

Families matter

The Family Arts Campaign was established in 2012 with Arts Council England's support to help connect more families with arts and culture across the UK. Campaign Manager **Jenny Daly** shares key learnings and best practice that the Campaign has learned over the past four years.

So why do families matter? Last year our evaluation¹ of the first three years of the Campaign was published and of participating organisations surveyed: 61% reported an increase in artistic work targeted at families; 33% reported an increase in earned income from family audiences and 59% reported an increase in average attendance/participation overall.

This tells us unequivocally that family work is not just a feel-good add-on. Prioritising families contributes significantly to the organisation's bottom-line while getting to the heart of diverse and inclusive provision. Work with families is cited as central to arts organisations' aspirations to provide public value or fulfil their charitable mission, but many also recognise that getting their family offer right makes clear business sense.

It's also become apparent that motivations are less about galvanising the audience of the future than dealing with the audience of now. There's immediate opportunity to engage today's different generations to experience culture side-by-side — an end in itself, not a means to an end.

Defining family

We continue to challenge misconceptions around the shape of the family — it is not just about children, or parents and children. Family encompasses every possible configuration of different generations experiencing culture together — teens, early years, carers, parents, older people. Making your offer appealing and accessible to different generations without making assumptions that may alienate some families is crucial.

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We're not calling for seismic organisational shifts in providing well for families. Indeed, we've learned that it's often the simple things that decide whether or not families will attend: is there parking space nearby? Are events programmed at practical times of the day? Is pricing and age suitability of events clearly signalled? Is it easy for families to find out about what's on offer...?

Our Standards² codify ideal practice for arts organisations to assess how well they're doing and reflect on where improvements can be made. Our evidence shows that this quality assurance mark is valued by families, with a strong correlation between organisations promoting the Standards and an increase in family visitors.

In terms of artistic quality, unhelpful perceptions still abound that hinder the development and commissioning of work for families. Impressions that family work represents a compromise in quality — that it's safe, unchallenging, dumbed-down — where we have often found the opposite to be the case. Great family work, as demonstrated not least by winners of our Family Arts Festival Awards³, is increasingly challenging and inspiring, striking a chord with young and old alike.

The issue of price is important and we absolutely endorse the case for affordable provision for all. However, family offerings needn't always be cheap or free. Our work on *Pricing Family Events*⁴ with Baker Richards calls for arts organisations to "create and communicate value" to families before even thinking about setting prices.



→ Key learnings

— Collaboration is key

The Family Arts Campaign straddles umbrella bodies across the arts sector and the UK. We've seen the erosion of unnecessary divisions, with proof that the same strategies to engage families can work for different art forms and demographics. Most importantly, the creation of a unified voice across the sector to advocate for families has been a game changer. The collaborative approach functions extremely effectively at regional level, where our Family Arts Networks⁵ provide a joined-up approach to growing their local family audiences.

— Organisational buy-in

We also see that more is achieved and sustained with an integrated approach to family work within organisations. Families are moving up the agenda and achieving whole-organisational buy-in, as opposed to remaining the sole responsibility of the education team or the marketing department. A great family offer involves many different departments in the organisation working together, with priorities set and supported from the top.

— Innovation

We're also celebrating increased openness to innovation— many arts organisations report trying something new as a result of engaging with the Family Arts Campaign and making changes to their approach in welcoming families. These changes are reflected through programming, pricing and marketing strategies, venue presentation and use of space, introduction of relaxed performances as well as sparking

new collaborations in the sector and in their communities.

— Be consistent

What's also crucial is continuity and consistency. Families aren't just for Christmas — there's a demand and need for programming throughout the year. We know that getting families through the door can be a hurdle, but sustaining family visits is often more manageable than starting from scratch every year to re-engage these audiences.

— Clarity on content

Remember, families don't always appreciate surprises — clarity on content is key. Our *Content Guidance* resource⁶ commissioned from Staffordshire University offers practical guidance on content. It helps organisations to think about how they frame their offer, reassuring families about what to expect in attending arts events and signifying suitability to help them make the right choices.

What is the future?

There is greater opportunity for families to articulate their own needs. We are very interested in supporting a family voice that represents the priorities of a diverse range of families and we'll continue to work with our partners the Family and Childcare Trust to achieve this.

This means engaging older generations within the family context

Now we're in no doubt about the level of demand, there is certainly a need for better provision to promote family activities taking place throughout the year. We're also turning our attention to

engaging the full spectrum of the family audience and doing more to halt the drop-off in arts engagement in older age. This means engaging older generations within the family context — not only in health and social care environments, but using culture to provide opportunities to help build stronger bonds between generations.

There is also a need to make high quality work for families more visible and accessible to those seeking to programme it. Development, brokerage and mobility of artistic work designed for families is a priority — including supporting touring of family work from outside of the UK. ✓

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AMA partners with the Family Arts Campaign

The AMA are new partners of the Family Arts Campaign, the UK's largest initiative to connect families with arts and culture.

Family Arts Campaign

The Family Arts Campaign is supported by Arts Council England and the AMA joins 10 partner organisations spanning the cultural sector.

The Campaign focuses on three main areas of work:

- Increasing the amount and range of high-quality content available to families.
- Increasing the quality of experience.
- Improving marketing to families.

Get involved

Get involved in the national Get Creative Family Arts Festival:
familyartsfestival.com

Sign your organisation up to the Family Arts Standards to show your commitment to welcoming families:
familyarts.co.uk/family-arts-standards

Join your local Family Arts Network
familyarts.co.uk/networks

Sign-up to the Family Arts Campaign's e-newsletter:
familyarts.co.uk

Family Arts Conference 2017

Wednesday 15 March 2017,
St George's Bristol.

A major cross-art form event exploring age, diversity and inclusion in family arts.

familyarts.co.uk/conference



The Family Arts Campaign works via a consortium of representative bodies consisting of:



References

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2. familyarts.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Family-Arts-Standards-2014.pdf
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4. *Pricing Family Events: Guidance for Arts Organisations* — Baker Richards for the Family Arts Campaign, 2015: familyarts.co.uk/resources/toolkits/pricing-family-events
5. familyarts.co.uk/networks
6. *Content Guidance Communication for Family Arts Events* — Creative Communities Unit, Staffordshire University, 2013: familyarts.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Content-Guidance.pdf