



Publicity Guidelines for Autism Friendly Town Committees

Holding a public meeting

We recommend holding a public meeting, early on in your journey, to engage the local community. It is a great way to get local media coverage and also to meet key stakeholders who can support your town to achieve AsIAm Autism-Friendly Town Status. In organising your public meeting there are a number of things you may wish to consider:

- **Venue** – is there somewhere with a suitably large room in the Town that could facilitate the meeting. This could be a community centre, school or a local hotel for example. Find a venue which is easy to access and, if possible, see can your Committee get the space for free.
- **Time** – what time will work best for your community? Should the meeting be during the day or in the evening? Engage with stakeholders to get a sense of what might be the best time to reach the most people
- **Agenda** – how will you structure the evening? You might like an AsIAm team member to give a presentation on the award? Can a Committee representative explain what the next steps are in the process? Can an Autistic person share their experiences of growing up in the locality and why this work is important? Could you have a panel discussion of local businesses or groups sharing why they would like to get involved? Whatever your approach it is important to run the meeting to time and generally keep the session to around 1 hour, with an opportunity for the audience to ask questions.
- **Sign-up** – can you ask those who attend on the night to sign a sheet expressing their interest and giving you permission to contact them with further information?
- **IT** – do you need a projector or microphone for the evening?
- **Promotional materials** – do you want to give people something to go away with such as a flyer or poster explaining the project?
- **Promotion** – how will you tell people the event is on? Could you setup an event on social media? Could you put up posters in the town or send out a local press release? We have included some promotional materials which may be useful in the appendix



- **Social media**

Social media is a great way of promoting your work as a Committee. It is for each Committee to decide what platforms you would like to set up an account on. When you do set up accounts you can let us know and we can support in promoting and sharing your activity.

It is a good idea for the committee to discuss in advance what it wants to share on social media.

This might include:

- Re-sharing relevant AsIAm content
- Photographs and videos from your activities (always get permission from those included in the photos or footage prior to posting)
- Information about progress
- Calls for sponsorship or support
- Registration links for those who wish to be Autism-Friendly Champions
- Themed content e.g. competitions or content about Christmas
- It is important to consider your moderation policy – what comments will you reply to? Can a person be blocked or banned from the page for being abusive or spamming? What content would the Committee prefer they did not engage with or share?

- **Press releases**

A good way to keep your local community engaged is to issue press releases prior to any of your major activities. Many people still access their news through local newspapers and radio stations and so it is great way of getting your message out without incurring any cost!

A press release should be succinct and include quotes from the key people involved in the project. It is always important to include background information and contact details at the end of the press release.

We have included sample press releases in the appendix.



- **Reaching out the possible partners and champion**

A key starting point for your Committee will be engaging with local organisations who may partner with you or agree to becoming a Champion.

The public meeting, social media and press releases will all help drive this engagement but there are other ways too including:

- Calling to a business or organisation with some information about the project and asking if there would be a time that suited to meet.
- Identifying who on the committee knows various stakeholders and asking them to approach the person or organisation directly.
- Attending existing networking events in the town or asking to speak at a meeting of another organisation in the town to promote the initiative.
- Inviting a key stakeholder to join the Committee.

It is always a good idea to make sure you know what you would like the organisation or individual to commit to prior to meeting with them.

As local groups and businesses can be very busy it is important to spot your opportunity, be able to explain succinctly what the project is about and to be respectful of their time.