

Workshops

In each of the areas **Family Connections** worked we began by offering a programme of short taster workshops on a variety of subjects including animation, music-making, film-making, internet safety, digital photography, creating e-cards and much more. Many were held during the day in school holidays, whilst others were held after-school or on Saturdays.

Working with partners such as **Somerset Skills & Learning** and **Somerset Countryside Wildlife Trust** we also shared resources, bringing a digital element to other activities. Family sessions on fishing and pond dipping for example also involved learning about digital photography and macro-photography to help record finds.

93% of participants had never attended a workshop on film and digital technologies and many went on to learn much more, coming back again and again.

Experienced tutors who also work in the creative industries as film-makers, animators and musicians led all our activities. Thanks to support from the **Big Lottery** we were also able to provide crèche facilities, help with travel costs, support workers and refreshments.

Once we had met and worked with families in each of the areas, a steering group was established to take the learning forward. The steering groups included families and local community representatives including PCSO's, children's centre staff, youth club leaders and local councillors.



They discussed what families might like to do next and together we came up with exciting activities that also benefitted the wider community.

These included:

- Setting up and running a Family Radio station, broadcasting live on FM!
- Creating an online digital treasure hunt so that local residents and visitors could discover more about their town.
- Hosting their own mini-Olympics and building a website dedicated to sport, giving families ideas for things to do together and celebrating local opportunities/facilities*
- Making a film to promote local initiatives such as a community allotment scheme, later screened at a community family learning day.

The first phase of **Family Connections** has now come to an end but our commitment to family learning continues. We continue to raise funds for activities and there are a wealth of resources that families can use so get in touch *and get involved!*

*Winner: Best Digital Discoverers Event 2011, awarded by the Campaign for Learning and Toshiba and presented at the House of Lords.

Somerset Film

Somerset Film is a registered charity and social enterprise, dedicated to encouraging, facilitating and developing the use of moving image and creative technology.

We do this in a variety of ways, working with organisations, communities, individuals and across the county.

Teamwork

Kirsty Bucknell *Project Co-ordinator*

Holly Wicks *Project Support*

Deb Richardson *Associate Producer Somerset Film*

Phil Shepherd *Facilitator Somerset Film*

Tutors

James Birkett | Will Bix | Alistair Cambell

Paul Collins | James Dean | Michael Howard

Warren Luxford | James Price | Josh Randall

Alex Richardson | Adam Shepherd

Pete Snelling | Gemma Williams | Pip Harris



design: lumby/fumille 01458 251300



Partners and supporters

- Arts Council England
- Big Lottery Fund
- Birchfield School
- Glastonbury Children's Centre
- Highbridge Children's Centre
- Milford Community Hall
- Millfield School
- Morland Hall
- Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities
- Priorswood Community Centre
- Reckleford Children's Centre
- Sedgemoor District Council
- Sedgemoor Manor School
- Shipham Community Cinema
- Somerset Racial Equality Council
- Somerset Skills & Learning
- South Somerset District Council
- Somerset Wildlife Trust
- Taunton Deane Borough Council
- West Somerset District Council
- Williton Children's Centre
- Williton Library

Somerset Film

52 High Street BRIDGWATER
Somerset TA6 3BL

www.somersetfilm.com

Telephone | 01278 433187

Fax | 01278 433172

E-mail | info@somersetfilm.com

Facebook | facebook.com/somersetfilm

Twitter | @somersetfilm

Somerset Film & Video Limited
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Family Connections was set up in 2009 by registered charity **Somerset Film** with support from **Big Lottery Fund** and other partners. Over the past three years 440+ families across Somerset in Williton, Highbridge, Taunton, Glastonbury, Yeovil and Bridgwater have taken the opportunity to have fun and learn about communication and digital technology. Together they became involved in a variety of events, activities, workshops and community projects.

