

GUIDELINES FOR CREATING JOY AT THE JOBCENTRE MAY 2022



Colchester+Ipswich
Museums



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art and culture

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1. Introduction

Joy at the Jobcentre is a programme of events that have been developed through a collaboration between Elle Root at Colchester and Ipswich Museums (CIMS) and Philip Carter-Goodyear from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and specifically the Jobcentre in Ipswich. It has been a project that has been delivered a variety of times since 2019 at different scales, from a single event in the Jobcentre to a complete take over for a week.

This report has been commissioned by Festival Bridge to understand how to create a Joy at the Jobcentre project in other areas of the East of England.

This report has been developed as a result of interviews and focus groups with the lead coordinators of the project, DWP staff, cultural organisations who delivered activities and DWP customers, to understand what they think makes Joy at the Jobcentre work so well. For a full list of interviewees please see Appendix A.

This report is primarily based on Joy at the Jobcentre Take Over that took place at Ipswich Jobcentre Plus in February half term in 2022.

2. What is Joy at the Jobcentre?

Joy at the Jobcentre is either a one off session or a free week-long series of events at the Ipswich Jobcentre Plus where customers are invited to come and have fun with the children they care for in a safe and supportive environment. The events change each day but include a variety of artists and creative organisations delivering workshops, events, productions and opportunities, as well as community support organisations delivering information and support.

Joy at the Jobcentre is targeted at DWP customers who are experiencing difficult home situations and/or may not have much experience in engaging with cultural activities, which may cause anxiety around participating. Both adults and children may also have disabilities or additional needs.

DWP customers sign up to take part for a morning or afternoon. Most people interviewed attended for two days, but two also attended for one day and one for four days.

'We had signed up for two days but because the kids loved it so much we came back on the other days, and I brought my little cousin with me too and he really enjoyed it. And because it was the whole afternoon's entertainment, I didn't mind spending the bus fare each day [£7]' – DWP customer

Joy at the Jobcentre in February 2022 consisted of 5 days of events, with each day including up to six activities a day that included:

- Museum object handling;
- Live animal handling and information;
- Arts and crafts where they got to take home high quality items, including a bag to put everything in;
- A theatre performance;
- Dance workshop;
- Music workshop;
- Soft play for under 5s;

- Self directed play area – such as tents, puzzles, musical instruments, Lego
- Books for children and adults from the library, including books relating to mental health and bereavement;
- A cervical screening nurse with information about cervical screening, key ring with additional information and opportunities to talk to a nurse about gynaecological health;
- STEM activity;
- Suffolk Family Carers;
- Refreshments for DWP customers– ideally with limited sugar and salt and no caffeine!
- Refreshments for cultural organisations and DWP staff.

Most people stayed between two and four hours.

‘It was a day out where the kids had fun and got to do something different that they wouldn’t normally get to do. It was also a break for me as I got to relax and sit down knowing that they could do one of the activities. It was a bit of loud peace’. – DWP customer

The resulting impact Joy at the Jobcentre has had on the participants relationships within their families as well as with the Jobcentre can be significant.

“Parents have shared how much of a difference they have seen in their children throughout the half-term week. Children who struggled to engage or whose confidence around others was low have surprised their parents by freely playing with other children and adults. One family included an eight-year-old girl with autism, who was a selective mute and communicates only with her mum. After two days of attending Joy at the Jobcentre, she was so excited about what she made and done, she spoke to her grandmother to tell her about it. Through the power of supporting a young person to express herself creatively her grandmother had heard her granddaughter speak for the first time in three years.” Philip Carter- Goodyear, JCP UC Service Delivery Team Leader

3. Why does Joy at the Jobcentre work so well?

From the consultations and interviews it has been established that there are a variety of reasons why Joy at the Jobcentre works so well, but they can be reduced to the relationships between the people involved and the established principles for the project.

The relationships:

It is the relationships between individuals that makes this project work and if this project is being created then it is this style of relationship that needs to be developed.

‘Start small and go for a coffee with someone from your Jobcentre and chat about what they are working on and what their aims are and then just start with a table of craft activities and free tickets and then grow from there’ – Elle Root, CIMS

- The relationship between Philip and Elle is key to the project. They are both highly respected within both their own workplaces, each other’s workplaces and also the wider community. They are embedded in their communities and have extensive networks that they can draw on to deliver the project. They also have an overview of what is needed and is happening for both sides of Joy at the Jobcentre.

