

FEBRUARY 2021

ni4kids

MAGAZINE

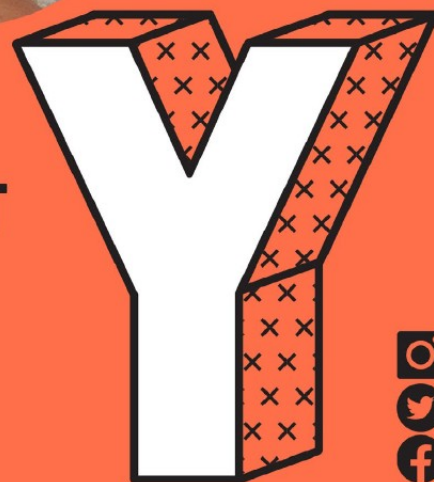
**BELFAST
CHILDREN'S
FESTIVAL
2021**

**ONLINE
5-14
MARCH**



**NORTHERN IRELAND'S BIGGEST
ARTS FESTIVAL FOR CHILDREN**

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**WE ALL
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THROUGH IT**



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KEEP
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WEAR FACE
COVERING



WASH
HANDS



COVID SYMPTOMS?
SELF-ISOLATE AND
BOOK TEST



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CONTACTS

Managing Director Gary Hamilton

EDITORIAL

Editor Nadia Duncan

Features Editor Elizabeth McGivern

SALES

Sales Group Head Christine Megarry

Senior Sales Executive Jenny Belshaw

CREATIVE

Graphic Designer Kerry Waugh

Contributors

Richard Dunn, Gabriella Egleton, Naomi McBurney, Jenny McGreevy & Caroline Roope.

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MEDIA GROUP

Family

Ni4kids Unit 5a, 21 Old Channel Road, Belfast, BT3 9DE

T: 028 9002 0129 W: ni4kids.com

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

This edition is being published just before St. Valentine's Day and that's quite appropriate as never before has it been so important to share the love. We are all counting down the days to when we can embrace our loved ones again in a bear hug, hold each other close and watch grandparents smother their grandchildren in kisses. Those days are coming closer – and hopefully when they finally do arrive we will never, ever take them for granted again – but until then this issue of Ni4kids is sent with love, from us to you and your family.

It's half-term so give yourselves a well-earned break from home schooling and embark on a digital day trip to somewhere exotic. On pages 24 & 25 we've scanned the globe to bring you the most exciting places to visit – without ever leaving your living room. If you are concerned that lockdown has turned you into a couch potato, the best way to get motivated and stay fit is to exercise together as a family. Check out our Winter Wellness ideas on page 23 for inspiration to get you all moving and grooving. And if the pandemic has also left you feeling a bit out of shape as far as your family finances are concerned, on page 16 Jenny McGreevy shares some super suggestions for saving for those better days



that are just around the corner. But wait, there is so much more to fall for this February and beyond. Two fantastic family festivals follow each other to fill your days with laughter, joy, wonder and a bit of crazy fun. The ultimate STEM celebration that is the NI Science Festival returns from 15-28 Feb, so check out pages 8 & 9 to discover some weird science and meet one of its fabulous presenters, while hot on its heels from 5-14 March the 23rd Belfast Children's Festival will open its digital doors to reveal that we can all still play – just in a slightly different way. See you there.

Stay safe x

Nadia X

Get in touch: Email me at editor@ni4kids.com

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Kantar Millward Brown June 2018
Read/Interacted Last 4 Weeks

WIN A BELFAST CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL FAMILY THEATRE BUNDLE!

A Piece of You, Greg Sinclair and Scottish Theatre Producers, hosted on Zoom Age: 3-7 years A private concert for an individual or a child and their family. Performer Greg Sinclair will turn your thoughts and feelings into your very own music score using colourful and expressive graphic notation.

Potato Needs a Bath, Catherine Wheels, hosted on Zoom Age: 3-5 years Maris Piper lives in a house with her fruit and vegetable friends. It is Potato's birthday and they are going to have a party! A very funny and highly visual story. Watch the film, then join Maris and hold your own vegetable party at home.

The University of Wonder & Imagination, Cahoots NI, hosted on Zoom Age 7+ Magic and illusion have no boundaries, bringing a fun filled, immersive theatrical experience directly to you. Choose your subjects of study and encounter all kinds of problems and puzzles. Do you have what it takes to graduate?

Mountain Goat Mountain, Threshold, Audio theatre experience Age: 5+ Mountain Goat Mountain is a magical place. Strange and wonderful happenings often take place. For families to enjoy together, guided activities will help you step into your own imaginative world. Explore tunnels, lava pits and underwater caves without ever leaving your home.

To be in with a chance to win visit ni4kids.com/competitions and answer this question:

Q) The 2021 Belfast Children's Festival takes place in which month?

A) March B) May or C) August

Ni4kids is a proud media partner of the 2021 Belfast Children's Festival which returns online from Friday 5 – Sunday 14 March. To celebrate we are giving away two fabulous family theatre bundles which includes a ticket to one of these highlighted shows from the festival (of your choice) plus a delivery to your door of a Belfast Children's Festival party pack with lots of fun surprises inside!



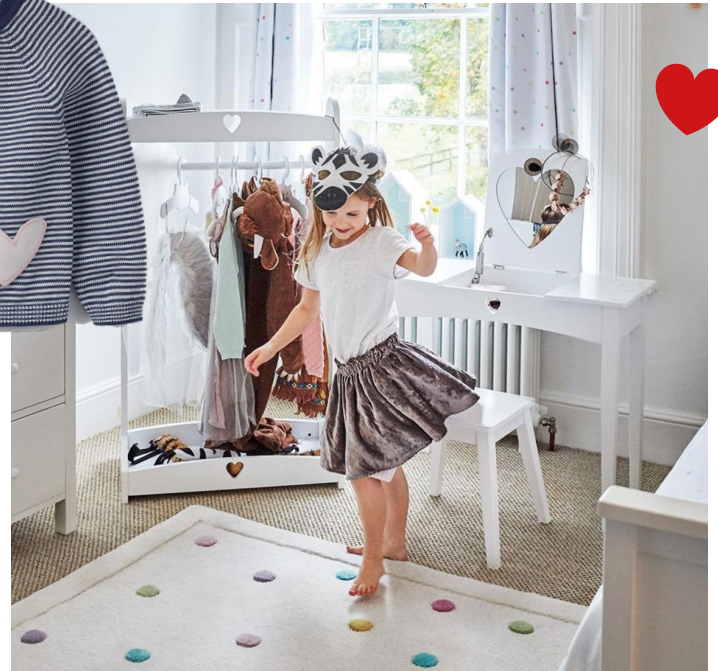
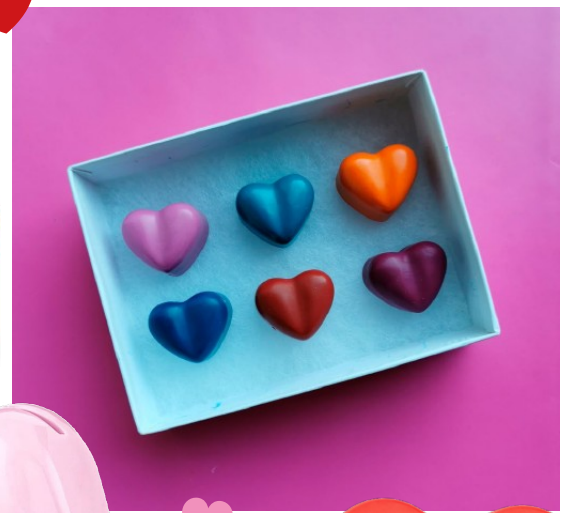
University of Wonder & Imagination

To book and for the full festival programme visit youngatart.co.uk/festival



Mountain Goat Mountain

T&Cs: The closing date for this competition is Monday 1 March 2021. Editor's decision is final. Usual Ni4kids T&Cs apply. No cash alternative. Winners may be asked to take part in publicity to promote #BCF21. Visit ni4kids.com/competitions for details.



From bottom clockwise: Kid's Print Heart Wellies, From £13, M&S | Personalised Hearts Cushion, £19.99, Getting Personal | Lanka Kade Heart Skipping Rope, £6.49, Babipur | Heart-Shaped Light, £10, George at Asda | Petit Bateau White Heart Pyjamas, From £34, Next | Fun Pocket Jersey Dress, From £21, Boden | Teddy Bear in a heart box, £42.90, Steiff | Heart Crayons, £4.95, And So To Shop | Ceramic Heart Money Box, £1, Poundland | Heart Shape Mould, £2, Sainsbury's | Personalised Heart Jigsaw Puzzle, From £19.50, Bags of Love | Sweetheart Dressing Table & Stool Set, Pink Hearts, £145, Great Little Trading Company | Stripe Heart-Pocket Cardigan, £32, The Little White Company

1 in 8

The number of children across Northern Ireland who are struggling with emotional difficulties.

EVERYBODY'S Talking About

NEWS | PRODUCTS | PEOPLE | PLACES

77%

The number of young people who say that being online is a more important part of their life than ever before.

What works? Teamwork!

Experts have warned that lockdown could lead to children having a skewed perception of gender roles in the home – as almost seven in 10 mums juggle more household chores than ever before. A study of 2,000 adults found that despite 66 per cent of women trying to set a good example by sharing tasks with their family, more than a third feel they often do everything themselves. However, while women tend to do the chores more often, men are doing their bit when it comes to washing dishes (65%), hauling out the rubbish (65%) or vacuuming (62%). But as children spend more time at home than usual, more than half of parents worry that this will influence how the youngsters view gender roles and equality. They fear that seeing one parent take on the lion's share of the chores could see children of the same gender emulate these behaviours. The research, carried out by Indesit via OnePoll, comes as the brand launches its #DoltTogether campaign, urging parents to set the right example to their children for a happier, healthier and equal home. The research also found more arguments have taken place during lockdown with 46 per cent of parents admitting their children have seen or heard disagreements over household chores. It also emerged 64 per cent of parents wish their family would help more around the house.

