

50

things to do

before you're  
**five**



Cambridgeshire  
County Council



early years childcare and  
school readiness service

## Using 50 Things to Do Before You're Five in Museums and Galleries

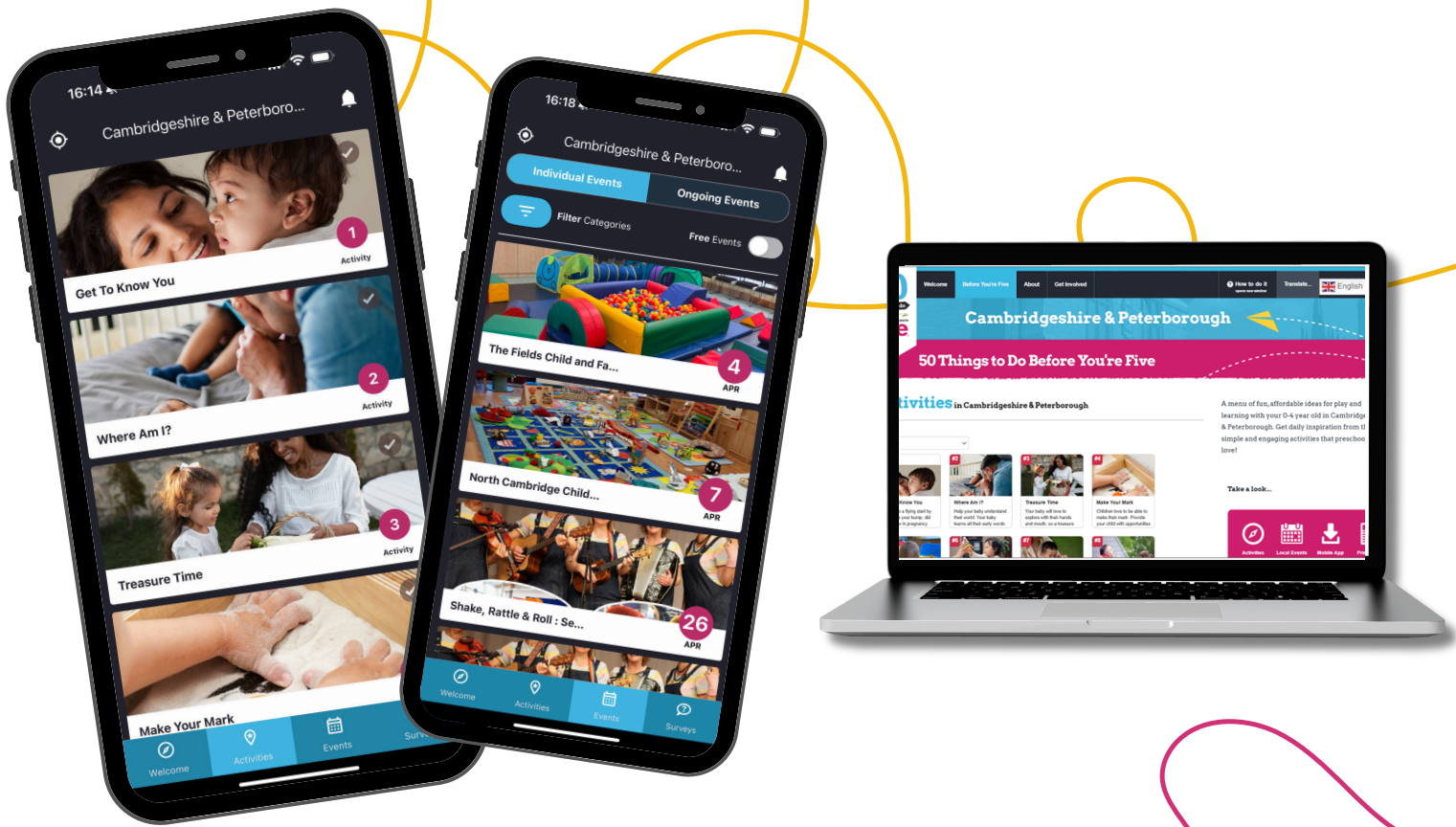


**50 Things to Do Before You're Five** is an exciting initiative full of ideas and activities for parents and families with young children.

**50 Things to Do** includes a suite of localised:

- Activities and events available on an app,
- Website,
- or within promotional materials that can be printed or shared digitally

Our project offers a wide range of activities from outdoor discoveries in the woods, to exploring how sound changes in different places, to sharing stories and water play!



# Why use 50 Things to Do in your venue?

## Engaging with Early Years Audiences

Families with children under five make up a significant number of visitors in many museums (Science Museum Group Journal, 2023, Supporting Young Children's Learning from Science Objects)

**Introducing 50 Things to Do Before You're Five** into your museum programming is an ideal way to increase early years visitor engagement, as well as increase engagement across age groups, including older siblings and adult visitors (family members and practitioners) who accompany your young visitors.



