

CASE STUDY

Autism-Friendly Programme Glasgow Museums

Glasgow Museums has taken steps to embed autism acceptance into all areas of its work. Lyn Mooney, Learning & Access Curator at the Riverside Museum, describes the wide range of measures - from improved accessibility and resources to workshops and training - which have been implemented to ensure a better experience for staff and visitors with autism.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

THE AUTISM-FRIENDLY PROGRAMME AT GLASGOW MUSEUMS INCLUDES:

- Visual storyboards
- Sensory kits
- Quiet safe spaces
- Autism-friendly programme of early openings & family workshops
- Additional support needs (ASN) schools programme & school work experience

THE PROJECT:

Our vision is to mainstream the range of services for all autistic people, their families and carers, across all ages within Glasgow. Autistic people should have the same choice, opportunities and access to services as everyone else.

In 2017 Glasgow Museums signed up for Glasgow City Council's Autism-Friendly City initiative. By signing up, we agreed to deliver awareness training to staff, promote good customer care, and provide guidance in any areas that might present challenges to autistic people. In achieving these aims, we have been able to create a positive experience for autistic people and their families.

Since joining the Autism-Friendly City initiative, we have improved accessibility by creating pre-visit information guides, implementing early autism opening times and quiet zones, making ear defenders and sensory kits available for people to borrow during opening hours, and adapting workshops to suit the needs of autistic people.

We also participate in Autism Acceptance Month each April to highlight the ongoing work of Glasgow Life museums. This has included promotion of the Autism-friendly programme in *What's On* guides for schools, the delivery of teacher training, and the development of an [autism-friendly microsite](#).



“Fabulous idea to have quiet space available all day which makes museum visits manageable for children on the autism spectrum. Great to have a place to dip in and out of – would be so helpful to have this available permanently.”

Visitor feedback

CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES:

- The challenge was to build a relationship of trust with the autistic community and to develop an offer which would meet a wide range of needs.
- Obstacles that had to be overcome included suspicion from the autistic community that our intent was not genuine, ensuring that pre-visit information was easily accessible online, and communicating across various teams and venues.
- This programme saw considerable collaboration across Glasgow Museums. For example, venue teams, photography and design worked together to develop visual storyboards to help autistic visitors prepare for museum visits.

THE IMPACT IT HAS MADE:

- The Glasgow Museums autism-friendly programme is now embedded in what we do as standard. This project and autism strategy were handed over to senior management in June 2019.

- Our autism-friendly family workshops allow families to try out our weekend and holiday programme in a calmer, more relaxed, flexible environment where all members of the family are supported.
- An autism-friendly approach has enabled Glasgow Museums to make progress in its ambition of delivering the best visitor experience for tourists, repeat local visitors and new audiences.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- To maintain this positive relationship with the autistic community, it was important to raise awareness and support among staff and to offer a consistent approach across venues.

GUIDANCE:

We identified the following ways to make museum visits easier for autistic people:

- Providing information to help people with autism and their families plan ahead for their visit
- Making sure staff have autism awareness (they don't need to be experts!)
- Offering quiet times and safe spaces
- Developing sensory kits

Most importantly, we continue to listen to the autistic community and be honest about our work. People appreciate genuine effort, and you won't get everything right for everyone all the time.

USEFUL RESOURCES:

Contact: museums@glasgowlife.org.uk

Visit: [Glasgow Life autism-friendly microsite](#)

Watch: [Autism Aware Glasgow video](#)

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