceagency.org

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