- Philip undertakes a significant amount of advocacy within the DWP before each event takes place. As a result both his managers and the people working within the Jobcentre understand the purpose of Joy at the Jobcentre and what will take place.
- The DWP staff involved in Joy at the Jobcentre are *'a tightknit group, more so than other teams in this building.'* – DWP staff
- *'They [DWP customers] saw us as more human, rather than just someone from behind a desk. It felt more of a community.'* – DWP staff
- Joy at the Jobcentre is a space for [sideways talking](#), where the participants are concentrating so much on what they are doing, they can talk at the same time without having to engage with the emotional baggage around what they are talking about.

The starting principles for developing the event:

- At the beginning of the process of developing the first Joy at the Jobcentre both Elle and Philip wrote down on post-it notes their organisational goals, to work out where there was overlap and discovered that it *'boiled down to supporting families to have a better time that might lead to sustainable employment.'* – Philip Carter-Goodyear, DWP
- It is only delivered when Elle and Philip have time to deliver it, it is not on a set timetable with a set targets. *'Never having a plan means that we are flexible and can work out what we want to do, when we want to do it.'* – Elle Root, CIMS
- There is no set budget, and each event is developed to fill the available budget each time.
- Having Elle and Philip at all the events means that both cultural organisations and DWP staff know who to go to if there is an issue.
- Philip's *'everything is possible'* attitude means that every idea is welcomed and ways are found around them to make them work.
- The starting principles of *'going out to people in their own community is really important, and not expecting them to come to us'* – Tony Casement, New Wolsey Theatre.
- Most of the cultural organisations were asked to bring whatever activity they felt was appropriate to the event, but having an organisation that can be worked with to *'fill the gaps'* in the provision means that a variety of activities can be offered each day. In the February Joy at the Jobcentre this meant that Rock Paper Scissors were asked to come up with a variety of ideas and they were programmed around the rest of the events that were delivered.
- The expectations of many of the DWP customers was very low, but these expectations were completely exceeded:

'It was a lot better than expected – when you hear that the Jobcentre has free events you don't think it will be good but there was a lot on.' – DWP customer

'I thought 'Eugh, why would I want to take my kids to the Jobcentre?!' But when I got there it didn't feel like it was the Jobcentre at all – everyone was so friendly.' – DWP customer

- Joy at the Jobcentre is targeted at specific families that need additional support.
- The cultural providers *'need to be passionate about working with the kids.'* – DWP staff
- It is a response to many families feeling isolated, especially post pandemic when *'it's a big thing to get the kids back interacting with each other again, learning together and learning things they have never done before.'* – DWP staff

- Joy at the Jobcentre is now written into CIMS' Business Plan which means that it gets funding through the museum being a NPO. *'It was written in because of the partnership not the other way round'* – Elle Root, CIMS

The starting principles for delivering the events:

- The key to why these events work is because the customers are going to a safe space that they already know, as they have to attend the Jobcentre every two weeks - *'It is us going to them, which is the other way round to what is often the case'* – Fraser Wilson, Festival Bridge
- It is fun – *'I loved seeing my children happy, having fun and meeting new people'*- DWP customer
- It is free – *'Unfortunately a lot of our families don't know how to create a fun day for free with their kids; so, this did it for them.'* - DWP staff
- It is relaxed – *'They are seeing a different side to the Jobcentre and they are seeing it as a fun place to go to. As a result, there was big changes in some of the children's behaviour over a few days.'* - DWP staff
- Quality of the offer – *'We felt we were doing something new, something needed and a really creative idea.'* – Lulu Horsfield, Rock Paper Scissors
- Variety of the offer – some elements were quite simple, such as having Lego for children to play with, others were far bigger such as the New Wolsey Theatre production.
- Access to creativity that the DWP customers may not get at home because of costs or because they are concerned about making a mess in their homes, particularly if they are living in very small spaces.
- Drop-in activities so that children can spend as long or as short a time as they like at each activity.
- Having an area without an adult where children could interact on their own was felt to be valuable, in the February Joy at the Jobcentre it was a soft play area and some tents.
- Activities are not just seen as being about what is produced or achieved but also about the conversations that the families and cultural organisations have along the way. *'a lot of our work is about chatting and talking, alongside doing something else - building a bit of confidence and fun as well as taking something away at the end of the session.'* - Lulu Horsfield, Rock Paper Scissors
- There needs to be more than one activity on at one time – both Tony Casement from New Wolsey Theatre and a couple of parents said they wanted other things going on to support the performance and after the performance to turn the event into something larger and so that the families were entertained for more than one hour. *'Also if they have something friendly first they can then be 'blackmailed' into doing something more intimidating, such as watching a performance.'* - Tony Casement, New Wolsey Theatre.
- Parents/ carers can choose to participate in the activities with their children, but it is about ensuring personal choice and comfort. However, the DWP staff felt it was important that the parents and children did have opportunities to participate together.
- Parents not having to keep a close eye on children the whole time. *'It was nice that I could do something myself [painting a bag] and know the kids are still being watched over'* – DWP customer
- Having DWP staff participating in the activities who have emotional intelligence to understand when someone is not feeling comfortable and can support them. *'The*

entertainers were so good with the kids that we got to interact and talk to the parents properly and show that we are human.’ – DWP staff.

