



Norfolk Library and Information Service

Shortlisted for Family Learning to Support
STEM Learning

Norfolk Library and Information Service (NLIS) is a network of 47 libraries and 6 mobile libraries. Within the service, there are a variety of events available for families, including:

- Sessions for families with babies and pre-schoolers
- Homework, coding, and Lego clubs for older children
- Computer help for adults
- 'Just a Cuppa' sessions where anyone can pop in for a drink and company
- Book collections to help with health and mental health conditions

NLIS branches have strong community ties and shared information with other local organisations such as community centres, charities, and daycares. This is used to improve family and community understanding. NLIS promote other council departments that serve families and share information with their service users. This kind of word-of-mouth communication is critical for reaching underrepresented families who might need direct encouragement and motivation to attend events like DigiFest.

Family Learning Provision

NLIS understand that, along with lack of access to computers, a lack of motivation and trust are significant barriers to digital inclusion. By delivering fun, aspirational sessions, their DigiFest event is designed to inspire young people to keep learning, pursue digital careers and be part of a generation that is fully digitally connected.

DigiFest 2023 included 112 free events made up of 8 different activities suitable for children aged 3-14. The activities provided educational, interactive, playful, and community-inclusive family learning. Session plans were designed to meet criteria in The National Curricula for Computing and for Design and Technology. This was done to ensure the program was relevant and aligned to school learning.

Parents and carers are present for most of the sessions and encouraged to participate with their children. The complements existing family learning sessions including Storytime, Bounce & Rhyme, and Lego Club which are well attended by a wide range of people at risk of being digitally excluded and who might not attend a digital event without a familiar element to hook them.

An example of this is the Code-a-pillar sessions, where Storytime, one the most well-known library activities, was given a digital twist. Sessions blend traditional storytime sessions with an interactive STEM element by using the Code-a-pillar to act out the story. The Coding Critters activity also uses coding to help characters solve problems and complete a narrative.



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Impact and next steps

Over 87% of the 106 attendees surveyed reported feeling more confident with technology, feeling inspired, having fun, and learning new skills. Attendees also felt they had more knowledge and skills, they wanted to continue and learn more, were better able to access technically, and had improved their social relationships and network.

Judges from NCFE were impressed by the amount of innovative and engaging activities on offer.

After surveying, the next steps are to develop more sessions, introduce more activities for children aged 12 and over, and to trial programming sessions for adults. NLIS will also improve availability of activities and equipment throughout the year. They plan to invest in more equipment and continue to work with new and existing partners. Specialist access and inclusion advisers were invited to audit DigiFest. A detailed report was completed which will use to improve future programming