

GARC

GLOBAL AUTISM RESEARCH CENTER

PRACTICAL TOOLKITS SERIES | NO. 10

COMMUNITY INCLUSION AUTISM TOOLKIT

A Practical Evidence-Informed Guide for Accessible Public Spaces, Services, Transport, Culture, Recreation, Events and Civic Participation

For autistic people • families & supporters • local government • public services • venues • transport • community organizations



EDITION 1.0 | SEPTEMBER 2026

globalautismresearch.org.uk

PUBLICATION

Publication Information

Purpose and audience

This toolkit supports autistic children, young people and adults, families and supporters, local authorities, public-service teams, community organizations, transport providers, libraries, museums, cultural and sports venues, event organizers, tourism and hospitality providers, planners and other organizations that shape everyday community participation.

Scope

The toolkit focuses on practical community inclusion: accessible information, communication, sensory environments, public spaces, wayfinding, transport, culture, recreation, events, civic participation, social connection, volunteering, safety, safeguarding, emergency preparedness, complaints, feedback and continuous improvement. It is intended for international use and should be adapted to local disability law, building standards, transport regulation, safeguarding requirements and public-service duties.

Rights and legal notice

This publication is an educational and institutional practice resource. It does not replace local law, statutory accessibility requirements, fire and emergency rules, safeguarding duties, professional standards, transport regulation, building codes, procurement obligations or individualized legal advice. Organizations should verify current local requirements before implementing policies or representing a service as compliant.

Language, dignity and agency

The toolkit generally uses identity-first language ("autistic person") while recognizing that people may prefer different terminology. Inclusion is not the same as requiring autistic people to tolerate inaccessible settings. The aim is to remove avoidable barriers, provide meaningful choice and preserve the person's dignity, privacy, communication and participation.

Evidence approach

The framework is informed by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, WHO guidance on autism and disability inclusion, NICE guidance on autistic adults, and established principles of universal design, reasonable accommodation, co-production and accessible public services. Local standards should always be checked before implementation.

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FOREWORD

Foreword

Community inclusion is experienced in ordinary places: the bus stop, library, park, sports club, museum, government office, shopping area, place of worship, community event and neighborhood meeting. A person can technically be allowed to enter all of these settings and still be excluded if the information is confusing, the environment is overwhelming, staff misunderstand communication, waiting is unpredictable, no quiet alternative exists, or participation depends on masking distress.

Autistic people are diverse. Some need only clear information and predictable processes. Others require AAC, a supporter, additional time, sensory adjustments, step-by-step preparation or ongoing personal assistance. Inclusion therefore cannot be reduced to one symbol, one quiet room or one staff training session. It requires a repeatable system for anticipating barriers, offering adjustments, listening to autistic people and improving the environment over time.

The strongest community systems combine universal accessibility with individualized accommodation. Information should be understandable before arrival. Journeys should be predictable. Staff should know how to respond without infantilizing or escalating distress. Feedback should be usable by people who communicate in different ways. Autistic people should be included in design and governance, not only invited to comment after decisions are made.

This toolkit converts these principles into a 10-point framework, 15 implementation sections and practical tools that can be used by local government, venues, transport providers, public services and community organizations. The goal is not to create separate communities for autistic people, but to make ordinary community life genuinely accessible.

Core principle

Do not ask only whether autistic people are allowed to participate. Ask whether the information, journey, environment, communication, support and decision-making process make meaningful participation realistically possible.

Global Autism Research Center (GARC)
Practical Toolkits Series

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Quick navigation

Venues and public-facing services can start with Sections 4, 5, 6, 10 and Appendix A. Transport providers should focus on Section 7. Local authorities and system leaders should use Sections 2, 3, 11, 15 and the 90-day roadmap.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

Three Levels of Use

Level	Primary users	Use
Individual	Autistic people, families, supporters	Prepare for community participation, request adjustments and share what helps.
Service / venue	Frontline teams, managers, event and facility leads	Remove barriers, standardize accessible processes and respond safely.
Community system	Local government, transport, commissioners, networks	Coordinate accessibility, co-design, measure outcomes and improve community-wide participation.

Use both universal and individualized approaches

Universal design reduces the number of people who need to ask for special arrangements. Individualized accommodations remain necessary because autistic people differ. A good community system offers accessible defaults, a clear route to request additional support, and staff who can respond without unnecessary gatekeeping.