“It's a really brilliant idea... I took my elder son. It was well structured for families... Fun for kids and adults. My son was exceedingly proud to tell his friends that he posted on YouTube. He thought it was fantastic...”



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Resources

In each of the areas we have worked in to date we have established a resource – equipment + software – that families can borrow, **FREE** of charge, to help you undertake your own creative projects. Equipment was chosen by local families and varies in each area, though typically includes computers, creative software for animating, editing, music making and digital photography as well as cameras.

“Since doing the animation workshop we know how to do it ourselves... and we have borrowed the equipment to do it ourselves...”

You don't need to have attended a **Family Connections** workshop to be able to borrow the equipment. If you've never used the equipment before, simply visit our website where you can watch the online video guides we've created. The guides will take you through all you need to know to get you started. To find out more about what's available visit our website, where you'll find details of who to contact in your area, how



to book and the equipment available. If you've got really young children there are 'Early Years' adventure packs available at each of the area's children's centres. Contained in backpacks, which are ideal for days out, you'll find robust digital toys ideal for small hands and designed to suit the way children play.

“My family would love to do this at home. It's engaged their imagination and they have all been smiling...”

These packs include stills and video cameras, Chatter Block, Easi-speak microphone, Talking Points and a talking photo album. Each item comes with an activity card, including games and ideas we've tried and tested with young people, plus a glossary of terms and how they connect with the Early Years Foundation Stage.



FAMILY CONNECTIONS

If you'd like a **Family Connections** workshop, event or community initiative in your area then get in touch. We can advise on everything from the benefits and logistics to promotion and cost – our evaluation shows that participants are prepared to pay for quality activity that really delivers. We can even point you in the direction of potential funders. We will also continue to raise funds to be able to offer further family learning activity and welcome new partners.

“I work every hour to pay the mortgage and do nothing with the kids. I have recently had problems with my eldest child and this gave us time together. It was great and it was FREE!”



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familyconnections.org.uk

Website

If you've already got your own computer/camera, then take inspiration by watching work that families have created in our workshops. You will find a gallery of short films, animation, music and much more to enjoy – *let us know when you've made your work and we will add you to it...*



You can also visit our 'Ideas Bee' who will generate ideas for projects you and your family to try together at the click of a button.

“No camera? Try scanography. Select a 3D item eg. toy, place on scanner glass, leave top UP, darken room, scan and save...”

Our easy to follow 'How to' videoguides tell you everything you need to know to get you started on your own creative projects including basic camera technique, editing with iMovie or animation with iStopmotion. Plus, they make useful creative suggestions for example, our guide about 'How to use Pinterest' shows you how to turn a digital scrapbook into a great gift for Mothers Day or birthday!

You'll find links to **FREE** creative software for download such as **Gimp** and **Befunky** (photoediting), **Audioboo** or **Ubuntu** (editing and animation) and useful advice and guidance on subjects such as internet safety, cyber-bullying and computer gaming. **PLUS** subscribe to find out more about forthcoming activities...

“It's important to have fun things to do and to keep learning. When you are learning together with your children it puts you on a level playing field and this is really important...”

“I'm not going shopping this afternoon. I'm coming back here!” participant aged 12

Family Connections isn't just about having fun, though we make sure that's a key part. It's special because it is all about family learning, which means that a parent, grandparent or adult carer learns alongside their child or children. Families told us the main reasons they attended were to:

- Find a shared family activity
- Give the children something to do
- Help their children with learning
- Develop new skills



Research

Formal research echoes these families' motivations, demonstrating the impact that family learning can have...

“Research shows that parental involvement in their children's learning positively affects the child's academic performance (Fan & Chen, 2001) in both primary + secondary schools (Feinstein & Symons, 9), leading to higher academic achievement, greater cognitive competence, greater problem-solving skills, greater school enjoyment, better school attendance and fewer behavioural problems at school (Melhuish, Sylva, Sammons et al., 2001).

The positive effects of parental involvement is most marked in younger children. (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003).” Niace

Sources

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