

FAMILY TICKET WATCH



We listened to 500 families and consulted 120 museums and galleries. Look inside to find out what they said, and for guidelines on how to work towards a Flexible Family Ticket.

Working towards a Flexible Family Ticket

Kids in Museums is a visitor-led organisation, working with museums to make them more welcoming of all families. Families were telling us, through the Kids in Museums Manifesto 2010, that they struggled to get a family ticket – because their family didn't fit the standard two plus two.

Families weren't only asking for the tickets to be flexible. Often a museum's activities, workshops, events and facilities made it difficult for those families who don't fit.

So Kids in Museums launched Family Ticket Watch, with support from the Department for Education, to ensure families of all shapes and sizes feel welcome in museums and galleries.

We talked to families, to museums and to other visitor attractions about their current family offer. We wanted to find a flexible ticket format which would work for families and for museums.



Over **500**
families told us what
they thought.

Point 2 on the Kids in Museums Manifesto 2010 says:

2 Have flexible family tickets. Don't dictate the size of a family. Families come in all shapes and sizes.

To see all 20 points of the Kids in Museums Manifesto 2010, download a copy from www.kidsinmuseums.org.uk or email manifesto@kidsinmuseums.org.uk

FAMILIES

We asked families three things:

- WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR EXPERIENCE OF A FAMILY TICKET?
- DID IT FIT YOUR FAMILY?
- WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE A FAMILY TICKET TO BE?

We worked with a wide range of organisations. We ran a competition with the Daily Mirror. The launch received extensive media coverage in national newspapers, on radio and in local broadcast and print media.

We also focused on the East of England to gather in-depth research. In this area, we joined lots of family groups and activities, and spoke to parents, grandparents and carers to get their views.

OUR SURVEY SAID **1/5**
respondents were positive about family tickets.

“Fantastic, not only a saving but encouraged a family outing and bonding.”

“Always works out more affordable than buying single tickets and has on more than one occasion been the deciding factor on going to certain places. If they don't do family tickets we are less likely to go.”

“It was great we were able to visit the attraction as a complete family and experience the day together.”

“A family ticket should be exactly that – access for all – any family size, any young person in full time education.”

“A ticket that is no fuss, no confusion and allows your family to have a great day out.”

“A family ticket should do what it says on the label – provide for your family, however many children that may be...”

“It has to fit whatever shape the family is. Not everyone shares the same surname or has two children.”

FAMILIES

These are the things families told us were important:

1. Age

Different museums define when a child becomes an adult at different times. Some museums have free entry for children. In others, children as young as 12 have to pay a full adult ticket. But if two 12 year olds wanted to visit the museum on their own, they wouldn't be let in.

OUR SURVEY SAID **1/10**
mentioned their child's age as an important factor.

FAMILY INSIGHT

Louise is married with two girls aged 7 and 12. Louise often has to pay an adult ticket for her 12 year old and feels this is unfair as her daughter is still a child in full time education.

2. Single parents

Although there are some tickets for 'one adult families' most family tickets don't offer good value unless there are two adults. Some museums let two single adult families visiting together access a family ticket, but others have stricter rules.

OUR SURVEY SAID **1/5**
were single parents or visited museums as one adult families – 96% of single parents said current family tickets didn't work for them.

FAMILY FACTS

There are 1.9 million single parent families in Britain. Over 24% of all children live in a single parent family.

"A family ticket should include children up to 16 rather than making them into an adult at sometimes 12 and sometimes 14."

"What really annoys me is that a lot of places count children as adults if they are 12 or over. I think it is unfair to have to pay adult price for a 12 year old."

"It doesn't fit my family. My husband is currently serving in Afghanistan and can't accompany us to any events. It's quite upsetting really to be classed as a non-family when we are involuntarily separated."

"Thank goodness somebody has noticed the outdated family ticket model! Not only does it cost more, but it screams 'You are not normal' at single parent families and yet there are millions and millions of us."

"'Proper' families with two parents and two or three youngsters pay less per head than a single parent struggling on a lone income with a couple of kids. It seems remarkably unfair."

