



# Marketing to the parents and carers of under 5s

**This document includes ideas and tips relating to marketing events and other activities targeted at families with under 5s.**

## 1. KNOW YOUR AUDIENCES AND HOW TO CONNECT WITH THEM

### **Think about the audience**

Recognise that under 5s are a special interest group with distinct needs, expectations and motivations that may be different from older families or adult audiences.

At the Museum of London, we use our own audience segmentation to help us identify the needs of different types of visitors. By understanding what the parents and carers of under 5s are looking for from a visit, we make sure we highlight these offers in our marketing materials.

Most families share a similar set of needs. There will be practical issues they need to think about before visiting, for example whether your activity fits in with their plans for the rest of the day, and whether your venue can accommodate lunch and/or breastfeeding. However, there are other motivational factors that vary between different parents and carers. Some families may solely want a visit to entertain their children, whereas others might be more concerned about how the activities will support their children's learning. Think about what your event or activity offers and focus on reaching the specific types of families that this will interest. You can then tailor your marketing approach to reach and appeal to the right people.

### **Use accessible, engaging language**

Don't assume that everybody understands the language used in your organisation. Use simple, engaging language that highlights your key selling points.

For example, when we want to summarise our under 5s activities, we may use a sentence such as 'play and learn together at our free, specially-designed toddlers and babies groups'. This sentence makes the target audience clear and gives a sense of what they will do at our activities. One of the key selling points for our events is that parents and carers actively take part in the activities with their children, and so we highlight this by saying 'play and learn together'.

Parents and carers like free activities and so highlighting that there is no cost to the sessions removes a possible barrier to taking part.

It is helpful to summarise your offer in a key sentence to capture the reader's attention. Once you have summarised your offer you can then expand and give more detail.

Make your copy engaging by using active language such as 'explore', 'visit' and 'learn'. These words encourage the reader to think about what they can do or experience at your activity or event.

## **Highlight the benefits of your offer**

Don't just explain what will happen during a visit or session but also explain the wider benefits of attending. We know that many parents and carers are new to these types of sessions and although they are looking for something to do, they might be unsure about exactly what. By highlighting the benefits, we can help them make better informed decisions.

Parents and carers may be enticed by:

- activities that encourage their child's development
- sessions that develop a particular skill, eg motor skills, language or hand-eye coordination
- the opportunity to socialise with other parents and carers
- activities that are enjoyable for both the adult and child.

## **Highlight the facilities you have**

Taking a young child on an outing can involve a lot of planning and there are many practical considerations that parents and carers might worry about when choosing to attend an activity or event. Tell them what facilities you have that can help them enjoy a stress free visit.

If you have them, highlight buggy access/parking, lifts, baby-changing facilities, places to sit down, and any additional facilities such as milk-warming stations, offers in nearby cafes/restaurants and being breast-feeding friendly. Not only do these facilities reassure a parent or carer that you can cater for their needs practically, but it also shows that you value this audience and want to create a welcoming environment for them. This can also help build your reputation and brand.

Travelling with under 5s can be a challenge so highlight parking, if you have any, and the easiest (step-free) public transport routes.

## **Carry out audience research**

Get feedback on your sessions. Find out what your audience is looking for and how you can improve your offer. You can also discover how your visitors found out about your activities. If you don't have budget to commission external research, you can design your own questionnaire or speak to parents or carers after your sessions. You could create a consultation group of regular families who visit with under 5s and invite them in for chats and to feedback on sessions. If you can, try to provide incentives, such as refreshments or vouchers, or if your sessions are charged for, a free session. Read our evaluation document in the toolkit for more detail or look at examples of the Museum of London's questionnaires in the resources section.

## 2. WAYS TO PROMOTE YOUR EVENTS FOR FREE OR WITH LIMITED BUDGET

### Listings

Make sure you take full advantage of free listings in local publications and family websites to reach parents or carers who are actively searching for things to do with their children. In particular you may want to prioritise publications which are distributed free of charge at local venues such as libraries and children's centres or at school fairs or other family friendly events, as well as popular listings websites such as Netmums and apps such as Hoop.

Research the free listing sites and publications that highlight activities in your area. Try searching online for local events for toddlers and babies, note what websites come up and then see if you can get listed on these sites for free.

