



Family Arts
Campaign

Family Arts Campaign

Content Guidance Communication for Family Arts Events

Family Arts Conference 13 March 2015

Content Guidance: the really important information that tells families about the creative offer that is being presented to them, both before making the decision to attend and in the run up to the event.

Hello!

"Find out what families think about content guidance for family arts events." A fairly simple task at first glance?

So, we, the good and studious folk at Staffordshire University, began our adventure. We talked and listened to families in the West Midlands. What on earth is content guidance? What difference does it make to families? And so, the conversations started and the stories started flowing (and continue to flow!).

The Family Arts Campaign knew from their previous research that we are pretty well served for guidance about the practicalities of getting families of all shapes and sizes attending family arts events, but what was lacking was any guidance about how to talk to families about the creative experience itself.

The plot? The art form? The characters? The shocks? The smiles? The embarrassment? The best bits?

Our research took us on a journey to learn more about what families wanted to know and where they would look to get this information.

This is just a start. We have shared the key findings, and suggested easy ways in which you can implement these. However, our research revealed that this was very much the beginning of the conversation. So, go ahead – read and play with this report... but most importantly, don't ignore your best creative copywriters – the families themselves. Keep the conversation going and have a bit of fun with this.

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The Creative Communities Unit (CCU) offers client-focused, professional training and coaching, consultancy, project work and research around community engagement, partnership working and communication. All our work is delivered in a way that promotes social responsibility and values diversity. We collaborate with local, regional, national and international partners to develop and deliver our work.

The Family Arts Campaign aims to support organisations across the UK in providing high-quality arts activities for families and in growing and broadening the number of families taking part in the visual and performing arts. The Campaign is supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England, with additional activity in Wales supported by Arts Council Wales.

Design by Blue & White Creative
and Gemma Ince



Janet Hetherington, Senior Lecturer
Creative Communities Unit, Staffordshire University

What is content guidance?

It is the information that tells families about the creative offer which is being presented to them. In whatever format, it is often the start of a family's creative experience. It is the beginning of a creative adventure. So the fun starts here!

The value of content guidance

We know that making a choice about attending a family arts event is a big deal for a lot of families. They want to make the right choice. We know that practical information and good customer service helps them make this choice but families have told us that they want more information before they commit. Families are familiar with the sorts of practicalities they expect at family arts events and increasingly there is a consistency in the information and help they receive from arts organisations in

regards to this. However, when it comes to finding out about the creative experience, there is arguably less consistency. After all, what do families really need to know?

Our research revealed that practical information and content guidance sometimes overlap. A good example of this is when the creative content of the event restricts whether pushchairs can enter the space or the timing of an event can imply whom it is targeted at. So, in some ways it is helpful to think about practical information and content guidance together – it could save time for both you and families!

You may be an amazing copywriter, storyteller or producer (we hope you are!) and have no problem in attracting families. However, families are reporting that they feel there is sometimes a lack of consistency about how creative experiences are described and targeted at families. Ultimately, this impacts whether or not they feel confident enough to try things out.

This guide has been written in response to what families have told us they want to know about the family arts events.

The purpose of content guidance

Our research identified that families were seeking some specific information.



One family compared it to party planning. Imagine writing a party invitation with just the date and venue of the party, on plain white paper. You may get a few people attending but it's unlikely you will be overwhelmed by attendees. People, especially families, want and need to know a bit more.

This guide is intended to help you create information to help families make a decision about whether it is right for their family. It's also time to think creatively about what form it takes. Our research showed that families are good detectives – they are equally as likely to pick up information from the other parents in the playground as they are from more traditional marketing materials – they trust information from people that they know.

- Is it suitable for my family?
- Is it something that we will enjoy and are interested in?
- What things can I do or learn more about in relation to the family arts event, which I am participating in?
- What is the message you want me to share with other families that I know, to encourage them to participate?

Our method!

Big thanks to all of the family participants who participated and the host organisations:
Telford Creative and Cultural Development Team
Telford and Wrekin Libraries
Warwick Arts Centre
Family Ambassadors
Mystery Tour, Work in Progress

How did we find out about content guidance?

The ideas in this guide have emerged from primary research using participatory research techniques, which we conducted with families, artists, creative producers and arts organisations primarily in the West Midlands. As we entered the festive party season of 2014, families from the Family Arts Network were invited to take part in a series of creative consultation sessions. Pre-show workshops, discovery trails, consultation craft... and a lot of conversations with over 100 families helped develop the information in this guide. We also spoke to people responsible for working with children and young people, families who have specific needs as well as artists and arts organisations themselves.

