





Background

In early 2015, Starcatchers' Chief Executive met with Liz Conacher and Meg Faragher from National Galleries of Scotland (NGS) to discuss the potential to work together on an action research project to inform the development of the nursery and family Early Years programmes at the Galleries.

Over a number of meetings a proposal was submitted as a framework for this activity and this report reflects the evaluation of the second part of this process – the Early Years Families Programme project 'Toddle Tours' which was delivered from March – May 2016. With Meg Faragher on maternity leave, Jeni Allison became our main NGS contact for the delivery of the pilot.

Context

The National Galleries of Scotland currently makes an offer to Early Years aged children and their families through an established programme of ad hoc visits, and workshops at each of the three galleries across Edinburgh, as well as a monthly storytelling programme at the Portrait Gallery. The main focus for the children and families provision was through delivery of programmes for children aged 4+ and Meg was keen to see the development of a programme that would engage with younger children, particularly those aged 2+ although there was also interest in making an offer to babies under the age of 2 as well.

In recent years, there has been an increase in Early Years arts provision in arts venues, galleries and museums across the country and this is an area that continues to evolve and grow in response to the audience. Increasing numbers of parents are keen to engage in arts-based activities with their babies and young children and this offers potential in terms of engaging with new audiences.

The initial proposal for the families pilot project included 2 strands: a programme for babies under the age of 2 and their parents/carers that would offer artist led creative and sensory play inspired by artworks in the Galleries that would build from week to week; Toddle Tours for children aged 2-4 and their parents/carers designed as an interactive tour of the Galleries.

However, following discussions with Jeni Allison, it was felt that it would be a better use of the resource available to focus on the Toddle Tours element of the proposal.

The Toddle Tours concept was inspired by 'Egg Tours' a programme developed by artists Katy Wilson and Geraldine Heaney for families at Inverleith House. Katy and Geraldine had developed an interactive workshop inspired by different artworks and exhibitions there. The approach they used encouraged children to engage with and respond to artworks and this was of interest to both Starcatchers and NGS. Katy Wilson was involved with the Wee Wanders project delivered for Nurseries with NGS and contributed to the development of the Toddle Tours. Although inspired by the Egg Tours, Kate Temple and Paula Flavell, the artists leading on the project were able to develop their own methodology to deliver this pilot.



SVS Consultation

Running alongside the development of the Toddle Tours was the delivery of 6 discussion sessions with members of the SVS staff. Delivering some training activity with SVS staff had been identified in the proposal as being an important part of the Starcatchers and NGS project as a means of understanding the challenges for SVS staff when engaging with family and Early Years audiences. It was also anticipated that this would inform the development of future family activities and support the delivery of Toddle Tours. We originally anticipated that these would be more formal training sessions, however in delivery, it was apparent that a discussion based consultation with SVS staff was most appropriate in enabling them to share their views.

Through the discussions, SVS staff raised a range of challenges and issues. Many understood the important role that the Galleries have in providing a rich artistic and cultural space for children, although others struggled with the idea of making the Galleries more accessible to this audience and particularly very young children.

SVS staff offered a range of suggestions to improve the visitor experience for families including: better signage, materials/activity sheets that could be given to families on arrival and improved Family Trails.

A report on this process was created outlining more detailed findings and is available separately from this report.

Toddle Tours

The Toddle Tours were broken down into 3 sections:

- Drop-in Toddles: one at NGS on 17th March and two outside at the Modern on 24th March and 14th May
- Toddle Tours @ NGS: April 19th, 26th & May 3rd
- Toddle Tours @ Modern: May 10th & 17th

The drop-in Toddles were added as additional sessions to engage with . We had made a decision to deliver tours at NGS and at the Modern as there was already provision with Wee Treasures at the Portrait Gallery and it was felt developing provision in the other Galleries was a priority.

The premise behind the Toddle Tours was to offer a short block of activity that parents/carers could sign up for. People would be signing up to attend all the sessions in the block, creating a group of participants who would participate in the project together.

Our original plan had been to deliver one public session and one session for a community group on



each day, however in our discussions with community groups it became clear that the dates we were committed to would not work for the groups as they had already planned activities for this period. This was valuable learning for future implementation. Community play group, Dad's Rock did attend the second drop in Toddle at the Modern Gallery and the feedback from them was very positive.

Planning Process

Following on from the success of Wee Wanders, it had already been established that we would work with artists Kate Temple and Paula Flavell on the delivery of Toddle Tours. We worked closely with Jeni Allison from NGS who supported the development and contributed to shaping the content of each session. Jeni also provided key support for the delivery of the project.