- The event humanises the DWP staff. One of the DWP customers had social anxiety and a number of medical conditions so seeing the DWP member of staff there with her grandchildren *‘made me feel more comfortable’*.
- There needs to be enough to occupy families for a minimum of two hours and ideally at least half a day.
- Having the event based in the town centre based meant it was central for customers to attend.
- Parking needs to be identified for the cultural organisations.
- The cultural organisations came with everything that they needed so that the DWP staff did not have to supply anything or have to tidy up at the end of the day.

4. How to get artists and creative organisations involved in Joy at the Jobcentre

All of the creative organisations that were involved in Joy at the Jobcentre Cultural Focus Group worked with disadvantaged families as part of their organisation’s purpose and wanted to give disadvantaged families, young people and adults opportunities to engage with culture. It should be noted that this is because *‘we are now in a place where we have to, and should, hand over creativity to people and not just do art to them as part of the [ACE] Lets Create agenda’*. - Tony Casement, New Wolsey Theatre

The cultural organisations found out about Joy at the Jobcentre either through conversations with Elle or Philip, an email from Elle or through the Ipswich Cultural Education Partnership (ICEP) meetings. They were given four months’ notice of the event, which all felt was enough time to incorporate into their work schedules.

‘Having something pop up in my Inbox about doing something in the Jobcentre is really different and intriguing – we had never done anything like that before and it really piqued my interest.’ - Sophie Lander, DanceEast

‘Elle and Philip made it really easy for us to be involved. Basically, they made the initial contact, said are you interested, do you want to be involved and can you commit. Because we trust both of them it was easy to say yes straight away. We got told the plans in plenty of time so all we had to do as an organisation was pack up our kit and turn up on the day.’ - Lulu Horsfield, Rock Paper Scissors.

However as a result of already knowing about Joy at the Jobcentre project, New Wolsey Theatre asked to participate in the February 2022 event.

What cultural organisations need to know to agree to participate in Joy at the Jobcentre

- The date of the event.
- The ages of the target audience i.e. if it is a specific session/ day for under 5s or 5 – 8 year olds or if it is open to everyone of any age and ability.
- Conversations need to be backed up by emails setting out exactly what is needed and timescales.
- That they have a budget, either internally or available through Joy at the Jobcentre, to deliver the event/ activities.
- That there are lots of activities taking place in the same space.

- Offering a site visit in advance could be useful for some of the cultural organisations, particularly for organisations who are delivering performances.
- That they can have access to additional space if they need to for their activity. E.g. New Wolsey Theatre needed a space to prepare the actors as well as a space to deliver the performance.
- Setting up a team email/ WhatsApp for each day Joy at the Jobcentre is being delivered means that the cultural organisations can support each other and think about how their events can complement each other. *'Maybe if we had know what Dance East were going to be in the same room we could have done print making about movement– so that we are more of a team and less of separate entities.'* – Lulu Horsfield, *Rock Paper Scissors*.

From the first contact all that is needed is confirmation that the organisation wants to take part; the detail is then worked out later.

Issues for cultural organisations that may impact their participation in a Joy at the Jobcentre

- The arts and crafts activities felt it was easy to engage with the families in the Jobcentre because *'they felt safe and it was familiar'*. However the performing artists, from New Wolsey Theatre and Dance East, felt it was harder to engage with the families, possibly because there was less familiarity with the art forms.
- Tony Casement from New Wolsey Theatre said that they had an audience of 33 people to their performance, which he felt is financially unviable and therefore they are dependent on their board/ CEO deciding that this is an appropriate use of their resources. Tony felt that if they were to participate in the future they would try and make it more financially viable *'building a programme to build an audience for the event in advance'*.
- It should never be underestimated how little cultural capital some people have. Tony Casement from New Wolsey Theatre was *'surprised that both the DWP customers and staff felt that it was intimidating to encounter theatre in that space. Which we hadn't really anticipated, we thought by us coming to the Jobcentre it would take the sting out of the tail and make it more inclusive. But there was a strong reaction – 'do we have to wear a tuxedo?'*
- Post covid pandemic a number of organisations are going through change, with new CEO's, and new or completed funding strategies which means they are unable to commit to projects in the future.
- Dance East found it difficult to engage with children as the artist needed to engage with a young person to demonstrate the work they were doing before they could get other children involved.
- It can be difficult for organisations to deliver activities off-site if they are also needing to use their staff to draw people into their venues, particularly if the events are held during the school holidays.
- Plenty of space is needed for activities that need physical movement, such as the workshop by DanceEast.