The West Midlands is a big place so we took care to speak to people located in rural and urban locations, as well as people responsible for a wide range of arts events covering a variety of art forms and activities. Arts organisations were particularly interested in knowing how to develop family arts content communication for families who had low attendance at Family Arts events, so we have particularly focused on this.

To back this up, we also conducted some desktop research to help contextualise our findings.



Have fun!

If you are responsible for developing content guidance for families then we want it to be something in your job which you enjoy doing – and doesn't create extra work for you.

This guide can be used in any order and includes top tips, a few case studies, and some fun things to make that can serve as helpful reminders.

It can be used by anyone with an interest in content guidance. So you might want to plan and develop things with families, friends, colleagues, creative teams, administrators and audiences.

The guide is broken down into 4 key themes to help you navigate and think about how you approach content guidance:

1. Is it suitable for my family?
2. Telling the story
3. Presenting content guidance
4. Making it part of the creative experience

Also, don't forget the gems! They are quirky things for you to make and serve as a reminder to some of the key things to remember when creating content guidance information.

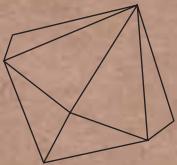
It's easy to get stuck in a rut when it comes to producing guidance material. Our research showed that changing just one thing has a significant impact on how families engage and understand what you are offering them.

So, if you haven't spent much time thinking about content guidance then use the gems to quickly look for an initial idea. It might be a really small idea but find something which you think is achievable and that you can get others interested in. There is always that temptation to file a report away and not look at it again, but play with the gems, have them on your desk, string them across your window. Have some fun. This guide serves as a prompt, and the gems are intended to stimulate our thinking and remind us that families have expectations about content guidance in the same way as they do about practical information.

Remember, it does not take long and families want to help share their family arts knowledge, so make those gems and let them sparkle...

How to use this guide?

A gem of an idea



Developing content guidance does not need to take up a lot of your time.

We begin by spelling out the obvious – there are some basics, which families want to know and which only take 30 seconds to identify but can make a real difference to what families understand and interpret about family arts events.

To help you do this and be prompted by some of our other findings, in this guide you will find some gems. Excuse the pun, but we think it is useful to have prompts to help you develop a 'gem of an idea' in relation to what content guidance should include and look like.

Make them. Add to them (you will have ideas too). Use them as reminders for some of the key information and ideas that will help you develop content guidance for families.

Our first gem serves as a prompt to help get the basics right: the information which families have said is essential to know. Read further into this guide for further advice on what families want to know.

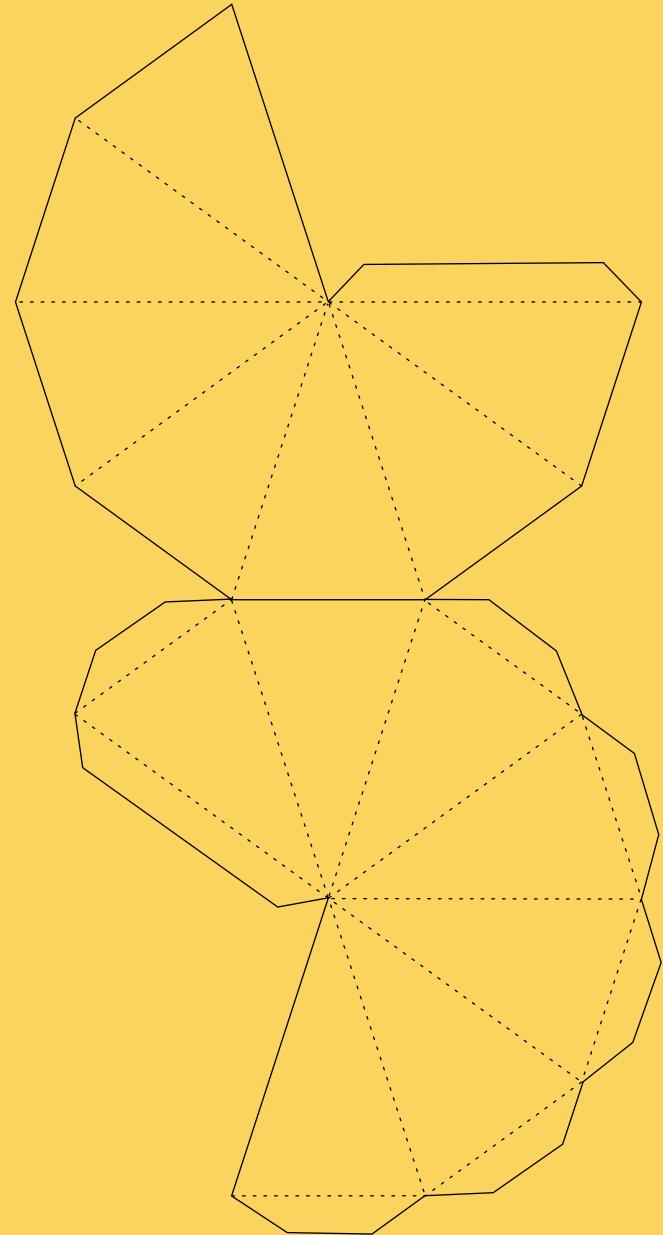
Our first gem serves as a prompt to help get the basics right.