TOP 10 TASKS KIDS CAN HELP WITH

1. Vacuuming
2. Feeding pets
3. Washing dishes
4. Dusting
5. Sweeping
6. Cooking
7. Watering plants
8. Taking out the rubbish
9. Laundry
10. Washing the car



The Big Pedal 2021

Families in NI are being invited to take up the Big Pedal 2021 – the UK's largest cycling, walking, wheeling and scooting competition for primary and secondary schools. Organised by the walking and cycling charity Sustrans, Big Pedal 2021 will run from 19 to 30 April 2021 and will see young people across the UK compete with one another to make the most journeys by cycling, walking, scooting or using a wheelchair. The theme of this year's competition, 'Amazing Journeys' will encourage pupils to see their local areas from a different perspective and learn about the benefits of active travel. With the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns resulting in many spending more time at home, Sustrans Big Pedal 2021 is adapting to become more flexible, and children will be able to take part in the competition and supporting activities whether they are travelling to school or learning at home.

Another fun and easy way to get involved in this year's Big Pedal is to enter the family competition. Share pictures or a short video of you and your children getting active between 19-30 April using #BigPedalWin on Twitter, Instagram or Facebook.

For more information visit:

bigpedal.org.uk



Pupils from Ballinamallard Primary School in Enniskillen hope to take part in this year's Big Pedal.

STEM Fun Meet the Smartivity Roboformers Rover-Bot 2-in-1 construction toy that allows your child to construct two different toys using the same parts – a wind-up rover, and an attacking bot. In the process, your child is introduced to a core understanding of STEM concepts like wind-up mechanism, gears, elasticity, torque, transfer of energy and laws of motion. A car that turns into a robot? It's a win-win either way. Suitable for ages 6+, £12.99 from smarttoysandgames.co.uk



Year of the Ox

Chinese New Year 2021 falls on Friday, 12 February 2021 and begins the year of the Ox. In Chinese culture, the Ox is a valued animal because of its role in agriculture, and similarly in the zodiac, the Ox is seen as hardworking, positive and honest. People born in the year of the Ox are believed to be earnest, honest, logical, intelligent and fit for leadership. The years of the Ox are 1925, 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997, 2009 and 2021 and famous oxen include Barack Obama, George Clooney, Meryl Streep and Morgan Freeman.

The Chinese New Year will be welcomed in with a spectacular free virtual celebration presented by the Chinese Welfare Association on Sunday February 14 from 2pm – 3.30pm with animation, music, acrobatics, dance and magic.

To book a place visit cwa-ni.org/chinese-new-year



WIN AN IZI FLEX FIX I-SIZE FROM BESAFE

Winner of the prestigious Kind + Jugend Innovation Award in the 'World of Travelling Kids' category

BeSafe is a Norwegian company, dedicated to developing the safest possible car seats for children of all ages. Like a true Scandinavian brand, BeSafe prides itself on its innovation and design, with a spirit of adventure at the heart of everything they do. They enable families to travel at ease, with the knowledge their children are safely secured in the car.

World renowned for their safety credentials, BeSafe's research and development team continually focuses on creating innovative products that will improve children's safety on the roads. Their award-winning collection ranges from car seats from birth to 12 years old, a pregnancy belt for expectant mothers, and a selection of accessories. All now available through a wide range of stockists. We've teamed up BeSafe to give one lucky reader the chance to win an iZi Flex Fix i-size worth £250! Suitable for children aged 4 – 12 years. To be in with a chance to win visit ni4kids.com/competitions and answer this question!

For further details visit besafe.com



BeSafe®

Q) BESAFE IS A SCANDINAVIAN BRAND FROM WHICH COUNTRY? A) SWEDEN B) FINLAND OR C) NORWAY

T&Cs: The closing date for this competition is Friday 12 March 2021. Editor's decision is final. Usual Ni4kids T&Cs apply. Visit ni4kids.com/competitions for details.

The poster features a dark blue background with a white dotted pattern. Three stylized hands, each with a different colored palm (green, orange, and teal), are shown holding three rectangular panels. The top green panel contains a large white eye with a blue iris and a network of orange circles connected by lines. The middle orange panel contains a large white eye with an orange iris and a network of orange hexagons. The bottom teal panel contains a network of blue lines and circles. Various geometric shapes like hexagons, triangles, and circles are scattered around the panels. A large white octagon on the right contains the text 'NI SCIENCE FESTIVAL'. At the bottom right, the text '14 DAYS. 120+ EVENTS. LET YOUR MIND EXPLORE.' is displayed, with '15-28 FEBRUARY' in orange below it. The bottom of the poster has a green bar with logos for the Department for the Economy, Belfast City Council, Queen's University Belfast, Ulster University, and matrix., followed by the text 'NISCIENCEFESTIVAL' in large white letters.

NI SCIENCE FESTIVAL

14 DAYS. 120+ EVENTS.
LET YOUR MIND EXPLORE.
15-28 FEBRUARY

**NCE
IVAL**

**NTS. INFINITE IDEAS.
IND WONDER.
RUARY 2021.**

ESTIVAL.COM



CRAFTY KIDS: WEIRD SCIENCE

The NI Science Festival returns for a fortnight of wonder and intrigue from Monday 15 to Sunday 28 February in a brand new all-digital format! To celebrate we've teamed up with Festival favourites **Science Starz** to bring you some wonderfully, wacky activities for the kids you can enjoy doing together at home this half-term!

MAGNETIC PAINTING (recommended for ages 3 - 6)

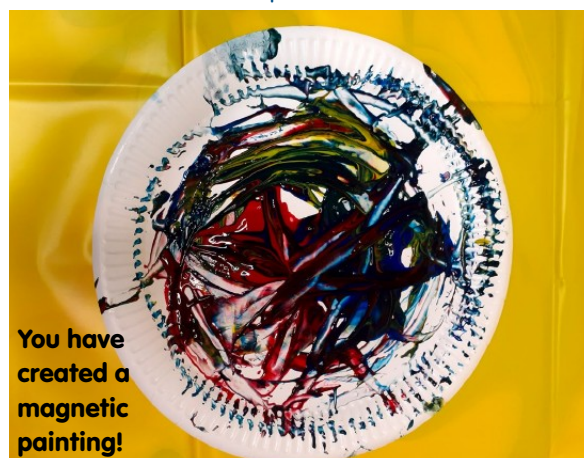
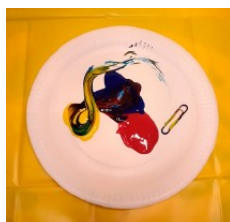
The Science: A magnet is a force that can pull or push. Magnets are attracted to certain metals, even if there is something between them like a paper plate. This is because magnetism is a non-contact force: the magnet can move the paper clip, even from underneath the plate. This makes the paint move and creates a fantastic picture.

You will need:

1. Paper plate
2. Magnet (fridge magnet, dart magnet or something similar)
3. Paper clip, safety pin or anything small and magnetic
4. Paint (non-toxic)

Instructions:

1. Squeeze a few blobs of different colours of paint onto a paper plate.
2. Place a paper clip or safety pin anywhere on the plate and hold your magnet underneath the plate, moving it around until it attracts the paper clip/safety pin.
3. You can then control the paper clip with the magnet. Observe how the paper clip moves with the magnet. Create all different patterns with the paint by moving the magnet around underneath the plate. NB: Magnets are harmful when swallowed. This activity should be carried out with adult supervision.



Have a go testing other items in your home to see if they are magnetic. Does your magnet stick to the radiator? Does your magnet work if the paper clip is in a glass of water? Try it and see! What else can you discover?

You have created a magnetic painting!

EXPLORING AND DUSTING FOR FINGERPRINTS

(recommended for ages 7 - 11)

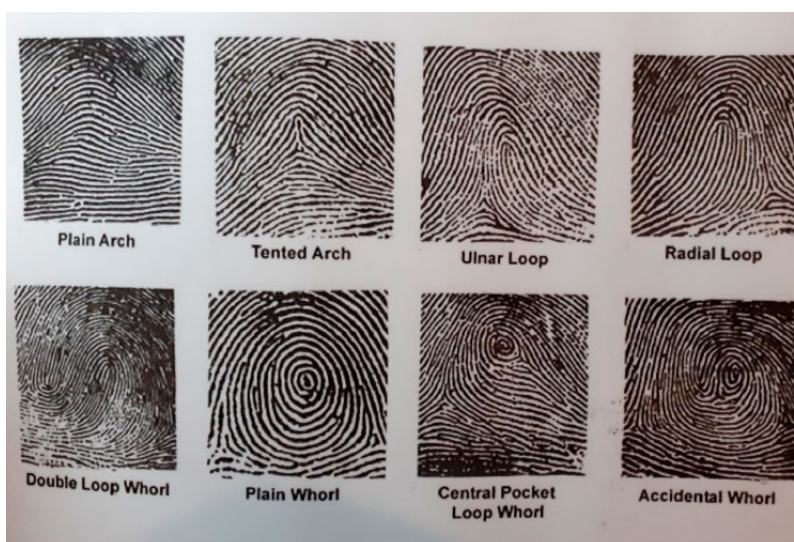
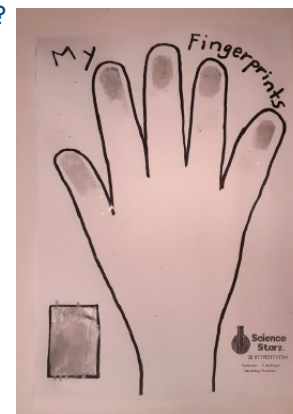
The Science: No two people have the same fingerprints. Forensic scientists and crime scene investigators uncover fingerprints in order to catch criminals. In some schools, thumbprints are used to buy lunch. There are three main types of fingerprints: whorl, loop & arch. The most common is the loop. Which kind do you have?

