

ART FOR ENGAGEMENT A TOOLKIT FOR MUSEUMS



**CREATED BY EMERALD ANT
IGGY FOR ALL**



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

USING ART FOR ENGAGEMENT

A TOOLKIT FOR MUSEUMS

Who is this toolkit for?

This kit will support staff and volunteers to use arts workshops to engage schools and families in museum collections.

In particular, it will support volunteer teams working with limited resources, The approach here is straight forward. For more complex and longer projects you might consider bringing in a specialist artist.

You can use the toolkit to:

- Plan workshops for Open Days with lots of families**
- Run workshops for schools visiting the museum**
- Run outreach workshops in schools and with other groups**
- Brainstorm ideas around your collections**
- Host outdoor theatre linked to your collections**
- Engage SEND children in your museum**
- Visit SEND schools with handling collections**

WHY ART?

**Art is a great aid for exploration, learning and interpretation
Art brings people together, across ages and abilities in a non-judgemental way.**

Workshops can involve whole families, peer groups across cultures,

Art doesn't rely on words, and can be used across languages

Art is sensory, and great for engaging SEND children

Art encourages personal expression and builds confidence

It builds teamwork skills and is fun

Arts can provide a museum with something beautiful for display

COMMON CONCERNS...

- 1. I'm not arty!**
- 2. I might get it wrong**
- 3. I was rubbish at art at school**
- 4. It's messy**
- 5. It's costly**
- 6. We don't have the space**

If these sound familiar, why not let go of your inhibitions and come together to try out ideas and techniques, before you bring in the children. Enjoy the process, working together, and forget about producing a masterpiece! You will find solutions to your logistical challenges along the way.

Background...

This toolkit is created by Sarah Butterworth, a heritage artist at Emerald Ant CIC. We are an arts organisation based in Dorset, UK. For over 30 years we have engaged schools and communities in their local history and heritage whether this is dinosaurs, bluebell woods, ancient mills, rivers or human heroes. We have worked with museums and specialist organisations, so that rangers, historians, archaeologists and palaeontologists can share their knowledge first hand with participants, who then participate in workshops with artists, interpreting their learning into exciting celebratory art for parades and outdoor trails.

In 2024-26 our 'Iggy for All' project used our theatre show, The Iguanodon Restaurant , to link 6 SEND schools in Dorset and Somerset with thier local museums. Museum teams came into schools to run workshops with artists. Many then went on to host a Dino Day in the summer, with inclusive arts workshops, alongside the show.

'Iggy' has travelled the entire south coast, working with schools and museums from Devon to Kent, to London. Our expreience is wide and varied, working with teams from some large museums, but mostly small volunteer -run museums.

Please see www.emeraldant.com for our work.

There are different artforms you can use to work wtih groups. in this toolkit we are focused primaily on visual art, the approach is fun, low cost solutions, that have a lot of potential to be adapted. Please use the toolkit as a springboard from which to build your own repertoire.

.

SECTION 3 - PLANNING A WORKSHOP – A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE!

A workshop is a bit like a mini project, with a beginning, middle and end...

1- Planning a Workshop

2 -Resources and Logistics

3 -Workshop Content

4- Delivery

5 -Evaluation

1) Planning a Workshop to fit the Occasion -

- Prioritise your desired outcomes, for example: learning outcomes, artistic outcomes, an increase in visitor numbers, celebrating a particular collection or artefact.

- Is the workshop part of an event? Consider a 'drop in' workshop that lasts throughout the day, engaging groups of people. This could need more staffing than a concentrated 2 hour workshop for 15 participants, but is generally less concentrated , more relaxed and family-friendly.

- Is it for a project? A school / community project, or a museum project? Does it link with a bigger local event / theme?

- A smaller number of participants tends to mean to a higher quality experience, allowing for better access to artefacts, and Qs and As. Can you split the group and swap them to do 2 different activities? This might be good for a class of 30 children.

- If you have a big event with lots of people, can you rotate families around several activities over the day?

- If you are hosting a performance can you run a workshop alongside the show, highlighting a collection?

- Are you taking a handling collection to the school? If so, the same questions apply, but find out the following: timings, numbers, age, location – might you be able to set up in one classroom or the hall?

- Are SEND or DDN people coming? You can make special preparations to help prepare people in advance, such as putting together a social story, and doing a class audit. See section 'Working with SEND'.

