

Working With Under 5s

Templates for

*Treasures for Toddlers as piloted at the
Holburne Museum of Art*

*Storytelling as piloted at the
Bowes Museum and The Wallace
Collection.*

*Mums and Newborns as piloted at
The Wallace Collection*

Working with Under 5s

Introduction

Under 5s have been identified as 'non-visitors' / 'hard to reach group' by all five museums.

These templates have been designed as an aid to be used when working with new audiences. It has been envisioned that each museum will pilot their under 5s project with a pre-established group before moving in to running a drop-in under 5s programme.

The majority of the parents that came along to the sessions had never visited the museum before and were surprised that you could a) visit a museum with your child and b) that museums offer creative activities for young people.

The three templates cover *Treasures for Toddlers* as piloted at the Holburne Museum of Art, *Under 5s Storytelling* at the Bowes Museum and at the Wallace Collection and *Mums and Newborns* at the Wallace Collection.

Aims and Objectives of Working with Under 5s:

- To engage rurally isolated and/or economically deprived young families in creative activities.
- To encourage interaction and enduring relationships between parents/carers and children within and beyond the sessions.
- To explore the use of Museum Network collections with parents/carers and young children.
- To raise the profile of the partner museums in the local area.
- To support the aims and objectives of the Museum Network and the partner museum.
- To support the Early Years Foundation Stage *Close Encounters with Culture* and *Every Child Matters*.

Key Considerations

There are a few points which must be considered when working with under 5s.

Questions	Check
Can buggies access the site and specified rooms?	
Have you timed your workshops around school runs/ feeding/ nap times?	
Is the activity room warm, welcoming and clean?	
Does your activity cater to different learning types?	
Are your activities varied and adaptable?	
Have you asked the local nursery what they have already done with the children?	
Are there any ESOL parents/ children in the group?	
If you provide food have you checked dietary requirements?	
Does your museum have a breast feeding policy?	
Do you have feeding and changing facilities?	
Do you have mats that babies can lie on, on the floor?	
How many people can you accommodate?	
Have you covered all sockets with socket covers?	
Does your group meet your target demographic?	
If offsite, can you provide images of the museum and reproductions?	
If offsite, does the location have all of the required facilities?	
Can you support your themes with a handling collection?	
Have you organised photographic release forms?	
Does your evaluation cover what you wish to find out?	
Do you need to provide a risk assessment?	
Does your freelance educator have public liability insurance and CRB check?	

Making Contacts

- You must make sure that the group you approach fits the demographic that you are want to work with.
- A quick search on your local council website will point you towards SureStart/ Children's Centre groups, mums and tots groups and village halls that run family programmes. You might also want to contact your local council Early Years Coordinator.

- When approaching your group be clear about costs, dates, timings and any commitments that they will need to make.
- The pilots have shown that parents can initially have reservations about new sessions, so it's worth meeting the group leader to discuss the workshops in person, and if possible introduce yourself to the group.
- Try to organise the sessions at a convenient time, e.g. fit the sessions around their regular nap times, make sure that the sessions are held on the same day at the same time.
- Organise three to six initial sessions to allow you to assess how successful the programme is.

Developing Your Sessions

- Before you begin developing your sessions consider your own collections and how an under 5 programme will run e.g. will it be onsite or offsite?
- Themed sessions are essential, as they provide a focus for the group and allow you to select appropriate collection items.
- Work closely with the person delivering the session to develop the workshop at an early stage.
- Discuss with the group leader the topics that have been looked at before, to make sure that your sessions are different.
- If you are not confident organising your own session, you could offer to host a pre-established session which is already run at your local Children's Centre.
- The pilot has shown that 1 ½ hour sessions provide the optimum amount of time for workshops. For storytelling 30 minutes is the maximum length of time that would be recommended for a session.
- If you are going to take photographs during the session, ask the parents to sign in and provide a photograph release form at this point.
- Make sure that the venue looks welcoming upon arrival.