It shows the information which, families have said, is essential to know:

Art Form
The Story
Title & Theme
Sensitivities & Shocks
The Experience

To make it

Cut along the black lines.
Score and fold along dotted lines.
Bend into shape and glue tabs.





Section 1.

Is it suitable for my family?

We found that families are looking for reassurance that family arts events are suitable for their family. When was the last time you examined how you made decisions about age appropriateness or descriptions about the suitability of a family arts event?

The reasons families want to know whether something is suitable

Despite families often having very different assessment criteria, the reasons for wanting to assess the suitability were often very similar. A common response was that families did not want to feel like they were wasting time or money by attending something, which they felt was unsuitable and therefore more likely to leave early or not participate. In addition, some families were very self-conscious of the cultural choices they made. Sometimes the act of choosing a family arts event which they felt was unsuitable made them feel like they might be judged by other attendees, and they lost confidence in attending other events. In addition, some families said that religious and cultural reasons meant that it was important to understand whether something was suitable. Professionals such as youth workers and care staff also spoke about the legal requirements governing how they work with children and young people and therefore took extra care in assessing whether something was suitable.

It is difficult to talk to families about these issues, as clearly many do not want to be discussing what they are looking for in terms of suitability in front of the whole family. Also, some families are concerned whether they will be judged in relation to what they feel is or is not acceptable. Thus, they prefer it when organisations provide them with the right information to help them confidently make the right choices for their family.

Establishing benchmarks to help families assess family arts events

Whatever form of assessment you choose to use, let families know what the benchmarks are or who makes the decisions about what is considered suitable. Encourage families to decide for themselves how the benchmarks relate to their abilities and preferences.

Interestingly, families said they were suspicious of shows targeted 'at all ages and for the whole family', so if you take this approach it's really important to explain your rationale for this.

"If you like this then you will like that..."
 Another way of benchmarking your event is to draw upon comparisons with previous family arts events, references to popular culture or even by grouping together family arts events.

Also, don't forget the adults. Youth workers, grandads, health professionals are also attending, and will notice if their needs and interests are referred to in any promotional materials and events.

British Board of Film Classification (BBfC) *Age Ratings You Trust Guidelines (2014)*

Should I use age guidance?

Families do look for age guidance, but that's because they're looking for clues about references to conflict, religion or other sensitive topics, the subject matter, or what equipment is being used. Based upon our research, these concerns related to four fears:

- Things that will blatantly offend someone in their family group.
- Things that might trigger nightmares.
- Things that some families might find difficult to 'explain'.
- Things which professionals responsible for children and young people (childminders, youth workers, etc.) might get into trouble for showing to people.

Families want to know about what to expect in advance. Threats, language, religious references... in many respects it is hard to identify everything which might be significant to families. The important thing is that you offer choice. Families that we spoke to said they often asked for age guidance because they were unsure of any alternative measures to help them assess whether it was suitable for their family – but at the same time they felt there was a lack of clarity about what age guidance was and whether they could trust it. A quick benchmarking exercise can be tried using the criteria set by The Education Act (1996). In education, Age, Aptitude and Ability are used as the tools to assess students and whatever they (or any related services) are suitable for. However, for a more in-depth approach, then it is useful to look at the guidelines developed for film classification.

If you choose to use age guidance, then the British Board of Film Classification (BBfC) *Age Ratings You Trust Guidelines (2014)* offers guidance to help you think about some of the issues, which may be regarded as age-sensitive. We have adapted the guidelines into a series of questions – this information can be used to explain to families why and how you have established age guidance.

Context

What do you think the public will expect from your event and in what context is it being presented?

Theme

Is the theme of the event challenging or easily accessible for children or young people?

Tone and impact

Does the event evoke a positive or an unsettling tone? What sort of behaviour is being depicted and is any harmful behaviour made to appear normal?

Discrimination

In what context do issues such as race, gender, religion, disability or sexuality appear? To what extent is the event targeted at children?

Drugs and behaviour

Does it refer to drugs? Family events should generally not include the misuse of drugs, smoking, alcohol abuse, substance misuse or dangerous behaviours.