You will need:

1. Sheet of paper or card paper
2. Pencil
3. Sellotape
4. Corn flour or cocoa powder
5. Soft-bristled brush (paint brush or make-up brush)
6. Glass or clear plastic bottle
7. Magnifying glass (optional)
8. Butter, oil or hand lotion (optional)

Method:

1. Draw the outline of your hand onto a sheet of paper or card paper. Beside the hand outline, draw a small box and colour it in with the pencil.
2. Press your thumb into the pencilled box and rub it generously.
3. Tear a piece of Sellotape and place it on your thumb. Remove the Sellotape and then place it on the thumb of your paper hand.
4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 with all the fingers of that hand.
5. If you have a magnifying glass, observe the patterns and designs of your fingerprints. Compare them to the various types of fingerprints (see photo).
6. For the next activity, place a tiny bit of butter, oil or hand cream on the tips of your fingers.
7. Place your fingers onto a clear glass or plastic bottle, being careful not to smudge them.
8. Tip some corn flour or cocoa powder onto where you placed your fingers and use the brush to dust (very gently!) to uncover your fingerprints or you can tap the glass/bottle (gently) against a hard surface to remove the excess dust. You should be able to see your fingerprints clearly.



Science Starz is a mobile lab offering fun, hands-on, engaging science & STEAM programmes for children all over NI. When not in a classroom, at a festival, or at a birthday party, Science Starz are making kits for children to do science at home with instructional videos for children to watch and follow along. As part of the NI Science Festival 2021, Science Starz have four of their kits on offer and can be purchased [here](https://www.nisiencefestival.com) or via [nisiencefestival.com](https://www.nisiencefestival.com)



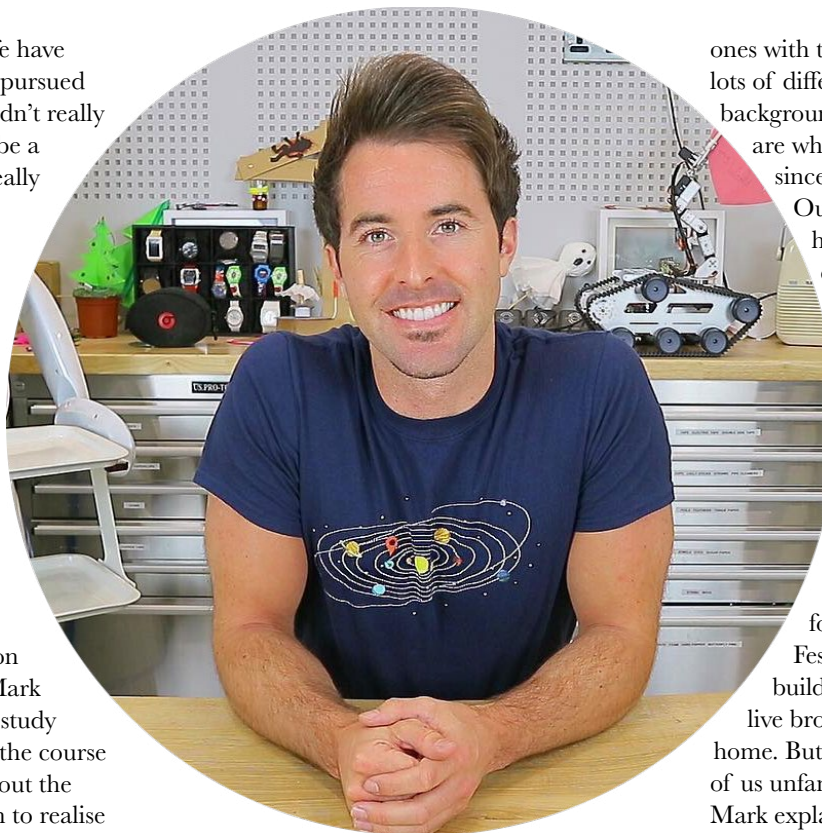
MEET THE SCIENCE GUY

A Theoretical Physicist, TV presenter, Science Communicator and former professional footballer, if Mark Langtry had squeezed time in his impressive career to date to also be in a famous boy band, he may have been torn between choosing to be the sporty one, or the scientific one... or perhaps not. Ahead of his show for this year's NI Science Festival in February, Ni4kids editor Nadia Duncan catches up with RTE's 'Let's Find Out' host to discover more...

Mark admits "My two passions in life have always been sport and science and I pursued both from about the age of four. I didn't really think of it at the time as wanting to be a scientist, but as a curious kid I just really wanted to know how things worked. Like most children I had a natural, innate desire to understand why the world was the way it was and things worked the way they did. At secondary school my favourite subjects were physics, maths and engineering, but it was also at high school that I signed my first professional football contract. My thoughts at that time were simply, I like both these things and I want to continue to do them and that's something I would encourage all young people to do. Find your passion and follow what you enjoy doing." Mark continues, "At university I choose to study theoretical physics because that was the course that might give me some answers about the world and the universe. I soon began to realise though that the more I knew about the science behind my performance, the better I would play. That's what the top teams in the world and players are doing right now, they analyse the data of the athlete's performance to help them improve their skills – just look at Cristiano Ronaldo. I directly benefited from understanding how science could help me play better and I thought that was absolutely amazing."

"IN TODAY'S WORLD THE STRONGEST TEAMS IN THE WORKPLACE AND LIFE ARE THE ONES WITH THE MOST DIVERSITY. WE NEED INPUT FROM LOTS OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF PEOPLE WITH DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS AND THOSE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ARE WHAT MAKES SCIENCE SO STRONG."

The former Shamrock Rovers player has previously expressed concern that too many children have already decided, at around the age of 10, what job they want to do when they grow up, before they have even had the opportunity



to experience much science at school and be inspired by it. Does he believe that it's about time the subject of science was a bigger part of the primary curriculum? He replies, "I wouldn't say it's more important than other subjects, but I do think there should be equal weight given and STEM subjects highlighted at a younger age, particularly considering that we live in a world driven by science and technology and that the majority of the jobs that our young people will be working in in years to come, will be in science and tech. There's a great quote from the late, great American Astronomer Carl Sagan who said, 'Science is much more than a body of knowledge; it is a way of thinking'. Science isn't something just done in a classroom or a lab – it's everywhere and so relevant in the real world. Understanding why things happen the way they do can help in any career. Making that connection at a young age and being exposed to good role models is incredibly important." But what does he love most about STEM subjects why do so many of us assume it's only for really clever people and probably beyond our understanding? Mark says, "In today's world the strongest teams in the workplace and life are the

ones with the most diversity. We need input from lots of different types of people with different backgrounds and those different perspectives are what makes science so strong." And since his TV show is called 'Let's Find Out', what's the one thing that he would have liked to have discovered? "I've come to the conclusion that I'm more interested in the process of unravelling the mystery. Science is the pursuit of understanding the truth behind something, and we are still looking for so many answers about so many things. I think most scientists accept that they may not find all the answers in their lifetime, but their journey will help the next person get a step closer." Looking forward to the 2021 NI Science Festival Mark will be in his element building a Rube Goldberg machine in a live broadcast along with the audience at home. But before you race to Google – for those of us unfamiliar with what it is and its purpose Mark explains, "A Rube Goldberg machine is built to perform a very simple task in the most overly complicated and hilarious way possible. For example, if you wanted to scratch your back it would be very easy to reach behind you and do just that, however... you could also build a machine where your cat knocks over his food dish, that bumps into a parrot, that squawks loudly and causes a ball to fall into a pan that flips over a broomstick at your back and eases your itch. A wacky contraption, usually made of junk, that embodies imagination, creativity, problem solving and having a laugh! I'll be asking the audience what they want their machine to do, we'll bounce around ideas, have lots of fun and see what happens next. It might not always work, but it's through failure that we learn the most." Sounds like one not to be missed and we can't wait to tune in.

Catch *The Rube Goldberg Show with Mark The Science Guy* on Monday 15 – Wednesday 17 February, 4pm, as part of the 2021 NI Science Festival. Age 10+, Free live broadcast, booking required. For the full programme and to reserve a family ticket go to nisciencefestival.com

Parents' Opinion

As the pandemic continues to disrupt education across the country, the conversation surrounding the potential decision of parents to request that their children have the opportunity to repeat this school year has gained momentum. Diane Dawson, principal of Braniel Primary School in Belfast, revealed that she has already been fielding enquiries from parents who were considering the delay in transfer of pupils to post-primary schools. Interested to discover how parents and pupils across NI were feeling about the idea, we took the question to our readers to ask, 'Would you consider the option of your child repeating this academic year?'.



