



YOUNG PEOPLE AND FUN PALACES

'Ask the Kids'

This guide is for people (probably adults) wanting to get young people involved in their Fun Palaces. If you are a young person wanting to make a Fun Palace, we have a toolkit for you telling you how to do it [here](#).

Murray Melvin tells us that Joan always said 'ask the kids' not just what they wanted to do – but how THEY would do it, empowering them to create their own engagement. When Joan asked the kids what they wanted at the Stratford Easter Fair in 1974, (a very early iteration of a Fun Palace), they replied with animals. And so it happened. The children set up much of the fair themselves, making the banners and deciding what stalls would be there. If you are wanting to think how you can better hand over to young people to ensure that they get the most out of their Fun Palace, hopefully this toolkit will help.

During the Fun Palaces weekend of celebration in October, hundreds of buildings, venues, spaces, and places, indoor and outdoor, are handed over to communities, to share and celebrate their greatness. It is an opportunity to do things differently for a day, to test new ideas, take risks, to encourage, and champion change. What better time to welcome young people to join in the fun? Chances are, you'll learn a thing or two, and maybe spot where changes can be made within your own space or service to better include and provide for the younger members of your community. And did we mention fun? Their youthful energy and playfulness is surely infectious and guaranteed to stimulate imaginative thinking!

We recognise that young people are often overlooked and excluded from decision making about public spaces, and rarely given a voice in shaping plans for services and amenities which should be accessible to them. Our belief is that young people can and should be a driving force in communities, bringing fresh ideas and innovation alongside energy and vision for the places they call home. And that those holding the power and resources should be finding ways to make sure that they're listened to and given the support they need to lead. We hope this toolkit will be a useful guide for anyone embarking on that journey.

Why do you want to engage young people?

There are many ways for young people to join in and it's important to start by understanding why you want them to engage. Maybe you're excited by the prospect of working alongside young people, feeling that everyone will benefit from their involvement. Perhaps you see young people excluded from your buildings and communities and want to address this. Or maybe you already work with young people, and want to bring your own skills in this to your Fun Palace. Whatever the reason (and there could be many) thinking this through will help you plan and to spot opportunities, not just on Fun Palaces weekend but long afterwards as well.

Handing Over

It is very common for adults to make assumptions about what they think young people want and need. Ask them directly and we are often surprised by the answer! Adults may have lived experiences that children and young people don't, but we cannot claim to know what it is to be a young person in the world today. And there is so much they can teach us if we allow ourselves to be taught. Their passions, interests, ideas and observations are all as valuable as the knowledge they hold, and the way they view and interact with everything around them. We simply cannot assume to know these things and if we open our minds to learning from them, wonderful things can happen. Everyone needs to feel valued and to know they have worth. Being recognised as an expert and asked to share their expertise could have a hugely positive impact on a young persons' self-belief and provide a much needed injection of confidence.

Of course how you hand over to young people will depend on their age, for younger children it may be a case of handing over to them to run an activity on the day, whereas for teenagers they could run larger sections of the Fun Palace, as well as taking on logistics and planning.

There have been many successes over the years in terms of Fun Palaces handing over to young people; Morden Hall Fun Palace in South London 2017-19 was led by young people, with an adult admin - over 1000 people turned up on the day. Marketing efforts included one of the teen Makers involved getting on his bike and leaving invitations to take part at every single interesting looking community centre/youth club/cafe he knew within cycling distance. Arc Stockton offered their one of their Fun Palaces to a group of local teenagers, and had several Fun Palaces led by Young People after. Quarterhouse in Folkstone put a call-out in the window for people who wanted to make the Fun Palace happen, a 10 year old answered the call and taught origami (with his mum reading her book in the corner to avoid any safeguarding issues). And 16 year old Maker William, has been running a Dungeons and Dragons FP in the corner of his local pub for the last couple of years. To name but a few.

Some other things to think about:

- **Safeguarding.** This can feel scary if you haven't had to do it before. Your best bet is to make your Fun Palace in collaboration with a group or venue who already work with young people. They will likely already have safeguarding policy in place which can be used to cover your Fun Palace - be sure to have this conversation early on. Another thing can be to ask parents / carers to accompany younger children taking part, so that you're not responsible for them. There is some helpful info on safeguarding for [here](#) at the NSPCC website)
- **Communications** - language, imagery, branding, reach (if you're working with older young people they could take charge of this).
- **Meetings to plan your Fun Palace** – how, where, who – consider best ways for young people to engage, the logistics, capacity and resources available. Let them take charge of their own meetings.
- **Programming** - Could they programme their own space or element of the event? Ask the children / young people involved in your Fun Palace what they would like to teach the grown-ups, it could be anything from coding,

to paper flower making to them having a go at leading a drama class or music workshop.

- **Marketing:** Many young people have excellent skills in design software (such as Canva) and ideas for eye-catching designs and attention grabbing headlines. Could they advise or lead on marketing for your event?
- **Publicity:** Always remember the importance of peer influence. Word of mouth among young people is by far the greatest publicity tool. Even if you only have a handful already involved, if they all brought a friend, who then also bring their friend, the numbers quickly multiply.
- **Budget:** Give them a budget or encourage them to take control of their own fundraising (there are some tips for fundraising in the Fun Palaces for 16-18s toolkit.)
- Ask what they need, try to give it to them
- Take risks! View it as a playful experiment

Also, do share our [Making Fun Palaces for 16-18s Toolkit](#), which has all of the info in it for young people wanting to make a Fun Palace.