



Family Arts
Campaign

Case Study

Telford Family Arts Network

Family Arts Festival 2014: Raining Cats and.... Frogs?!

“Raining Cats and.... Frogs?!” was an event organised in October 2014 by the Telford Family Arts Network, which took place during the annual [Family Arts Festival](#) and also incorporated the annual [Big Draw](#). The event also took part in the [Family Arts Campaign's Test Drive](#) programme designed to increase regular future attendance of families at arts events. The idea came about when thinking about opportunities based around a new piece of public art, an interactive wall intended for use as a display space.

The Network decided to incorporate creative activities representing each of the partner organisations into one event. A drama piece by Playhouse Theatre (a partner of Birmingham REP's Early Years programme) was chosen as the main feature of the activity day. The piece, *Rainforest Symphony*, is about a frog called Acapella - and so dogs became frogs!

The Network planned a day of activities in and around Southwater, the new development at the heart of Telford, and in particular Southwater One, which houses the library: we have a vision of this new space becoming a cultural hub. Everything was free and the majority of activities were drop-in with a timetable available so people could choose what they wanted to participate in.

There were two performances of *Rainforest Symphony*, 35 seats per performance and tickets were offered before the event to hard to reach and targeted families through partner organisations within the Council such as [Homestart](#), teen parent support and youth workers. The show was performed in a private space and therefore a safe and supportive environment, and attendees were made to feel like invited guests.

The aim was that once families who may not normally access these sorts of events have seen the performance they will decide to stay and participate in the other workshops on offer.

Telford & Wrekin Music offered early years music workshops, samba and djembe drumming workshops for all the family.

The Big Draw sent out packs containing luggage labels to schools and settings across Telford asking them to draw either a cat or a frog on a label and return it. These were displayed like raindrops hanging from two giant willow and paper umbrellas and visitors on the day added their own drawings; there were also opportunities to make origami jumping frogs and cat and frog masks.

A storyteller was resident in the library throughout the day encouraging families to make the most of the resource and *Stickleback Plasticus Cat's Choir Street Theatre* performed twice

To encourage people to vote for our event in the [Family Arts Festival Awards](#) we offered prizes from the Family Arts Network partners* such as theatre tickets and children's books.

We created an evaluation/feedback form to collect baseline data about the kinds of families attending and to create a database of families we can invite to future events.

Summary

There were 1400 visitors to Southwater One on the day of our event.

We estimate around 600 people actively participated in the various workshops. We consider this event to have been a great success and will be exploring how we can source funding to make it an annual occurrence. We are also piloting a Family Arts Network* newsletter and will continue to collect information about families as well as feedback at future events.

Photos of the event can be found on [Flickr](#).

Tips for engaging families:

- Start building a database of families
- allow drop-ins but have a clear timetable of activities available
- Use non-arts partner organisations to target hard-to-reach families.
- Make families feels like invited guests rather than customers

*Telford Family Arts Network partners are:

Birmingham REP
Ironbridge Gorge Museums Trust
Telford & Wrekin Music
Telford Culture Zone
Oakengates Theatre
Telford & Wrekin Libraries