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together**

Belfast Strategic Partnership

Belfast Festival of Learning Evaluation Report



Belfast Festival of Learning

May 2016

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Your Comments

"It was a great festival and showcased so much that we can be proud of in the city. We would like to see this become an annual event."

"We thoroughly enjoyed being part of this event and look forward to participating in more."

"We received excellent feedback from parents saying it was 'the first time they have played games as a family', they were 'really impressed at how much fun the children were having and not being glued to their iPad'

"It was good to be a part of a larger citywide event."

"The Belfast Festival of Learning is a fantastic idea as it opens up other avenues of learning for people who would otherwise not take part."

"...the process for running events was so easy we were able to run things that we wouldn't normally have done."

"It was beneficial to be part of a citywide initiative offering adults the opportunity to re-engage in learning. We would hope to see the festival gain momentum in coming years and would be keen to continue to support this exciting initiative."

"The festival was a hugely beneficial way for organisations to showcase their work."

"The range of events reflected learning in all its forms –it is important to keep this broad focus in any future festival programmes."

"It gave the message that Belfast takes learning seriously."



Background to the Festival of Learning

Our vision for learning

“Belfast is a city where learning is valued in all its forms and promoted as a force for improved personal, social, civic and economic change in the city. All citizens of Belfast have equal access to Lifelong Learning opportunities, creating conditions for a better quality of life for everyone in the city.”

Tackling Inequalities through Lifelong Learning

The role of the Lifelong Learning Thematic Group within Belfast Strategic Partnership is primarily:

- To demonstrate how Lifelong Learning can be used as a tool to tackle inequalities that exist in the city for many communities and individuals
- To encourage innovation and excellence in Lifelong Learning practice as flagship examples of removing barriers to learning
- To advocate for strategic and collaborative approaches to planning and delivery of services.

In 2015 the Lifelong Learning Thematic Group launched “Belfast a Learning City” and the Learning Charter for Belfast. “Belfast a Learning City” sets out a strategic framework for a more collaborative, co-operative approach to Lifelong Learning and the Learning Charter sets out the principles, values and related actions needed to create the conditions by which Lifelong Learning can be used to tackle inequalities in the city.

There are four strategic pillars of “Belfast a Learning City”

- A learning culture that values all forms of learning
- An inclusive, innovative and strategic approach through partnership working to maximise the reach and impact of all available resources
- Equality of access for all and excellence in the design and development of provision
- Matching skills provision with economic need.

The Learning Charter asks organisations to commit to working together on shared principles and actions needed to remove barriers and create a Learning City for all, these include:

- Creating clear pathways for entry and progression routes for learners
- Creating easier access for learners at all levels and across all ages
- Promoting best practice in Lifelong Learning
- Addressing economic disadvantage
- Sharing targets and outcomes
- Increasing diversity among learners and promoting inclusion
- Promoting resilience through Lifelong Learning
- Recognising and promoting all kinds of learning.

The Festival of Learning was our first attempt at engaging and linking with organisations in the city to bring to life the ethos and principles of “Belfast a Learning City”. We invited submissions for interactive events that would break down barriers to learning and encourage the participation of groups and individuals who have experienced barriers to learning. Lifelong Learning has the potential to transform lives but unless opportunities are accessible to all, inequalities in the city will deepen.

It was also an opportunity to showcase the range of learning opportunities that exist in Belfast, to celebrate learning as a lifelong process, and to encourage citizens of all ages to explore, take part and enjoy learning in all its forms.

We encouraged submissions for imaginative and creative events to build a programme that would reflect and promote the many reasons people have for learning – whether it is learning for work, learning to understand others and live together, learning skills or learning to deal with life’s challenges.

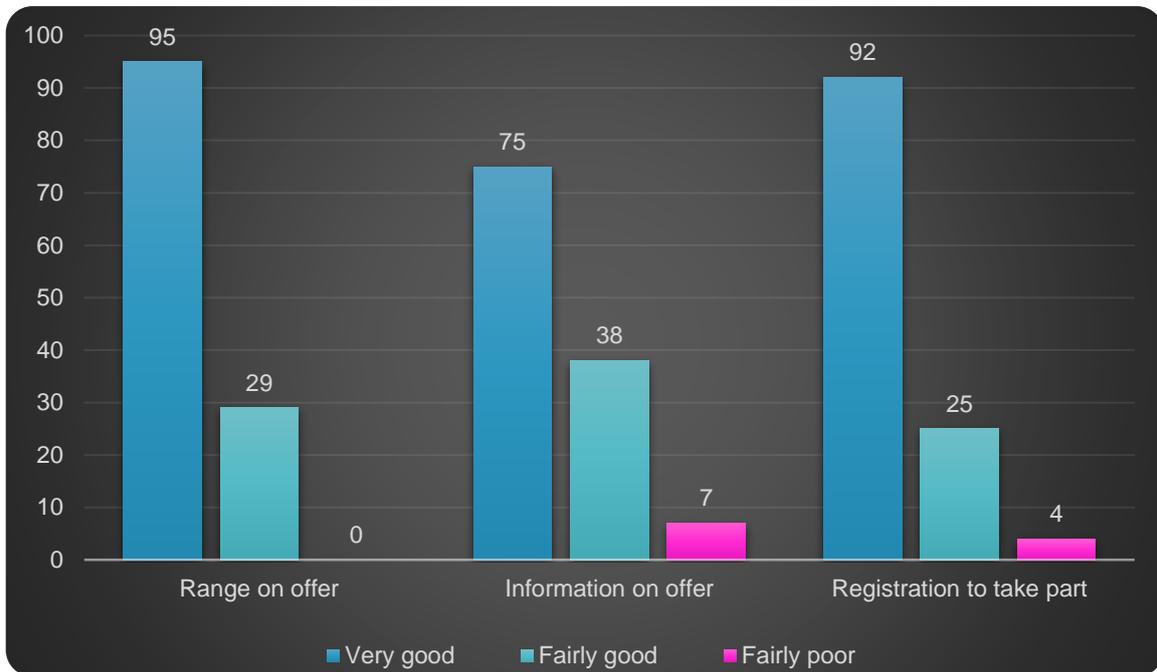
Over 80 organisations responded to this invitation and a week long programme of diverse events was offered to citizens across Belfast. Working in collaboration with BSP’s Family Friendly Initiative ensured that a wide range of Family Friendly events were also on offer across the city.