"Museum-going habits that are formed in early childhood can shape how a young child views, supports, and contributes to museums in the future." Why Museums Should Care About Young Children, American Alliance of Museums (2017)

## A full suite of Early Years Activities

50 Things to Do Before You're Five is based on such a simple idea: Fun, low or no-cost experiences for the whole family, indoors and outdoors. It is a free bucket list of 'fun stuff', involving an app, website, printed or digital materials, and a social media campaign. It provides museums with the perfect resource for working with families and enabling parents/carers to feel supported during their visit.

### 50 Things to Do will enable your youngest visitors to:

- **Explore your sites and collections with a sense of awe and wonder**
- **Make connections with their lives outside the home or early years setting**
- **Develop their creativity as they imagine what an object is, does or who it belongs to**
- **Investigate, ask questions and build their communication skills**
- **Feel valued, as you are creating environments that accommodate and celebrate unique abilities and differences**

"Wherever you are on your journey with Early Years Audiences, 50 Things to Do is an ideal tool. You've got a whole wealth of ideas that are tried and tested and are going to work"

**Nicole Wallis**, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

There are many ways you can use 50 Things to Do Before You're Five in your museum. For example, some museums develop family learning activities based on the 50 Things. Other museums create trails signposting where the 50 Things activities can be found on your sites.

Our initiative is underpinned by evidence-informed, impactful pedagogies and parenting approaches, but what your staff and visitors really need to know is that it is full of fun stuff to do with their children! Our focus on families having fun together is a deliberate approach, promoting an inclusive, non-judgmental way for parents to engage fully with their children.

# Why use 50 Things in your venue?

## Promoting Effective Practice

“The cognitive and social development of children under five is enhanced by engaging in creative and playful interactions with their parents and caregivers, and an enriching home learning environment. Museums and cultural organisations - with their inspiring spaces and collections, expert learning teams and access to artists, performers and makers - are well placed to engage families in creative and playful activities that build parenting skills and underpin key areas of child development.” (Nesta, 2024)

Supporting parents and families through playful museum interventions)



The 50 Things to Do Before You're Five activities have been developed to support all aspects of child development.

They also promote the Characteristics of Effective Learning for young children:

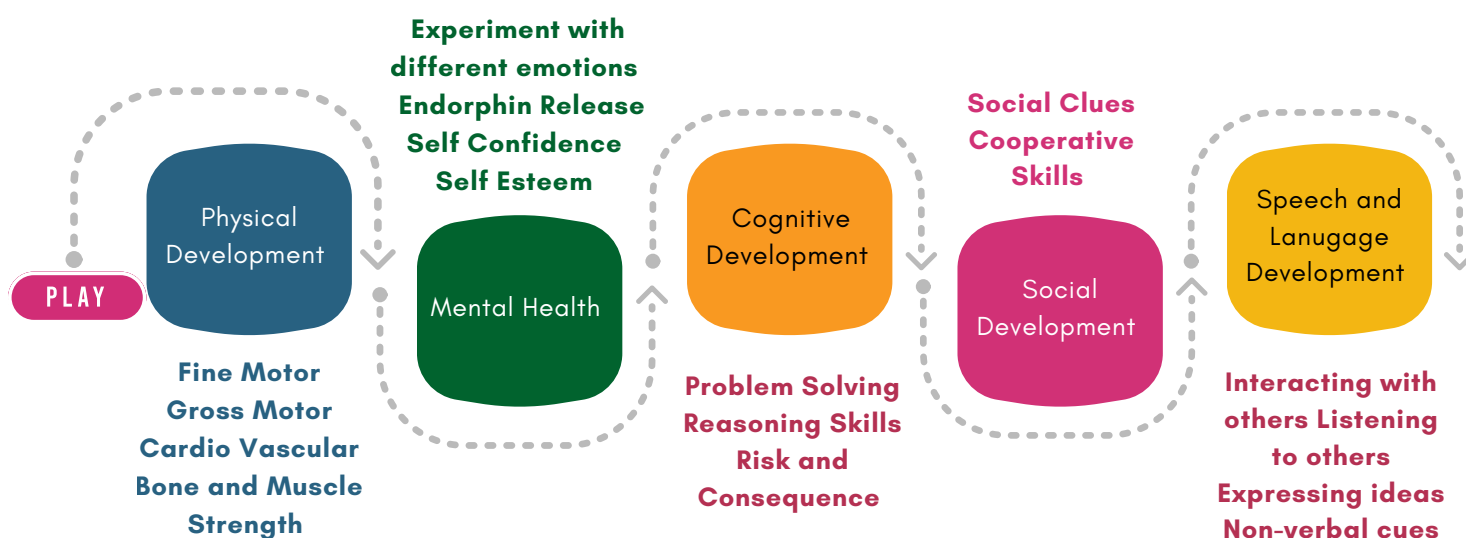
- **Playing and Exploring:** children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.
- **Active Learning:** children concentrate, keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements.
- **Creating and Thinking Critically:** children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

Museums and heritage sites are perfectly poised to offer educational engagement for young children and a friendly and safe environment for parents and carers. (GEM, 2020)

## Promoting Playful Learning

The project is about promoting play because it is essential in our lives. It underpins all development and learning for young children.