5. How to get DWP staff involved in Joy at the Jobcentre

It is key that a DWP manager is the person responsible for coordinating and delivering Joy at the Jobcentre; but they need to get the DWP staff on board to help recruit customers and deliver the event on the day.

The DWP staff spoken to in the DWP staff Focus Group were all very committed to the project and felt that it brought value to both the DWP customers and also to the Jobcentre.

Below are some principles that need to be taken into account when getting DWP workers engaged with Joy at the Jobcentre.

- The DWP staff need to know about the event at least two months in advance.
- Having a close knit team at the DWP helps. It was thought that other DWP teams are not always so close and also in some areas the equivalent members of staff work within the council rather than within the Jobcentre. Therefore the staff who support customers getting into work will need to be identified for each area that is trying to establish a Joy at the Jobcentre.
- The DWP staff got involved in the project with *'a bit of having to and a bit of wanting to. We didn't really have a choice, but we did enjoy it!'* – DWP staff
- The DWP staff signed themselves up for half a day each to support Joy at the Jobcentre, but they also had to make sure that they had cover for their day-to-day work so they were not all away from their desks at the same time.
- The DWP staff need to know what they are doing and when in advance of the day.
- Because Philip did so much of the preparatory work for Joy at the Jobcentre, the DWP staff were able to fit in their contribution to the event within their working hours without having to compromise on their work or put in additional hours. Therefore, there was no extra work involved in participating in a Joy at the Jobcentre for the DWP staff.

6. How to get the DWP customers involved in Joy at the Jobcentre

The DWP customers were targeted by the DWP team for Joy at the Jobcentre as families identified via the local authority as requiring enhanced support under the supporting families initiative outlined by the Ministry for Levelling Up. Suffolk County Council provide the DWP with a list of people they would like us to offer enhanced mentoring and coaching to. This list is then used to pinpoint customers living in the Ipswich and Greater Ipswich area.

The targeted DWP customers were informed about Joy at the Jobcentre event in a variety of ways, but everyone interviewed decided to be involved after only being told about the event once.

- Most people were told about the event by their Work Coach either through face-to-face conversations or through a phone call. The DWP staff had a brief overview that they could refer to with the details of the event.
- Others found a short note in their Work Journal, that set out what was happening and when; however it must be noted that not everyone has a Work Journal as not everyone is in the process of trying to get into work.
- The combination of both being told about the event by a trusted DWP staff and having an email reminder/ Work Journal note was felt to be the best way to hear about the event.
- However, one person also wanted a visual leaflet with minimal words to put on her fridge, which was backed up by a member of DWP staff who wanted a poster they could distribute and put up in the Jobcentre. *'I have dyspraxia that means I forget everything. If I had a leaflet on my fridge I am more likely to remember to go to it. But it can't have lots of words on it.'* - DWP customer

All the DWP customers needed to know about the event about one week in advance.

Several of the DWP customers had children with additional needs, therefore it was important that they knew in advance that their children's additional needs could be accommodated and accepted.

The DWP staff then signed up the families, the number of children and their ages into a spreadsheet. However, families felt that they could drop out of events if they couldn't come or attend additional events without having to sign up in advance. This flexibility is key.

What the customers need to know in advance to sign up:

- What will be happening
- When it will be happening
- The type of activities that will be on
- It is free
- That it will be good for their children
- That there will be refreshments
- They can stay for as long as they want
- They can participate as much as they like
- The age range that each days activities are targeted at
- That the event is appropriate for children of all abilities
- That there are easily accessible toilets
- Aprons will be available to protect clothes

Why the DWP customers might attend:

- Although several people said they had social anxiety they pushed themselves to attend because *'the work coach told me it would be good for the kids and it was free.'* Emphasising how good it will be for the children was therefore seen as a key reason for pushing the parents out of their comfort zones.
- The DWP customers can do things that they may not feel comfortable doing at home, on their own or in an unfamiliar environment. Being creative is something that is appreciated by the DWP customers, but people living in small enclosed spaces do not feel they can be creative at home as it might make a mess. Therefore having the opportunity to be creative (whilst ensuring they don't make a mess of their clothes) is highly valued. *'We can't have pens at home cos the kids might draw on the walls and things and my flat is so small that there is no room to do anything like that' – DWP customer*
- Knowing that the other parents/ carers are in similar circumstances to them.