Plan the full participation journey

Accessibility begins before arrival and continues after leaving. Review information, booking, travel, arrival, waiting, navigation, communication, sensory exposure, participation, breaks, payment, emergencies, departure and feedback. A single inaccessible step can prevent the entire activity.

Do not convert preferences into stereotypes

Some people prefer quiet spaces; others enjoy busy events. Some need written information; others use speech, AAC, pictures or a supporter. Ask, observe and provide options rather than assuming one autism-friendly format fits everyone.

SECTION 01

What Community Inclusion Means

Move from physical presence to access, participation, belonging and choice.

Inclusion is more than entry

A person may enter a venue but be unable to use it because instructions are unclear, staff communication is inaccessible, queues are unpredictable or sensory demands are too high.

Participation should be ordinary

Autistic people should be able to use the same community services, facilities and opportunities available to the general population, with adjustments and support where needed.

Choice matters

Inclusion does not require attending every event or social activity. People should be able to choose whether, when and how they participate without being penalized for communication, sensory or support needs.

Belonging is an outcome

Look beyond attendance numbers. Ask whether people feel respected, safe, understood, able to influence decisions and able to return.

Barriers often interact

A confusing website, difficult bus journey, crowded entrance and rushed staff interaction may combine into one inaccessible experience even if each problem appears minor in isolation.

Participation test

Can the person find the information, reach the place, enter, understand what is happening, communicate, regulate, participate, leave safely and give feedback? If one stage fails, the service may still be inaccessible.

SECTION 02

GARC 10-Point Autism-Inclusive Community Framework

A practical operating standard for community access and participation.

1. Co-design with autistic people

Include autistic people with diverse communication and support needs in design, testing, governance and review.

2. Make information accessible before arrival

Publish practical, concrete information on what will happen, sensory conditions, routes, costs, rules, supports and how to request adjustments.

3. Design predictable journeys

Reduce avoidable uncertainty in booking, transport, arrival, queues, navigation, schedules, changes and departure.

4. Support communication

Use plain language, multiple formats, AAC-aware practice, processing time and direct respectful communication.

5. Reduce sensory barriers

Manage lighting, sound, crowding, smell, touch and waiting demands and offer quieter alternatives where feasible.

6. Train people, not only places

Frontline staff need practical skills for welcoming, explaining, adjusting, de-escalating and escalating safely.

7. Preserve dignity, privacy and autonomy

Ask before touching, sharing information or involving supporters; avoid infantilizing assumptions.

8. Build safety and safeguarding into access

Plan for missing persons, distress, emergencies, exploitation, harassment and safeguarding without using exclusion as the default.

9. Provide a clear adjustment and feedback route

Make it easy to request support, complain, give feedback and obtain a response in accessible formats.

10. Measure participation and improve

Track barriers, adjustment requests, incidents, repeat use, feedback and co-design actions - not just policy completion.

#	Domain	Practice standard
1	Co-design with autistic people	Include autistic people with diverse communication and support needs in design, testing, governance and review.

#	Domain	Practice standard
2	Make information accessible before arrival	Publish practical, concrete information on what will happen, sensory conditions, routes, costs, rules, supports and how to request adjustments.
3	Design predictable journeys	Reduce avoidable uncertainty in booking, transport, arrival, queues, navigation, schedules, changes and departure.
4	Support communication	Use plain language, multiple formats, AAC-aware practice, processing time and direct respectful communication.
5	Reduce sensory barriers	Manage lighting, sound, crowding, smell, touch and waiting demands and offer quieter alternatives where feasible.
6	Train people, not only places	Frontline staff need practical skills for welcoming, explaining, adjusting, de-escalating and escalating safely.
7	Preserve dignity, privacy and autonomy	Ask before touching, sharing information or involving supporters; avoid infantilizing assumptions.
8	Build safety and safeguarding into access	Plan for missing persons, distress, emergencies, exploitation, harassment and safeguarding without using exclusion as the default.
9	Provide a clear adjustment and feedback route	Make it easy to request support, complain, give feedback and obtain a response in accessible formats.
10	Measure participation and improve	Track barriers, adjustment requests, incidents, repeat use, feedback and co-design actions - not just policy completion.

SECTION 03

Co-Design and Governance with Autistic People

Design with people who use the community, not only for them.

Include diversity

Recruit autistic people across age, gender, culture, communication methods, intellectual disability, mobility, sensory needs and level of support. One advisory voice cannot represent everyone.

Pay for expertise

Where governance or co-design requires significant time and expertise, use transparent compensation that does not depend on unpaid lived-experience labor. Check local tax or benefit implications.