We asked event organisers to send us their feedback on taking part and we supplied evaluation forms for individual participants which were posted back. The following report outlines event details, feedback and learning points for the future.

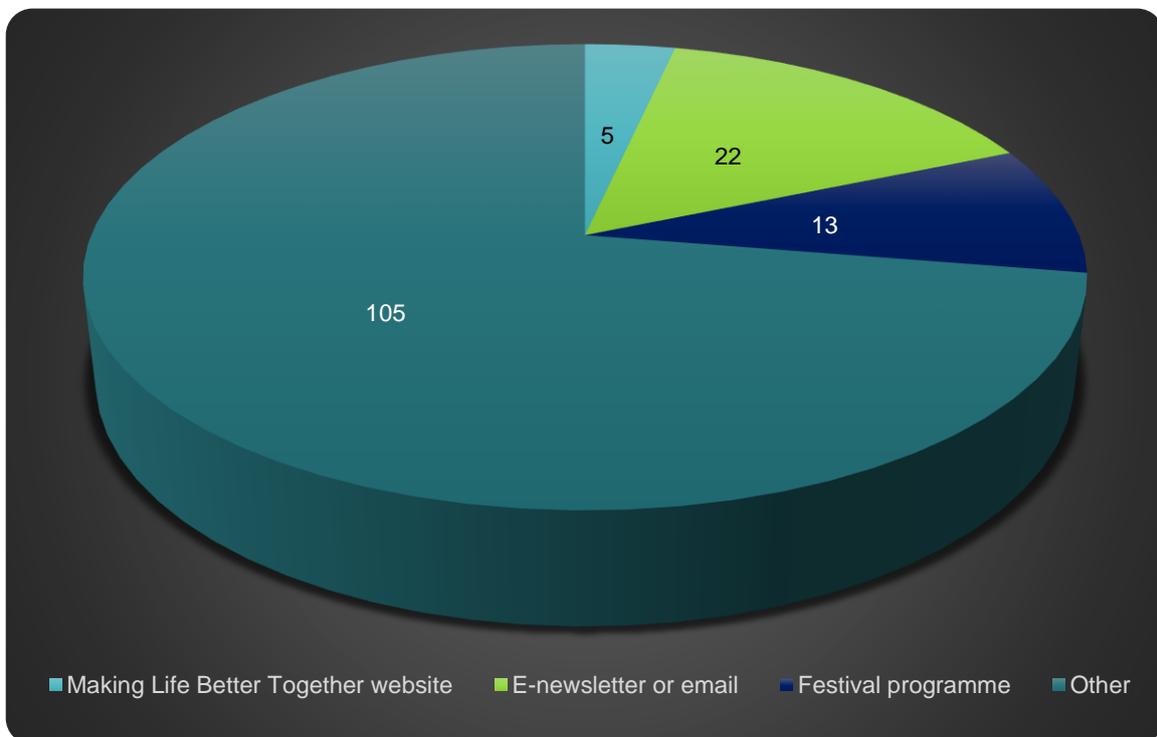
The BSP Lifelong Learning Thematic Group would like to thank everyone, all organisations and participants, for their contributions, energy, positivity and constructive feedback, to which we hope we have done justice in the following pages.

Summary findings from learners

How good do you think each of the following aspects of the Belfast Festival of Learning were?

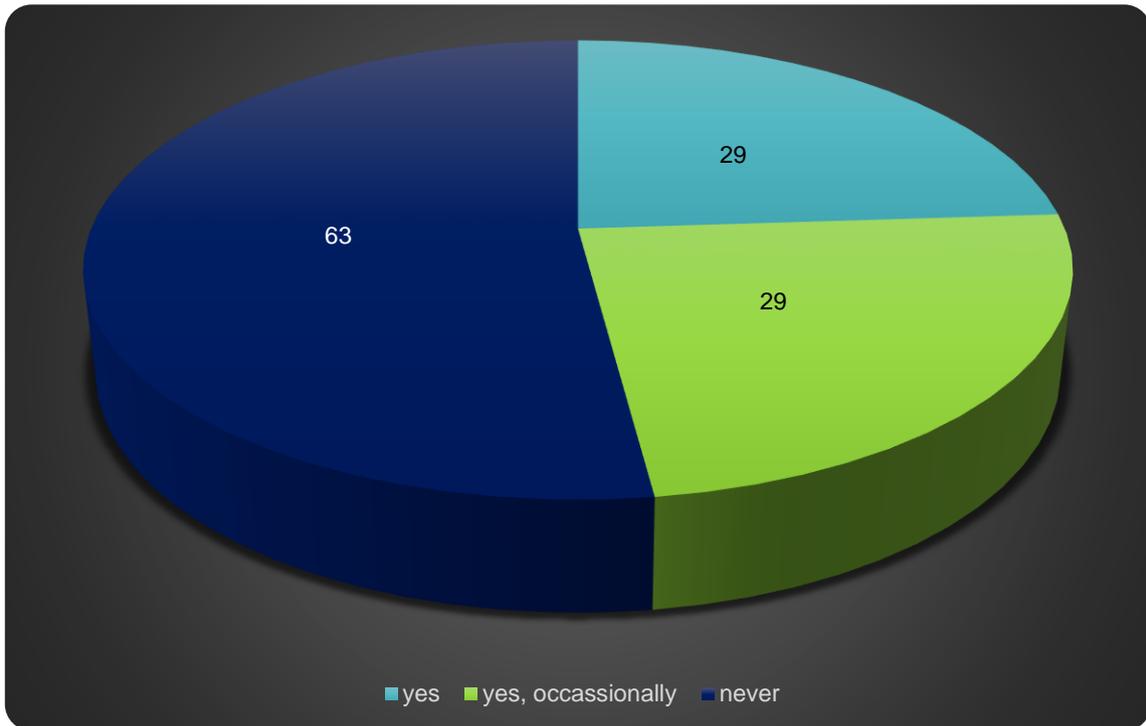


How did you find out about the Belfast Festival of Learning?