Why the DWP customers may not attend:

- The cost of attending. If a family need to get public transport to the Jobcentre or have to pay for car parking, it is money that could be spent on food. *'I signed up for two days because I didn't want to spend £8 on another day getting there.'* – DWP customer
- Social anxiety was an issue for many of the DWP customers – they were concerned about leaving the house, interacting with others and whether their children would behave appropriately.
- The DWP staff found it hardest to sign up customers to the theatre performance and several of the customers who were interviewed said that they were anxious about attending because *'I didn't think [my child] would still for a whole hour and they would embarrass me by running around'*. However, everyone that did attend the performance, despite their fears, really enjoyed it. Therefore, there could be a film of a theatre performance for people to understand what they will be going to in advance.

7. What needs to be in place to create a Joy at the Jobcentre elsewhere?

The project needs coordinators from both a lead cultural organisation and the DWP who get on and can work well together. It should be noted that the relationship that Philip and Elle have developed is one that Tony Casement of Wolsey Theatre is 'envious' of, therefore it is not an easy relationship to develop, it is one that is dependent on people having similar attitudes and interests.

Coordinators therefore need to be identified in each area that a Joy at the Jobcentre is being delivered. This could be an issue because amongst the Cultural Organisations Focus Group no one felt it fitted with their current roles and felt that they would want to take on such a role, however they were able to identify other people who they thought could take on this role. The Cultural Organisations Focus Group were therefore asked to identify someone who may be able to take on Elle's role elsewhere in the region. The following people/ organisations were suggested:

- Hannah Salisbury from Bury St Edmunds Archives thought that the archives could be involved but it depended on there being funding for the community engagement roles after their current NLHF funding is completed in September 2022;
- Moyses Hall in Bury St Edmunds;
- The Garage in Kings Lynn;
- Melissa Hawker at Ancient House Museum in Thetford;
- Colin Pool at Haverhill Arts Centre;
- Possibly the National Horse Racing Museum, but they have just lost key staff members;
- The Community Producer at the Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds.

It must be noted that finding the capacity to take the lead on this style of project may be a significant issue. *'I don't think for us it is something that we can lead on; because we are already struggling with capacity because of the last couple of years. We have to be careful on what we can now take on ... it is how we manage our workloads at the minute. It was perfect for us as we could just rock up and deliver the workshop.'* – Sophie Lander, DanceEast

Tony also felt that New Wolsey Theatre may lead on a project, but *'only if it was in a priority area, as part of the government's levelling up agenda and the ACE NPO agenda'*. Tony also felt that there would be enthusiasm from the local cultural organisations if a Joy at the Jobcentre was created in one of the [levelling up areas](#) identified by the government such as Great Yarmouth, Kings Lynn and West Norfolk, North Norfolk, Peterborough, Southend-on-Sea or Tendring.

Local consortiums of cultural organisations need to get together to work out which organisations could be the lead in their town or region, this could be through the local Cultural Education Partnership meetings, but it would need to be a specific element within the meeting's agenda.

How to identify other Philip Carter-Goodyears was harder to establish; but each Jobcentre will have to be approached as an individual organisation and the most likely receptive manager needs to be identified.

Therefore, three roles have been identified and briefly scoped out below.

- The coordinator person from the lead cultural organisation needs to recruit, manage and enthuse other local cultural organisations to be involved. This person needs:
 - to be embedded in both the community and cultural community;
 - to have this project as a core part of their paid job;

- to have a fundamental commitment to the principle of culture for all and social justice;
 - to be a 'doer';
 - to be organised;
 - to be someone with energy, creativity and thoughtfulness.
- Someone from the DWP to manage the development of the project and the delivery on the day. This person needs:
 - to be committed to the idea that the Jobcentre is a space for communities to develop skills;
 - to have networks within the local community to engage organisations that can support the DWP customers, such as health professionals;
 - to be respected by their colleagues;
 - to be hands on and set up the spaces in advance of the cultural organisations coming in;
 - to believe in the power of cultural engagement and social justice;
 - a view that 'everything is possible'.
 - A mentor role – ideally have someone from Joy at the Jobcentre in Ipswich to mentor people who are delivering similar projects.

In the Cultural Organisation Focus Group there was a discussion that some training could be given to the Jobcentre staff about marketing the programme. This could be given by the cultural organisations themselves, who could also help to develop a visually enticing flyer.