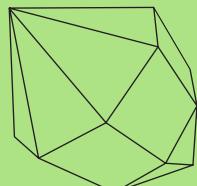
Language

Could the language being used cause offence to anyone?

Our second gem:
Who is it for?

Content & Theme
Public Expectation
BBfC Guidelines





Nudity and sex

How frequently is nudity used? Work with strong portrayals of sexual behaviour is not considered suitable for children.

Photo or pattern sensitivity

Will there be any work involving photos and patterns, which might make it unsuitable for some families?

Should you use age guidance or not?

In our research, we observed that many arts organisations and artists have developed their own approach to providing age guidance and families themselves differ in their views on what is age appropriate.

If you choose to use guidance, then here are some suggestions on how to do it.

Look at how the BBfC do it

There are ways in which you can use the guidelines to provide more explanation to families about how you have reached your decision about age guidance.



Consult families

Work with families and use their expertise in regards to age guidance and to get a better understanding about what families want to know. Working with professionals who work with families could also give you another perspective about how to assess who a family arts event is suitable for.

Look at what other organisations are doing

Discuss your approach to age guidance with other family arts providers in your region, as families have said it is useful if there is consistency about age or suitability guidance amongst the family arts events in their region.

For more information about how to use these guidelines to establish an age, refer to:
www.bbfc.co.uk/what-classification/guidelines

Summing up

- Work together with families and professionals to establish age suitability.
- Explain your rationale for age/suitability guidance.
- Establish a process to review whether your guidance is helping families.

Section 2.

Telling the story

A lot of family arts content guidance focuses on the story, which is a great start. It may sound obvious but families want to know everything about the story and we found that this included telling them about the art forms being used and more information about the practitioners offering them the experience. Family arts events are competing for the attention of families alongside other opportunities relating to other interests, sports, friends, so you do not want to be shy!

Creative superpowers

Families want to know more about the art form being presented, so don't be afraid of exploring ways to promote the creative experience to help persuade reluctant participants to get involved.

Stories for young and old

Storytelling has been traditionally used for cultural, entertainment, educational and moral purposes, and any of these approaches can be used to start telling a story about family arts events.

Content guidance serves as an opening chapter – it needs to engage people. Families want to hear stories being told which tell the story of the family arts event from everyone's perspective.

A hint of a plot, character and a narrative, which is suggestive of the tone of the family arts event, helps families decide if they want to commit to attending the event.

Getting the most from other people's marketing material

Are you worried that you are restricted by the copy that you receive from visiting companies or people creating the event? You can remain hopeful that they will get it right or you can involve them and others to help shape and edit what you are producing. Families, colleagues, your family, professionals responsible for children and young people... what story do they want to hear? Even if you can't change the text you might be able to offer other experiences, conversations, images, discussions that help families engage more easily.

Intrigue

How much you disclose is up to you. The families we spoke to still wanted surprises, but they did not want to be completely shocked or feel unprepared. If you want to create intrigue and not give everything away then try and ensure that families can ask for more of the story if they require it. Talking to staff, a synopsis sheet or even a 'spoiler alert' page can help with this, as it can be especially useful for professionals attending with children or for people with additional needs.



Find ways to help families tell the story with you. Invite them to:

- Make plans about the things they want to do, find or make.
- Learn about things associated with the event.
- Ask questions.
- Meet characters and staff.
- Read or hear about a detailed synopsis. Rehearsal/workshop or exhibition set-up footage (but make sure you explain the difference between the event and the rehearsals, as some families we spoke to said they like seeing the planning stages but it can confuse some children in terms of their expectations for the real event).
- Blog posts featuring entries from the range of people helping make the family arts event happen – and if the event does include a popular children's character or motif, try to make sure it is included.
- Further information about the art form and how to train in it.

Case study: Just So Festival

Wild Rumpus CIC are responsible for the Just So Festival, a bespoke family festival celebrating family arts outdoors.

"It is about the stories that you tell to the audience, and the narrative that you use... it's that sense of momentum in an event", said Sarah Bird, Director of Wild Rumpus CIC and the Just So Festival. In their case, content guidance is very much an extension of the performance and activities that they offer families.

Like many arts organisations, marketing budgets are limited and given the range of events and experiences that they offer families it is a challenge to know where to start. So, they looked to their audience and identified that, building up to the event, families used content guidance to help decide whether it was an event that suited their family. But they also saw it was used by families after booking to build up a sense of community.