3. Extended family and friends

Many families mentioned visiting with grandparents, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews. Yet we have only come across one museum which has a specific grandparent based family ticket.

OUR SURVEY SAID **1/4**
like to visit museums and galleries with a grandparent.

FAMILY FACT

One in three families depend on grandparents for childcare.

FAMILY INSIGHT

Lorna is a foster carer and a mum of two. She usually cares for children on a short term basis so her family size is constantly changing. She frequently has more than the standard two children allowed on a family ticket. To help with the foster children on a day out, Lorna visits with a friend. She finds that most family tickets expect the two adults to be husband and wife and aren't always flexible enough to accommodate her family.

"Because our eldest child has a disability it would be great to be able to take along one of his older cousins with us to help out, but cost often prohibits this."

"I'm a grandma who likes to take grandchildren on days out. We obviously do not fit the two adult, two children set up, but we're the norm by not being norm!"

"Grandparents and parents should be interchangeable on the ticket as grandparents are so involved these days with looking after the grandchildren."

4. Speak our language

A museum may say family when it doesn't mean our family. If it's called a 'family ticket' it has to fit all families.

OUR SURVEY SAID **2/3**
said their family didn't fit the description on the ticket.

FAMILY FACT

27% of step-families have three or more children, compared with 18% of non step-families.

"Our family comprises of two mummies and our two young boys. In the past we have had to justify our family set-up in order to qualify for family tickets for all types of activities, events and museum entry."

"My family is me and my three and a half year old son. It's the same story with family rooms and family deals at hotels – we could double our family size for no change in the price."

"My husband and I have five children and step children so when we go anywhere we always have to pay for a family ticket plus extras. Of course we want to pay our way, but ticketing could certainly be more flexible."

"It sends a message that you are not a proper family unless you fit the approved model. There are enough ways to feel stigmatised without experiencing it almost every time you go to buy tickets for an event."

MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

We asked over 120 museums and galleries:

- WHAT DO YOU CHARGE AND DO YOU HAVE A FAMILY TICKET?
- HOW YOU DECIDED ON FAMILY TICKET STRUCTURE?
- WHAT WOULDN'T WORK FOR YOUR MUSEUM?

We also talked to 29 museums, galleries and attractions conducting in-depth interviews and gathering information about their ticketing policies. The following museums, galleries and attractions were interviewed:

At-Bristol, Science and Discovery Centre
Bath Postal Museum
Birmingham Botanical Gardens & Glasshouses
Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery
Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives
Design Museum, London
English Heritage
Eureka! The National Children's Museum, Halifax
Fairfax House, York
Fashion Museum, Bath
The Golden Hinde, London
Harewood House, Leeds
Historic Royal Palaces, London
JORVIK Viking Centre, York
Lancashire Museums
Leeds Museums & Galleries
London Eye
London Transport Museum
Museum of East Asian Art, Bath
Natural History Museum, London
National Theatre, London
Quilt Museum and Gallery, York
River and Rowing Museum, Henley on Thames
Royal Armouries Museum, Leeds
Science Museum, London
Tate Modern, London
Thackray Museum, Leeds
Thinktank, Birmingham Science Museum
York Art Gallery

Museums were keen to develop their family ticketing structure but they were unsure about how best to do this. They said they would welcome inspiration, guidelines and advice.

These are the things museums told us were important:

1. Museums rely on ticket sales to generate income. They need to ensure a flexible family ticket doesn't leave them worse off, especially if they have financial targets to meet.

MUSEUM FACT

Over 100,000 people work as volunteers in museums.

"Free admission is not possible because we need to generate income to contribute to running costs." ST. NICHOLAS PRIORY, EXETER

"We have to keep the Museum running as we are independent and rely on our entry price to keep open. We couldn't be a free museum."
MUSEUM OF EAST ANGLIAN LIFE

"Our income targets are the main difficulty, while we want to be welcoming to all we need to control the offer to make sure we're raising income." GLADSTONE POTTERY MUSEUM

"As a charity, paying visitors are an essential part of our income stream. It's difficult to get the balance between making as much income as possible while not pricing ourselves out of the local visitor attraction market."
WWT WASHINGTON WETLAND CENTRE, TYNE & WEAR

2. Museums want to keep it simple. They are worried flexible means complicated, not only for visitors but for the reception team.