Currently, if a child misses out on a large percentage of the school year, parents or guardians can apply to the school for their child to be able to repeat that year. The decision is up to the school's individual board of governors and not the Department of Education. Speaking to the Belfast Telegraph, Ms Dawson stated that a large number of parents could reasonably make that request, because of the amount of days missed in school this academic year, and is asking for guidance to be set out now by the Education Minister. In the same article, Dr Graham Gault, president of the National Association of Head Teachers said, "It would most certainly be a shambolic outcome if individual principals, faced with requests from parents, made such decisions for individuals or cohorts of children on an ad hoc basis without a universally shared position at system level. The implications of such a thing could be immeasurable." Earlier this month Education Minister Peter Weir touched on the issue at the Assembly and said that repeating the school year was neither practical logistically or financially, but that there is provision in place for Boards of Governors for individual schools and cases. In a straw poll of responses from Ni4kids readers, a whopping 64 per cent said 'no' with 'yes' and 'maybe' tied evenly at 18 per cent each. One reader, **Lisa Martin-Connor**, felt that parents should be given the option and said, "Having been a child who spent two years in P7 due to a summer birthday I wouldn't wish it on anyone, but I think parents this year should have the option." **Karen Burton** felt that the decision to repeat the year for certain year groups in post-primary wouldn't be a 'bad thing'. She said, "I feel young people in third year making GCSE choices are having a particularly hard time, lessons online are certainly not the same as being taught in a classroom

setting, it's such an important stepping-stone for these young people and perhaps repeating a year wouldn't be a bad thing." **Natalie Robinson** said, "If it could work I think it would be a good option, plus it removes the stigma if it's a blanket policy" while **Jemma Currie** believes, "It would be good to have the option for those who need and want it, but it shouldn't be imposed. My own son has worked very hard during lockdown and I don't want him to feel it's been for nothing." On the opposing side was one mum who had personal experience of missing substantial periods of schooling. **Vicky Wylie** said, "Kids are resilient. I know this from experience. I missed the first three years of primary school because I had leukaemia. I'm now 30 with an honours degree in health and social care. It's not an ideal situation for kids but they will bounce back. My daughter says she definitely does not want to repeat this year and would rather have to work a bit harder in year 10." Mum **Susan Brennan** agreed saying, "I don't feel my children need to repeat, although they're only P2 and P4. The teachers have been even better during this lockdown than last, more support going forward for the children that need it makes more sense." And **Angela Atkinson** stated, "Absolutely not. The disaster that was AQE this year would break us if we had to do it again!" Concern about the impact of such a decision on their child's confidence and mental health seemed to be the standout reason why the majority of parents were not embracing the suggestion. One such mum, **Mrs H**, emailed in to comment, "As a parent of three children I understand how hard it has been to learn at home. If I made any of them repeat, they would be a year behind their friends which would impact their social learning. Friendship is a major issue with child development. All children will be in the same position going back to class - all will

have missed out on so much education." Another reader, **Glynis Brown**, echoed this sentiment and worried about the implications that repeating the year would have on children's mental health adding, "I believe they can make it up. This won't go on forever." And **Clare Hawkins** thought it would be "incredibly disappointing" for teachers, children and parents "who worked so hard home schooling." Coming up with an alternative solution, **Kim Scott** suggested that perhaps summer school could be a way to help children catch-up before they are due to change school years, while **Karen Galway**, went further proposing a 'less formal' and 'more fun environment' in a setting like a Forest School. She revealed, "I repeated P6. I was young and my parents were advised I'd do better in 11+. Now I have a PhD and work as a lecturer in mental health. Perhaps I needed that extra year, but I wouldn't wish it on anyone."

ni4kids' View

Despite recognising the impact of the pandemic on their child's education, it seems the majority of parents would not choose the option of them repeating this school year voluntarily and rather are keen to see their children back in the classroom as soon as possible for face-to-face learning to begin once again. However, this school year is far from over and if lockdown continues until Easter - resulting in children having missed a full term - would that opinion change? Only time will tell, but one thing is for certain and that's the effect of COVID-19 will be felt in the years to come - even when we return to our new normal.

BLACKWATER INTEGRATED COLLEGE ANNOUNCES £40,000 INVESTMENT

Blackwater Integrated College in Downpatrick has announced it is investing over £20,000 to provide every Year 8 student starting in September 2021 with their own Chromebook.

The school has also recently invested £20,000 in purchasing Chromebooks for existing students as well as staff development and additional training in the use of Google Classroom.

Stephen Taylor, Principal of Blackwater Integrated College said:

"Making the transition from primary school to secondary education is a daunting stage for children. We have a robust plan in place to support the pastoral and curricular needs of all students for when they return after lockdown and I am confident that this will also be of huge benefit to our new intake of Year 8's in September.

We are one of only a few schools in Northern Ireland to have recently appointed a dedicated full-time Youth Worker who will work solely with our students to develop bespoke programmes for them and provide support both inside and outside of school."

"I'm extremely proud of how we have continued to support our pupils and their parents through these difficult times and in a survey we carried out last month, 94% of parents said that their child was well supported through our online learning provision," Stephen continued.

Blackwater Integrated College prides itself on providing all ability education that caters for students of all academic abilities and its offering includes accelerated learning groups at KS3; specialist provision



for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and both vocational and academic pathways for students when choosing GCSE subjects. As an Integrated College Blackwater proudly caters for students from all communities. The school has small class sizes and excellent transport links from Belfast and the surrounding areas including scheduled buses from a choice of locations including South East Belfast.



2021/22 ADMISSIONS

At Blackwater Integrated College we have invested in the latest technology using Chromebook laptops.

All Year 8 students starting in September 2021 will be provided with a new Chromebook to assist with the use of Google Classroom.



VIRTUAL OPEN NIGHT

SEE OUR WEBSITE AND FACEBOOK
FOR OUR VIRTUAL OPEN NIGHT VIDEO
www.blackwateric.org

CONTACT US

028 4461 2115

info@blackwateric.downpatrick.ni.sch.uk

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The Principal and senior staff are happy to speak to prospective parents who would like to find out more

COFFEE & CATCH-UP

If you've ever daydreamed about setting out in business for yourself then this is the interview for you. We caught up (virtually) with wife, working mum and tech billionaire, Iza Login who – along with her husband Samo – launched a kids' app in 2010, which went on to become the world's most popular app for children and led to the couple becoming tech billionaires in 2017. Downloaded 13 billion times, the Talking Tom Cat app is used by hundreds of millions active users across the world every day. Now the Londoner's story will be covered in a new book that explores the secrets behind their success and how they turned a £250,000 start-up into a £1 billion company in only seven years while parenting full time...

INTERVIEW BY ELIZABETH MCGIVERN

Q) Describe yourself in only five words.

Walk-the-talk person, motivating, positive, warm, energetic.

Q) The Talking Tom app has been an enormous success and a huge hit with kids, where did the idea originate?

Talking Tom apps were not initially made for kids at all, but for young people. Later, we developed an app specifically for younger children as well – Talking Ginger. Only less than 50 per cent of Talking Tom apps users were younger than 15 years. The basic purpose of all the apps was always instant fun – when the users have two minutes of free time, they can take their phone and have fun with as little effort as possible. The user base covered both genders equally, from one to 99 years and in more than 200 countries in the world. Talking Tom and Friends served as amusement for small kids, as a fun gig for young people, and as entertainment for the elderly.

Q) Lockdown may have given people the opportunity to think about going into business for themselves, have you any advice for those who want to set out in self-employment?

Before starting your own business/project answer the question: "Why am I doing this?" If the answer addresses

the real present need of time and space, you already have more than a 50 per cent chance to succeed. Too many new projects are started only to answer the question, "What will we do?" Only the rare ones know Why (the purpose) as well. When you start building your team, make sure it has solid foundations, with all team members strongly believing in the purpose. In my opinion, these two factors are the most important to build a successful business. If the market doesn't understand your products, it's not their fault but yours – be agile, turn it around and make it closer and approachable to users.

"We are working to create a world where everyone is free to prosper and live with purpose and love, where we act in the interests of nature, as well as ourselves."

Q) How were you able to handle the pressures of parenting whilst setting up the company in its early days?

When we established Outfit7 our two sons, France and Janez Neic, were already in high school. Then, when we moved to Cyprus our youngest came with us and we home schooled

him as we travelled around the world a lot therefore this was the only viable option. It took us some time every day to support his studies, but we made it fun and we were happy with the programme he completed (Global Village School Program in California, US). I think parenting is the most important life role we have, and it shouldn't be neglected, but that doesn't mean parents should be with their children 24/7, but instead spend as much quality time together as possible. My friend (a stay-at-home mum) once said to me when our children were younger: "Even though you work hard, I feel that your kids get more from you than mine do from me, even though I spend all day with them." We only had hobbies when we were able to do them together. It's essential to find harmony and if you enjoy your job, fun time with your kids is easy and fulfilling.

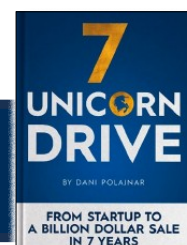
Q) Tell us more about your Login5 Foundation and what your hopes are for it in the future?

The purpose of the Login5 foundation [their philanthropic initiative which supports food sustainability and

green building initiatives] is: pure water, pure air, pure consciousness. If we're thinking about the long-term survival of the human race, we've got to think first about our planet. If we don't take care of that, we don't stand a chance. We are working to create a world where everyone is free to prosper and live with purpose and love, where we act in the interests of nature, as well as ourselves. Current projects focus on sustainable food production and development, and conscious leadership. We have a technologically advanced brain research laboratory that looks for the answer to: "Why do we like to eat what we eat?" With empirical understanding, we might be able to develop the food that will be healthy for people and sustainable for the nature. In Serbia, we run a huge farm with the vision to build a model for large-scale sustainable farming. We'll share the findings, models and software tools for free for non-commercial and commercial use. We also cooperate with universities (Harvard and Oxford), research centres, and like-minded companies around the world.



7 Unicorn Drive: From Startup to a Billion Dollar Sale in 7 Years - The Adventure of Iza and Samo Login by Dani Polajnar is out March 1 (Aprodite, £15.99).



PLAY IN A NEW WAY AT THE 2021 BELFAST CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL

With contemporary dance based on the theme of hope, a 'part Lord of the Flies, part Animal Farm' theatre performance set in a post-pandemic future, and an exhibition that explores the magic of everyday items found in the home, the line-up for Belfast Children's Festival 2021 feels very much like art imitating life.