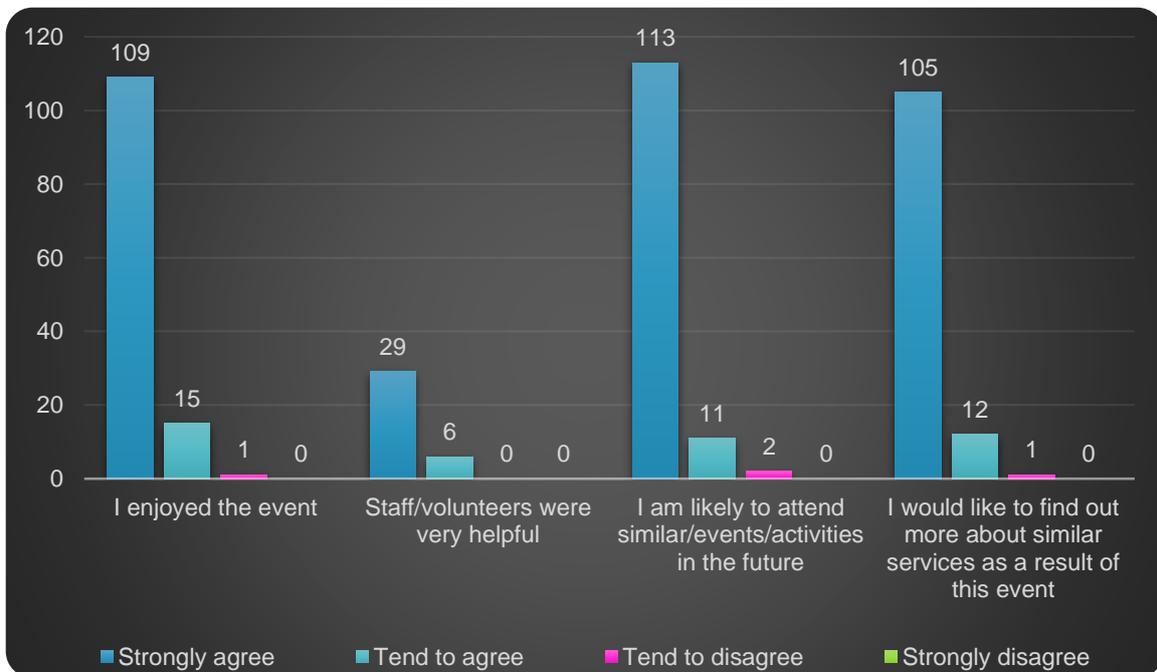


Other included the event organiser, social media, a friend/colleague or word of mouth.

Have you used a service or been to an event run by the people hosting this event before?



Please let us know to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements



Feedback from event organisers

ACTION ABILITY “BELFAST SPEAK OUT” GROUP

The Action Ability “Belfast Speak Out” Group members prepared and delivered an interactive workshop on human rights, disability discrimination and self-advocacy.

What you liked about being part of the Belfast Festival of Learning

Group members really enjoyed the opportunity to share their learning and personal experience of disability rights and self-advocacy. They were filled with pride at the response they received.

How you think your event went

More than 40 people attended and based on the evaluation forms they completed, everyone enjoyed the event and learned something from it. The group members really enjoyed hosting the event and it was a great boost to their confidence to get such a fantastic response.

What you would do differently/what you would change

We agree that we wouldn't actually do anything differently!

Any other comments

It was a fantastic opportunity for group members to share what they have learned with others.

It was such a big deal to the group to be part of something like this festival.

We thoroughly enjoyed being part of this event and look forward to participating in more.

It was a great festival and showcased so much that we can be proud of in the city.

We would like to see this become an annual event.

LEARNING SPACE - LEARN THROUGH PLAY GAMES NIGHT

What you liked about being part of the Belfast Festival of Learning

The families got a lot from the event and we would look forward to participating in events like this again in the future. We received excellent feedback from parents saying it was the first time they had played games as a family, they were “really impressed at how much fun the children were having and not being glued to their iPad”, as well as “It was a great social, family event set in a relaxed atmosphere, that encouraged fun learning and interaction”.

How you think your event went

We were very pleased with how the event went and overall we are deeming it as a success after the excellent feedback we received from not only the parents but also the children. We are now also considering the possibility of making our games night a regular monthly event.

What you would do differently/what you would change

One area we would like to improve on would be the timescale for promoting the event. We feel there was a very limited time period and we found that the festival in general wasn't pushed as much as other festivals usually are.

Any other comments

I think it would have been great for the festival to be promoted by the Welcome Centre, What's On NI, etc. as well as ourselves listing our events separately. Also we thought that it would be ideal to include a timetable of events with links to further information of events for people to view, we found that the booklet format wasn't very clear & could be hard to follow.

The festival also happened at the same time as the Belfast Children's Festival, it would be better if the festival happened at a different time so as not to coincide with other major events happening throughout the city.

REPLAY THEATRE COMPANY - ALL IN

A discussion event hosted by Replay Theatre Company exploring how artists can ensure that we provide the best possible creative experiences with and for young people with disabilities.



How you think your event went.

ALL IN went very well. The event was at capacity and received great feedback both through Replay and through Belfast Children's Festival. Networking between sectors (arts/ disability/ healthcare) was useful, and insightful discussions were had about the provision of arts with and for children and young people with disabilities.

What you would do differently/what you would change.

