

We are Edinburgh Science

The Edinburgh Science Foundation is a charity that inspires people of all ages and backgrounds to experience the wonder of science and technology. Characterised by a commitment to immersive, hands-on experiences, our extensive portfolio of science-themed events and activities aim to engage people with the world around them, to create a scientifically aware and literate society which can be part of informed decisions, debate and the future planning for our world.

We are best known for running the Edinburgh Science Festival – the first Festival of its kind in the world – as well as our science education outreach programmes *Generation Science* and *Careers Hive*.

Community Engagement

THIS YEAR, AROUND 2,800 PEOPLE BENEFITTED FROM OUR COMMUNITY RELATED PROJECTS

Communities living within areas of high deprivation encounter significant barriers that prevent or discourage them from engaging in science-related activities. Barriers are not just physical but systemic, with people perceiving science as male, middle class, neurotypical and able-bodied. This lack of variety reflects and reinforces social inequalities.

Edinburgh Science is proud to challenge these perceptions and show that science is not something to fear but something accessible, that everyone can engage with. By fostering an interest in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM), we equip people with the knowledge needed to make informed decisions around issues including health, politics, environment and their communities, enhancing their role as active citizens to help build a fairer and more inclusive STEM-literate society.

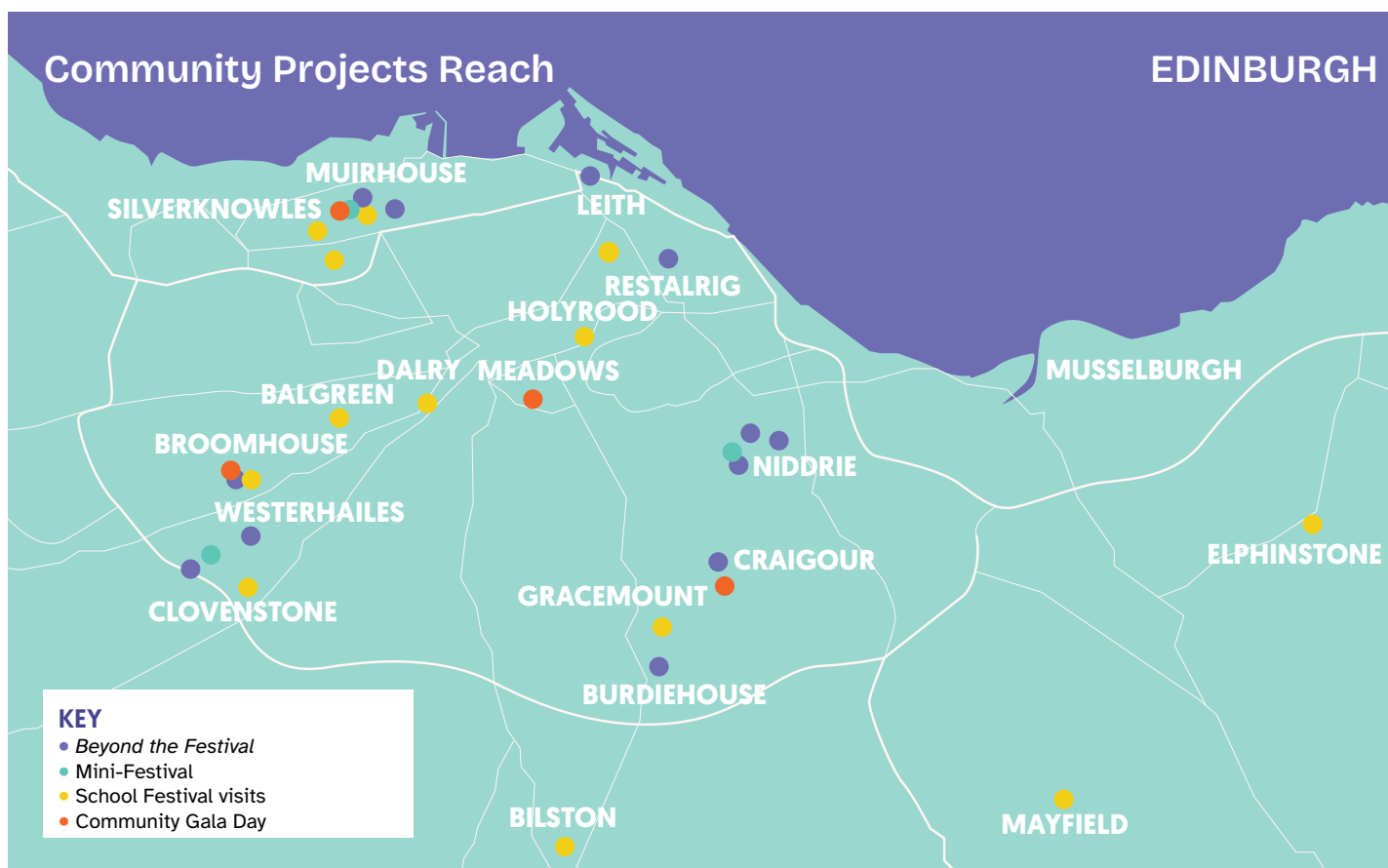
The Edinburgh Science community engagement programme reaches children and families from disadvantaged communities, offering opportunities that might otherwise be missed due to economic or social barriers.