Young at Art Director, Eibhlin De Barra said: "We're delighted to be announcing our programme for the 2021 Belfast Children's Festival, which will take place online for the first time over an extended period of 5-14 March. Who would have thought when we started to put the festival's programme together almost 18 months ago the resonance that our opening festival performance from Replay Theatre Company would be a show about the aftermath of a global pandemic! We certainly didn't think we would be delivering the entire festival online, which is a brand-new approach for us! We've all had to learn to adapt quickly since last year's festival

closing show on 14 March 2020, and we've learnt that we can still play in a new way. One thing remains constant: it is jam packed with exceptional creative experiences for children, young people and the adults in their lives. And this year that is vital, as we believe arts & creativity is needed more now than ever before. We're working with a dynamic range of artists and producers from NI, Ireland, Scotland, England and Australia. The festival programme will premiere **a new horror opera for children** from

the Belfast Ensemble; feature **a magical audio theatre experience** for the whole family from Australia called Mountain Goat Mountain; and Grass, **a beautiful piece of dance** inspired by the insects that inhabit a world beneath our feet from Second Hand Dance; and we also welcome **Catherine Wheels and Barrowland Ballet** from Scotland. We're also delighted to welcome **Maiden Voyage Dance** back to this year's festival to premiere their new performance, Turnabout." In addition, the 2021 programme will feature Cahoot's NI's brain-bamboozling interactive **'The University of Wonder and Imagination'**. Festival favourites like the Book Clinic

from Children's Books Ireland and **Baby Rave at Home** from Young at Art have been specially adapted for online audiences and Cherrie OnTop who performed 'Dragtime Bedtime Stories' at last year's festival will read a selection of **diversity**

and inclusion themed bedtime stories especially for under 5s, throughout the festival. Meanwhile, Young at Art Artists Jane Butler and Duncan Ross asked schoolchildren across Belfast to tell their stories about lockdown and the pandemic from the perspective of the special objects they found within their homes resulting in the the **'My Place' virtual exhibition.**" Eibhlin continued: "Belfast Children's Festival performances will be hosted across a range of digital platforms including QFT Player and Zoom and all bookings can be made through Young at Art's website or our Box Office which is open 10am-2pm Monday to Friday. As always, we are pleased to be able to make the festival as accessible as possible, with many performances offered free

of charge." Roisín McDonough, Chief Executive, Arts Council of Northern Ireland said: "It has been truly heartening this year, of all years, to see how our wonderful arts and cultural organisations have gone that extra mile to ensure that the people of Northern Ireland can continue to enjoy the enrichment, the pleasure and the entertainment that the arts bring to our lives. Keeping the arts alive and available has probably never been more important, and indeed more valued and appreciated, as we have all needed our spirits lifted during these exceptional times." Lord Mayor of Belfast, Alderman Frank McCoubrey welcomed the launch of the

Festival commenting: "We are thrilled to see Belfast Children's Festival 2021 launch its programme and bring some much-needed light and hope into the city during what is such a challenging time for families and young people."



Maiden Voyage Dance's new production 'Turnabout' filmed in the Ulster Museum, will premiere at the Festival on March 6.



Eibhlin de Barra, Director of Young at Art pictured with Maeve McGreevy and Michael McEvoy, Maiden Voyage Dance at the launch of Belfast Children's Festival 2021.



Festival tickets are on sale now and view the Festival Programme at youngatart.co.uk/festival or Box Office Tel: 028 9024 3042

Many events are free, booking essential. #BCF21

Testing Times

This year's post-primary transfer tests have been cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however many selective grammar schools have indicated that they may use transfer tests to admit pupils to year 8 in 2022. Bangor mum and #BringItBackToPrimary campaign organiser Naomi McBurney believes that while academic selection will remain a contentious issue for many, we must consider where we are now and put the children who face it in their immediate future at the heart of decisions about what happens next...

I have been campaigning for one year now and although the world is a very different place, the message of #BringItBackToPrimary has not changed. In fact, it is maybe now of more significance than it ever was at the beginning in January 2020. The education landscape is different. Most children have missed approximately 115 out of 190 days of face-to-face teaching, for some who had to isolate it is more. P7 children expecting to sit unregulated transfer tests, have experienced what can only be described as a complete nightmare.

Some selective schools suspending academic selection, test preparation that extended over the Christmas holidays, the worry of mixed bubbles at large test events and the subsequent complete cancellation of tests leaving unfair and discriminatory criteria. P7 children and their parents, with the guidance of their primary school,

are currently trying to navigate a challenging terrain of alternative criteria. Those with siblings already at the school of their choice are on the home straight, those without are feeling extremely overwhelmed and disadvantaged against their peers. Disadvantage is not an alien concept when it comes to unregulated transfer tests, and this has only increased as blended learning continues and children experience a wide variation in their school at home encounters. As P7 children navigate through the post-primary entrance criteria published this month, thoughts turn to P6 children. In any normal year, nine and 10-year-old children would now be starting to prepare for the AQE and/or GL tests. The grueling process for many begins after Christmas as they gear up for tests in November of their P7 year. The uncertainty they have witnessed unfold for their P7 peers,

"AS WE STAND WITH OUR P7 CHILDREN FACING DISADVANTAGE THROUGH ALTERNATIVE CRITERIA, WE MUST REMEMBER THE CURRENT P6 CHILDREN HOT ON THEIR HEELS.."

is causing anxiety and stress. As we stand with our P7 children facing disadvantage through alternative criteria, we must remember the current P6 children hot on their heels. Most selective grammar schools have already indicated they are committed to academic selection and intend to revert to transfer tests for their September 2022 intake. Education Minister Peter Weir has also not been shy in his support for academic selection and the lack of political will to change the legal right of selective grammar schools to adopt this method. So where does that leave our P6 children?



There is an opportunity to ease the pressure and do something positive for them. Nothing replaces the security a child feels in their home primary – and while tests continue every child deserves the right to that security. It requires forward planning, but it is reasonable and achievable. While

selective grammar schools continue to use academic selection, it is an integral part of our education system, ideological positions cannot, and simply should not, take precedence over the right of all children to take part in this system. By working together with selective grammar schools, primary schools could host the AQE and GL tests. The needs of children should be paramount and as it stands, under the current system of post-primary transfer testing, they are bottom of the list. There is time to do the right thing and consider the needs of all children at the centre of the system.

Conversations and actions to move away from academic selection, should and will take place. However, while the tests exist and our education system remains in its current state, there is room for serious improvements. Differences must be set aside to ease the pressure and anxiety associated with uncertainty. The #BringItBackToPrimary petition managed to gain over 7,000 signatures and although regrettable timing, the Education Minister declared his support for this move. He now needs to go one step further and provide clarity to all primary schools about what hosting tests means for them and make this happen for all children facing these tests. Let's keep the momentum going and while tests exist, do the right thing for every child wanting to take part. The next step for the campaign has now begun with a proposal to the Education Minister which sets out how he can #SupportEveryChild and #BringItBackToPrimary.

You can find the petition at change.org/SupportEveryChild
Read Naomi's Open Letter to Peter Weir, Minister for Education [here](#)

Lockdown Uncertainty

TRANSFER TESTS AND LEGAL CHALLENGES



Enda Lavery, Solicitor, McCartan Turkington Breen (MTB)

The Post Primary Transfer Consortium entrance assessment (GL) and The Association for Quality Education (AQE) are responsible for distributing and marking the transfer tests sat annually by primary 7 students. This year's tests have been cancelled and the

Association has stated this is because it is mindful of the health and safety of the pupils. The AQE statement read:

"Due to the ongoing uncertainty about the potential for an extended period of lockdown, the Board of AQE Limited has decided to recommend to our grammar schools, the membership of AQE, that there should be no assessment offered by AQE in this academic year." Schools are left to decide the criteria they will apply as a means of

determining the pupils they will admit. An argument over the transfer test has raised its head again from both sides of the debate; those in favour of an academic test being the lead criterion for admission and those that are in

favour of school places being obtained without reference to academic selection. What will be the legal fallout as a result of this decision? Concerned parents have contacted McCartan Turkington Breen Solicitors for advice should their Primary 7 child not get the desired

"The panel will only take into account the evidence and information that was available to the school at the time they made their initial decision, so it is very important that parents leave nothing unsaid in their application form."



place in the secondary school of their choice. It is clear that certain schools are going to be oversubscribed and this will undoubtedly lead to disappointment for some when a place is not achieved and this in turn may lead to appeals of those decisions. Disappointment however is not enough to be successful in an appeal. Schools have an obligation to apply their application criteria correctly, and whether or not the school has done so is the question that will be considered by the panel deciding the appeal. The panel will only take into account the evidence and information that was available to the school at the time they made their initial decision, so it is very important that parents leave nothing unsaid in their application form. These appeals cannot, however, consider more significant issues such as whether the criteria were properly selected in the first place, and for challenges such as these, more significant legal processes such as judicial review may have to be considered.

At McCartan Turkington Breen we offer expert legal advice to steer you through these legal challenges. For further information, please contact us on Tel: 028 9032 9801 or at Legal@mtb-law.co.uk

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FRUGAL FEBRUARY


MONEY TIPS TO GET YOU THROUGH THE PANDEMIC





Have your finances been impacted by the series of lockdowns over the past year? Are you on furlough or lost your job? Money expert, mum-of-three and Managing Director of Refresh Debt Services, Jenny McGreevy shares advice on how to maximise your money at this difficult time:


McGreevy shares advice on how to maximise your money at this difficult time:





 If you have a mortgage and are struggling to make your payments you can apply for a payment break of up to six months. You need to apply by the 31 March 2021 but the payment holiday can extend beyond this date. You can only apply by contacting your mortgage lender directly. Your credit rating won't be affected but future lenders may be able to see you were on a holiday. However you need to be aware that interest will still be charged during this time. If you are finding payments difficult use this payment break to give you time to get back on your feet financially.


 If you have credit cards, store cards, catalogues or personal loans that you are struggling to pay you can apply for a payment break of up to three months. Again, you need to apply by the 31 March but the payment holiday can extend beyond this date. As with the mortgage payment break, your credit rating won't be affected but future lenders may be able to see you were on a holiday. However you need to be aware that interest will still be charged during this time.


 If you are one of the lucky ones and find you have a little bit extra at the end of the month because you aren't spending it on socialising or travel, then use this money to pay extra towards any debts you have. This could save you hundreds or even thousands in interest repayments over the term of the debt.