Earlier notice of the Festival of Learning would help us plan to include the festival more in our marketing and planning of the events. Perhaps print literature about the Festival of Learning provided to each event planner so that the Festival can be plugged at each event.

Any other comments

It was good to be a part of a larger citywide event. An annual Festival of Learning is a great addition to the city's calendar, and the diversity of events reflects Replay's ethos of the wide and far-reaching definition of learning and education. Coinciding with Belfast Children's Festival means that, while there are many events on that could become part of the Festival of Learning, it could also muddy the waters in terms of public awareness.

Overall, a great event delivered through the collaboration of a number of dedicated partners.

NORTH BELFAST MEN'S SHED OPEN DAY & TASTER SESSION

What you liked about being part of the Belfast Festival of Learning

We found the application process for the Belfast Festival of Learning event very easy and straight forward. The method of payment was also straight forward without any complications. Another positive outcome was the fact that a number of individuals, who otherwise would not have had the chance, were able to take part in activities that go on in North Men's Shed. These activities included woodturning, pyrography, copper work, painting etc. The feedback from participants on the day was very positive.

How you think your event went

The feedback from the day was very positive. Of those who completed an evaluation form 100% stated the range of events on offer was very good. A total of 87.5% enjoyed taking part in the event at the Men's Shed with the same percentage stating that the staff and volunteers were very helpful. Of those who took part 81.25% are likely to attend a similar event in the future and 87.5% want to find out more about similar services.

What you would do differently/what you would change

When asked how the event could be improved participants expressed an interest in attending more of these events if they were on offer in future.

Any other comments

The Belfast Festival of Learning is a fantastic idea as it opens up other avenues of learning for people who would otherwise not take part. One recommendation would be to run the programme over two or three weeks instead of one week. This would enable members of our group and the general public to attend more events, during the Belfast Festival of Learning event. Overall an excellent festival and thank you for letting us be part of it.

FORUM FOR ADULT LEARNING N.I. (FALNI) PROFESSOR ALAN TUCKETT LECTURE – LIFELONG LEARNING FOR A WORLD WORTH LIVING IN

What you liked about being part of the Belfast Festival of Learning

Very pleased to be part of a festival raising the profile of lifelong learning. Pleased to have such a festival supported by BSP with its significant partners.

How you think your event went

Feedback was extremely positive - including from the speaker. There were 26 attendees which is a good number for such an event. I recorded the event and it has since been uploaded to the EPAL website and to YouTube gaining more publicity for all concerned, including the festival.

What you would do differently/what you would change

The event itself ran well and there was good participation. Could consider asking a little more time commitment and building in a workshop element as well. Good venue.

Any other comments

Very much appreciated the financial assistance to bring Professor Tuckett across - FALNI could not have run the event otherwise.

ELECTRONIC PLATFORM FOR ADULT LEARNING IN EUROPE (EPAL) SEMINAR

What you liked about being part of the Belfast Festival of Learning

EPAL very much wants to support ventures such as this so that more people have the chance to experience and talk about learning. NI has been missing a special week like this dedicated to lifelong learning and BSP is to be commended for the initiative.

How you think your event went

Very positive feedback from the 16 participants on the site and workshop and they would have liked it even more interactive which is great-good spread of participants too. We used the EPAL website to give UK/Europe coverage of the event.

What you would do differently/what you would change

Good venue and the length of the event was about right - will consider ways to increase participation in the future.

Any other comments

If it can be annual that would be terrific and a real boost to those of us trying to promote and grow lifelong learning in Belfast – and beyond.
Perhaps Learner Awards could be considered –although these do require a bit of admin support to run successfully.
Perhaps twinning with a Learning Festival elsewhere could be explored, with the mutual learning this could offer.

LOVE FOOD HATE WASTE COOKERY DEMONSTRATION – DIVIS COMMUNITY CENTRE

What you liked about being part of the Belfast Festival of Learning

I thought it was a lovely way to bring skills and tips to people who may otherwise not have access, or who may not know about the kind of service we offer.

How you think your event went

The event went well, everyone seemed to enjoy it.

What you would do differently/what you would change

I could incorporate a paper-based exercise on freezer tips or food storage ideas.

Any other comments

I think it is a great idea that could be run every year or every two years.

LEARNING TOGETHER - AN AFTERNOON OF LEARNING FOR ALL THE FAMILY

What you liked about being part of the Belfast Festival of Learning

The branding and the events being advertised centrally.

It was great to be part of something that was happening across the city as you could advertise other events at the event you were running and give people more opportunity to learn.

The funding was necessary and allowed organisations to run events they wouldn't have ordinarily.

It gave the message that Belfast takes learning seriously.

How you think your event went

Event was very successful, over 140 people came. Families were engaged in learning activities for the afternoon.

People said that the event was well organised and that they loved the activities.

Parents were saying that they could try the activities at home and have never thought of doing things like that with their children.

Any other comments.

I think a once a year festival of learning would be fantastic for the city especially if was held at the same time each year.

SING BECAUSE U CAN

What you liked about being part of the Belfast Festival of Learning

The opportunity to showcase a new workshop to the community and networking.

How you think your event went

Numbers were small but feedback was excellent.

What you would do differently/what you would change

I would have learned more about social media and how to advertise the event better.

Any other comments.

No one on my course had heard of the festival except for me

LIGHTNING BOLTS AND SEAHORSES: A FAMILY FRIENDLY ARCHITECTURAL TREASURE HUNT

What you liked about being part of the Belfast Festival of Learning

The new exposure for our organisation, being part of a festival for all groups and abilities to engage with and learn about new things.

How you think your event went

The event was very popular. We had produced specially commissioned hand drawn treasure maps for ages 4 - adult, with clues that led you on a walk around the city centre looking out for architectural features. The clues were aimed at children but fun for everyone.

The event for the festival was a facilitated walking tour, but the idea is now that the maps are available free of charge for anyone to drop in and go off on a DIY tour.