Starcatchers' Admin and Marketing Assistant, Claire Griffiths also became involved in the project, both in supporting the marketing but also in supporting the delivery, providing assistance and also using her other skills as a dance and movement specialist to contribute creatively.

The artists, NGS and Starcatchers staff met for two half day planning sessions in early March. This allowed time to discuss the aims of the pilot and ideas for themes to explore in each session. These included:

- The beach
- Picnics
- Buildings
- Landscapes
- Pattern
- Colour

There was a real sense from the whole team that the ethos behind the Toddle Tours was to offer an open, child-led experience where the child and parent had time and space to engage, play and create artworks together. All the activities would be inspired by and connect to the artworks and gallery buildings/environments as everyone wanted to ensure that the sessions were not just seen as arts/creative play sessions that 'happen to take place at the galleries'.

This gave Kate and Paula the freedom to take some risks in their planning for the sessions and approach engagement with the Galleries audience in a different way from other programmes. Both artists found this to be an exciting and liberating approach to engaging with the audience.

A set of aims for the Toddle Tours were identified through the planning sessions which also contributed



to the development of our evaluation of the pilot:

- Engage toddlers (2-5) year olds from community groups and members of the public and their parents / carers
- Develop frameworks for toddler sessions which can be rolled out across our galleries (with a particular emphasis on the Scottish collection)
- Sessions should encourage families to interact and share positive experiences together
- Sessions will take place in gallery spaces, in education rooms and potentially outside at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art
- Sessions should have a clear focus – either thematic or materials led
- Sessions should be child-led
- (Resource development linking to the project is a possibility for the future)

Marketing & Audience Engagement

Marketing for the Toddle Tours was managed by Jeni Allison who shared information through NGS channels and by Starcatchers marketing staff who shared information through our e-newsletters and social media platforms.



Starcatchers

Published by Claire Griffiths [?] · 12 April · 🌐

Join us next week at the [Scottish National Gallery](#) as we team up with [National Galleries of Scotland](#) to deliver our new Toddle Tour pilot programme. We've already enjoyed a Messy session and an Outdoor session, so why not bring your 2-5 year old along to the next few sessions as there are still some spaces left.

Tuesdays: 19th and 26th April and 3rd May at The National Gallery 10.30-11.30am.

Please contact Jeni Allison on jallison@nationalgalleries.org or 0131 624 6428 to book.

[#scottishnationalgallery](#) [#toddetours](#) [#creativeart](#) [#creativeplay](#)



This information reached an estimated 38,600 across both organisations (figures taken from total social media followings for both organisations and Starcatchers mailing list). From our participant questionnaire, Starcatchers' social media and marketing were the most effective way of engaging participants in the pilot.

Capacity for each session was set at 10 toddlers and 10 adults. For the blocks of sessions at NGS and at



the Modern participants were expected to book for the whole block of sessions.

We had positive conversations with Community Groups, however as mentioned earlier, it became clear that working with Community Groups across multiple sessions on this pilot was not going to work as their planning for this time period had already taken place. However the groups expressed keen interest in the pilot and there is potential to offer bespoke programmes for Community Groups that could be tailored to their schedules in the future.

The response from the public to the opportunity to participate in Toddle Tours, both the drop-in sessions and the blocks of sessions was very positive. The drop-in sessions filled very quickly and although the blocks of sessions took slightly longer to fill, this was as a result of the gap between booking and the sessions starting. As a result of marketing activity, there was a waiting list for participation in the project.

People did respond well to the idea of the block bookings, although some asked if it was ok to sign up but miss one of the sessions.

Participants contacted Jeni Allison at the National Galleries to secure their place at sessions. Jeni then contacted participants each week in advance with information relevant to the session – for participants to bring particular items or to wear appropriate clothing.

Evaluation Process



In establishing an evaluation framework for the pilot, Starcatchers applied the Contribution Analysis approach the company uses in other work to evaluate Toddle Tours. An evaluation framework was created with input from NGS and the artists. This framework identifies anticipated immediate, medium and long-term outcomes for activity and risks and assumptions made in successfully achieving these outcomes.