MUSEUM FACT

Over 50% of museums charge for entry.

3. Reception teams are central to the communication between museums and visitors. Museums recognise their role in delivering a flexible family ticket, fairly and consistently.

OUR SURVEY SAID **8/10**

museums would like to introduce a Flexible Family Ticket but don't know how.

"Too many different prices causes confusion and extra printing costs." AVON VALLEY RAILWAY

"Complicated structures don't work!" ELY MUSEUM

"You could bog yourself down with too many variations so we keep it simple and hope that we are pleasing most of the people most of the time." BAMBURGH CASTLE, NORTHUMBERLAND

"Keeping it relatively simple but most importantly affordable." SELLY MANOR, BIRMINGHAM

"We need something simple. We are a relatively small museum and don't have many staff so at busy times we need to serve people quickly and efficiently." PORTHCURNO TELEGRAPH MUSEUM

"We have questioned what makes a family as there are endless possibilities and we would be interested in seeing how other museums solve the issue." IRONBRIDGE GORGE MUSEUM TRUST

"Reception staff work out the best deal for the customer which is appreciated." GLADSTONE POTTERY MUSEUM

"We need to make things easy for our volunteer ticket sellers too." CHILTERN OPEN AIR MUSEUM

"Our team likes to be able to show what good value for money we are, so a flexible family ticket that accommodates all visitor requirements is bound to be a winner on both sides of the desk." IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

museums **SAY**

CultureLabel Report

Flexible Family Tickets – Commercial Considerations

The need to generate enough income was naturally a big concern for museums, particularly those which don't receive grant funding. So we asked CultureLabel to look into the commercial viability of family discounted tickets.

Their report shows that discounted tickets for families actually represent a major opportunity for museums to develop new creative business models.

The right commercial models can result in an increase in the number of visitors to the museum as well as an increase in revenue from existing visitors. A win-win situation is possible – the museum earns sufficient income to stay open and many more families can afford to visit, families which can then become life-long supporters, ambassadors and patrons for a museum.

With lots of examples from both inside and beyond the cultural sector, there's no need to reinvent the wheel, just cherry-pick the bits that will work for your museum or gallery.

Download the full report from www.kidsinmuseums.org.uk

CultureLabel is a commercial organisation working with arts organisations to encourage and support cultural entrepreneurship. See www.culturelabel.com

"I had a family ticket for Marsh Farm years ago when we were two parents and two children it saved a lot of money and made us visit more. We still supported the farm by using the café and shop."

Flexible ticket suggestions

Families came up with all kinds of suggestions for Flexible Family Tickets including:

- A set discount off the total cost for individual tickets when visiting with a child
- Different family ticket options for different family sizes
- Family tickets to be valid for a year to allow return visits
- Family tickets to include discounts in the gift shop and café
- The option to add extra children or adults to a standard ticket at a discounted rate
- A small group ticket option which would include friends

"It would be great if there was more flexibility and perhaps a variety of different types of family tickets. A bit like a mix and match style, that way no families would feel they couldn't go."

"Perhaps you could have 'large family' and 'small family' tickets."

"I would like all family tickets to be valid for a year – this is great because kids get bored. We feel like we can relax, enjoy ourselves and not have to cram it all into one day to get our monies worth."

"I would like family tickets to have the option to add extra children at a small surcharge."

"Abolish family tickets and base it on different group sizes."

"I think for many families you should be able to add extra children for a nominal amount."

families **SAY**

Some real-life flexible options

ENGLISH HERITAGE

English Heritage membership has a 'kids go free' policy and can be bought as either an individual adult or joint adults which works for single parents and couples. Each adult can be accompanied by up to six children under the age of 19 within the family group. There are joint senior tickets for grandparents and also a ticket for one adult and one senior for a parent visiting with their mum or dad as well as their children.