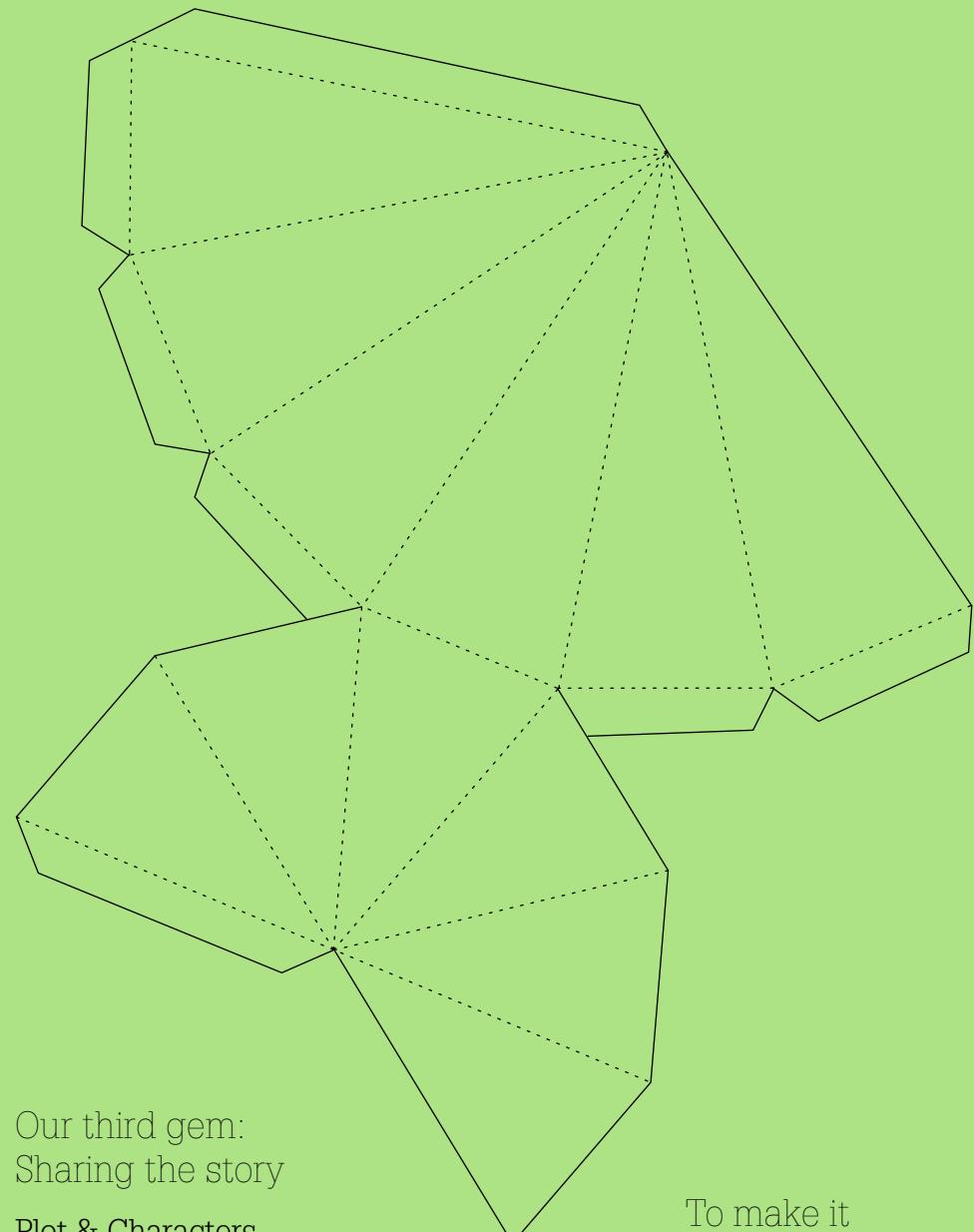
The Tribal Tournament is a parade for all of the families where they dress up as tribes influenced by animals from Kipling's *Just So Stories*. It essentially started off as a small idea, mentioned on social media, and used to help get families talking and thinking about their participation at the festival. Families were encouraged to comment and discuss how they would participate – and more importantly could ask questions. By focusing on this event they were able to use images, which they think represent the creative content but which also convey a lifestyle and a community that families

want to be part of. In taking this approach they found that not only did families use discussion about the tournaments as a way of finding out more about the festival itself, but it also helped develop the creative experience. It created a sense of excitement and commitment which has led to families driving ideas forward and ultimately making what was a small activity on the Sunday night into the ultimate finale and celebration for the weekend long festival.

However, they have learned to not be too prescriptive in what they feel families should know and think about in advance. It is still important to them that families are part of the experience regardless of how much they choose to find out in advance. So, in the case of the Tribal Tournament, families are encouraged to research costumes on Pinterest and meet the artists, but likewise they want families to have the same experience if they choose not to find out too much in advance.