2)Resources & Logistics

- Who will lead it? Does a team member have a particular idea, skill or interest? Or will you bring in a paid specialist artist? Who will support it?**
- Do you have enough team members to work with the expected numbers of participants?**
- Who will be responsible for pastoral care? Teachers, parents, or carers?**
- Do you have a suitable space? An art workshop may require more elbow room than a writing workshop. Are there enough tables and chairs? Music and drama generally require more space than art.**
- Will they have a break half-way through? Who is providing refreshments? Schools will normally bring something, which avoids the problems around allergies.**
- Will participants be exploring the museum as part of the activity? Can they move around easily?**
- What is access like? Is it safe and easy for people to enter the museum from the street / road outside? Is anyone coming in a wheelchair? Is the toilet accessible?**
- Is the group expecting to take their work away?**
- Do you need inclusion support, such as BSL or audio description? Can the school provide this ? If not, budget for it in advance and book a professional ahead.**
- What materials will you use? Are they age appropriate for the participants?**
- Do you need drying time for the artwork?**
- Is storage of the artwork needed? Will it go on display?**
- What risks might be associated with the activity? Complete a Risk Assessment and share it with the teacher / adult in charge in advance.**
- Do areas of the museum need to be protected from paint or glue?**

3) Workshop Content

This is the main part of the workshop, the creative bit, which could involve teamwork, or working alone. Each workshop session should last no more than 2 hours before a break.

Think about the following wider questions:

- How is your museum organised? Are collections organised by theme, chronology or subject matter, or is it different to this? Do you want to stick to the layout, or work across themes, or timelines?**
- Do your displays encourage multiple interpretations?**
- Do you have a handling collection, especially good for children of all ages and abilities**
- Are you celebrating / focusing on 1 or more items in the collection?**
- How will you start? Questions, sharing, or a quick inspirational task, often used to 'hook' people in... Sometimes it is good to gain a sense of group awareness at the start**
- How will your participants explore collections to find out facts?**
- Might they be exploring the space in a sensory way, e.g. looking for colours? Dressing up in character?**
- How will they work with your artists/ museum team to interpret their findings?**
- What will the group create as a result?**

4) Delivery – Some Helpful Tips to work with Different Groups

- Be clear that you are there to run the workshop, and not to deal with behaviour or pastoral care. If you feel uncomfortable about this you can explain to the children with teachers present, that if they need the loo, or a drink they should ask their teacher and not you! Make parents aware you are expecting them to work with their children, not leave them and go to the shops!**
- Do a risk assessment in advance and complete any actions to reduce risk in advance, find a simple Risk Assessment template at the back of this pack.**
- Choose appropriate art materials – SEND and younger children will better handle accessible, low risk, easy to use tools such as loop scissors, fingerpaint and sponge rollers, stencils, paper, card, crayons, felt pens, pastels, tactile, colourful, soft materials. Many SEND children dislike slimy glue (and it is a pain to clear up after a long day!)**
- Be careful with your precious artefacts, you do not want to see a treasured fossil smashed to the floor**
- Make the workshop sensory for SEND and younger children, plenty of things to touch, smell and see. SEND children might also like to be given tasks to explore, categorise objects, i.e. a tub of beach finds could be organised into colours, sizes, shapes...**
- If you are working with SEND have a couple of options as attention spans may be short. Many SEND children prefer to explore the space in their own time, with their teacher, carer or parent. See the section 'Working with SEND'**
- Small group, more intensive workshops lasting 2-3 hours, involve step by step instructions. The leader will have 1-2 helpers, and support participants needing more help. Plan in a break where the group leaves the space**
- All day drop in workshops tend to be more simple, requiring less detailed instruction, but more staff time is needed overseeing, greeting and explaining, topping up paint, cleaning up etc. Participants normally stay for 20 -40 minutes, SEND children might stay for longer or shorter. Some kids may come back throughout the day, especially if their parents are working on the event, they might see your workshop as a safe space. I often give them jobs helping out.**
- For elderly and reminiscence workshops, you might invite participants to bring in an item from home that ties in with your collection. Participants may share stories about objects, linking them to items, or history, in the museum.**
- Engaging reluctant groups, such as a class of uninspired teenagers, consider topics and challenges they may be interested in, i.e. How would they respond to a chosen historic event? If they were sending a postcard home from the museum, what object would they choose to write about? Do a drawing on the front. Engage them in social history, such as women's rights, rights in the workplace – Work in pairs to plan a campaign? Do something funny – invite them to write about their breakfasts in the style of a famous writer, Jane Austin, or Beatrix Potter, and read out loud. Engage them in small group challenges, i.e. create a jointed puppet of a plesiosaur using black card, split pins, sellotape, sticks, and string...**
- Gather the group and enjoy the outcome at the end of the day. Get their feedback, see next section...**