“A significant body of research highlights that play is crucial for young children’s learning in museums and other informal learning settings” (Hope, 2018, ‘Young Children as Curators’)



## Supporting Family Learning

**Family learning** is an approach to engage families which aims to help parents and children learn together as and within a family across generations. Museums and Galleries are well placed for such engagement. 50 Things to Do is the ideal tool to inspire activities for family learning, encouraging learning, exploring and making together.

The 50 activities can be used, as a self guided resource, to inspire family learning in and around cultural venues or as facilitated family learning sessions.

Learning outcomes and benefits resulting from family learning can be categorised into five areas:

- **new skills;**
- **increased confidence and understanding;**
- **improved communication;**
- **changed behaviours;**
- **changed relationships with the community and family**

Fairfax Cholmeley and Meade, 2009

"We encourage anyone programming activities for early years families to consider whether, and how, you are encouraging both young children and their adults to take part in your activities." The importance of adult involvement - Museum of London Early Years Toolkit

## Encouraging Cultural Capital

**Cultural capital** is the essential knowledge that children need to prepare them for their future success. It is about giving children the best possible start to their early education. (Early Years Inspection Handbook, OFSTED, 2022 ) Our wider perspective suggests it is about children exploring and understanding the locality they live in.

50 Things to Do Before You're Five encourages children and families to explore their own local landscapes, communities and cultural venues alongside the local history that defines the places they live. Encouraging children and their families to find opportunities to be part of their local area provides children with a sense of place and a greater connection to their community.

Developing cultural capital helps children to develop the knowledge, experiences, confidence and communication skills that will prepare them for their future success.

**50 Things to Do encourages families** to build on children's interests and experiences to harness the cultural capital they already have.

"An important aspect of the heritage sector is its role in defining local identity and reinforcing a sense of place" GEM, 2020

### Activity Number 40: Happy History

Museums and galleries offer the chance to experience art and objects not seen in everyday lives or the chance to see things differently – they offer a safe space to reflect and relax.



# The impact it can have in your venue

**By helping families see that museums and galleries are a great place to play and learn**, you are supporting children's development and contributing to improved life chances. We know that playing, especially outside, impacts children's brain development and positively impacts their health later in life.

By encouraging your families to play together, you are having a positive impact on the whole family's mental wellbeing, reducing stress, whilst promoting feelings of joy and happiness.

By welcoming young children and their families into your museums and galleries, you can increase your engagement with underrepresented audiences, as well as create the audiences of the future.

By encouraging positive interactions and improved communication, you are helping families bond. You are also improving parents' confidence in supporting the development of children's language, literacy and communication skills. We know that this positively impacts on academic achievement at primary and secondary school ages.



## Reaching New Audiences

"Museums have a responsibility to work with their communities to overcome the challenges of poverty and exclusion and to achieve equality of outcomes." Museums Association, A Manifesto for Museum Learning and Engagement, 2020

**70%**

of parents said that, since using **50 Things to Do Before You're Five**, their child has had more opportunities to socialise within their local community.

**74%**

of parents said that, since using **50 Things to Do Before You're Five** they have been to places they may not have visited before

## Parental Confidence

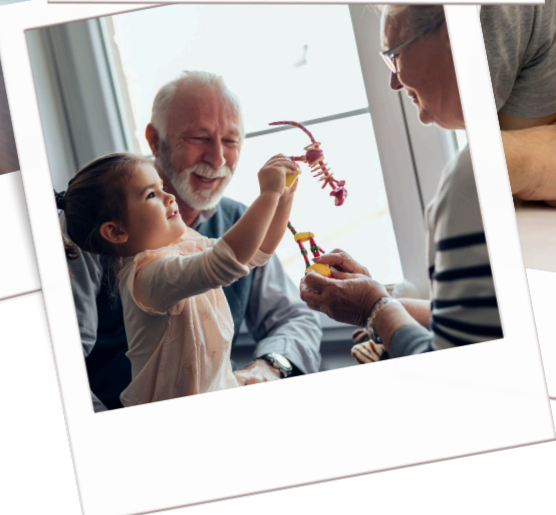
When parents feel competent in their parenting role, they are more likely to be engaged in their child's learning and development. "An individual's belief in their ability to be successful in the role of parenting (for example, confidence) is an essential component of the quality and sustainability of parenting behaviours." Belsky and Jaffee (2006) The Multiple Determinants of Parenting

"It's exhausting to be a parent in any circumstance, but it's much more exhausting to be a parent when you don't have the resources that other families have." Lew-William.

**67%**

of parents said that, since using the **50 Things to Do Before You're Five** app, they feel more confident to try new things with their children.

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