The team has taken risks. Creating anticipation, but also keeping people informed is an ongoing task. At times they felt they had got it wrong, but in these instances they have taken time to reflect and question their approach. It has also helped that in the early days they relied on word of mouth to publicise their event. This gave them a chance to directly analyse what information was having the greatest impact and ultimately set up a culture, which broke down the barriers between the producers and the participants. Having confidence in your convictions in relation to content guidance takes time, but the team constantly looks for new ideas, shares the things that they love and keeps the conversation with their audience alive.

Taking on the responsibility for telling families about the possibilities, the intrigue and the excitement of the arts experience is a vital component of the success of the Festival. "You might get a little bit lost, or you might see something you don't like seeing. But



Our third gem:
Sharing the story

Plot & Characters
Wow & Intrigue
Full Synopsis

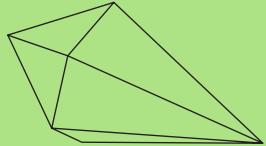
To make it

Cut along the black lines.
Score and fold along dotted lines.
Bend into shape and glue tabs.

“

We're showing images and trying to evoke something, so they get a sense of what it is they're coming to. We feed their enthusiasm.”

P.20



Full Synopsis

Wow & Intrigue

Plot & Characters

that brings the level of excitement. That's when the memories are made... when your adrenalin is going." The team believe that families set their own benchmarks for what is suitable for them, and age guidance is offered as only one way of understanding whether activities are for them. It has helped reduce enquiries from families about suitability and wherever possible they try and encourage families to take risks and try something new. They have noticed that the practicalities are important to families but that there is also a risk that they can be so absorbed in this that they miss out on the feelings of excitement and expectation in relation to the arts experience itself. "The easier we can make that, the more they can just think about all the great stuff they're going to be engaging in." Branding their work is important to the Just So team. They take care in how they sell their brand, the colours, the style, the images – consistency is important as it helps families recognise family arts events. So, they now take care to ensure the practical information is available in a simple format, and that there are contact details for more information – but the emphasis of the communication is on the content guidance. The team see it as selling a lifestyle and if they are excited by the arts then they are likely to be comfortable with the practical arrangements.

"It's about the narrative that you create as opposed to about the programming. We're going to tell them a little bit of the narrative around it, and that's what it is, it's about the stories that you tell. It is about creating those moments like giving people goose bumps, making people cry or laugh. Creating that sense of adrenalin and excitement without the terror. We're showing images and trying to evoke something, so they get a sense of what it is they're coming to. We feed their enthusiasm."

Twitter: @justsofestival
www.justsofestival.org.uk

What we learnt

1. Shift your thinking from family survival guides and helping families 'cope' with the challenges of attending family arts events. Instead think creatively and positively about the story you want to tell families about the family arts events that you are promoting.

2. Listen to how you describe the event to your friends and colleagues. What things do you keep talking about? What words do you use? What are people reacting to? This might help you start crafting the content guidance (which could be in the form of written copy, an online forum comment or even a chat on the bus).

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Section 3.

Presenting content guidance

How and where we present content guidance information can significantly impact how families engage with the information being shared.

Working with colleagues

Don't sit in different offices and plan the practical information and the content guidance separately. Be brave – drink tea and talk to each other about it. Try to keep talking to each other so that you can start to be consistent in your approach. Families like having practical information and creative content guidance but there is no need to keep them separate.

Experiential marketing

A good place to start is with experiential marketing. Evidence supports the fact that children learn best through hands on experiences, and some families have told us that they look at how children respond to content guidance as a way of determining whether they will choose to participate in the family arts event.

Therefore it is important to get this format right. That is not to say there is not a role for more traditional print based marketing tools, but whenever there is an opportunity to access information and experiences through other means then families really like it.

Families (remembering this means the whole family and all ages) told us that they like to:

- See 'behind the scenes'.
- Hold props and artefacts associated with family arts events.