Visit your local libraries and community centres to see what flyers and leaflets they give out and then contact them to see if your event can be included in these publications. If your time and resources are limited, you can use Google Analytics to see which websites customers are visiting before clicking through to your website. This will help you work out which websites to focus uploading your listings onto. There is more detail about Google Analytics later in this guide.

### Email and website

Developing specific under 5s and family email databases will help ensure you're promoting your activities to the right people rather than sending irrelevant content to all your subscribers.

If you don't have a database already, you could look to build one. Drive email sign ups on your website and, if you already have a general list, send an email asking people if they would like to hear about events specifically for under 5s. When families attend our bookable baby and toddler sessions for the first time, we ask whether they would like to sign up to our under 5s mail outs. Make sure you always follow data protection legislation and guidance when asking customers for their personal data.

As well as email marketing, think about how you can incorporate your under 5s activity on your website. Can you group all the activities in one place using a filtering system to make it easy for your potential visitors to find the right content? Don't forget to highlight any practical visiting information that will help parents or carers to make the decision to attend, eg how easy it is to get to your venue with a buggy.

You should also make sure your website uses keywords that users might be searching for online (this is called optimisation). For example, if your offer is a family-friendly café you should make sure that these terms feature in your titles or main text. Google looks for key words used on your site to decide how high to list your event when people search for certain terms. There are lots of other ways you can look to improve your search engine optimisation. There are guides online that can help you make it easier for potential visitors to discover you.

### Promotions and partnerships

Promotions and partnerships with other organisations can help you grow your audience and are a great way to promote your events when you have a minimal budget.

You could look to hold joint activities or promote each other in your marketing materials. You could also look to arrange reciprocal discounts or reward loyalty by offering added value to customers attending your sessions. For example, why not team up with a family-friendly café and see if they could offer a coffee deal for parents and carers who have attended your activities?

Providing discounts for paid events or facilities are great ways of measuring success and can help focus your marketing. We have a loyalty card in our café as we know that many families are repeat visitors and often combine a visit with a coffee break.

## **Influencers**

Building relationships with bloggers and social media influencers can prove a great way to raise your profile with targeted audiences. Invite them to experience your events with their children and offer them something personal such as a curated tour, as well as refreshments and perhaps a goodie bag for the children to make their visit extra special. If you do decide to use this tactic, then make sure you adhere to Advertising Standards Authority guidance on influencer marketing at all times.

## **3. PAID FOR ADVERTISING**

If you have budget to pay for advertisement, think about where you would expect to find your target audience or what they might be reading. Paid for social media advertising, for example Facebook, is a cost effective way to target a very specific demographic and doesn't require a substantial budget. You can create a business account on Facebook and start creating adverts. You can set the budget yourself and see how many people you will reach with that budget. You can also choose who will see your advert based on their age, location and what they are interested in. Facebook's website also contains information about how to create good adverts.

If you run any digital advertising, for example an advert on a website targeting families, track your activity so you know what works and can optimise your campaign accordingly. Create a free account with Google and use Google Analytics to find out which webpages people have visited immediately before coming to your site (this is called referrals), then follow their behaviour on your site to see if they are buying tickets (called conversions). This gives you insight into whether your adverts are working. You can find lots of guides online explaining how to use Google Analytics.

At the Museum of London we take a very local approach to marketing our under 5s programme. We have noticed that many of those attending our sessions don't travel far and many live locally - this is understandable as travelling with young children can be difficult. We use a combination of paid for social media and print distribution to reach parents and carers in areas with good transport links to our museums. You might want to consider creating bespoke print for your under 5s programme to distribute at soft play centres, family attractions, libraries, local parent groups or meet ups, or family-friendly cafés/restaurants. If you can't afford to pay for print distribution, approach local organisations and groups directly and see if they would be happy to display your flyers or posters.

# Early Years toolkit

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If you decide to make flyers, try to include an engaging image. Photography from your event is a useful way to further demonstrate to parents and carers what they can expect. Make sure the dates and times of your activity are clearly listed and use simple, engaging language. Make sure you include information about the booking process, a call to action and a website link, telephone number or email address, so interested families can obtain more information.