An unexpected outcome was that we had an order for 100 maps from an individual who wants to make them available to young groups he works with and their families so we are producing an additional print run as demand is high.

Any other comments

I think the timing of the festival is good. The only thing about March is that often funded organisations such as ours have a lot of projects to get delivered by end of financial year so there is a bit of a scramble to get events produced, having the knock on effect of potential audience fatigue.

It was great to be part of the festival and we enjoyed the additional marketing opportunity for the organisation that the festival provided.

FAMILY FUN DAY AT CONNSWATER STREET GARDEN – DRUMMING AND ART

What you liked about being part of the Belfast Festival of Learning

It gave our organisation the opportunity to show that these meanwhile spaces can be used for more than just gardening.

How you think your event went

We had more adults taking part than children, some came specifically for the community tribal drumming, it raised awareness of the gardens and their potential use, everyone that wanted took home a big bag of freshly picked kale (the only thing we have in season at the moment). You could really see how much the

participants were enjoying this activity, from nervous beginning to really getting into it! Smiles all round! The lack of children meant less work for the artist.

What you would do differently/what you would change

Having seen how much people got involved with the drumming I wouldn't try and offer another activity with it. If I was able to get funding to run this again to target teenagers I wouldn't run it on a Saturday morning but at a time more suited to them i.e. later in the day, but the morning time suited the adults.

Any other comments

The official programme and launch could be earlier to give more people advance notice so they could plan to attend more events.

EDIBLE CONTAINER PLANTING AT CONNSWATER STREET GARDEN

What you liked about being part of the Belfast Festival of Learning

It gave our organisation the opportunity to show how a polytunnel helps us to garden regardless of weather.

How you think your event went

It gave the garden users the chance to try something different by being able to take home a planter which they can keep topped up at home. They might be encouraged to use more fresh salad leaves if they have them to hand, encourages healthy eating.

What you would do differently/what you would change

This event went well, no change.

DOG DAYS AT THE THINKING CUP CAFE.

Just happened to find out about the festival on Twitter one day when scrolling through. Loved the application process so smooth and easy. Would definitely encourage us to apply again.

There were loads of great events in the programme that I nor others knew where happening or we would have gone ourselves.

The opening for the festival at the city hall was fab. Loved taking part in the workshops.

FANDOM COMIC PROJECT LAUNCH

What you liked about being part of the Belfast Festival of Learning

It was a very positive experience and offered a feeling of inclusion to the Fandom group to be involved in the first Belfast Festival of Learning. It gave us the opportunity to showcase and promote the event to a wider audience.

How you think your event went

Event went really well both the participants and attendees found it a really enjoyable, valuable event. We had received a number of queries of interest from the public to attend the event but in the end I am unsure if they actually did attend.

What you would do differently/what you would change

We felt it was inappropriate to ask event attendees to fill in an evaluation form.

Any other comments

While the brochure was extensive highlighting the number and the range of events available we felt it was just a bit too busy.

THE GENERATION GAME WORKSHOP (SUPPORTED BY AGE-FRIENDLY BELFAST AND DELIVERED BY PURPOSE CONSULTANCY)

What you liked about being part of the Belfast Festival of Learning

The energy, enthusiasm and variety of the programme.

Being part of a diverse and proactive approach to learning.

Having the opportunity to highlight the importance of planning for, and supporting, a multigenerational workforce.

How you think your event went

Overall feedback was that the session was very informative and people asked to be included in general information and similar events organised through Age-friendly Belfast. We are awaiting results of a survey monkey compiled by the facilitator.

What you would do differently/what you would change

Have a bit more time to promote the workshop

Target more business and may hold training in somewhere like Business in the Community or the Chamber of Commerce.

Any other comments

This was a great festival, it was quite a busy time because of it being near the end of the financial year but March is also quite a good time to highlight initiatives. Other suggested time could be May/June.

'YEAR OF THE HIKER' BY SOUTH BANK PLAYERS

What you liked about being part of the Belfast Festival of Learning

It encouraged us to think about our audiences for the show and to think about how and why we should reach out to individuals and groups who had never been to the theatre before. It has given us the opportunity to develop a closer relationship with the community groups who responded to our invitation and to explore a new approach to our marketing and audience development.

How you think your event went

We asked those who attended our event to complete a short feedback questionnaire and to meet the director and cast after the show. Only a small number completed the questionnaire but the responses were overwhelmingly positive – 100% said they would definitely come back to see a play like this again.

What you would do differently/what you would change

Because we offered free admission there were quite a number of 'no shows' and we need to think of a way of ensuring that they attend the next time. This might mean visiting the group before the event and engaging with them so that they had a greater commitment/interest in attending.

Any other comments

As it happened the timing was perfect for us but that was lucky! The earlier we know about the timing the better so that we can plan our event for the festival week.

OASIS - LIVE & LEARN INFORMATION AND INTERACTIVE EVENT

Oasis hosted an event giving local people the opportunity to taste and try a range of activities and to access information on other community resources. The aim was to introduce the possibility of returning to learning in the local community.

Being part of the festival gave us an opportunity to have an open morning and invite people who wouldn't normally access our services, to come along, try something new or simply talk to staff about the courses and services on offer throughout the year. It also gave local people the opportunity to access additional community services as we invited other organisations to participate with information stands.

Interactive Activities:

- Knit and Natter
- Men of History - Information workshop and display of artefacts
- How to Stay Safe on the Internet.

Numbers attending approx: 40

Formal Outcomes:

4 women signed up for our course on emotional health and wellbeing called Look Good Feel Good.

2 people signed up for a voluntary employment programme

1 person signed up for a basic computer class

We would reconsider offering interactive sessions in any future event as attendance was low. Participants preferred to access drop-in type opportunities.

Knit and Natter was the most popular of the interactive sessions. A pilot has been running for 4 weeks and on the basis of interest from our festival event we are continuing to offer this informal weekly drop-in.

