

Note: The names of these participants have been changed to protect their privacy.

Embracing Girlhood While Staying True to Yourself

Laura (6) attended her very first Festival of the Girl in 2025 with her mother, Jessie. Although Jessie describes her daughter as someone who has always gravitated toward traditionally 'boy' hobbies, she felt the event was a fantastic opportunity to show Laura all the many amazing things that girls can do - and it didn't disappoint.

A Safe and exciting space to explore new interests

Initially hesitant, Laura described the festival as *"the best day ever."* Jessie explained that they arrived with no expectations or agenda, allowing Laura to explore whatever piqued her interest. She described the event as having a *"supportive and gentle atmosphere that created a safe space where girls could understand how the world works."*

Laura enjoyed learning about germs, vaccinations, bracelet making, coding, drawing comics, and making her own Diwali lanterns. She also tried activities often labelled as 'boy' hobbies, such as skateboarding and boxing. Jessie emphasised how meaningful it was that these activities were led by women, *"flipping the status quo"* and inspiring the younger generation.

Seeing women in diverse roles

While Jessie chatted with other parents, Laura fully engaged with the different stall keepers and even spoke to doctors. She especially loved the coding activity, prompting Jessie to look into getting the coding programme, Scratch, for home use. As Jessie shared previously that Laura did not like maths, she was surprised by how naturally Laura took to coding, noting that *"coding is the gateway into maths for her."*

Laura also learned about broader concepts such as women's struggles and discovered that anyone can become a doctor or programmer. Jessie appreciated how *"passionate", "helpful", "engaging" and "well-equipped"* the stall holders were in explaining complex topics to younger children. She also valued the exposure to women in a wide range of roles: *"she usually sees women as wives, mothers, or teachers, so, it's nice for her to have that variety of role models at the festival, doing things like architecture or working on lifeboats."*

Understanding identity and belonging

The festival helped Laura feel *"proud and happy to be a girl,"* even as she embraces more of her 'boy-side,' such as wearing more masculine clothes and having more male friends. Jessie noted that Laura now feels comfortable in both male and female spaces, having seen that girls can enter fields that are traditionally male-dominated.

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



Case study: Jessie and Laura

Although Laura has always been more “tomboyish”, the festival helped her realise, “there’s a lot of people who aren’t girly girls,” Which made her feel less like an exception. She was also surprised to see boys enjoying activities like bracelet making, helping her understand that interests don’t need to fit traditional gender roles. As Jessie put it, the festival showed Laura that “if girls can do it, so can boys,”

One month on: a growing impact

Weeks after the festival, Jessie noticed the impact on Laura hadn’t faded but grown. Laura was now using two different coding applications and had tried new physical activities such as climbing and BMX mountain biking. Jessie reflected: “I think that came from being very enthusiastic about trying new things after the festival.”

Laura’s curiosity expanded into engineering and architecture. She began reading books on these topics with her father and even started planning how she might redesign her bedroom, and even the kitchen. Jessie shared how excited her husband was to have new shared interests with their daughter: “They came back from doing some coding together, and they were both really energised by it.”

Jessie explained how meaningful it was to see Laura applying what she’d learned in ways that naturally fit into their family life. She credits the festival for sparking Laura’s interest in STEM, saying “I thought she’d be more interested in drawing, but actually it was things like germs and vaccinations, more of the science, technology and engineering.” The festival, “opened up a whole side of her which she’s passionate about,” from STEM to physical activities, and. helped her discover interests she might never have explored on her own.

Looking ahead

Jessie and Laura are already looking forward to attending future festivals with family and friends. They’re excited to return and take part in some of the workshops that they missed this year, eager to continue exploring the activities and ideas that sparked so much enthusiasm the first time around.

Jessie and Laura’s shared experience highlights how the Festival of the Girl can create lasting change for girls and women of all ages. The festival’s supportive atmosphere offered Laura a safe space to explore new interests, try unfamiliar activities, and learn from inspiring role models. Seeing women in diverse fields and engaging hands-on with different activities helped her recognise what girls and women are capable of and made her feel more comfortable in her own skin. Their experience shows how events like this can spark confidence, curiosity, and meaningful growth - even at a very young age.