

Sparking interest and shifting mindsets from a single day of exploration

Prior to attending Festival of the Girl 2025, Chidinma and her daughters – Ebube (11), an avid reader, and Ginika (9), who loves to draw – had never engaged with the festival’s events. Encouraged by the recommendation of Chidinma’s friend, they arrived with little knowledge of its mission. What followed was a voyage of discovery.

A joyful space to explore, spark interests and challenge preconceptions

Chidinma described the event as full of *“exciting things to do and see”* whilst Ginika recalled feeling *“so happy”* as she entered the space and saw everything on offer. The family immersed themselves in diverse activities – football, boxing, Dungeons and Dragons gaming, engineering challenges, and sessions on wellbeing, equality, and activism – many of which were new to them.

Chidinma acknowledged that before the festival she felt unsure about girls taking part in sports such as football and boxing: *“I remember one time when her teacher told me they are doing girls football in school. I was like, ‘No, no, no, no, I’m not going to get my kids involved,’ based on injury.”* But seeing her daughters participate in football and boxing in a safe, supportive environment challenged her assumptions and shifted her perspective: *“I believe we feel it is not meant for girls, but the festival is presenting that women can do these sports ... There is no restriction to what they can do and can be.”*

Hands-on activities that deliver emotional satisfaction a sense of belonging

The girls proudly showcased items they created and techniques learned, demonstrating a strong sense of achievement. Ebube shared actions they identified to address global challenges, *“We were meant to make our own protest posters about how we could help the world. Ginika made one about climate change and I wrote about how to reduce inflation”*, whilst Ginika reflected on their engineering successes, *“We helped save the houses from falling and being very dangerous, and then after they paid us for our jobs by giving us sweetsies.”*

The family also formed connections, highlighting the festival’s ability to foster positive interactions and create a sense of togetherness: *“We met lovely people there ... We chatted about how exciting being at that event was for the kids and parents as well.”*

Learning to value yourself

Chidinma’s highlight was Natasha Devon’s workshop, *‘Friends, compliments and self-talk’* that encouraged girls to value the personal qualities that matter, speak positively about themselves, and build confidence - areas she and her daughters often found challenging: *“I really enjoyed it, for the kids and for myself, because it*

Festival of the Girl: Evaluation of Festival of the Girl 2025



Case study: Chidinma, Ebube and Ginika

helped you to appreciate yourself ... The way you see yourself is the way people will see you ... You should always be proud of who you are."

Initiating change and further exploration

Following the event, Ginika attended her school's football club and expressed a desire to keep playing. As a family, they also began considering climate friendly actions like reducing food waste. Conversations about women's rights and their evolution made a strong impact on Ebube, inspiring her to explore the stories and contributions of female activists: *"I did some research on BBC Bitesize ... I learnt about Malala Yousafzai and searched deeper. I found some videos from Newsround from about 2017 when she talked about what she did, and I was inspired."*

Self-talk was not something the family had previously considered, but Chidinma's experience of the Natasha Devon workshop prompted her to embrace the techniques. She has continued applying them in the weeks after the festival and encouraged her daughters to do the same: *"Based on the workshop, we continue to talk about self-talk and self-appreciation ... From that day I've decided to have more confidence in myself."*

Reflecting on changes in her daughters since attending, Chidinma observed a positive shift in Ebube, *"Going there helped her be bold and confident ... She's usually reserved and avoids public settings, but that day really made a difference."*

Reaffirming gender equality

Participating in Festival of the Girl reinforced Ebube and Ginika's existing belief that girls and boys should be free to pursue any interests and be treated as equals, judged on facts rather than preconceptions. Ebube stated, *"I've always thought that girls and boys can do anything they want"*, whilst Ginika reflected, *"Some girls in my class say girls' rule, but I don't agree because it's not fair on the boys."*

Inspiring positive conversation

The family plans to attend Festival of the Girl in future and their experience sparked positive conversations beyond the event itself – Chidinma and Ebube both having shared their experience with friends. Chidinma noted that her friend, who has only sons, had asked whether a similar festival exists for boys – highlighting a wider appetite among parents to explore how gender stereotypes shape boys' experiences as well.

Together, Chidinma, Ebube and Ginika's experiences show how encountering Festival of the Girl for the first time can evoke strong emotions, spark new interests, and reshape personal perspectives. By stepping outside their comfort zones and

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engaging with unfamiliar activities and ideas, Ebube and Ginika have begun to explore new topics and pursuits, while Ebube and Ginika has embraced and encouraged positive behaviours in herself and her girls to build a deeper sense of selfworth and increased confidence.