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Top 5 autism tips for professionals: autism-friendly museums

The importance of visual stories, training on autism awareness and the availability of quiet spaces in museums are common ideas that have often been repeated. They are key for museums to successfully integrate autism into the museum.

The following top 5 tips aim to establish autism in museums as a sustainable, permanent presence.

- 1) **Make autism events regular**, not one-off or twice a year events. Being autism aware and autism friendly needs to be a commitment not just for one day or one special event. It is familiarity and regularity that allows autistic visitors to build confidence - visits may start with an early opening with low numbers, and then progress to visiting in regular hours.
- 2) **Work with autism groups**, but not just to put on an event. Think about a youth panel or an access group working with the museum to make lasting change. Co-production to put on an exhibition brings many benefits for the museum and the autistic individual, including the presence of role models, and promotes lasting links.
- 3) **Good communication with all staff** is crucial, it is no good spending time on a visual story if front of house don't know you have one, or a back pack if it is not offered to visitors when they arrive. Get your staff to understand why autistic families might need some more support - this includes senior management, get them onboard too. A museum working together is a powerful force for change. Communication needs to be good between staff before you think about strong communication channels with visitors.
- 4) **Think about technology** and how you can use it in your museum. Be at the forefront of change. There is much being written about the [benefits of Minecraft](#) for autistic children and its ability to promote social skills. Don't be afraid to use similar technology as an introduction to the museum space. Apps on smart phones and tablets can be a great distraction for individuals who are anxious about visiting an unfamiliar space. Technology could become the bridge that helps facilitate those first visits.

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- 5) **Don't be afraid to give it a go**, don't be afraid to get things wrong. Every autistic child or adult is different, you can't get it right every time but that doesn't mean you shouldn't try. Museums are facing difficult financial times and staff are stretched, but reaching out to autistic families and welcoming autistic adults often means making a massive difference to an excluded community. Museums are for everyone, but not everyone can visit and the barriers that exist sometimes just take a little bit of time and little bit of thought to break down.

These top tips are meant only as a very general guide to what to think about. You can find further information on this subject below.

Further reading

[Kids in Museums autism resource](#)

[Tincture of Museum: 10 tips for breaking down the barriers](#)

[The National Autistic Society local branches](#)