Oasis joined forces with Groundwork NI as we are working in the same immediate locality and were hosting events on the same morning. This was a very successful collaboration as we encouraged visitors to take part in both events. Groundwork NI had an information stand recruiting local volunteers at our information event. Oasis café was the hub providing refreshments for all participants.

Our event was successful in terms of participation of other local service providers and the interaction of existing clients. (Many of our existing clients took the opportunity to speak to Belfast Metropolitan College and East Belfast Independent Advice Centre). They also learned about other courses that are available in Oasis that they hadn't yet encountered.

Hosting the event once a year is sufficient however it may be useful to look at the timing. As a community training provider it is our experience that the majority of adults are more likely to look for structured learning opportunities in line with the academic calendar i.e. September and January (this is particularly relevant to literacy, numeracy and computer classes). Unfortunately we don't deliver through the summer months therefore the courses we have on offer in March – April are potentially more limited and likely to have been running for several months.

This observation is purely from a community training perspective, we realise that learning in its many other forms may not be impacted in such a way.

It was beneficial to be part of a citywide initiative offering adults the opportunity to re-engage in learning. We would hope to see the festival gain momentum in coming years and would be keen to continue to support this exciting initiative.

BELFAST CITY COUNCIL, SKILLS FAIR, ST GEORGE'S MARKET

How you think your event went

Our event went really well, over 1050 people attended. The market was separated out into *learning zones*, providing attendees with information and support. There were also live demonstrations and activities encouraging informal participation. The event was proactive in promoting the potential for learning to be fun and an opportunity to acquire new skills. Some participant feedback is noted below:

'It was great to experience all of the different cultures.'

'It was fantastic; I really enjoyed the Scottish dancing and boxercise.'

What you would do differently/what you would change

We created four learning zones within St. George's Market. Zone 1 promoted personal skills such as CV and interview skills, zone 2 was leisure, well-being and beauty, zone 3 was Arts, Culture and Food and zone 4 was Creative, Digital and

Media. Rather than having zones by sub-sector we would recommend, in future, that zones could be closer aligned to work readiness such as Employability Skills (CV writing etc), Workplace Skills (communication and team building etc.), Hobbies and Career Paths.

Any other comments

The Festival of Learning was a great way to show-case the breadth of learning which occurs on a daily basis across the city. The festival presented a mix of academic and practical opportunities for learning and showed how flexible and person focused our citizens and their service providers have the potential to be.

Evaluation from learners attending events

SUSTRANS – FORAGE ON FOOT

Something you have learned and/or tried for the first time

Learning about environment and the system within nature, which can be used in all systems

Tried edible wild plants x 2

Great ideas about environment, people. I really enjoyed the concept behind it
Foraging, learning to read the landscape

Belfast Festival of Learning

Much needed

SUSTRANS - RUBBISH REUSE REEMPLOY

Something you have learned and/or tried for the first time

Empathy exercises and feeling what it's like to be a litterer.

Pulling a bag out of the ground, throwing away something - good suggestion to note how it feels.

Belfast Festival of Learning

- Belfast sorely need festivals of learning 😊

ULSTER MUSEUM – ART FOR THE SLIGHTLY TERRIFIED

Something you have learned and/or tried for the first time

Arts and crafts

Painting x 3

Painting with acrylics

Drawing and painting

Art class for adults

“Letting myself go” Enjoying the moment

Improvements

Better information given

More advance notification of event

Would like it to be longer

How can you improve excellent?

Would love to do it again

Belfast Festival of Learning

Wonderful!

Excellent

Comments

I'm so glad I was contacted. This morning with Jayne has been very releasing (not a bit scary!). Just what I needed at present.
Fantastic!
It is a most exciting/inviting topic
More of them please
Both classes were excellent. Very well taught. Great sense of achievement at end and interest in art reawakened

BELFAST CITY COUNCIL - LOVE FOOD HATE WASTE

Comments

It was very informative
Learned new cooking skills

LAW CENTRE (NI) – WELFARE REFORM-THE BASICS

Something you have learned and/or tried for the first time

I gained a lot of useful information about Welfare Reform.
Training on Welfare Reform
Training on welfare benefit
Blended learning with future lean
Social media course

Improvements

It was very good, wouldn't change it.

Belfast Festival of Learning

Better promotion is needed

Comments

Very informative and easy to follow session
First class training, Facilitator friendly, enthusiastic, very knowledgeable.

FALNI – PROFESSOR ALAN TUCKETT, LIFELONG LEARNING FOR A WORLD WORTH LIVING IN

Belfast Festival of Learning

Excellent innovation – deserves support
A very welcome development
Excellent idea
Would like to see this as a regular event
Good idea
To build in the future-more continuous, beyond the week
Excellent initiative, need to show what Belfast offers

Improvements

Make it part of Adult Learners week
Handouts
Online registration – Eventbrite

ELECTRONIC PLATFORM FOR ADULT LEARNING IN EUROPE (EPALE) SEMINAR

Something you have learned and/or tried for the first time

New website for sharing resources and learning
Found out more about the EPALE community and how to use their website
Epale website- exciting
New EPALE website x 3
Engaged with voluntary organisations and learnt about new ways to engage with like-minded people on a European level

Belfast Festival of Learning

Lots of activities, but would be nice to see more events to do with Higher Education
Great! Fantastic resource
Glad to see the festival and hopefully it becomes an annual event
I only heard about this particular event and didn't know it was part of the Belfast Festival of Learning. I'm interested to find out more about it.
It should be an annual event + for all of NI

Improvements

Email drops to voluntary/private companies
No-it was great!
Please increase awareness via social media – email drop to large organisations
More practical session
Better information beforehand
More information on what the event entails

Comments

Very interesting

SING BECAUSE U CAN

Something you have learned and/or tried for the first time

Singing workshop
I never sang amongst people before and really enjoyed this session today
Singing and dancing to let off energy and emotion + chanting in a group.
Singing in a different manner.