Make participation accessible

Share agendas early, use plain language, offer written or remote contribution, allow support persons, schedule breaks and provide more than one way to give feedback.

Give co-design real influence

Clarify which decisions participants can shape, what is fixed, how disagreements will be handled and how the organization will report back on changes made.

Create an evidence trail

Maintain a simple register of barriers identified, recommended changes, decisions, responsible leads, deadlines and verification with users.

SECTION 04

Accessible Information, Communication and Wayfinding

Make the community understandable before and during participation.

Publish practical access information

Include opening hours, booking process, photos or maps, entrances, queues, toilets, quiet areas, security procedures, expected duration, costs, age rules and who to contact for adjustments.

Use concrete language

Avoid ambiguous signs and instructions. Explain exactly where to go, what to bring, what will happen next and how long steps usually take.

Offer multiple formats

Where feasible provide web, written, visual, easy-read, captioned or audio formats and support compatibility with assistive technology.

Improve wayfinding

Use consistent signs, symbols, colors and landmarks. Avoid sudden changes in naming between the website, ticket, map and physical signage.

Train for communication differences

Allow processing time, one speaker at a time and alternative communication. Do not equate lack of eye contact, delayed response or atypical tone with rudeness or non-compliance.

SECTION 05

Sensory Accessibility and Predictability

Reduce preventable overload without creating a segregated experience.

Map sensory demand

Review lighting, alarms, music, announcements, crowds, smells, temperature, echo, touch, costumes, flashing effects and unexpected movement.

Publish a sensory profile

Tell people what they may hear, see, smell or experience and identify times or areas that are typically quieter or busier.

Offer options

Examples include quiet waiting, low-sensory sessions, headphones, sunglasses, alternative entrances, reduced queuing, breaks or a calm space where operationally safe.

Make changes visible

If an elevator, entrance, schedule, room or sensory condition changes, communicate this as early and clearly as possible.

Distinguish distress from misconduct

Overload may present as shutdown, escape, repetitive movement, crying, agitation or reduced speech. Staff should focus first on safety, communication and reducing demands rather than punishment.

Sensory inclusion

A quiet hour can be valuable, but it should complement - not replace - improvements to ordinary opening hours and everyday access.

SECTION 06

Public Spaces, Civic Buildings and the Built Environment

Design spaces that support navigation, regulation, waiting and participation.

Review the whole route

Audit approach, drop-off, parking, entrance, security, reception, elevators, corridors, seating, toilets, service counters and exit - not only the main room.

Create clear transition points

Mark where to queue, wait, check in, collect information, enter and leave. Use staff or visual cues at complex transitions.

Provide manageable waiting

Offer realistic waiting information, seating options, quieter locations, call-back or text alerts where feasible and safe.

Protect access to regulation

A calm or low-stimulation area should be easy to find, not used as storage and should not require an embarrassing explanation to access.

Use procurement and renovation strategically

When changing buildings, furniture, signage or digital kiosks, include accessibility requirements early rather than retrofitting after complaints.

SECTION 07

Transport, Mobility and Journey Access

A community is not accessible if people cannot reliably reach it.

Plan the full journey chain

Consider route planning, ticketing, stops, platforms, vehicle boarding, transfers, delays, staff communication and the final walk to the destination.

Make disruptions understandable

Give clear, repeated information about cancellations, diversions, platform changes and expected delays. Provide a direct route to assistance.

Support practice and familiarization

Travel training, route rehearsal, station visits, visual journeys and off-peak practice can build confidence when desired.

Reduce conflict in enforcement interactions

Ticket checks, security screening and rule enforcement should use clear language, allow processing time and recognize that distress or communication differences may look unusual.

Build contingency plans

Identify what happens if a person misses a stop, becomes separated from a supporter, experiences overload or cannot use the planned route.

Journey principle

An accessible destination does not create inclusion if the transport journey is unreliable, confusing or unsafe for the person.

SECTION 08

Libraries, Museums, Arts and Cultural Participation

Make knowledge and culture available through more than one mode of participation.

Explain the experience before arrival

Provide practical visitor information, photos, floor plans, performance length, seating, breaks, lighting and sound effects, and whether people may leave and return.

Create flexible participation

Offer quiet browsing, sensory-friendly sessions, relaxed performances, alternative interpretation, take-home resources or digital access where feasible.

Train front-of-house staff

Staff should know how to respond to communication differences, movement, stimming, use of headphones or AAC and requests for a break without unnecessary confrontation.