 Remove temptation! If the delivery van is a daily visitor to the house because of your online shopping addiction, try removing some of the triggers that start you shopping. If you get emails about special offers, unsubscribe yourself from the email marketing list. If you have a shopping app on your phone, remove it to make it a bit harder to spend the money.


 Set a budget – we all have more time on our hands at the moment so now is the time to sit down and work out how much you have coming in each week or month and how much you need to spend on essential bills like mortgage/ rent, utility bills, car, debts repayments, food and clothes. Having and sticking to a household budget is one of the best ways to get on top of your money and stay in control of your spending.

 Work out where you can save money. Check through your bank to see if you have subscriptions that you no longer or rarely use, can they be downgraded or cancelled? This is usually services that you signed up for 30 day free trial and you have never got round to cancelling. Could you save money on your car or house insurance by shopping around? Could you get cheaper gas, electric or broadband by switching provider? Now is the time to make some calls to see what deals are available.

 Sell unwanted or unused items in your home. If you have items laying around the house that you no longer use then try and sell them on Facebook, Gumtree or Ebay. This could raise some much needed money to help with your household budget

 Stay away from shops that take your money. Even though it is only essential retail open at the moment, we can still be guilty of buying more than we need when we are doing the weekly shop. If there is a store you visit that you always come out of with unnecessary items and spending more than you meant to then do your best to avoid going there. These shops are very clever and have many different techniques to encourage shoppers to increase their instore spend!

 Think before you buy. If there is something you really want to buy, rather than making it an impulse purchase, give yourself three days. If you still want it after that time and it fits within your household budget then go ahead and purchase. Chances are you will have forgot about it by the time three days are up.

 If you are seriously struggling with your finances and none of these tips would help you then it might be time to seek professional help and advice. You can speak with an FCA authorised debt adviser who understands what you are going through and can help you find solutions to the problems you are having. Don't suffer alone when there are people ready and willing to help.

For more information about Refresh Debt Services visit refreshdebt.co.uk

Happiness

Is...



All any parent wants is for their child to feel loved and be happy. This sounds simple, but the reality can be more challenging. In a world where 10-20

per cent of children and adolescents are experiencing mental health disorders (and the numbers are rising due to the pandemic) making sure our kids have a positive outlook on life has never been more important. Here, Caroline Roope, author of *Help Your Child Feel Happier*, offers some mood-boosting activity ideas to turn that frown upside down.

We all have good days and bad days. Children, in particular, can be prone to mood swings because they have not yet developed the emotional language to express how they are feeling. If your child needs an extra pick-me-up, try some of the following to help banish the blues...

UNLEASH YOUR INNER ROCK STAR

Music has long been known to have a positive effect on kids. If your child has a favourite piece of music that you know will bring a smile to their face, put it on and sing along. There's something about belting out a tune that is brilliantly



cathartic! Even better, help your child to make up some dance moves to go with it – bonus points if you manage not to fall over while practising...!

GO FOR A WALK

Walking, particularly in nature, can have an instant positive effect on our mood. It has obvious physical benefits too, and reminds us how lucky we are to have fresh air in our lungs and how precious our planet is. It's also good for engaging in a meaningful conversation with your child about the world around them. Make it fun by encouraging them to look out for different trees, sounds and textures. If you're lucky enough to be near a woodland, simple things like building dens and playing hide-and-seek in the trees can be enjoyed by all ages.

FAMILY TIME

Finding the time for regular family activities is one of the best ways to boost happiness levels and share a positive experience together. If you can find something you all enjoy (adults included) then that's all the better. Movie nights in pyjamas can work well for all ages; or perhaps there's a sport you all enjoy, such as football or cycling. A regular board-games night could be fun – as long as there are no sore losers among you! Whatever your interests, spending time together as a family is essential in creating a lasting bond and boosting everyone's mood.

FIND YOUR INNER CHILD

Children are always delighted when a parent stops being their usual sensible self and acts a bit silly. Particularly if it's a surprise! Next time your child is having a pillow fight, or playing chase or "the floor is lava", why not join in, too? Getting inside their games is good for bonding and creating shared experiences. It's also important for our children to see us laughing and having time off from being a grown-up – and it's good for our mental health, too, if we can take a break from "adulting" and spend some time "childing" instead!



ACTIVE BODY, HEALTHY MIND

Being active is an essential part of child development. Not only does it ensure our children stay physically healthy, but it's also an important mood booster. Try some of these ideas to make sure your child is making the most of their active time:

- Be a good active role model yourself.
 - Involve the whole family and make it sociable.
 - Introduce an element of competition – kids versus parents, garden games, etc.
 - Exercise by stealth – park further away from school and walk some of the way.
 - Give presents that promote activity, such as rollerblades, a tennis set, frisbees, a scooter, etc.
- Learning to master physical skills also helps to build confidence, no matter what age we are, and makes us feel good about ourselves!

LAUGH OUT LOUD Get giggling! Numerous studies have shown that laughing out loud really is good for our mood. Sharing a funny moment also helps to connect with those around us, and being able to laugh at ourselves is an essential part of learning resilience and dealing with challenges in life. Initiate a tickling fight, play some silly games or just tell some silly jokes – anything that elicits a good belly-laugh will help to boost happiness levels. Watching a funny movie together or having a "who can create the craziest costume" competition allows all of us to just enjoy the moment – embrace it!

***Help Your Child Feel Happier: 101 Ways to Boost Positivity and Self-Confidence* by Caroline Roope (VIE, £9.99) is publishing in PB on 11 March. Available to pre-order now.**

**HELP
YOUR
CHILD
FEEL
HAPPIER**

101 Ways to Boost
Positivity and
Self-Confidence

LIFE IS SWEET

10 FUN THINGS YOU CAN DO TO MAKE FAMILY LIFE IN LOCKDOWN A LITTLE SWEETER...



1) START A FEATHER COLLECTION When out walking keep your eyes peeled for unusual bird feathers. From magpies to pigeons, you'll be amazed at how beautiful some feathers are.

2) GROW SOME HERBS Instead of buying fresh herbs, invest in a few packets of seeds and let the children watch them grow. As the kids grew them, they will be more likely to try them to see what they taste like.

3) HAVE AN INDOOR SCAVENGER HUNT Create a list of items, or give clues, and set a time limit to find a range of different objects around the house. It could include an item of clothing, a picture, a favourite toy or book... and a few things that the kids might not know the proper name for - just to keep it interesting. They might even learn something new.

4) MAKE YOUR OWN BOARD GAME Come together as a family and brainstorm what your boardgame is going to be about, the object of the game and the rules. Then as a team set about creating it together.

5) MAKE PAPER PLANES OR PAPER DOLLS Host a paper plane throwing competition and see whose creation can fly the furthest. Alternatively, cut out paper doll chains and decorate them. Once completed you can attach lolly sticks to either end and make the dolls dance for you.

6) CREATE AN INDOOR DEN Raid the airing cupboard for blankets, towels and cushions and build a den in the living room. This activity offers hours of fun as the den could become a castle or a tent. It will grow with your child's imagination.

7) MAKE A LIST OF THINGS YOU ARE THANKFUL FOR Every day add an activity or event to the list of things that has made your child happy. This will become a memory for you and your child to treasure in years to come.

8) HAVE AN INDOOR PICNIC Inject some fun into mealtimes by hosting a picnic on the kitchen floor. Grab your rug, sandwiches and crisps for a lunchtime with a twist.

9) DRAW WITH YOUR EYES CLOSED Art is always a nice way to fill time but why not try drawing objects, places, and people with your eyes closed. You might surprise yourself.

10) HOST A FAMILY TALENT SHOW BGT has been cancelled for this year so why not move the show into your living room? Some people have natural talent and your little ones might have one they haven't discovered yet. Learn something new to show the family like a magic trick, whistling with your fingers, or juggling. The list is endless. Enjoy!

SECRET STRAWBERRY HEART MUFFINS

These wholesome and delicious treats contain a secret strawberry at their heart – perfect for sharing the love and baking with your little cherubs this St. Valentine's Day...



INGREDIENTS

Makes 12

Suitable for ages 10+ months

DRY INGREDIENTS:

- 100g oats
- 300g sprouted whole grain spelt flour (the healthier option) or standard whole wheat flour
- 3 tsp baking powder (or use self raising flour instead)
- 50g desiccated coconut

WET INGREDIENTS:

- 2 large eggs
- 20 small strawberries, hulled
- 1 ripe banana
- Juice and zest of 1 orange
- 60 ml melted coconut oil, melted butter or vegetable oil (whichever you prefer)
- 60 ml maple syrup
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

SECRET HEART CENTRE:

- 12 small whole strawberries, hulled
- An extra sprinkle of desiccated coconut for each muffin

METHOD

- 1) Preheat the oven to 180°C / 160°C fan / Gas Mark 4 and line a 12-cup muffin tin with paper cases. Combine all dry ingredients together in a large bowl. Blitz together all the wet ingredients in a blender until smooth.
- 2) Create a well in the centre of the dry ingredients and pour in the wet ingredient mixture. Mix together lightly with a fork to keep in as much air as possible. Chop the additional 20 strawberries and then lightly stir through the mixture.
- 3) Place a spoonful of mixture into the bottom of each case, then place one of the 12 whole strawberries, point end up, into each case, then cover with more mixture so that the strawberry is covered. Finally sprinkle with a little desiccated coconut.
- 4) Bake for approx. 30 minutes until golden and the base of the muffin sounds hollow when tapped.

The beauty is finding a surprise strawberry heart in the centre of these lovely muffins and knowing they are filled with love! Try serving with dollop of yogurt. For a sweeter treat, you could use lighter-weight white flour and replace the oats with more flour.