6. OUTREACH VISITS TO SCHOOLS

Taking a handling collection from your museum into a school can be a wonderful experience for children, whilst introducing them to the museum in the lead up to a school outing. You may choose to run a short workshop, enabling deeper exploration of a handling collection.

PREPARATION

Questions to ask the teacher in advance include: numbers of participants, age, length of sessions, background learning around the subject, location – where will you set up? Will a member of staff accompany you through the day? Are DBSs needed? Parking and unloading - can you have help? Can you take over one classroom for the day and have classes come to you? If you are running a workshop you don't want to be moving materials from one place to the next. Share a workshop plan and risk assessment with the school in advance.

Consider whether any children with 1 to 1 support should come to you on their own.

Be mindful of your own energy limitations, schools often want to squeeze all their classes into a day. Try to split big classes of 30 into 2 groups and rotate them around 2 activities, and limit your team members' shifts to 2 hours.

EXPLORING WHAT A MUSEUM IS - An 'overarching' fun idea for younger children....

What is a Museum? Explore this in a simple fun way: If the class had their own museum, what would they put into it? How would they transform the classroom to display and celebrate their chosen objects? How would each person's item be displayed and curated? How would they greet visitors? This could be a start point for a bigger school project. Over one day the teachers could open up their classrooms for the rest of the school, and the children could present and talk about their items.

5) Evaluation

- If you can, it is important to gather comments and gauge how happy the group was with your workshop. This way you can see where the gaps are in facilitation, plan follow up activities, training and support for your team.**
- Re photos and video, follow your museum's GDPR code of practice.**
- You can use several methods - Invite participants to write or speak one word or a sentence that sums up their experience. They could complete a questionnaire, or you can invite them to share a) something they learnt, b) how they felt, and c) anything else. The anything else can turn out to be very interesting outcomes you didn't expect.**
- Some participants will prefer to use spoken word, and you can invite them to interview each other, and feed back to the group, on video or voice recorder.**
- SEND children may prefer to use widgets (pictures) to feedback, smiley faces etc. These can be found online, you can prepare a questionnaire this way.**
- Record the feedback for your museum, and funders. Participant feedback is valuable for museum websites, publicity and to grow audiences.**

WORKSHOP PLANNING TABLE

Name of Workshop and Collection: i.e. *Exploring Fossils through Drawing, Jurassic Coast Fossil Collection*

Participants: *Year 4, Bridport Primary School - 15 children*

Length of workshop: *2 sessions x 40 mins*

Activity	Facilitator	Support	Materials	Notes
Hand out fossils with eyes closed 10 mins	Beth	Caroline	Fossils handling collection	
Draw fossils – on a single large sheet of paper 15 mins	Beth	Caroline	Roll of sugar paper Masking tape Chalks Fixative	
5 mins	Handwashing			Teacher oversees this
Explain fossils Class can take notes if desired 10 mins	Caroline	Beth	Pencils A4 paper	Explore their knowledge first

RISK ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE Workshop name, location, date, contact details - Activities: cutting, sticking, colouring in, painting, stencilling, badge making - NB Parents will be asked to supervise their children during workshops				
Risk	Cause	Likelihood	Measure taken	ACTION in preparation for workshop
Physical injury	Tripping / general	Unlikely	Vigilance by all and calm atmosphere	Basic first aid kit available First aider available for minor cuts etc.
Cuts	Using scissors	Unlikely	Parents will be with children A team of adults will be supervising and instructing	Child-friendly loop scissors are used Left handed are available as needed
injury	Using badge machine	Unlikely	Only staff / volunteers will use the badge machine Badge machine kept out of children's reach	
injury	Badge pins poking into skin	Unlikely	Badges are given to parents / to put on children's clothing	
illness	Ingestion of paint, pritt stick etc	Unlikely	Parent supervision Paint and glue used is child friendly	Buy child friendly materials

SECTION 4 - IDEAS FACTORY!