The curated programme of activities is delivered mainly outside the city centre, reaching people directly in their local community. We focus on areas of high deprivation, according to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), to reach people who don't usually engage with the Edinburgh Science Festival, or STEM subjects in general. Our community projects are always free to ensure there is no financial barrier to access.



“Coming to communities is vitally important to ensure opportunities are available to all children”

PARENT ATTENDING
WESTER HAILES MINI-FESTIVAL



Programme Highlights

BEYOND THE FESTIVAL

THIS YEAR WE WORKED WITH 20 COMMUNITY GROUPS ACROSS EDINBURGH, INVOLVING 371 PARTICIPANTS

Beyond the Festival is a project we run with local community groups which aims to engage children and young adults with the Edinburgh Science Festival, helping to break down barriers accessing STEM and cultural activities within the city. The project is designed to build long lasting relationships with communities and involves running hands-on workshops in the community centre pre-Festival; assisting the group by arranging a bespoke, guided visit to the Festival; and delivering a follow-up activity in the community post-Festival.

Community leaders are able to pick from a range of activities that we then deliver in their centres. This sees participants designing and constructing their own rockets with *Mission Control*; exploring the principals of design applied to everyday objects in *Design Day*, building dinosaur skeletons; making their own fossils in *Prehistoric Party*; and creating their own bubble bath in *What Makes Scents*.

These community outreach sessions are designed to be flexible and adaptive in their content and delivery style, catering to the unique needs and interests of each group. Flexibility is crucial for address varying audiences and levels of interest, attention, behaviour, support needs, ages and participant numbers.

“Thank you for delivering such a brilliant morning workshop for local families! The activities were playful and creative, whilst still being informative and worked so well for all ages”

DEPUTE TO DIRECTOR,
NORTH EDINBURGH ARTS

By conducting these sessions in community centres participants regularly attend, we remove the barrier to access, allowing attendees to try out and engage with activities as much or as little as they want.

SCHOOL FESTIVAL VISITS

THIS YEAR WE WELCOMED 1,000 SCHOOL CHILDREN



Each year before the Edinburgh Science Festival opens to the public, we invite local primary school children from disadvantaged areas to enjoy our Science Festival family venue free of charge. These school days offer pupils a fun day out while building their experience and confidence with science topics.

“Many of our children would never be taken to the Science Festival or even into the centre of Edinburgh. This was also a great opportunity to give them that experience.”

TEACHER VISITING EDINBURGH SCIENCE FESTIVAL SCHOOL DAYS 2024

With the ongoing cost of living crisis, lowering barriers to experiences like the school days is increasingly important. Thank you for your support in doing this.

