

What we've learned about running sleepovers

Practical tips on how to start a sleepover programme at your museum

When you're planning the programme...

Consult the local council about **regulations** relating to overnight activities.

Work out how often you can run a sleepover, bearing in mind the impact on staff. One sleepover each month is the sensible maximum for us. Set the **start and end times** of the sleepover considering your museum's closing time, and the set-up and take-down time you need before the museum reopens.

Balance up your **costs**, and how many campers you can manage – too few and you may not break even. By charging for tickets, you ensure campers will turn up.

Decide on your **target audience**: 8-11s are a good age, with 6:1 child-to-adult ratio, but we have run sleepovers for younger children or families in smaller groups.

Have good pre-visit **communication** with the adults who will be in charge of groups coming along. Third-party adults don't always pass information along.

Gather groups of campers into larger named teams that move between activities with staff ushers. This also assists with distributing activity materials on the night.

Make sure all staff **know the event is taking place**.

For the night itself...

Avoid chaos by **labelling** belongings or placing them into containers with team names.

Arrange separate sleeping areas for boys and girls unless your campers are families. Keep campers comfortable. Consider providing sleeping mats for campers to put their own sleeping bags on, and locate them near to toilets.

Start the evening with a fun and engaging **Health and Safety talk** that sets the expectations of behaviour from campers, who are bound to be very excited.

Plan an evening programme of **varied activities** (lively demonstrations, workshops etc) each of which lasts a maximum of 45 minutes to keep interest levels high.

Ask campers to bring their **own evening snack** and arrange a simple **breakfast** for the morning. Provide water stations and hot drinks for adults in the breaks. After the evening programme, send everyone to bed and make sure enough lighting is left on in the galleries.

Feed your staff and do everything you can to make them feel appreciated for going the extra mile,

For afterwards...

Plan in **recuperation** time for the core team.

Further resources:

Contact us on learning@sciencemuseum.org.uk for details of our training courses:

- **Learning in Museums** to find out more about how museums promote informal learning.
- **Audience Awareness** to find out how visitors really use museums.

Find out what parents say they'd like to get from a science show by consulting a summary of key findings from a Science Museum Research report:

- Science Museum Research Summary: What parents want from a science show

Find out about what we've learned about developing shows and workshops by reading other sheets in the *What we've learned* series:

- What we've learned about writing and performing science shows
- What we've learned about developing workshops