Template One: Treasures for Toddlers

This highly successful programme was piloted at the Holburne Museum of Art [HM] and ran for four sessions.

The aim of this project was engage with rurally isolated families in the Norton-Radstock area, and to enhance the Museum's profile during renovation work. HM wanted to work with parents and toddlers, to encourage family learning and play. HM formed partnerships with local nurseries/ parent and toddler groups in the local area and delivered sessions which were themed around the collection.

The following themes were developed for the sessions:

- o Me by Me (self-portraiture); Gorgeous Stuff (materials); Over and Over Again (printing); Treasure Boxes.
- o Session activities might include making frames with pasta and paint, photography, clay work, painting, decorating masks or other craft sessions.

The sessions took the following format which worked well:

Activity	Timings (mins)
Arrival and settling in	15
Story using collection items	10
Art activities	40
Break	15
Singalong	10

Template Two: Storytelling

Two storytelling sessions were developed in 2008/2009 for the Museum Network: Nineteenth Century Christmas Stories at The Wallace Collection and Celebration Stories for the Story Tree project at The Bowes Museum.

Both sessions were well received and a similar format will work at any museum.

Storytellers who had experience of working within museums and using museum collections were contacted through *A Bit Crack* and *The Whole Story*.

The stories at the Wallace were developed around the collection, and drew upon pre-established stories as well as stories created for the day which drew upon specific collection items and the building itself. This resulted in the children linking the stories to the collection and building, rather than just dislocated stories. Similarly, the sessions at the Bowes were created around the Story Tree, its setting and the collection items carved onto the tree.

For indoor storytelling a safe, warm and welcoming room was provided. Families gathered on the floor on a rug and chairs were provided for less able-bodied visitors.

The story sessions lasted for around 30 minutes and were divided up into smaller stories to keep the children's attention. Similarly audience participation was encouraged through song and the use of props like hats and handling collections.

The sessions took the following format which worked well:

Activity	Timing (mins)
Arrival and settle in	5 mins
Story of how Josh arrived at the Museum with a nineteenth century twist	10 mins
Twas the Night Before Christmas	5 mins
Song/ Carol to finish	5 mins
Goodbye/finish	5 mins

Template Three: Mums and Newborns

This workshop was devised as a means of providing new mothers with a safe, welcoming and stimulating environment for themselves and their babies as it had been identified that within the culture sector there was not a lot on offer for mothers and newborns.

Mothers were encouraged to bring along their children, aged 0 to 12 months, to meet new people and take part in fun activities in the galleries for 1 ½ hours. The mothers were invited to two workshops which followed themes such as portraits, animals, shapes and textures. The sessions were designed to either stimulate the child, for example through colour/light/feel or to stimulate the mothers through gallery tours and collection based activities.

The mothers were encouraged to bring their babies in slings and papooses to allow them freer movement in the galleries. The sessions were delivered around feeding, nap and school times to make sure that the mothers could attend and were not feeling pressured by time restrictions.

The following format was used and worked well:

Activity	Timings (mins)
Arrive, tea and coffee	20 mins
Gallery activities	50 mins
Arrive, tea and coffee	20 mins

Useful Under 5s Contacts

The following are useful contact that can be found in most areas:

- Your local Council will have an Early Year co-ordinator and lists of preschools, nurseries and toddler groups
- Family Information Services (council)
- SureStart/ Children's Centre/ Children's Centres
- National Childbirth Trust (mums and newborns)
- Local church and village hall groups (mums and newborns)

Useful Publications and Websites

- Early Years Foundation Stage <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/eyfs/>
- ACORN: Postcode analysis showing affluence, resident types, C2DE groups <http://www.caci.co.uk/acorn/>
- Under 5s website has lots of activity ideas <http://www.underfives.co.uk/>
- A Bit Crack storytellers: storytellers across the North East <http://www.abitcrack.com/>
- The Whole Story: storytellers who specialise in working with museums <http://www.thewholestory.org.uk/>
- Society for Storytelling: storyteller index <http://www.sfs.org.uk/>