Belfast Festival of Learning

Needs more profile in media

I had not heard of it before and I don't watch TV or read newspapers so I would not have seen it advertised. But I go onto social media so maybe some advertising in that direction?

Improvements

Better publicity about what's on

Better advertised – I saw no advertisements for the festival.

Staff at venue better informed – told us it started at 1.30-when we arrived at 2. It started at 2

Better advertised

As organiser- perhaps some points and tips how to advertise our events more effectively.

Comments

Great!

DOODLEBUGS WORKSHOP. "DOG DAYS" AT THE THINKING CUP CAFE

Something you have learned and/or tried for the first time

Book reading/craft workshops

Belfast Festival of Learning

Was great to be part of the festival.

Improvements

Much better publication of the events via social media and via the festival website. Very difficult to find an event listing – (blank under events on website) I eventually found the event PDF.

For this event the address and the name of the venue was completely wrong on the listing on the Festival PDF – resulted in being in the car for 40mins with 2 small kids. Not good for Doodlebugs and author who put on a great event Very difficult to discover it was on. Only found out by accident severe lack of promotion/PR/ marketing.

Comments

Excellent event, more more more 😊

We had great fun at our event.

GROUNDWORK NI – SPRING FLOWER PLANTING

Something you have learned and/or tried for the first time

Planting spring flower boxes

Bulb planting, herb planting

Planting summer flower beds and potatoes

Improvements

More notice
More activities
More notice and information

Comments

Really enjoyed the event x 2

GROUNDWORK NI – MID SHANKILL COMMUNITY GARDEN

Something you have learned and/or tried for the first time

I planted some poppies, carrots and a few other seeds
African drumming and my grand-daughter eating raw carrots for first time ever
Tasted kale - very nice, looked very healthy can't wait to have it with Sunday dinner as well as the lovely carrots
We pulled carrots and ate them
I tried some fresh vegetables
I planted poppies with my mummy
I tried a new drum
I tried playing new instruments
We used drums x 2
I planted some seeds
I played with some instruments
I washed some carrots
We tried planting some seeds and playing some drums

Belfast Festival of Learning

Seems very good
Great idea which everyone should be encouraged to participate in especially children
Very good idea, more of the public being interested would be great
Exciting

Improvements

Publicise more and get in touch with other community groups to attend
I feel it is already very good, like to see more people interested in it.
A toilet would be good for the kids.

Comments

Excellent
I liked it.
We all had fun
It was fun x 2
It seems very interesting
My children loved it
The two girls were lovely
I had lots of fun today. I look forward to the next event.

GROUNDWORK NI – FAMILY FRIENDLY DAY CONNSWATER

Something you have learned and/or tried for the first time

- Drumming x 5
- Sowing seeds
- Herb planting x4
- Tried oriental salad green

Belfast Festival of Learning

- Really enjoyable festival, great to get community together
- A very good idea
- Great idea!
- It's super
- Good

Improvements

- More activities
- Start a bit later
- Regular on going sessions
- No, was perfect
- Better advertising starting earlier in the year
- Giving more notice – for people to attend
- More notice to the public
- More activities
- More information

Comments

- Very friendly and peaceful atmosphere
- Was great!
- Very good, enjoyed the event

BARNARDO'S – AN AFTERNOON OF LEARNING FOR ALL THE FAMILY

Something you have learned and/or tried for the first time

- Cornflour, water mix
- Stuff for older children

Improvements

- More room
- Advertising wider – range of area

Comments

- It would be good when school was on
- It was very good
- Very well laid out
- Very good fun
- This was fun

Very well planned

FOOTPRINTS – CELEBRATION OF LEARNING AND STAYING INVOLVED

Something you have learned and/or tried for the first time

Going to do a cooking course and starting gardening course
Women's empowerment was highly informative, enjoyable and would love to do it again
I am doing the Women's Empowerment...it's fantastic.
Living Life to the Full
Health and wellbeing courses
Upcycling
Lighten your life
Healthy Body, healthy mind
Seniors over 60 club on Mondays.

Belfast Festival of Learning

Good to be involved
Great

Improvements

More events with more food
More information available
Would be good to offer more courses i.e. law or human rights for women.
More complementary therapy available to women.
To make it a more regular event
Maybe an evening one to help cater for people who could be working during the day or for other family members to attend for support for one of their family who may be receiving a certificate
Have more activities for younger and older people aged 18-65
Maybe longer.

Comments

More needs to be done for women to be educated
It has helped me a lot, I love learning new things. Really helped my mental health. I'd be lost without it
Very good
It is good for reinforcing confidence and giving recognition to a wide range of women's achievements.
We need more courses and programmes for women in Poleglass!
Great. Thank you. It made me feel appreciated and valued.
It is very interesting, the tutors are very pleasant and helpful.
Just make a mention of the seniors we are very important.

Comments

A showcase of people who genuinely care about progress and bettering the future.

Fantastic initiatives and dedication – inspiring!

I felt inspired and have optimism for the future

Really interesting and inspiring contributions from a range of organisations – thanks!

So many dedicated people!

Made me wish I was a musician – I saw tonnes of incredibly passionate pioneering women.

It was great to meet like-minded people, hear about a few different organisations and spread the word.

What you liked about being part of the Belfast Festival of learning

The Belfast 'Festival of Learning' week felt exactly like a festival i.e. it was fun, energetic and inspirational. The festival felt both inclusive and engaging as it had such a wide variety of workshops/programmes taking place right across Belfast, therefore it certainly did make Belfast feel like a true 'learning city'. The launch event was well organised, enjoyable and thought-provoking, and with our Chief Executive, Dr Michael McBride, being involved in the launch the commitment that we have from Belfast Trust in terms of learning is very much embedded from the very top of our organisation. From an operational perspective, we were delighted to be involved as it gave us an additional driver to promote the wide range of learning and development available both within Belfast Trust and across the city. It also provided a perfect platform to reiterate the importance of learning and how it can positively impact upon life and work experiences.