You probably have lots of ideas for workshops to run, but if you don't, below are some starting points for exploring different collections using visual arts. You can use these whether you are doing outreach visits with a handling collection, or working with larger items in the museum

4.1. Fossils and Geology – workshops to engage with fossil collections

- Explore the fossils with your eyes closed first, consider weight, texture, shape, features such as lines and dots. Picture it in your mind's eye. If you are working with an older, or more confident group, you could invite them to draw the fossil with eyes closed over 3-5 minutes, using charcoal /soft pencils, on A3 paper, whilst still exploring the fossil in their other hand. With a less confident group they could draw with eyes open, taking a bit longer. Explain that drawing is just a process of getting to know the fossil, by using your eyes, and there is no pressure to produce a realistic result. Once they have done this, you could ask what they think the animal or plant once was, age, environment and food. You could link ammonites, echinoids and belemnites to ichthyosaurs through a food chain, and talk about Deep Time.**
- Fossil rubbings can be done with fossil pieces, crayons, paper. Invite the group to fill a large-scale sheet of paper with fossils, you could split the image into strata / geological time zones etc . You can buy plastic fossils for such activities at <https://www.findel-education.co.uk/product/fe00010303>**
- Invite a group of young children or SEND children to categorise a bucket of fossil pieces, organising them by shape, colour, detail etc, before explaining what they are, with photos / models of the actual creatures. You could chuck in some pieces of sea glass and china found on the beach, and talk about the history of these items.**
- For Year 5 upwards, introduce the idea of a geological chart with different time zones, children can choose from a pot of cut out creatures, or draw plants and animals and place them on the chart. At the end you can go through it together and re-position them according to scientific fact. Some highlights might include the big bang, the start of oxygen, Cambrian age, Jurassic and Cretaceous ages with marine reptiles and dinosaurs such as the T-Rex, giant dragon flies, and the start of flowering plants that brought in pollination, the Chicxulub extinction event, which led to the rise of mammals. At the end you could invite them to draw a creature from the future to put at the nearest end of the timescale.**
- 10 printable arts geology workshop sheets, suitable for Primary Schools and Year 7s, as well as family workshops, can be found at <https://emeraldant.com/digging-discovery-worksheets/>**

Use your fossils (e.g. an ammonite), to create a giant image that lots of people can decorate or write on. This is good for a drop in workshop.

SECTION 4 - IDEAS FACTORY

4.2. Archaeology – exploring Celtic / Roman flint tools, pottery, coins, bottles, beads etc

-Rubblings from coins, get a class to fill a sheet using crayons

-‘If I were King’ coin workshop. Design your own coin for the Iron or Roman Age, (or any other age relevant to your collection). Put your own portrait on one side and an image of your choice on the other. What text should you put on it, how will your coins be used?

-Use the pottery in the collection to imagine a pot for storage or eating in Celtic / Roman times. Make drawing and use the collection to consider what would go in it and how it would be used?

-Make a clay bead necklace or bracelet inspired by Celtic or Roman jewellery from the collection, paint them, put a hole in them and add string

SECTION 4 - IDEAS FACTORY

4.3 The Local Town - Photos, Paintings and Models

Photos and Artworks / Models of Local Town / Village

- Draw or model from clay / plasticine, the buildings, trees and other features, and build a street made by the class. Add colour, and draw yourself on the street
- Give a small group of SEND children some masking tape and a large hard floor. Ask them to use the tape to map their street. They can start with their school, drawing it out as a birds eye view, using torn and cut tape, then expand to the street and the whole town!
- The street / settlement might be Iron Age, Roman, Georgian, Victorian, work with a partner to imagine occupying the buildings. Draw / model a picture of a family eating at home, or a scene of local working life, or school life.
- Building / construction techniques through the ages. A class would enjoy being introduced hands on to wattle and daub, brick laying etc, they could use local materials, willow, hazel, straw, mud etc to make something together in the museum.
- 'Day and Night', think about power in the home and street. What would it have been like 50, 100, 200 years ago, 500 yrs ago, 1000 years ago? Discuss the changes that electricity brought.
- Exploring feelings about buildings, share your experiences of these buildings...Who's been inside? What did you do? How did the interior make you feel? You could create a mood map of the street, bringing in colours, shapes. I suggest using watercolour-type paints, and if you'd like to use strong colours, bring in Brusho paints, which are lots of fun, (but use floor coverings and disposable gloves with these as they stain).
- Documenting history – discuss the different methods of recording information, from drawing, painting, writing, printing to photography. What is it like to use each of these techniques? Do you get to know a place better by using one technique over another?

