

'Our Brains and Us' a collaborative event between The Hub at The Wellcome Collection and the Institute of Imagination July 2018

From 19 to 20 and 25 to 27 July the Institute of Imagination (iOi) partnered with Wellcome Trust to transform The Hub at Wellcome Collection, the fifth-floor interdisciplinary research space, into a creative space for investigative play and exploration. Children, young adults, teachers, parents and carers were welcomed to the space to explore the theme of 'Our Brains and Us' through a carefully co-curated programme of activities. Each workshop was designed in partnership with The Hub to encourage participants to think, imagine and explore how our brains work. The aim of this partnership was to connect people of different ages, interests and learning abilities together in an environment that enabled individuals and groups to engage in open ended activities, where ideas and differences are celebrated.

During the first week of 'Our Brains and Us' we welcomed school groups to the space; **240** children and **30** teachers joined us across the two days. The second week of the project focussed on family groups; **300** children and **150** adults were engaged with 'Our Brains and Us' during the three family days. We were delighted that **540** children and young people joined us across the five days at The Hub, a space, which for the first time, was opened up to these age groups. In total **720** visitors joined the Institute of Imagination and Wellcome Trust to explore and celebrate the unique nature and diversity of the brain.

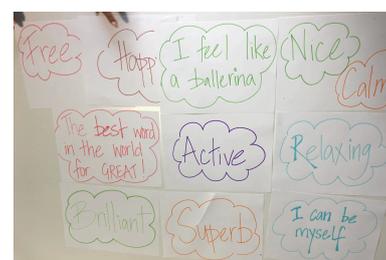
Activities on the day

The iOi Experience and Learning team, in partnership with The Hub team, designed a programme of collaborative workshops that approached neurodiversity in original, exciting and thought-provoking ways. The workshops showcased both the iOi's and Wellcome's interdisciplinary approach to art & design, science and digital technology, with each activity intended to be experienced by everyone, welcoming individuals of all ages and abilities.

School groups

Aimed at children from Key Stages 1,2,3 (aged 5 to 14 years old), visitors explored the topic of 'Our Brains and Us' through:

- **Sound:** participants explored electronic sounds created by computer programmes and composed music or soundscapes using Scratch and MakeCode programs on laptops. They investigated different ways of triggering the sound using the keyboard, a MakeyMakey (an invention kit and circuit board that connects to a computer) attached to conductive materials (fruit, vegetables, cutlery, money and keys) and Microbits.
- **Immersive Spaces:** participants used art, design and engineering to create spaces around inclusivity and belonging. Using over 400 milk jugs, participants worked collaboratively to build an igloo fitted with lights, colours, and textures. Children and adults built a light and shadow house, customising and redesigning the aesthetics of the structure across the three days. These activities were ideal for sensory and tactile learners. Several children stayed in this room, evolving the spaces, for the entire session.
- **Illusion:** participants created optical illusions to test how they plays tricks on the brain. Making spinning tops, 3D hands and floating 3D cubes allowed



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"It's been incredible. It's a wonderful space up here, really calming. The facilitators and their activities make it so easy for the children, and adults, to get involved and focus on the activity at hand."

Emilie, parent

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"Inspiring, interesting and fun. The activities today have given me lots of ideas of how I can mix subjects in the classroom. It's been a great day and I can see that the students have not only had fun, but have used their imagination and learnt new things too."

Stuart, teacher

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visitors to question if we always see reality. Magician and illusionist, Josh Stadlen, performed close-up magic, giving children and adults one-on-one experiences of wonder and illusion. He led workshops to teach children and adults how to perform magic and distort reality through tricks of the eye.

In addition, teachers from a school in Islington attended a Show and Tell training session on Thursday afternoon as part of a twilight inset.

Family groups

For the family-focussed workshops, in addition to the themes from the previous week, children and their parents or carers explored:

- **Virtual Reality:** participants practiced coding and creating virtual environments using the CoSpaces app to bring ideas to life. The activities used storytelling strategies to introduce and develop interactive narratives using code. Children and adults studied how the brain interprets 2D information to create 3D experiences, and how to use this knowledge to imagine virtual worlds based on personal ideas, memories and dreams.
- **Dreams and daydreams:** The London Brain Project explored how brains create nonsensical night time adventures and future-focussed day dreams by creating zoetropes (a pre-film animation device that produces the illusion of motion by displaying a sequence of drawings showing progressive phases of that motion) and spinning tops. While children of many different ages took part, it was a pleasure to see them engaging in their own way, at their own pace, and immersing themselves in the creative experimentation.
- **Senses:** for the final 'blended day', interactions were opened up to the upper age range up to 25, who identify as having a cognitive disability. BitterSuite explored connectivity through touch. Participants drew, explored and imagined their very own touch map through a series of games, explorations and creative questionings.
- **Our Brains and Our Futures:** on the Friday 'blended day' session, BBC's CAPE crusaders explored 'everyday' challenges in new and unexpected ways. They encouraged visitors to discover their very own super power during the creative problem-solving extravaganza.

Impact

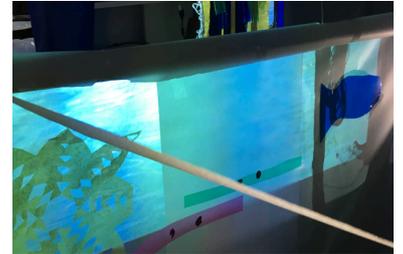
Over the course of 'Our Brains and Us', children, young people and adults were encouraged to explore each activity and spend time collaboratively playing, creating, building and imagining. The crossover of art & design, sciences and digital technology traversed traditional boundaries within learning and teaching to explore neurodiversity.

Imagination: the programme was designed to encourage imagination and creativity. **92%** of parents/carers and teachers felt that their children or students were encouraged to use their imagination more than they usually would.

Collaboration: the free-flowing movement between activities incited collaborative working between children, teachers and parents or carers. When accompanying adults were asked if they engaged and interacted with children or students more than they usually would on a typical day out, **71%** of them agreed that they had.

Community: welcoming familiar faces to our events is as important as engaging with new people. **67%** of visitors to 'Our Brains and Us' had never been to an iOi event before or visited the Wellcome Collection. We are delighted to have engaged with new families and schools, to showcase both the Institute of Imagination and Wellcome Trust activity.

Inclusivity: **21%** of visitors interviewed declared they had Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). 'Our Brains and Us' welcomed all abilities and ages, using our neurodiversity to inspire ideas and support learning from one another.



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"Fun, exciting and happy. I want to stay here forever."
Juliette, aged 6
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"A great opportunity for my grand-sons to use their imaginations, and brains, outside of the school and home. I'd not been to the Wellcome Collection before, but it's an amazing space that really nurtured their creativity."
Carole, grand-mother
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"I've had a lot of fun today. I enjoyed learning the magic tricks and using coding with fruit to make music!"
Habiba, aged 11
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