8. How to manage a Joy at the Jobcentre

Budget:

- The budget has changed for each event depending on what is available, but the event in February 2022 was delivered for £3,377. Funding came from Festival Bridge, Suffolk Family Focus, Ipswich Cultural Education Partnership (ICEP) and the core Ipswich Museum budget. However other Joy at the Jobcentre events have taken place for far less money.

Before delivering Joy at the Jobcentre:

- Contact cultural organisations about four months before the event is to take place.
- The DWP manager needs to let DWP staff know about the event about two months in advance.
- The DWP customers need to know about one week in advance of the event. DWP staff put the families names, ages and contact details in a spread sheet next to the day and time they would be attending.
- Ensure both cultural organisations and DWP staff know the age group that each day is targeted at.
- Ensure that the DWP staff are aware of the project and what it will entail.
- Engage the DWP staff in the value of cultural engagement, this has included delivering team building exercises in the local theatre.
- Show that the DWP's staff are valued by giving them free tickets to events and performances.
- Most of the management of the events is done by Elle with Philip advising where needed.

- Philip tidies up the room that Joy at the Jobcentre is taking place in, with the help of the Estate Manager, and then sets out the room on the day.
- Have packing lists of everything that needs to be taken to the Jobcentre, ensuring that it includes everything that could ever possibly be needed to ensure that there are no additional costs or hassle for DWP staff. See Appendix B for the February 2022 Joy at the Jobcentre packing list.
- Have an area for the cultural organisations to drop off and unload easily.
- Be open to cultural organisations approaching Joy at the Jobcentre team to participate.

Delivering Joy at the Jobcentre

For a Joy at the Jobcentre to be delivered the following is needed:

- The space needs to be made safe for families – this can take a day beforehand to remove anything unnecessary and to set it up for workshops/ performances.
- Be flexible – in terms of what is delivered on the day, so that children’s interests can be catered for and also so that families can just turn up to events if they decide they like them.
- Have more than one space – so that the cultural organisations have a space to go for breaks, but also that can be used as a quiet space for families if needed.
- Easy access toilets that mean that people who have toilet urgency have swift access to a toilet.
- A functioning lift if the event is not on the ground floor.
- Ensuring there is also a diversity of people delivering the activities. For Joy at the Jobcentre an intermediary organisation, Art Eat, was paid to commission an artist of mixed heritage who used a diversity of styles to deliver some of the arts and crafts workshops.
- A variety of activities so if a child does not like one activity, there is something else for them to do.
- Having activities that include making things that the children can take home with them, ideally also including a bag that they can put everything in. The variety of arts and crafts activities, such as stop frame animation, printing and crafting, means the artists can respond to the children’s interests. *‘My daughter loves koalas and so she made a koala hand puppet. She still plays with it now.’ – DWP customer*
- Enough activities to entertain a family for at least two hours, so that they feel it is worth the day out. It was felt that the theatre production could have been supplemented by arts and crafts activities before and after the performance. One woman stayed for about four hours on the arts and crafts day.
- Having activities that are appropriate for a variety of ages and ability whilst also being a space that the parents can relax because they know that other families have similar issues.
- Having activities for under threes as well as older children, such as soft play.
- Being a secure space so that carers are not concerned that their children will run off.
- Friendly staff *‘there were two ladies who were really engaging’ – DWP customer*
- Having additional information about health and wellbeing that was targeted at the parents. One DWP customer *‘got a key ring to remind me to book a cervical screening test – as a result I have actually done it. If I didn’t have the key ring I would have forgotten again.’*
- Having a nurse/ medical worker to talk to the parents/ carers was really appreciated because *‘I could ask the questions that I don’t usually get to ask at the doctors when you only have 3 minutes, so I was able to talk about my cervical screening and contraception.’ - DWP customer*

- Additional resources including the library was greatly appreciated because *'my mum has recently died so I was able to pick some books up on bereavement for me and my dad as well as my kids.'* – DWP customer
- Ample space for the activities and for children to run around.
- A comfortable space to sit with beanbags and cushions.
- Staff having access to a smaller space that could be used to take people out of the large space if they are feeling overwhelmed, in the February Joy at the Jobcentre event this was the staff kitchen.
- Aprons so that children and parents/ carers do not need to worry about getting clothes dirty/ washing clothes.
- Free tickets for attending activities and performances back in the cultural institutions for both the DWP customers and the DWP staff. It should be noted that these need to be given to the parents/ carers not the children so that they do not get lost and so the parents/ carers are aware of them.
- Refreshments for the people from the cultural organisations.
- Nappies, wipes and changing mat

9. What the customers, cultural organisations and DWP staff get from being involved in Joy at the Jobcentre

Below are some of the benefits that the cultural organisations, DWP staff and customers gained from being involved in Joy at the Jobcentre, that could be used to persuade other people to establish their own event.