“The class came back really excited to share what they had learned”

TEACHER VISITING EDINBURGH SCIENCE FESTIVAL SCHOOL DAYS 2024

“I want to come back and bring my Mum!”

PUPIL VISITING EDINBURGH SCIENCE FESTIVAL SCHOOL DAYS 2024



MINI-FESTIVALS

THIS YEAR OUR MINI-FESTIVALS ENGAGED 750 ATTENDEES

To build on our work in disadvantaged communities, we partnered with three local venues – Craigmillar Library, Wester Hailes Library and North Edinburgh Arts at West Pilton Neighbourhood Centre – to deliver one-day mini-Science Festivals in community settings. These were mini science take over days and they included hands-on science activities, pop-up science shows and free food for attendees.

These events were free to attend and built on the relationships that these community facilities have already built. The activities were interactive and immersive, made to appeal to children who don't traditionally feel that science is for them. They were designed to encourage parents to get involved, who may also feel disengaged and excluded from science. Our goal was for attendees to leave feeling confident that science activities are something for them and are fun to take part in, helping them feel that science is for everyone.

"We were made to feel very welcome"

MINI-FESTIVAL ATTENDEE

It's important to us that we deliver these events at venues that are trusted and embedded within the community, to foster meaningful partnership between organisations. Our first ever community mini Science Festival event with Craigmillar Library in 2023 brought them their highest visitor numbers they had ever had and saw 40 new people sign up for library cards.

COMMUNITY GALA DAYS

THIS YEAR OUR POP-UP SCIENCE SHOWS ENGAGED 650 PARTICIPANTS

We brought our pop-up science shows to five established community Festivals and Gala Days that are highly valued and trusted within their local communities. By attending these community events, we not only build recognition and trust within these areas, but most importantly, we reach underserved audiences who might not typically attend science-focused events.

These pop-up shows are filled with interactive experiments, performed and explained by our trained science communicators, providing a fun and accessible introduction to science. They include audience interactive and spectacular demonstrations, creating unforgettable memories for all the family.



Our Impact

To measure the impact of our outreach projects we asked attendees of the community mini-Festivals to answer some feedback questions to identify levels of science capital.

WHAT IS SCIENCE CAPITAL?

Science capital is the sum of all science-related knowledge, attitudes and experiences that an individual builds up through their lives. Our projects are designed to build a participant's Science Capital and showcase the central role STEM plays in all our lives and the world around us, explore the possibilities they hold for the future and demonstrate that STEM can be for everyone.

THE RESULTS

61% OF ADULTS WHO ATTENDED THE MINI-FESTIVALS HAD MEDIUM OR LOW SCIENCE CAPITAL

55% OF CHILDREN WHO ATTENDED THE MINI-FESTIVALS HAD MEDIUM OR LOW SCIENCE CAPITAL

This shows that the majority of people attending these events aren't typically engaged with science, an important part in breaking down barriers to STEM.

60% OF CHILDREN AGREED THAT THE EVENT FELT LIKE A PLACE FOR THEM

83% OF CHILDREN AGREED THEY LEARNT SOMETHING NEW

55% OF CHILDREN AGREED THEY WANTED TO EXPLORE SOME OF THE TOPICS

Agreeing with these statements is a way of demonstrating that an activity is building upon someone's science capital.

WHILE 100% OF PARENTS WHO ATTENDED THE COMMUNITY MINI-FESTIVALS SAID THAT THEY WOULD LIKE TO ATTEND A SIMILAR SCIENCE-THEMED EVENT IN THE FUTURE, 20% SAID THEY WOULDN'T BE WILLING TO TRAVEL TO THE CITY CENTRE FOR IT.

This highlights the importance of bringing these experiences out into the community.



Our Future Community Projects

We plan to continue breaking down barriers to science and providing free experiences to disadvantaged communities in 2025. From special events in local venues to guided visits to the Science Festival, we can only run our community outreach projects thanks to the generous support of sponsors. If your organisation would like to help us with our mission, get in touch with development@scifest.co.uk.