Evaluation took place throughout the project with information gathered from NGS Staff, Starcatchers staff, artists and parents and carers who attended with their children. Photographs were taken during sessions and parents completed an online survey monkey questionnaire at the end of each block of sessions. We also received anecdotal feedback from parents through both Starcatchers and NGS social media. During the initial drop-in Toddles we also tried to encourage parents to share immediate thoughts through a post-it wall where they could write anonymous notes of their experience. At the end of the Buildings Toddle, the parents and children wrote letters to the Galleries telling them about their day and what they had done. This was another good way of gathering creative evaluation from participants.

Toddle Tours Content

Drop-in Toddles:

- The Storm by William McTaggart – a messy arts play session to create our very own ‘Storm’ in the Clore Studio following a toddle tour around the NGS to see McTaggart’s picture
- An Outdoor Toddle – a chance for children and their parents to explore the sculptures in the grounds of the Gallery of Modern Art and create their own sculptures outside
- Land Art – After packing rucksacks at the Bothy in the grounds of the Gallery, families and the Dad’s Rock group went on a journey across the Landforms before having a go at making their own land form and mud paintings





Toddle Tours@NGS:

- Buildings – exploring the building site outside NGS and the bronze model of Edinburgh, the children and parents were then able to explore the Gallery looking for other buildings in the paintings before they got a chance to make their own town from cardboard boxes, tape, and other materials. At the end of the session, the children (helped by their parents) wrote letters about their day at the Gallery
- Beach – inspired by the beach in McTaggart's *The Storm*, the toddler and their adults were able to enjoy their own make believe beach created underneath the painting
- Picnic – The toddlers took their parents on a tour of NGS collecting 'picnic' items on their way around the Gallery before gathering together in the main Gallery to create their own picnic

Toddle Tours @ Gallery of Modern Art

- Bridget Riley – inspired by Riley's black and white patterns, the toddlers and their parents got to explore making their own patterns with light and tape and also did some creative movement
- Peter Doig – In the final session of the pilot, the groups camped out under the stars of Peter Doig's 'Milky Way' painting. Toddlers and adults made things they needed for their camp-out and enjoyed playing with light and darkness, as well as just spending some time playing together





Observations from Toddle Tours

The Toddle Tours pilot was a successful initiative with generally very positive feedback from participants.

Key observations from the process included:

- The sessions on the whole worked well, allowing the children to explore and then create in a gently guided, age appropriate way. There was a range of materials, themes and activities that engaged the children and encouraged parents to engage with their own creativity too
- Feedback on the structure of sessions from parents – the aim with Toddle Tours was to offer something that was open-ended and child-led so that whilst there was a theme to each session and elements within the framework of the session, what took place was very fluid based on the response of the children in the group. For some parents/carers, this was ideal and allowed them to really get involved in playing creatively with their toddler. For others, this was more challenging and they expected a much more structured experience. It was felt that some of this could be addressed through marketing and communication materials. There was also a point raised by one of the artists that perhaps Toddle Tours is not the right name for the programme and that this may also contribute to adult expectations of the content
- The blocks of sessions with repeat attendance, particularly at NGS allowed the children to grow in confidence. Often, it can take time for children to settle and feel able to contribute, however the repeat attendance with (the majority of) the same group meant that as each week passed, the children were increasingly comfortable in the space and confident in engaging in activities. There was also a sense that parents/carers felt more at ease each week as they got to know the artists and the space and what the format of the sessions was.
- Many parents fed back that they enjoyed the opportunity to do something creative and different with their child. Many of them had not seen the Galleries as a venue to take their child to previously as they felt that they would be too young, however this experience has opened their eyes to the potential of future visits. Parents enjoyed being able to play and engage with their children and also to see their children getting lots from the experience
- The majority of parents reported that they would be happy to pay a small charge to participate in sessions (no more than £5 per child per session) and understood that there are costs attached. For others this would be a barrier to their participation
- SVS Staff - As a result of the consultation with the SVS staff in the lead up to the pilot, we were conscious of how they engaged with the project during its delivery. From a Starcatchers and NGS perspective, SVS staff engaged positively with the groups when they were at the Galleries. However, feedback from parents showed that they still felt that the Galleries were a bit 'unwelcoming' and that they were being 'watched' constantly by SVS staff which impacted on their experience



I enjoyed being creative with my child in an environment that allowed me to do so and be safe. I felt encouraged by the ladies running the programme as they showed ideas to the children without it seeming like they were educating the adults too.

Joanne Baker Jewellery shared Starcatchers's photo.
May 7 · 🌐

Enriching creative experiences for parents as well as the children!



