

Building a Learning Legacy

Advice Notes: Family Learning

Families are a key visitor group for museums and other heritage organisations. Engaging them in a meaningful way will enhance their enjoyment of a visit to your organisation. These notes will help you understand who “families” are and will provide some basic guidance on how to start planning family learning.

What is a “family”?

A “family” is defined as any adult and child or any group of people of different generations accompanied by at least one child, excluding schools or all adult groups.

What do families want from museums?

In order to meet families’ needs, museums need to provide the following:

- Fun
- A bonding experience
- An opportunity to be sociable
- Friendly and knowledgeable staff
- Space to move
- Noise tolerance
- Learning materials for adults to use with children
- Things to do, to touch and to draw
- Something to take home

Museums need to make sure that they don’t push parents out and that they know what families want to learn.

Planning family learning

Key features of family learning activities:

- Something to involve everyone – i.e. dressing up in all sizes - alongside a portrait exhibition
- Activities where the children need the help of the adults
- Workshops for the whole family where children can help the adults to see things in a different light
- Something to make and take
- Something to do at home that follows on – i.e. a take home booklet with a recipe to make together

Funding:

Enhancing your provision for families is not always cheap. But there are ways of keeping the costs down or finding supplementary funding which will enable you to develop your offer.

You can apply for external funding from local authorities or charitable trusts or you might try attracting sponsorship from local business or local branches of nationals, e.g. banks and supermarkets.

You could also consider asking for donations or contributions towards the cost of materials or to reduce entrance fees for visitors in order to attract more people.

On a practical level, you can save money by locating learning resources in cheaper shops such as poundshops, asking for discounts and freebies on purchases and by opting for materials that are sustainable and can be used again and again.

Finally, you should consider using volunteers in the development and delivery of learning.

For further guidance and resources on working with families go to www.kidsinmuseums.org.uk