Cultural organisations:

- All the cultural organisations felt that they were working with diverse audiences who they do not usually get to work with.
'The primary reason we wanted to be involved was to engage with new audiences. It was also an experiment as to whether we could do something else like this further down the line.' – Tony Casement, New Wolsey Theatre.

'We are a building that most people would walk straight past, it is therefore important that we challenge that perception and break that down.' – Sophie Lander, DanceEast.
- It was also a learning experience for several of the cultural organisations about how they are perceived and how they need to change some of their practices to work with more diverse audiences. *'I was surprised how nervous people were to engage, considering we had hoola hoops, scarves and pop music that they were familiar with. You could see the nervousness that was coming from their grown-ups that was affecting whether the kids interacted with us... an important learning curve for us is actually how inaccessible we are for people and how scary and intimidating we can be.'* - Sophie Lander, DanceEast
- The cultural organisations also gained a lot from being with other cultural organisations and seeing people they had not connected with in the real world due to the pandemic.
- The cultural organisations also felt it was important that the families could see that there were diverse ways to make a living, and it could be achieved by being creative. *'Our organisation wanted to get to hard-to-reach people and to give them inspiration; to look at different ways of working, it could be the arts or to get involved in the different organisations.'* – Susan Palmer, Art East

- Joy at the Jobcentre can impact on who is involved in standard programmes organisations deliver. *'We had two young people come and join our Youth Theatre as a result of seeing the show in the Jobcentre. And I am not sure they would ever had done that if they had not met us in that space.'* – Tony Casement, New Wolsey Theatre
- Everyone felt that it was important that cultural organisations needed to 'make the space' for this work and not just added onto an already full workload.

DWP staff:

- Philip Carter-Goodyear says the purpose of the Jobcentre is to *'build a community that will result in jobs.'*
- *'We got a first-hand experience of knowing what it is like for our families. We don't usually get to sit and chat with them and meet their children. But when we have troubled kids that are not going into school, we only get to see what mum and dad are telling us, but on those days we can see the whole dynamic of the families. So we can help support them a bit better.'* – DWP staff
- As a result of meeting the cultural organisations the Jobcentre was more likely to work with them in the future. *'It was great to talk to the providers, I know that our families do things with Rock Paper Scissors, but I was never sure what they did, so it was great to meet them and to learn what they can bring to the table and what they do.'* – DWP staff
- *'We could see that the children were actively engaging in the activities. They were choosing to be there and that was great to see.'* - DWP staff
- *'I have got a better relationship with many of our families – the families can now really to us better as a result.'* – DWP staff
- *'I think the families are now more likely to come into the Jobcentre and attend their appointments. They can see we are human and now feel the space is more relaxed. And now it is a conversation opener as I now know the children and can ask about them.'* – DWP staff.
- *'It has made me more confident in what we could do in the Jobcentre. I could now run well-being related activities, such as mindfulness or relaxation. This has shown that we can get hard-to-reach customers in and engaged in our activities.'* – DWP staff
- *'It is nice to get away from your normal work for a change. It is more holistic, and we get more out of it because we see them getting more out of it.'* – DWP staff
- *'I loved it. The whole day was fun. Because of Covid it was lovely to hear children laugh in the Jobcentre. There is nothing better.'* – DWP staff

DWP customers:

The DWP customers were asked what they got from being involved in Joy at the Jobcentre, the key responses can be broken down into:

- Being sociable:
 - The children got to see other children from school that they knew in a different context *'and having a laugh and being kids again.'*
 - Meeting and interacting with other children that they have not met before, particularly parents with very young children have only known life in the Covid 19 pandemic. *'My daughter [4 years old] hasn't gone to playgroups or anything yet so it really built her confidence and has got her more independent and excited about doing things with other children.'*
 - Meeting parents of children who attend the same school as their children and therefore extending their own circle of acquaintances.