Starcatchers ✓
May 6 · 🌐

Julie Dunn @dunnjulie1 · Apr 22
Building rockets @NatGalleriesSco #toddletour #StarcatchersUK



🔄 1

A really special, creative time in a stunning location, that was supported by kind, encouraging staff.

I liked that it made the modern art gallery accessible. I've always found it a less than welcoming place even as an adult so I've never considered bringing my active 3 yo.



Recommendations for Future Development

- Online booking
- Combination of drop-in and blocks of sessions
- Development of bespoke offer that Community Groups can take advantage of inline with their own planning
- Thinking about sustainability – how can a programme be delivered when it needs staffing – needed 2 artists and also benefited from other Starcatchers/NGS support in delivery
- A member of staff dedicated to Early Years/Children to support development/delivery of activities
- Potential to charge public – majority asked said that a small charge (up to £5) was not a barrier to their participation
- Communications with parents/carers – how do you manage their expectations
- Child-friendly spaces – the need to have spaces where children can touch without parents/carers feeling like they are not welcome

Evaluation Framework

		Risk/Assumptions (to get to next step)	Monitoring Criteria
Contribution (Final Outcome)	NGS & Starcatchers have greater understanding of the needs and barriers for children and families engaging with the Galleries NGS, Starcatchers and the artists have developed a new model for delivering Early Years activities across the 3 Galleries. Audiences, both family and Community Groups become regular visitors to the Galleries and participate in available programmes	Assumptions: the model created will be applicable across all three galleries The sessions will encourage repeated visits from participants Risks: The families we work with are not representative of audiences we might get at other times in the year (for example summer programme) The model will be obsolete due to much larger numbers wanting to attend sessions	Ongoing programming reflection Starcatchers evaluation report
Behaviour/Practices (Intermediate Outcomes)	Increased skills in delivery and development of Early Years activities in the Galleries context Artists experiment with new and different approaches to practice Community Groups staff using the experience as inspiration for other activities within the groups. Children who attend multiple sessions are re-visiting activities/experiences at home (Question for evaluation to parents/community groups)	Assumptions: Community groups will want to revisit activities in their own settings Risks: The sessions will be too gallery focused to allow for community groups or individual families to revisit them without access to education spaces, collection and materials.	Participant evaluation
Capacity : Knowledge, attitudes, skills (Immediate Outcomes)	Audiences have increased awareness of range of activities offered by NGS That parents, staff and artists have increased understanding in how young children engage with the Galleries and activities provided Artists are more confident in their abilities to deliver Early Years activities SVS staff are more confident and aware of the needs of this audience	Assumptions: The project will have a wide enough reach to increase awareness Risks: SVS won't feel involved in the process, and rather than confidence being improved, it will be unchanged or have a negative impact	Information available about other family activities at NGS. Artist feedback SVS feedback
Awareness/Reaction (Immediate Outcomes)	Audiences respond to call for participation and are excited about participation Families and Community Groups feel comfortable and welcomed in the Galleries Children enjoy participating in the project along with their parents and with the project team SVS Staff feel informed about the project and engage where appropriate	Assumptions: Risks: formal atmosphere of the galleries puts off staff and children. Unwanted attention from other gallery visitors (eg taking photos of children)	Clear communication with NGS staff and people attending the sessions. Observation – are participants enjoying the sessions?

		Risk/Assumptions (to get to next step)	Monitoring Criteria
Engagement/Involvement	<p>Artists commit to working collaboratively on the development and delivery of the pilot Staff and artists enjoy the project</p> <p>Starcatchers and NGS staff, (including SVS staff) offer appropriate support and attend sessions where possible</p> <p>Families and Community Groups sign up to participate in the activities</p>	<p>Risks:</p>	
Activities/Outputs	<p>Delivery of 2 pilot messy creative play sessions</p> <p>Delivery of 2 Toddler Tour mini-programmes – one at NGS, and one at The Gallery of Modern Art</p> <p>Programme to be developed by artists, Starcatchers team, NGS Staff and informed by parents and children</p> <p>Development of materials that may be inform development of in-gallery resources for families</p>	<p>Assumptions: There is demand for these types of activities; parents will happily participate with their children;</p> <p>Risks:</p>	<p>Starcatchers and NGS staff need to discuss / share attendance and be clear about roles when attending.</p>
	<p>NGS Staff</p> <p>Artists</p> <p>Starcatchers Staff</p> <p>Resource</p> <p>Children & Families visiting the Galleries (individual and Community Groups)</p>		