



## ***Rocky road to chocolate fudge cake - Kate Fellows***

“Hello,

I’m Kate Fellows, Head of Learning and Access at Leeds Museums and Galleries, welcome to my kitchen! I’d like to talk to you about two topics close to my heart - early years and cake. I have 2 cakes here – rocky road and chocolate fudge cake. I’m going to use these to talk about arts, culture, early years and Leeds.

So, let’s look at the fudge cake. It has the cake. It has icing, and, (as all good cakes should) it has sprinkles. As museum professionals, we often appear as sprinkles (a few family activities, a bit of cutting and sticking), but by working with other agencies to provide wrap around support, we can be the icing; and by working with families, we can help bake a better cake.

What does baking a better cake for everyone look like? How can you create better life outcomes for all the children within a city or an area, starting with the very youngest? First, start with what make recipe you have at the moment. So, here’s some facts and figures for you.....

In 2018, The Sutton Trust estimated that ‘parenting and the home learning environment accounted for half of the 11-month development gap at age five between those from the lowest income families and those from middle-income homes’. In Leeds, only 66% of children from low income families achieve a ‘good level of development’ by the end of Early Years Foundation Stage. This story is borne out across the north of England through the Children’s Commissioner’s *Growing up North* report. This is the lived reality of many families in Leeds. This is their cake.

It is a knotty, rocky road of a cake. At least we have the data to show what kind of cake it is. In your area, do you know what your cake looks like? Where do you sit in the patisserie window of comparable cakes across the country? Rocky road is ok, but given the choice, wouldn’t you rather have a chocolate fudge cake? Our challenge is how to make a fudge cake for everyone and improve outcomes for children in the city using culture as a catalyst.

So, how do we do that?

**One.** There is a strategic level. Leeds wants to be a UNESCO Child Friendly City. It’s about building a better world for our children, a more socially, culturally and economically successful city for the future. This carries through into the Children and Young People’s Plan for the city. The plan strategically guides all work with children and young people in the city. As an arts and cultural sector organisation, and part of the local authority, we were part of the consultative process for its development along with children and other support organisations working with children. The plan sets out the ethos of making connections, valuing families, working through restorative practice, listening and acting with, not for.

How? Work closely with Children’s Services

**Two.** There are partnerships at all levels. Build personal relationships with other professionals and it works great, until one of you leaves

How? Signpost. We have accompanied under-fives social work visits in Artspace in Leeds Art Gallery

**Three.** There is advocacy. We know engagement in arts and culture changes lives. As museum learning professionals, we know that anecdotally through our practice and by that feeling we get when something awesome has happened.

How? Work with others, stronger together across artforms. Research.

**Four.** Use an ABCD approach. LS14. Abbey House

The best cakes work when all the partner ingredients come together beautifully. Every family recipe will be different. The cakes for families in Leeds are improving. It will take time (and baking practice) to get the balance of the ingredients right.”