- Respite for the parents/ carers
 - *'I got a break because they were so occupied they weren't fighting and arguing and the holidays can be so expensive it was great that it was free.'*
 - *'I really did enjoy that day; I was laughing all that day'*
- It made the Jobcentre a more welcoming space – *'my son had covid recently and couldn't go to school but I had to go to the Jobcentre and he got all excited asking if there would be live animals there again.'* – DWP customer
- The children got to learn facts and skills. One DWP customer said that their children got to *'learn about the animals, what they eat and where they live. My boy also wants to become a YouTube blogger so learning how to make the film was great cos I cant teach him that.'*

10. Questions that need to be answered as part of replicating Joy at the Jobcentre

Below are some questions that will need to be answered during the process of replicating Joy at the Jobcentre project:

- Does it work because of the relationship between Elle and Philip? Is this central to such a project or can it be created by a central person who is negotiating between the organisations?
- Can this style of project only work in large towns which have a large catchment area of customers? Or can it work in smaller towns and rural communities?
- How do you identify a Philip in an organisation?
- Are there people in the local community that can take on Elle and Philip's roles who are outside of the institutions?
- Does Joy at the Jobcentre have to be within a Jobcentre or could it be delivered outside in the community, such as a [Greener Queen Edith's Day](#)? Would it have the same impact?
- Could there be funding available to pay for staff to deliver this project? This would then mean that they could have more commitment to deliver it.
- Even though several of the DWP customers took part in the theatre performance and they liked the idea of attending a performance in a theatre, they still came up with reasons why they would not actually visit the theatre, such as money, time, their children's behaviour and other people's attitudes. Therefore, research needs to be undertaken to understand how the families that did attend Joy at the Jobcentre performances could be turned into theatre visitors.
- Possibly having confident families, such as the children and grandchildren of DWP staff and cultural organisations involved as well, to give the children of the DWP customers an example to follow could make it easier for the children to engage in dance and theatre. This is a model that has worked with the [Dundee Science Centre](#) holiday clubs, where they have the equivalent of the children from the DWP families participating in science clubs alongside children whose parents work at the university.
- Research will need to be undertaken in each area of the East of England for a potential Joy at the Jobcentre to establish who are the key and enthusiastic people in each Jobcentre.

Appendix A: List of interviewees

Coordinators:

Eleanor (Elle) Root, Collections and Learning Curator (Community), Colchester + Ipswich Museums

Fraser Wilson, Senior Manager: Festival Bridge

Philip Carter-Goodyear, JCP UC Service Delivery Team Leader, Ipswich JCP

DWP Staff Focus Group:

Elizabeth, Disability Employment Advisor, Ipswich

Linda, Suffolk Family Focus Advisor and lead for Homeless, Suffolk

Michelle, Disability Employment Advisor, Ipswich

Theresa, Suffolk Family Focus Advisor and lead for Refugees, Suffolk

Cultural Organisations Focus Group:

Hannah Salisbury, Suffolk Archives

Lulu Horsfield, Rock Paper Scissors

Sophia Allen, Britten Pears Arts

Sophie Lander, DanceEast

Susan Palmer, Art Eat

Tony Casement, New Wolsey Theatre

Telephone interviews with ten DWP customers

Jobcentre Event – suggested materials list

Fun Things!

A range of activities, which facilitate families to get involved more or less directly with facilitators is useful. Many Jobcentre clients are experiencing difficult home situations and/or not have much experience in engaging with cultural activities, which may cause anxiety around participating. Some people will want lots of guidance and others may want to hang back and do something without facilitator involvement until they feel more comfortable.

To further facilitate engagement, you can offer resources for people to take home, for example colouring resources, books, cress seed kits, or other simple craft activities. If you do this, include everything that's needed and don't assume on any other available resources at home.

If you distribute marketing materials, ensure that these prominently feature free events.

As the Jobcentre's cleaning team are likely to have to clear up mess, avoid glitter or anything which is likely to create a lot of mess. Bring tablecloths to protect Jobcentre tables.

Facilitated Activities

As families tend to stay for many hours and come back each day for events that run over several days, it's important to have a range of activities available. As families will often come in groups of mixed ages with one grown-up, activities that are exciting for a range of ages.



Activities that have worked well at previous events include;

- Live animal handling (often a draw for uncertain families to come along and then take part in cultural activities)
- Badge making
- T-shirt/canvas bag design
- Mask making
- Animation
- Printing
- Seed planting
- Museum object handling

Self-Directed Activities



Story books

Sensory toys

Building blocks

Musical instruments

Lego

Materials to Take Home



Cress seeds and cotton wool

Colouring-in sheets and crayons/felt-tips (if you use colouring pencils include a sharpener)

Story books

Activity booklets which introduce people to your organisation

Space

A room for facilitators to sit with a drink for a break

A quiet space for participants who feel overwhelmed by the main space

Looking after the participants

Soft drinks (individual servings to avoid spillages) and bottled water

Snacks, including those that are packaged so people can easily leave with them for the journey home

Baby changing mat and nappies (just in case!)

Baby wipes

Hand gel

Looking after yourselves and other facilitators

Tea, coffee, and milk

Soft drinks

Snacks

A pack of 'thank you' biscuits for the staff room