Recipe courtesy of the Organix Baby & Toddler Cookbook (£12) with over 70 quick and easy recipes - from weaning purees to dinnertime faves for the whole family to enjoy! Buy at Organix.com or via Amazon



this issue we are loving...

ni4kids
loves



CHOCO-TASTIC

What if we told you that we had discovered a brand-new, 2-Star Great Taste Award-winning delicious chocolate spread with NO palm oil and the main ingredient is organic chickpeas – a source of vitamins, minerals and fibre? We could hardly believe our luck either! Our saviour for breakfast, packed lunches and Pancake Day (16 Feb) the amazing **Fabalou's Organic Hazelnut Spread** (£4.99 per 200g jar) is good for you, good for the planet and tastes great! Available now from Amazon. Find out more at befabalous.com

SMOOTH, SUPPLE SKIN

Nourishing Skin Treatment Oil (£8.99/ 50ml) from effective plant-based skincare brand Nuture is your new go-to solution to look after your scars and stretchmarks. The deeply nurturing and restorative oil helps to improve the appearance of skin in just eight weeks. Formulated with highly effective plant-based omega-rich ingredients including Rosehip, Grapeseed, a natural source of Vitamin E and Chia, the light-weight oil is easily and quickly absorbed and works to replenish hydration improved elasticity and supple skin. Available now from nutureskin.com and Boots.



NESTING MADE NATURAL

Plant-based cleaning brand Nimble knows parenting is messy business. From washing tiny clothes to cleaning bottles and wiping down surfaces, the **New Parents Gift Set** (£30) features all the essentials to prep new parents for the fun to come! Including five full-size products, as well as a Magic Wand bottle brush, this is a great option for a virtual baby shower gift, new parent's laundry, feeding and cleaning up all sorted in one convenient box! Shop at nimblebabies.com



THE SCENT OF SPRING

It will soon be the start of a fresh new season and if perfume was flowers **Jimmy Choo Floral Eau de Toilette** would be our pick of the bunch. A graceful scent which evokes the pleasures of springtime when nature explodes into bloom with a symphony of floral, fruity and musky top notes of Bergamot Oil, Nectarine and Mandarin Oil. Best of all, we love this sweet offer on now – half price from £68 reduced to £34 (90ml) at **Gordons Chemists**.



HEALTH UPDATE

Winter Skincare Survey Reveals 'Perfect Storm' of Eczema Triggers in Children.

A new study by Irish skincare company Elave has revealed the stresses experienced by parents of children suffering from eczema (a dry, itchy skin condition which can cause skin to crust, crack, blister and weep) during the winter months. One in five children in Ireland suffer from this dry, itchy skin condition, which becomes worse over the winter due to a combination of central heating and cold weather. Parents said their stress levels were highest when eczema interfered with their child's sleep, followed by the challenges flare-ups imposed on their child's emotional development and social life. Well over half of parents (66%) said that soap and fragrances were the most frequent triggers of flare-ups and caused the most serious reactions, with nearly nine out of 10 stating they used sulfate-free soap and apothecary solutions.

Skincare expert Joanna Gardiner, CEO of Gardiner Family Apothecary, makers of the Elave and Ovelle skincare ranges, said that cases of eczema had doubled in children over the last 20 years, due mainly to environmental pollution. "Central heating, which is the norm in modern homes, keeps us warm in winter – but it also dehydrates the skin and triggers outbreaks of itchiness and rashes," she explained. "Then, when you go out into the cold and wind, you have the perfect storm of adverse conditions. Other irritants like polyester, wool, tight clothing and diet also play a role in triggering flare-ups, while soap and fragrances are huge irritants and should be avoided at all times by using free-from body washes, shampoos and creams."

Elave Skincare provides expert advice on coping with eczema, psoriasis and other dry skin conditions at gardinerfamilyapothecary.com



Ask the Pharmacist

COVID-19 Vaccination

Richard Dunn is a community pharmacist with Gordons Chemists.

Vaccines prevent the spread of infectious diseases, saving millions of lives every year. After clean water they are the most successful and cost-effective public health measure in the world.

Roll out of the COVID-19 vaccination is the biggest breakthrough since the pandemic began. It is absolutely vital in tackling the pandemic and enabling society to eventually return to some sort of normality. **It is extremely important that everyone who is eligible takes up the offer of vaccination when invited.** The two most important reasons to get vaccinated are to help protect yourself, and to help protect those around us which includes our friends, family and the wider community – in particular the most vulnerable, some of whom will not be eligible to receive vaccination. Vaccines work by training your body's immune system to make antibodies, which are proteins that help fight infection, just as it does naturally when it's exposed to a disease. Your immune system then 'remembers' the disease and quickly destroys it before you become unwell if you are re-exposed in the future. All vaccines are rigorously tested before they are approved for use. A vaccine will not be approved if it does not meet very high safety standards. Once approved, a vaccine will continue to be monitored for any possible side effects. It is reassuring to know the safety standards of vaccines have to be higher than those for medication to treat illnesses and the UK has some of the highest safety standards in the world. Most side effects of COVID-19 vaccination are mild and do not last long. These may include soreness, reddening and swelling at the site where the needle goes in, although this should subside within a couple of days. Headache, tiredness and feeling achy can also occur. Some children might cry and be upset immediately after the injection. This is a normal response. They might also feel a bit unwell or develop a high temperature for one or two days. Such side effects can be

treated with painkillers such as paracetamol. Some may experience a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to a vaccination. However, this is extremely rare but if it does happen, it usually happens within minutes. The health care professional administering your vaccine will be trained to recognise allergic reactions and treat them immediately. **It is important to remember you are far more likely to be seriously harmed by the disease than by the vaccine. The benefits of vaccination greatly outweigh the risks.** The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation are the independent experts who advise on which vaccine(s) should be used and provide advice on who should be offered the vaccination first. As large numbers of people from at risk groups are vaccinated, we should be able to see the impact on infection rates, hospitalisation and deaths. Higher rates of vaccination should lead to reassessment of current restrictions and returning to a more normal way of life. There are over 60 COVID vaccines currently undergoing clinical trials globally, although only three vaccines have been approved so far for use in the UK: Pfizer-BioNTech and Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines which are available now, and the Moderna vaccine which will be available in the Spring. The first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine will give you good protection from coronavirus. But you need to have the second dose three to 12 weeks after the first to give you longer lasting protection. **But a word of caution – there is a chance you might still catch or spread coronavirus even if you have the vaccine, so it is important to continue to follow government guidance on social distancing, wearing of face coverings and hygiene.** If you would like more information on the COVID vaccination click [here](#).

Gordons Chemists is the largest independently owned retail pharmacy chain in Northern Ireland. Established in 1980, Gordons Chemists now has 61 pharmacies on the high street and in shopping centres across Northern Ireland and Scotland. Products described are available at most pharmacies and Gordons Chemists does not endorse any individual product. Always consult your pharmacist in relation to your individual symptoms.

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The Reading Corner

This month we are so in love with...



AGE 0+

Rabunzel: Fairy Tales For The Fearless by Gareth P. Jones, illustrated by Loretta Schauer PB £6.99, published by Egmont Books

A uniquely silly and rebellious modern twist on a favourite fairy tale. Join rabbit Rabunzel on Furry Tail Hill as her mother tries to keep her safe from the dangerous hungry-eyed creatures! With strong messages of resilience, courage and being true to yourself this is the perfect story for both boys and girls and will resonate with families emerging from lockdown.

AGE 3+



Mole in a Black and White Hole by Tereza Sediva HB £11.99, published by Thames & Hudson

When Mole looks around his underground home, all he sees is the black- and-white world of his cold, dark hole. Mole digs and digs, dreaming of finding something colourful, but day after day, he is disappointed. Printed in vivid pantones and with an inventive die-cut hole in the cover, this is a charming tale about what awaits us when we seek out the light in the darkness.

AGE 3+



I'm a Feel-o-saur PB by Lezlie Evans and illustrated by Kate Chappell PB £6.99, published by Upside Down Books

Are you a happy-saurus? A bit of an angry-saurus? Or maybe today you're feeling like a shy-o-saurus? From brave to scared, silly to grumpy and excited to bored, *I'm a Feel-o-saur* takes young children through a range of everyday emotions that we all experience. Adults can use the rhymes to kickstart conversations about different emotions and help children to articulate how they're feeling. The book also ends with practical suggestions about how to deal with each of the emotions.



AGE 5+

Lizzie & Lucky: The Mystery of the Missing Puppies by Megan Rix Illustrated by Tim Budgen PB £6.99, published by Puffin

Lizzie is desperate for a dog. And, in order to convince her parents to get one, she has to come up with 101 reasons why she needs one. But, as Lizzie begins compiling her list, she witnesses an adorable puppy being snatched away and put into a van by a mysterious-looking man. A playful and heartwarming story about determination, family and the bond between humans and animals, featuring an authentic representation of a young girl growing up with hearing loss.

AGE 9+



Opie Jones Talks to Animals by Nat Luurtsema, illustrated by Fay Austin PB £6.99, published by Egmont Books

10-year-old Opie Jones is very ordinary. In fact nothing remarkable has ever happened to her. So she is naturally very surprised when she is recruited to join The Resistance – a team of superheroes who can read minds, and have a dastardly brainwashing villain to defeat. However... it turns out Opie can't read human minds, she can read ANIMAL ones. The perfect choice for all fans of Frank Cottrell Boyce and David Baddiel.

AGE 9+



The Soul Hunters by Chris Bradford PB £7.99, published by Puffin

The first title in an epic fantasy series by Young Samurai author Chris Bradford. Have you ever experienced dreams so vivid it seems like you have lived them before? For Genna, déjà vu comes almost as regular as breathing. But when a strange boy turns up and starts acting like he knows her, it sets in motion a chain of events that turns her world upside down. Her past is a lot more complicated than she could have expected – and her future even more so.

WIN A COPY OF WATER WORLD BY BEN ROTHERY

Life on Earth is shaped by water, and only survives here because of it, but our ocean ecosystems are at the epicentre of global warming.