The staff we spoke to throughout the week from across all levels, specialisms and areas across the Trust, expressed their appreciation that Human Resources (HR) Learning & Development took the opportunity to engage with them to share what learning was available, and to provide advice on how to access training programmes that would specifically help them develop the skills required for their roles. On the other side of this interaction, it was great for us as a learning & development team to visit different Trust sites and staff groupings to meet and talk to staff in their own setting, giving us further insight into their needs, pressures and demands.

Lastly, we found all the excellent promotional information, brochures, logos and supporting materials useful in branding the activity and helpful in adding focus to our communications plan.

How you think your event went

Throughout the week of the festival we communicated with approximately 20,000 Trust staff, face-to-face, electronically and through the dissemination of printed materials to profile both the festival activities and the range of learning provided by the Trust through the HR Learning and Development Team. The team visited over 30 of our Trust sites including the main acute hospitals i.e. Royal Victoria, Belfast City, Mater and Musgrave Park, in addition to a wide range of community sites and facilities across Belfast. Promotional information was left at all sites and staff were encouraged to share the message with their own families and with the service users and families who attend the different properties. The response from staff was very positive and it gave them an opportunity to have face to face conversations about learning opportunities and what was particularly relevant to them. During these events, we asked staff to make a pledge in terms of what they were going to learn as part of the event and to share these were possible via Twitter. This was fully embraced and included our own Learning and Development team who made a pledge to continue enhancing their learning. In addition to the site visits, we also

had daily Festival of Learning articles and information uploaded onto our Trust Intranet Hub site. This site is accessed by staff throughout the organisation, and we have subsequently received a number of enquiries from staff regards further learning opportunities.



What you would do differently/what you would change

From a Trust perspective we probably could profile the event even more by working in partnership with our colleagues in the Community Development Directorate and also with the range of other training providers that work within the Trust. We could also make the “fun” side of learning more explicit and host some of the “fun” learning exhibitors in our Trust and with our clients. There is research to highlight the positive correlation between learning and post recovery from illnesses, perhaps better coverage from this perspective would be advantageous for our staff as care givers, but also for our patients/clients/service users and family members.

Any other comments

We feel this event will just get bigger and better over the coming years. Perhaps the timing could be looked at as it is quite close to the ‘Learning at Work’ Week which takes place in May. It would be useful to start planning now for next year and perhaps promote this a bit earlier to give organisations further time to prepare. It would also be useful to have a website or similar to share resources and provide opportunities for more collaborative working and partnerships to be formed.

Key lessons learnt

“One area we would like to see improvement on would be the timescale for promoting the event. We feel there was a very limited time period and we found that the festival in general wasn’t pushed as much as other festivals usually are.”

“I do think it's important to get publicity out earlier - people need info about a month in advance to plan their diaries”.

“Have a longer lead in to enable better promotion of all the Festival events.”

“Ensure there is no clash with other citywide events.”

“Promotional materials should be social media friendly to allow groups to circulate.”

“Develop a wide range of evaluation methods for participants attending festival events.”

“Engage with Higher Education and Health partners more...”

The Festival helped us gauge the level of endorsement and buy in for a citywide initiative that puts people at the heart of learning. The positivity it has generated has convinced us there is a real need for an annual Belfast Festival of Learning, and that it demonstrates the potential for how learning can be used to raise aspirations, self-esteem, develop a better understanding of diversity, empower people to take control of their own lives – all possible in a context where structures for planning and delivery put people at the heart of learning.

We hope to secure the resources needed to organise a second festival in 2017 and to build on the growing interest, creativity and enthusiasm whilst applying all the lessons learnt from this year.



Next Steps for “Belfast a Learning City”

We want to continue to promote the value of learning and the transformative power of learning to improve lives and the life chances of all citizens of Belfast.

To ensure that the general perception of learning is not skewed to employability to the detriment of all other reasons for learning, we have developed key messages to highlight how learning cuts across all aspects of life, from employability, health and wellbeing, developing life skills and building community cohesion.

These are:

LEARNING THROUGH EDUCATION

Learning is the foundation for life. Education and training gives us with opportunities to shape our future.

LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER

Learning brings us together. It develops respect and understanding about and within our communities.

LEARNING FOR AND IN WORK

Learning creates routes to work. It generates opportunities, develops our careers and strengthens our communities and city.

LEARNING FOR LIFE

Learning changes our lives for the better. Every day there is the chance to learn something new.

UNESCO GLOBAL NETWORK OF LEARNING CITIES

Moving forward on our strategy “Belfast a Learning City” we plan to lobby for the civic leadership needed to establish Belfast as part of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC).

We believe we already have the foundations on which to build Belfast as a Learning City within the UNESCO framework. For example, “Belfast a Learning City” closely matches the UNESCO definition of a learning city:

“A learning city promotes lifelong learning for all;

A learning city effectively mobilises its resources in every sector to:

- Promote inclusive learning from basic to higher education;
- Revitalise learning in families and communities;
- Facilitate learning for and in the workplace;
- Extend the use of modern learning technologies;
- Enhance quality and excellence in learning
- Foster a culture of learning throughout life.”

BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP OF UNESCO GNLC

- Receiving guidance and support during the journey towards building a learning city
- Being part of a dynamic network and strengthening your partnerships and networks
- Receiving recognition for your efforts and showcasing the actions of your city

CHALLENGES

Essential components of building a learning city

- Political will and commitment
- Governance and participation of all stakeholders
- Alignment and best use of resources

As UNESCO states, “A Learning City is not an abstract theory but an operational and pragmatic approach to the implementation of Lifelong Learning which needs a set of indicators or key features against which to monitor progress. This approach will help cities:

- To transform political and theory based discussions into concrete strategies and approaches
- To measure progress over time
- To evaluate the benefits of the strategies it has put in place

It is a continuous process – there is no magic line over which a city will pass in order to become known as a learning city.”



For more information on this report and “Belfast a Learning City”, please contact:

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