



Highlands & Islands Audience Development **CONFERENCE NOTES**

**AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE
18TH MARCH 2005, INVERNESS**

**BREAKOUT SESSION:
THE FAMILY FRIENDLY INITIATIVE
WORKSHOP LEAD BY ALICE McGRATH, DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR FOR IMAGINATE**

The Family Friendly Initiative supports and encourages arts venues throughout Scotland to be more child and family friendly through training, information materials and networking opportunities.

Children must be considered in the larger scheme of things and their needs and desires should be met. This can only be achieved through commitment - commitment from parents and commitment from providers.

It was agreed that a change in ethos is necessary to begin the process of better inclusion, and that we must adapt to existing situations, through training and the use of case studies.

Audience development as a whole should aim to be family friendly and this in turn will have two benefits to both organisations and families. But how do we achieve this,

1. Conduct an audit, looking at the strengths and weakness of an organisation. This will include aspects such as programming, marketing, environment, catering, policies and customer care.
2. Consult with staff and gain from their experiences.
3. Consult with audiences

Then draw up an Action Plan for the organisation. More information on this can be found on the Imagine website. www.imagine.org.uk

Discussion followed on the problems of incorporating a family friendly approach to decision making. These include:

- Not enough product information
- Lack of venues
- Lack of funding and consciousness
- How much to charge
- Audience attitudes

- Who pays?
- Targeting
- How to integrate with core activities
- Development of audience
- Cost
- Travel
- Need to promote for families rather than just children

Solutions:

- Need for better venues
- Sharing of experiences
- Communication with families
- Flexible approach
- Explore barriers
- Talk families language
- Customer care and merchandising essential (good idea to let people leave with something to enhance the experience)

Ideas:

- Have a family friendly week
- Have children actively involved in the design of new buildings and venues. Need to look at Social architecture in planning to ensure venues are user friendly.
- Produce family friendly guidelines, what makes a venue family friendly, looking at all aspects.

It is hoped that a seminar will be delivered by the *Family Friendly Initiative* later in the year. This seminar may tie on with another event, but it would be beneficial to build on existing momentum.