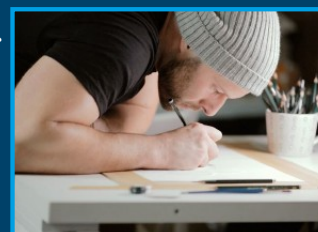
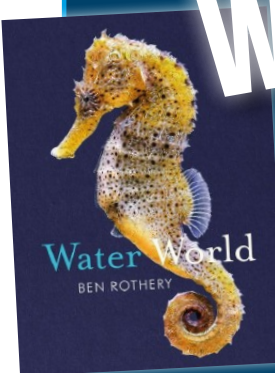
Framed by the need to protect our fragile oceans, *Water World* is natural-history illustrator Ben Rothery's rich exploration of the creatures from the coastal and offshore waters of the world – from penguins, seagulls, polar bears and seahorses, to sharks and deep-sea beings. Discover the longest migration and the loudest animal on Earth, and learn how our own actions affect the ocean, its inhabitants and our entire planet.

WE HAVE FIVE COPIES OF THIS STUNNING BOOK TO GIVE AWAY SO TO BE IN WITH A CHANCE TO WIN, SIMPLY VISIT [NI4KIDS.COM/COMPETITIONS](https://ni4kids.com/competitions) AND ANSWER THIS QUESTION!

Q) THE TITLE OF THIS BOOK IS WATER... A) WORLD B) PLANET OR C) GLOBE

Water World by Ben Rothery is published by Ladybird, HB £20

T&Cs: The closing date for this competition is Friday 12 March 2021. Editor's decision is final. Usual Ni4kids T&Cs apply. Visit ni4kids.com/competitions for details.



WINTER OF WELLNESS

Words by Elizabeth McGivern

There's nothing we like more than snuggling up as a family and embracing the wonderful mood of hygge over the winter months, but as the restrictions of coronavirus stretch on, it's more important than ever to keep the whole family in tip-top health so we can make the most of the coming spring. There's still plenty of ways to embrace family fitness even if the sunshine hasn't started to stretch the evenings just yet. Families should be well used to embracing the colder weather, wrapping up warm and heading into the great outdoors to get those heartrates up.

THE FAMILY THAT RUNS TOGETHER

Although weekly Park Runs have been on hold, it shouldn't stop the family downloading the free 'Couch to 5K' app and starting off their running career. Normally, children are capable of running longer distances, such as 5K, from age eight but it doesn't mean that you can't involve younger children in the beginner stages of the training. If anything, it could help encourage you to carry on with the programme and finish it to make the whole family proud of your achievement together.

WALK AND TALK

If running simply isn't your thing then there are plenty of walking apps that can track your time and distance. You could start off the week with a distance target in mind and aim to hit that number, as a family, before the weekend. Walking as a family is also a great way to relax together and talk. If you've spent all day being a referee between squabbling siblings or losing your cool with home learning, then a walk is a great way for everyone to decompress and reset your mood. You could also add some AR (Augmented Reality) fun into the mix by downloading play-together games such as Pokémon Go onto your phone. Catch the kids' favourite characters all while burning off some excess energy, it's a win-win! If Pokémon doesn't pique their interest, head to the app store of your smartphone and check out all the AR games available to get the kids interested in hitting the roads and exploring



the world around them. It's also important to only ever use these types of treasure-hunt games in a safe location and not near places with heavy traffic. Remember, be smart and safe! If the thought of adding technology into the mix defeats the purpose of getting outside and away from screens, there are plenty of free printable nature scavenger hunts available online. These are great for younger kids and keeps everyone present in the moment together as they look for what's on the list.

HOME WORKOUTS

If you've had your fill of fitness apps, you balk at burpees or want push-ups to push-off there are still plenty of ways around the home to get the blood pumping and the family smiling. Make Friday night party night with a kitchen disco! Sophie Ellis-Bextor has been keeping the nation entertained with her version of kitchen discos over the last year but that doesn't mean she's the only option. Now's the time to host your own and get the kids interested in the music that you loved

when you were their age. They're never too young to rock out with Queen or croon with old-school Take That. You can even take it in turns to DJ, the only rule is: bust a move! If you want to brush up on your dancing skills there's a whole host of YouTube dance videos covering every kind of dance category, even for the most shy beginner. Who knows, your family could be the latest TikTok dance sensation in no time.

ALL WORK AND NO PLAY

Keeping fit doesn't always have to involve traditional exercise. Why not think outside the box and with the whole family spending a lot more time around the house, it might feel like you're constantly facing a losing battle with housework. Now's the time to make cleaning a family affair. Okay, we get it, it's going to be a tough sell to get kids excited about housework but if you add a fun twist to it, you might just get the help around the house you need! How about giving each child a specific job or room (depending on their age) and setting a timer. Thirty minutes a day, with the whole family involved, will help you keep on top of things and whoever finishes their task gets a prize. This could be as simple as ten minutes extra screen time or they get to choose dinner. Setting the timer will help everyone get moving and you'd be surprised at just how quickly your heartrate gets pumping when you're putting your all in.



FAMILY LIFE IN LOCKDOWN

DIGITAL Day Trips

While everyone practises safe social distancing this half-term, we've curated our favourite list of fab family-friendly activities that you and the kids can escape for a grand day out, travelling near and far, without actually leaving home. And

Take a walk on the wild side

Knowsley Safari in Merseyside is continuing to satisfy children's curiosity during lockdown, with its 'Home School Safari' – a new online learning hub packed with education, wildlife and conservation resources. Visitors to the **Home School Safari** can see the Knowsley Safari vet conduct an x-ray on a male African Lion to diagnose an injured paw; get up close to watch Kuzma the Amur Tiger having a root canal and learn how giraffes are fed through the seasons.



Knowsley Safari



Penguin Watch

Help scientists count penguins

Anyone aged 5+ can contribute to penguin conservation. **Penguin Watch** is a project led by University of Oxford researchers, who are gathering data about seabird populations, particularly by monitoring penguins around Antarctica and the Southern Ocean. You can help out and join the research team by simply watching timelapse footage on their website and using their interactive tool to click whenever you spot penguins!

The show must go on...

Watch free family-friendly theatre online with **Official London Theatre**. During lockdown and beyond they will keep you up to date with a range of free online theatrical experiences to be enjoyed by children across the UK and beyond. *The Twits* is free to watch on the Unicorn Theatre YouTube channel until 3 March 2021, enter a perilous world of murderous step-mothers, devious Kings and fearless children with *Philip Pullman's Grimm Tales Online* until March 31 or curl up together for *Huddle*, a moving tale of a daddy penguin and his new chick learning how to thrive in spite of the odds.



Unicorn Theatre



Ride a camel in Egypt

Take a trip of a lifetime to see the Pyramids of Giza. In this **360° virtual guided tour by Sygic Travel** experience what it's like to hop on top of a camel in Cairo for a short ride! This is a great immersive experience if you have a VR headset, but if you don't it's still awesome. Just make sure you click and drag to pan the camera in any direction or simply move your mobile device or tablet to look around.

friendly virtual and interactive experiences so the best part? They're all free!

All the world's a stage

Theatres may still be closed right now but you can still step inside and experience the grandeur and drama of iconic venues such as the historic Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, Russia, or Carnegie Hall in New York through this **Google Arts & Culture virtual 360° tour**. Explore behind the scenes of the costume department or watch a video of a performance.



Google Arts & Culture



Ride Disney World rollercoasters

Enjoy all the excitement of a day out at Disney World by taking the kids on virtual roller coaster rides! **Virtual Disney World** is a YouTube channel dedicated to 360° videos of popular rides, which even includes the experience of queuing so you really feel like you're at the theme park. Play this on a big screen and use a VR headset for maximum fun! For little ones, laundry baskets or a big box on an adults knee make a fantastic make-believe carriage and you can add all the thrills of moving up, down and side to side – just like a real coaster!

Watch the awe-inspiring Aurora Borealis

Have a delightful evening watching the northern lights dance through the sky thanks to a **live stream by Explore**. This live cam is located directly under the aurora oval in Manitoba, Canada, one of the best places in the world to see it. Catch the magical natural phenomenon with the family in the comfort of your home every evening and the months of February and March are a perfect time to tune in. If you prefer to watch animals instead, you will also find wildlife streams for all over the world!



Explore The Natural History Museum

Delve deep into this incredible London museum from home with a **virtual self-guided tour of the galleries**, an interactive experience about Hope the blue whale and audio guides narrated by Sir David Attenborough. Take a sneak peek at the Fantastic Beasts™: The Wonder of Nature exhibition, hang out with scientists online or flick through Wildlife Photographer of the Year images.

COME AND PLAY IN A NEW WAY WITH BELFAST CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL!

Young at Art, Northern Ireland's leading arts provider for children and young people, is home to the flagship Belfast Children's Festival (5-14 March 2021).

This year our festival is going to be entirely online, allowing everyone to stay safely at home. You can enjoy live interactive events on Zoom and specially filmed performances on demand at QFT Player.

All information is available on our website www.youngatart.co.uk

GET READY TO ENJOY BELFAST CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL BY MAKING A COMFY THEATRE AT HOME! FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS BELOW:

1. Firstly, to get into a Theatre you need a ticket! Get a grown up to help you cut out the tickets on this page or create your own.
2. Take a look at the Young At Art website and pick what you might like to see! If you're a dancer, a singer, an actor or a writer yourself you could even create your own show!
3. Then colour in your tickets, maybe you want to add your seat number and the name of the show you're going to see. If there's enough time you could make a poster as well, with all the important information about the show: like its Name, Date and Time.
4. You could ask a grown up to share a picture of your tickets with us on Social Media using #BCF21
5. The Box Office keeps the tickets safe and ready for the show. Store your tickets in the Box Office until you're ready to collect them. If you're in charge of Box Office make sure everyone gets the right ticket.
6. Then the next step is getting the theatre ready! This means making sure all the seats can see the show, making sure they're all super comfy. This is the Theatre Usher's job.
7. When you're ready to welcome your audience to the room, check their tickets and show them to their seats!