SECTION 4 - IDEAS FACTORY

4.4 Inventions and Machines – Agricultural and Industrial

-Bring black and white photos of local factories alive, by explaining the factory business and a machine's function. The class could draw shapes from photos, cutting out, and create an all colour, large scale machine that belongs to them. They could decide what it makes. Invite them to share the sounds the machine makes.

-What were the first machines in town? Consider what raw products are available locally and how it the machine was powered (i.e. water / wind / animal / human). Ask the group to work in pairs and present their machine to the class, with a drawing.

Invite the group to think about what is grown locally, or mined. Choose one item they would make a business out of. How would they go about it?

-Design and draw a machine for the future... What will its function be? What will power it? How will we document it, and present it in an exciting way for the museum?

SECTION 4 - IDEAS FACTORY

4.5 Clothing and Home Furnishings

- Dressing up and acting in character. Invite the groups to make little scenes around subjects you give them.**
- Looking at clothing, consider the job / role of a person, their social status and their work and home environment. A small group could model a set of characters, or they could draw them together on a large sheet. You can use big drawing tools (crayons, pastels) to encourage spontaneity and discussion, rather than detailed drawings.**
- Consider clothes through the ages... First clothes, from animal skins, to wool and cotton trading. Where raw materials came from, and how were products harvested / mined and transported?**
- Consider how clothes, linens and blankets were made, the development of agricultural machinery, how looms led to mass production. Invite the group to discuss, design and draw a factory production line for a pair of Victorian pants, for example.**
- If they were going to design an item of clothing for 1000 years in the future, what would it be like?**
- Quilts and patterns – a class could design their own quilt based upon their own ideas or feelings about an important event. They should choose shapes and colours that reflect meaningful events or feelings. Use the stories in the museum as research.**

SECTION 4 - IDEAS FACTORY

4.6 Celebration and Entertainment on the Beach / in the Town Centre

Social events in the town have been well-documented through time in photographs and paintings.

-Do you have a Punch and Judy theatre in your museum, or something similar? Share the story behind it: How did local people make money from tourism? Did the railway play a big part in bringing people there? Was there work legislation that gave working classes some time off? Use the museum collection to inspire a new entertainment for visiting families. Use the museum collection to see what has worked well in the past. How will you market your new attraction, what will you charge? How will it work? Make drawings and write a paragraph to present.

SECTION 4 - IDEAS FACTORY

4.7 Notable Characters

- Who has run the town, find out a bit about parish / town councils and town mayors. Did any of them do something you find especially useful or exciting for the town? Write a short paragraph**
- If you were mayor, what would you change? Look at the portraits of mayors, and make a self portrait (drawn / painted / modelled from clay / plasticine) with the correct robes and regalia**
- Are there other people who have made a difference to the town? Writers, artists, business leaders. Choose one, and write a postcard home to your family about them, with a drawing on the front of the postcard.**

SECTION 5 - HOSTING OUTDOOR TOURING THEATRE

A theatre performance can bring museum collections and historic characters to life, draw in new visitors and explain a complex story in a fun and entertaining way, unlocking collections for local families as well as visitors on holiday.

5.1 Preliminary Meeting

- The theatre company will do a site visit to the museum in advance, meet with your team, measure the performance site and look at access for getting the theatre set in.**
- At the same time you can agree show times, discuss the collection that the show links to, start a marketing plan and discuss managing the performance day.**
- Companies will share a show 'Promo Pack' (or equivalent) that supports logistics and publicity, complete with advertising copy. You can use this for local press releases, social media etc.**
- The company can drop off posters for you to use later, and share social media links. They should also share an online folder of photos from the show.**

SECTION 5 - HOSTING OUTDOOR TOURING THEATRE

5.2 Stewarding

Volunteer and staff stewards are there to help the day run smoothly and support visitors and the theatre company. They provide information to the public, and help prevent accidents which could otherwise be caused by children running around the set.