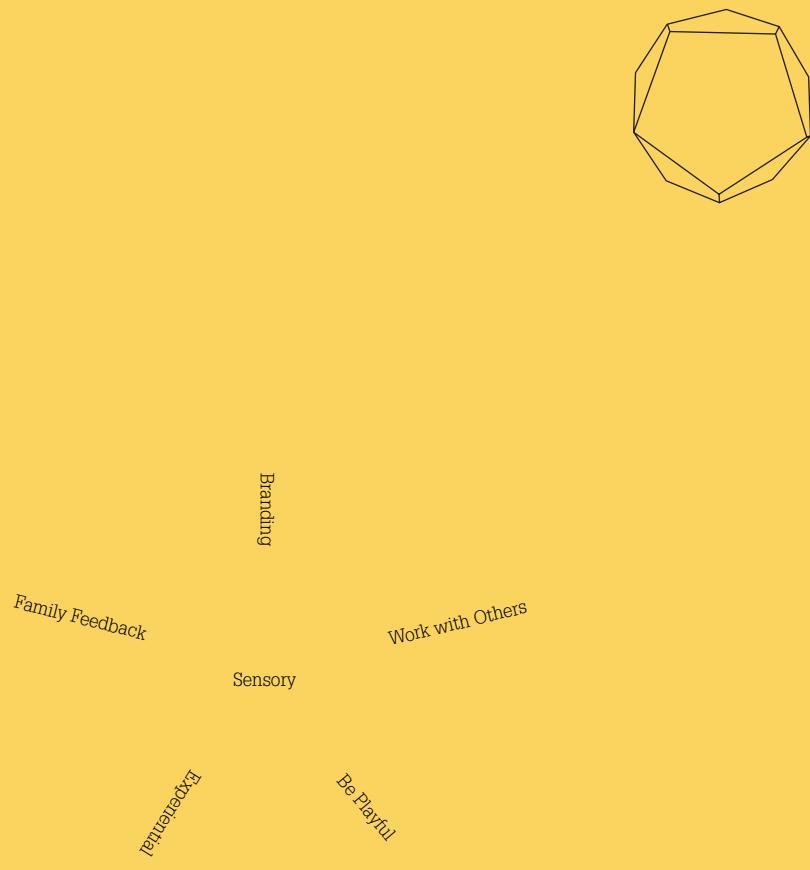
Our final gem:
Getting the
message across

Experiential
Sensory
Family Feedback
Be Playful
Branding
Work with Others

To make it

Cut along the black lines.
Score and fold along dotted lines.
Bend into shape and glue tabs.





Developing family engagement

Families also respond well to more formal offers to help produce content guidance. Opportunities to review and help promote family arts events were really welcomed by families who more regularly attended family arts events, and many were happy and wanted to use their experiences to engage with non-attendees to encourage them to participate.

Families and professionals acknowledge that they have exclusive access to school playgrounds, baby groups, antenatal facilities, children's services... all places where family arts events are discussed and mulled over. Any ways in which these conversations can be encouraged, whether through the adoption of family representatives or simply by encouraging families to talk to each other through social media or in non arts locations, helps families get reassurance from others in similar positions – and it gives them the opportunity to ask more honest questions.

The enthusiasm from families to spread the word is invaluable, but don't forget that it can also include less positive responses. Families can change opinions, provoke and challenge, so you need to find ways of managing possible negative feedback about family arts events. What is reassuring is that we know that families prefer honesty and discussion, especially about issues such as suitability. Families credit those organisations where they can talk openly about their experiences. Having a good and open relationship with families, including forums for general discussion and input about family arts programming – both in person and online offers reassurance and commitment to trying to get it right. Not only do you get a valuable insight into the perspectives of families but you are also developing skills within families to develop their language, ideas and expectations around content guidance.

Case study: Warwick Arts Centre Family Ambassadors

Warwick Arts Centre Family Ambassadors have been appointed by Warwick Arts Centre to help shape their programming, their services and how and what they communicate with families.

Training and supporting the Ambassadors to feel empowered to share their views on both practical information and content guidance issues has delivered huge benefits to Warwick Arts Centre. Warwick Arts Centre has a consortium of ambassadors including Access Ambassadors and are launching a Teacher's Ambassadors scheme. This programme is core to the Centre's desire to create a venue and programming which matches the needs and interests of the communities it serves.

The families appointed as Ambassadors represent people from different communities, ages, and family structures and have a range of different interests – but all responded to a call out to families who were interested in working with the centre to improve experiences for families and to encourage new families to participate. All receive training and participate on a voluntary basis. User engagement can take many forms, and Warwick Arts Centre and the Family Ambassadors stress that it is not a case of one model of family engagement fits all – they suggest it's important to develop schemes, which suit the availability and preferences of

the families you want to connect with. In the case of Warwick, the group has chosen to meet online and in person. The online engagement has led to the development of a family friendly Facebook page.

By using a participatory approach to engage families, the Family Ambassadors have also served as great promoters of the work. They have suggested ways to engage families in finding out more about the family events and they themselves now publicise events in their communities. They are even developing a cultural reviewers programme where Family Ambassadors review family events and they have the autonomy to share their opinions – good and bad. By having that relationship with the reviewers, Warwick Arts Centre are then more easily able to engage in dialogue about how to make improvements by making the organisation part of the conversation that families are having.

