

# Fire, Ice and Arthur's Seat

## Event Report & Evaluation

20/05/18



### Background

The Rainbow Families Project, delivered by LGBT Health and Wellbeing, provides events, support and information for LGBTQ+ families living in and travelling to Glasgow and Edinburgh. Quarterly family-focused social events are organised for LGBTQ+ families in a variety of settings and involving a range of activities to meet the needs of family members of all ages. The events provide a unique and safe, affirming space for families to celebrate their identities, make social connections with others and find a sense of community.

### About the event

Community Learning and Development Officer, Brendan Seenan from Dynamic Earth, contacted Jules Stapleton Barnes from the Rainbow Families Project, as a follow-up to a previous event Dynamic Earth had assisted with in 2015.

Keen to explore how they could work together to provide future opportunities for the LGBTQ+ community, Jules and Brendan began planning Fire, Ice and Arthur's Seat, an interactive afternoon led and supported by Dynamic Earth, featuring indoor and outdoor activities for families to learn, explore and socialise together.



### An Inclusive approach

In order to ensure we created a safe space, for all LGBTQ+ families, particularly being mindful of trans and non-binary individuals taking part, Brendan and Jules discussed the potential areas of concern in regards to safety and accessibility, and established inclusive ways of delivering information and activities to meet the needs of those attending.

There were key elements of the event delivery that helped to ensure we maintained an inclusive approach. They were:

- Raising awareness among staff at Dynamic Earth (by email) that an LGBTQ+ event was happening; encouraging questions and ensuring any issues were addressed before the event. Brendan reported this received a hugely positive response with staff sharing their support for the event.

- Fully accessible indoor activity space and full agenda being communicated to families before the event about any outdoor activities where accessibility may have been impacted.
- Reflecting on use of gendered language in community learning settings such as those hosted at Dynamic Earth. Recognising that language such as “girls and boys”, “Mum’s and Dads” can exclude those with non-binary identities or same-sex parents, for example. Understanding the impact of using gendered language, helped Brendan to make change more achievable.

*“The wider issue of the language we use is something you have affected. I have increased my efforts to remain in the moment whilst using language in the teaching setting in order to promote inclusivity. It’s easy to point out but another to bring to reality. Language is something so habitual that retraining the brain is what’s needed.”*

- Brendan Seenan, Dynamic Earth

- Promoting Dynamic Earth’s gender neutral toilets to families in advance, set a precedence for inclusion that some families felt greatly reassured by. The inclusion of gender neutral toilets means that non-binary children and adults or those exploring their gender identity, do not have to experience discomfort or anxiety when needing to choose where to access a basic facility like a toilet.



*“Gender neutral toilets?! Yahooo Dynamic Earth, \*\*\*\*\* wants to hug you all and have their picture taken by it!”*

- Mum on Facebook

## Key outcomes

Have you had a good time?

Would you like to come to Rainbow Families again?

What activity would you like to do next time?

What was your favourite thing about today?

Can you draw a picture of this afternoon?

- 100% said they enjoyed the event very much
- 88% feel a greater sense of connection to their community
- 82% feel less lonely and have had the opportunity to make friends
- 41% feel their mental health has improved
- 35% feel more able to cope
- 65% are more aware of resources & opportunities for themselves and their families

## Evaluation: friendships, connections and building a community

Whilst Brendan led on the delivery of a workshop and outdoor excursion, it was the role of Jules to facilitate the social space, to welcome and introduce families to each other, provide information and help to build connections between both adults and



children. Regular evaluation indicates that a key motivation for families attending the events is wanting to connect with other families from the LGBTQ+ community. As the project has evolved, along with many LGBTQ+ adults, there are a significant number of young LGBTQ+ children attending with their families. Common experiences between these children include, experiencing difficulties at school, making friends and finding safe spaces to be themselves.

In the firmly established safe workshop setting, some really significant connections began to form at this event, between adults but for example between two young children (both aged 10) who both identified their gender as non-binary. In their own words, here is what the event meant to a Mum of one of these children,

*“The whole 'find your tribe' thing becomes more difficult when you live in a tiny village where all the kids are cis. \*\*\*\*\* is really starting to struggle with school: some kids are regularly hitting, punching etc, others are starting to tell them things like 'my whole family thinks you're weird.' The value of having someone their own age to talk to about this stuff - or maybe to just talk about all the other geeky things they have in common ;) is potentially life-changing. And you did that. Thank you.”*

- Rainbow Families Mum

Alongside the children, the adults were also making their own connections, finding out where other families were based, getting a sense of other support and social spaces and hearing others experiences. It can be hard for parents to make new connections, given the distraction of the location and activities, which is why it can help to have at least part of the events based in one space, to offer time for parents to meet. For many, just seeing and being around other families that look similar to theirs, has a profoundly positive impact.



*“It’s so important to see other same-sex parents, so our son knows he’s in a normal family. We live more rurally so there aren’t that many visible to him.”*

- Rainbow Families Mum

**Feedback in their own words: What did you most enjoy about today's event?**

*Meeting and chatting with a big group of other families.*

*Friends.*

*It was so much fun for the kids and very welcoming. Lovely biscuits. The group leaders were excellent with the kids and very informative.*

*Meeting new people and learning about Arthur's seat.*

*Brendon was so enthusiastic. Lots of kids.*

*Very child lead /accessible options.*

*Exploring Arthur's seat.*

*Meeting other families, being outside, learning about local geology.*

*Walk to Arthur's seat.*

*It was great that the kids could hang out with each other and make friends, Jules and Brendon did a great job. Nice scenery too.*

*Meeting other families and learning about Arthur's seat.*

*The craic, the friendliness, accessibility, really interesting for all of us.*

*Meeting nice adults and children.*

*That it was outdoors.*

*Spending time with non-judgemental people who 'get' it. And my kid finally making a non-binary pal.*

**Anything we could improve for future activities?**

*Even more Biscuits.*

*Rainbow Families does Australia really is appealing!!*

*Make sure people know to bring lunch.*

*It was fabulous having a representative from Dynamic Earth. It would have been even better if he had introduced himself with his pronouns like we all had.*

Brendan and Jules have shared feedback and learning from the process, to help shape and improve future partnership working, which they have firm plans to pursue.

## Useful Contacts

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