- Stewarding the show should be discussed in advance, the company will know what is needed, and share their Risk Assessment with you. The set should ideally be roped off as the performers are getting ready and taking down.**
- A stewarding rota should be drawn up to place limitations on any outlined risks. This normally runs from before the show starts and ends when the company are taking their set down and audiences and visitors have left. The company should brief all stewards before the rota starts. The company may provide stewards with hi viz clothing, or otherwise.**
- Stewards should also meet and greet audiences as they arrive, and accompany families with DDN or accessibility requirements, guiding them if necessary to good view points and where they can easily see the BSL interpreter.**

SECTION 5 - HOSTING OUTDOOR TOURING THEATRE

5.3 Marketing

- Social media (the museum's face book page), for local families can be very effective in drawing big audiences. Post photos and info regularly in the lead up to the event.

- Make sure the company's webpage is shared, where there is practical information enabling families to gain knowledge about the show day.

Link with the company's webpage. They should have a 'social story', where actors introduce themselves and the characters they play, alert audiences to any surprises, loud noises for example. One of these can be found at <https://emeraldant.com/iggy-for-all/> This is useful for all families, but especially those with SEND and DDN.

- Get posters into the local TIC, schools and flyers into classrooms if possible, so that children can alert their parents. Post on local sites for parents and arts sites.

- Press releases to go out to local papers, radio and TV

- If the company are bringing a BSL interpreter or audio describer, make sure this is made clear to SEND schools, and families with SEND and DDN members. These groups often need to plan well ahead so this information should be shared at the earliest opportunity.

SECTION 5 - HOSTING OUTDOOR TOURING THEATRE

5.4 Supporting Families with SEND and DDN

- The theatre company should have a ‘social story’ about their show, which can be seen online. share this on your social media and with your audiences.**
- It is good practice to have a ‘safe space’ in the museum in case it is needed by any audience members. At the very least this is a quiet space where a parent and child can sit away from noise and sensory overload. For full, practical advice please see Sam Bowen’s website <https://sendinmuseums.org/how-to-work-with-send/>**
- Ensure clear access routes to the show, indoors to loos, café and workshop space, are big enough for wheelchair users**

See more in the final section ‘Working with SEND’

SECTION 5 - HOSTING OUTDOOR TOURING THEATRE

5.5 Running a Workshop alongside the Show

- Running a creative drop-in workshop before and after a show is a good way of linking the show and a big family audience to your collection, for example, you may have fossils that link with a show about dinosaurs.

Make it a simple activity that links well with your collection, and signpost participants indoors to the collection as they leave the workshop. It may be that you create one joint artwork over the day, or participants might take something home they have made. There are different ways of delivering the workshop, use the Ideas Factory to brainstorm this.

- Make sure you have a big enough team on the rota as you may find when the show ends, you are inundated!

- Ensure you have tables, chairs and a gazebo or 2 solely for the workshop, parents might want to sit down to help their kids.

- 1-2 additional sensory activities for SEND will go down well, for example, a sandpit with fossils in it, a lucky dip, colouring in.

- It is nice to run badge making , or something similar so children have something to take home.

- Do a Risk Assessment for the workshop and share it with your team before the workshop starts

- Ensure first aid is available

- Leave a big sheet out inviting comments on the day

SECTION 5 - HOSTING OUTDOOR TOURING THEATRE

5.6 Evaluation

- Make sure you take photos of all activities during the day.**
- Pool together any comments collected during the day.**
- Share comments and photos with the theatre company**
- Have a debrief with your team, and with the theatre company after the day.**
- Consider what you might do next!**

6. USING CREATIVITY TO ENGAGE WITH SEND CHILDREN

If you're a museum located near to a SEND school or a Pupil Referral Unit, you can make a big difference to children and young people who get less cultural opportunities, but who often find museums magical and enticing!

Not all SEND children will be able to go on a school trip, so taking a handling collection into school is welcomed. SEND families often see museums as a 'safe space' for a family day out, compared to a walk in the countryside or a theme park.

Engaging SEND children in a museum can require a completely different approach, compared to working with a large class of primary school children. Many will prefer to explore in their own time, and if you can give them the exclusive run of the museum, all the better. Making their journeys fun and exciting is your job, rather than facilitating a complex challenging workshop!