An approach like this takes some time but minimal resources. It is led by Johnathan Branson, the Audience Development and Digital Communities Officer. Johnathan had previous experience involving families in cultural planning, but acknowledged that only recently have people started to realise that families can help shape and develop content guidance, rather than just focus on the practicalities. In doing so they have become aware of the language and themes which families prefer and also have clarity about how to describe things simply and quickly.

What we learnt

1. Family involvement takes time and commitment. If you are going to involve families in developing content guidance then they need training and support in order to do this and feel valued. Gaining their commitment and trust takes time, so if you want to develop a sustainable approach then it is important to plan for the long term and think about family involvement in all aspects of your decision making.

2. Families really liked being asked to be reviewers and this could be something, which could be more easily implemented. Families like seeing opportunities to contribute their reviews and feedback for family arts events. Parents and carers mentioned that motivational offers, ranging from the opportunity to be in a competition if you submit a review to holding special events for contributors, helped encourage participation. As did any opportunities to link reviewing to wider educational goals and learning.



Section 4.

Making it part of the creative experience

Our research has led us to believe that a great family arts experience can start with the content guidance. Content guidance helps people decide whether they will participate but it also helps influence how families engage and participate in the event itself.. It's the first chapter, first scene, the opening activity... that is why it is important to get it right!

Create a sense of excitement

Families feel like they can get their money's worth if they have an opportunity to use content information to help build up the excitement before the event. It is worth thinking about what the package of information is that families can obtain about the content of the event. Once you have told them the basics... what comes next?

Have fun with this... families want the independence to choose what information they need. Families look for information, which matches their interests – images, interviews, audio, reviews, events, any related games and activities. Families want to be directed towards accessible and consistent information.

Keep it varied

Families generally felt that after making a commitment to participating in the family arts event they would decide for themselves if they want to know exactly what will happen or whether they want a surprise. However, families do not always know what they need to prepare them – so you need to provide some interesting options.

It's worth bearing in mind that care professionals, who may be working and attending with families, said they appreciate any information which can serve as a briefing, giving the 'heads-up' about what to discuss with the people they are bringing. So don't be afraid of making clear information available to this group of participants.

Don't be scared of trying to visually capture the essence of the experience in any content guidance. The colours, the tone, the visuals need to reflect the experience itself. The form or presentation of any content guidance should reflect the creativity of the family arts event. Obviously certain images, fonts, presentational styles signify 'family friendly' but if these misrepresent the style or tone of the family arts event, then families would rather things reflected the style of the event. This can add to the fun and intrigue! It also helps families who regularly attend family arts events, as it helps them select and make choices about what they will do.

Moving On

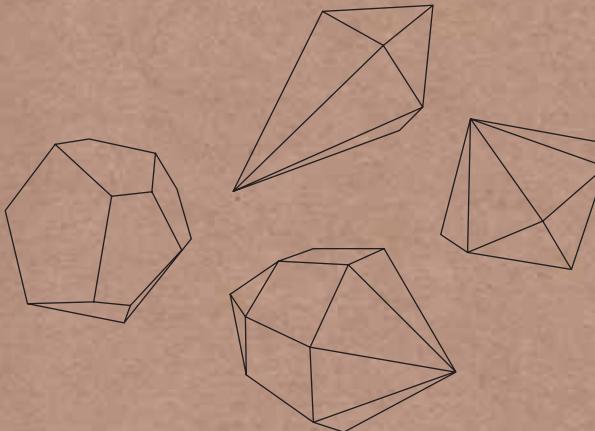
Our research showed us that families were expecting good quality content guidance and that there are some really interesting and innovative ways of doing this. But what we realised was that very few organisations were talking to families about what they were doing in this area, nor are there many opportunities for people working in the family arts sector to see how different people have developed approaches to content guidance.

There is work we can do within the arts. For example, rather than struggling to adapt inefficient copy, if we are going to improve at developing content guidance then we really need to find time to collate and share relevant information and experiment with new techniques and approaches.

You can involve families in this process. We learned how important it is to listen and observe how families are making choices about family arts events. We frequently heard people working in the arts learning from hindsight and especially from evaluation. It is really important to learn from these occasions, especially those moments when families are less happy, a bit confused or quite frankly, not turning up. You may disagree with their reasons for this, but it is at these times when the greatest learning can happen.

Families have trust in the creative sector. We also know there are families out there who are prepared to comment, discuss and challenge our ideas about what content guidance can and could be. Families want a great experience so do not be afraid to take them on the journey with you.

Families like knowing about the arts, the arts like talking about themselves... it is a perfect partnership – we just need to make it happen!



To sum up

1. Give families the basic facts about what you are offering them.
2. Provide guidance to help families assess whether it is suitable for them.
3. Use storytelling to describe the experience.
4. Make content guidance the start of the family arts experience.



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