RIVER AND ROWING MUSEUM

"As an independent charity we have been as creative as possible with our ticketing. The core offer is to provide free access for a year for the price of a ticket. It has proved to us that the term 'family friendly' for a museum or exhibition is one that is truly 'intergenerational' – it is a joy to see families of all ages, inspired by the museum and interacting and enjoying their time together." *PAUL MAINDS, DIRECTOR*

LANCASHIRE MUSEUMS

Lancashire Museums recognise families as a key audience. Many of the 13 venues in the group had a strong activity offer for families and wanted to adjust the ticketing to specifically attract families. Lancashire Museums are working to improve the whole experience for families but are sure that their Family & Friends Xplorer Ticket, which offers free unlimited return visits to all venues, has helped to make families feel more welcome.

HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES

"Our family visitors are hugely important to us. We're working towards making the whole offer exciting and relevant for all families, from flexible tickets to family activities on site, online activities pre and post visit and kids' meal deals in the restaurants. We still have a way to go but each member of the management team has shadowed a family on a visit, so we know what is important to them." *SANDRA BOTTERELL, HEAD OF MARKETING*

FAMILY AND FRIENDS RAILCARD

Lots of families mentioned the Family & Friends Railcard as an example of something that worked. It costs £26 for the year and any two adults can be named railcard holders. With this railcard you save 1/3 off adult fares, and 60% off child fares (a child is aged between 5 and 15 years). Up to four adults and four children can travel on one card. They don't need to be related, they don't need to be the same people each time. The only condition is that at least one child must be travelling each time.

There may not be a 'one size fits all' solution but many museums and galleries are taking steps towards greater flexibility.

Can you see something that would work for you or do you have any other examples of flexible tickets?

Let us know by emailing familyticket@kidsinmuseums.org.uk

Guidelines for a Flexible Family Ticket

There is no one Flexible Family Ticket but here are our guidelines developed after listening to over 120 museums and over 500 families. This is to help museums and galleries become more welcoming to all families.

GUIDELINES

Shout about it. If you're free, let visitors know – on your website, in your marketing and publicity and at reception. If you have a great Flexible Family Ticket, boast about it. Use it to reach out to families who might not otherwise visit.

Be clear with visitors. Keep your pricing simple – calculating the cost at the door can be a hurdle for families to overcome. Visitors shouldn't have to work out if they count as a family.

Be clear with your staff. Your reception team shouldn't have to decide who does and who doesn't get in on a family ticket. A family ticket isn't a favour; it should be part of your policy to attract and include all families.

Be good value – for all. Think about your pricing from the perspective of different families. Take a look at who you count as a child. Families don't mind paying for a day out, they just want it to be fair.

Get real. Today's families come in all shapes and sizes and may have more than two generations. Family tickets need to reflect this.

Family tickets make a real difference to family visits. **If you can't be free, be flexible!**

To download a full version of these Flexible Family Ticket guidelines go to www.kidsinmuseums.org.uk

To order a free A3 poster of the guidelines to use in your training sessions and other activities, please email familyticket@kidsinmuseums.org.uk

Thank you

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4Children
All About Audiences
Anglo Sikh Heritage Trail
Army Families Federation
Begrant.net
British Association of Friends of Museums
Contact a Family
Culture24
Dad Info
Early Arts
Family and Parenting Institute
Fatherhood Institute
The Fostering Network
Gingerbread
The Grandparents' Association
Grandparents Plus
Havealovelytime.com
Home Start
Ideasforthekids.com
International Longevity Centre
Kids in the Middle
National Childbirth Trust
National Family Week
Netmums
Parenting UK
Parenting Without Tears
Reallykidfriendly.com
Royal Air Force Families Federation
Sure Start Centres
Take the Family
Totsdays.net
Tourism North East
Twinsclub
You've got your hands full

Download copies of the Family Ticket Watch report from www.kidsinmuseums.org.uk or email familyticket@kidsinmuseums.org.uk

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