Activities should aim to engage in a sensory way, rather than be prescriptive, or cognitively demanding. Big drawing, making sounds, touching, dressing up are all great things to offer. Being good for SEND will elevate your museum, making it better for everyone.

It is important your team are signed up to this, and are not afraid of causing offence, being politically incorrect or of being misunderstood. Check out <https://sendinmuseums.org/how-to-work-with-send/developing-your-send-offer/> and <https://the-art-of-autism.com/why-and-how-to-visit-a-museum-tips-for-parents/> for some excellent advice and strategies.

The Acronyms...

'SEND' refers to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, relating to children and young adults in a school or care setting.

DDN is a broad term for all people who experience deafness, disabilities, and neuro-divergence.

6. USING CREATIVITY TO ENGAGE WITH SEND CHILDREN

6.2 PREPARATION FOR A SEND GROUP COMING TO THE MUSEUM

There are useful tools you can use for school visits to the museum and for outreach visits. A member of your team with lived SEND experience can be a great help in planning and running these.

Try to plan a quiet day, where the museum is open exclusively to the group.

Create and share an introductory video guide, where you introduce yourselves, and take a walk with the camera through the museum, introducing visitors to collections, artefacts and activities. Point out steps, the loos, and anything that could be noisy, unusual or surprising.

Ask the teacher to provide information about the group. You can use the school booking template at <https://sendinmuseums.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Example-school-booking-template-Copy.pdf>

if you can, dedicate a quiet room to being a safe space in case a child is experiencing sensory overload.

FREEDOM TO EXPLORE THE MUSEUM

Let the group explore at their own pace, be there to support this. Make the museum interesting – reduce written labels and provide objects that can be touched, drawers to pull out, clothes to put on, percussion instruments that make sounds. Make it an adventure!

PLAN FOR A WONDERFUL EXPLORATION, RATHER THAN FIXED ACTIVITIES

It is best to assume everyone has different learning styles and interests, so aim to provide a range of experiences, presented one at a time. You will not be able to predict each child's responses, and some children will need more time to join in.

You could provide a trail of non-complicated sensory experiences, such as find things that are blue, soft, furry (soft toys can be very popular) Find a fossil in the sand tray, Can you draw the rest of this fish? Offer different textures to touch, impressions in airdried clay, invite children to playfully engage; Strike a pose like the man in the portrait etc. Bring in music and provide headphones....Have a dark space with illuminations... Making your museum a wonderland is an exciting challenge for your team!

6. USING CREATIVITY TO ENGAGE WITH SEND CHILDREN

MATERIALS & EQUIPMENT

- Take care not to use toxic materials, especially those easy to swallow.**
- Chunky drawing tools like crayons, big pencils and pastels can be gripped easily**
- Large sheets of paper on the floor**
- Masking tape is great to create maps / 'drawings' on the floor**
- Loop scissors are easier to use than normal scissors**
- Have some tools for left handed people**
- Categorising and sorting out items according to colour, shape and size etc can be fun**

EVALUATION

At the end you could ask the group to give you one sentence for how they found the experience.

If you want a written response, you could ask the teacher to provide an evaluation sheet using widgets.

Alternatively, you can ask the group to choose from a range of sticker 'smiley' faces.

FOLLOW UP the visit with the teacher, maybe a more dedicated workshop looking at one collection could be the next move.

6. USING CREATIVITY TO ENGAGE WITH SEND CHILDREN

USEFUL RESOURCES FOR MAKING YOUR MUSEUM SEND-FRIENDLY

“Kids in Museums” manifesto - <https://kidsinmuseums.org.uk/what-we-do/manifesto/> Having policies for ‘relaxed visits’ on your museum website will manage visitor expectations and support volunteers in their roles.

SEND in Museums expert Sam Bowen has a website packed with resources and advice on everything you may need, including creating a welcoming video, fidget packs, through to disabled access <https://sendinmuseums.org/> Language – widgets (drawings) as a written language - <https://widgitonline.com/en/home>

Sunflower lanyards can be given to visiting families to indicate to museum teams that a person has a hidden disability and may need support. These can be obtained for free from <https://hdsunflower.com/>

The bigger disability conversation - www.wearepurple.org.uk