Include autistic creators and audiences

Participation includes employment, programming, exhibitions, performance, research, volunteering and leadership - not only attendance.

Avoid tokenism

A single autism awareness day does not replace year-round accessible practice. Use feedback and participation data to improve ordinary programming.

SECTION 09

Sport, Recreation, Parks and Physical Activity

Support participation, enjoyment and health without forcing one social or sensory style.

Offer clear structure

Explain rules, equipment, group size, changing facilities, session sequence, noise, contact, breaks and how to opt out of an activity.

Build skills progressively

Use demonstration, visual sequencing, predictable routines and graded exposure to unfamiliar settings where appropriate.

Provide participation options

Some people prefer individual activity, parallel participation or smaller groups. Inclusion should not depend on performing conventional team social behavior.

Address sensory and motor needs

Consider whistles, echo, bright lighting, uniforms, tactile demands, balance, coordination and crowded changing rooms.

Support safe coaching

Coaches and volunteers need safeguarding, communication and distress-response skills, with clear escalation routes for health or safety concerns.

SECTION 10

Events, Festivals, Tourism and Hospitality

Design the entire visitor journey for choice, predictability and recovery.

Make booking accessible

State access options before purchase, avoid hidden requirements and provide a simple way to request accommodations.

Publish an event access guide

Include maps, entrances, security, crowd expectations, sensory effects, quiet areas, toilets, food, medical points, re-entry rules and transport information.

Manage queues and crowding

Use timed entry, virtual queues, alternative waiting or priority access when operationally justified and consistent with local rules.

Train temporary staff too

Security, volunteers, contractors, ushers and hospitality workers may shape the experience more than permanent managers. Give them a short practical briefing and escalation contacts.

Plan recovery and exit

People may need to leave early, take breaks or avoid peak departure. Make exit routes, re-entry rules and transport options clear.

SECTION 11

Public Services, Civic Participation and Emergency Preparedness

Ensure autistic people can use government, community and emergency systems.

Make public-service encounters accessible

Appointments, forms, identity checks, payments, interviews and complaints should have clear instructions and communication alternatives.

Support civic participation

Accessible information, meeting formats and reasonable adjustments should support participation in consultations, community planning and public meetings in line with local law.

Include autism in emergency planning

Evacuation, shelter, emergency messaging and family reunification plans should consider communication, sensory needs, AAC, service animals, medications and support persons where relevant.

Train emergency-facing staff

Police, security, emergency management and public-contact staff should use clear communication and avoid escalating atypical behavior unnecessarily.

Plan service continuity

If a public facility closes or changes during an emergency, communicate alternative routes, digital options, opening hours and access arrangements clearly.

Emergency planning

Do not create a generic “autism emergency protocol” without checking local emergency, safeguarding and legal requirements. Build accessible communication and individualized support into established emergency systems.

SECTION 12

Social Connection, Community Groups and Volunteering

Create opportunities for contribution and belonging, not compulsory socialization.

Offer interest-based routes

Clubs, volunteering, faith communities, maker spaces, study groups, environmental projects and special-interest activities may create more natural connection than generic social-skills settings.

Explain unwritten rules

Make expectations about arrival, introductions, turns, group chat, attendance, dress, food, money and leaving explicit when useful.

Provide defined roles

In volunteering, concrete tasks, written instructions and a named contact can reduce ambiguity and help people contribute effectively.

Respect social preference

Some people want frequent social contact; others prefer limited interaction. Quality, autonomy and belonging matter more than a universal target for social activity.

Prevent exclusion by culture

Review jokes, initiation practices, group norms, informal communication and volunteer selection for barriers that may unintentionally exclude autistic people.

SECTION 13

Safety, Safeguarding, Dignity and Anti-Discrimination

Increase safety without turning risk management into exclusion.

Recognize vulnerability and rights together

Autistic people may face bullying, exploitation, abuse or misunderstanding. Safeguarding should increase protection while preserving privacy, autonomy and ordinary community access.

Create clear reporting routes

People should know how to report harassment, unsafe behavior, discrimination or staff conduct in more than one communication format.

Avoid punitive interpretations

Communication differences, pacing, stimming, shutdown, leaving suddenly or difficulty following vague instructions should not automatically be treated as suspicious or defiant.

Respond proportionately to distress

Reduce demands, identify a quieter area, use the person's communication method, involve a chosen supporter where appropriate and escalate to emergency help only when needed.

Learn from incidents

Review whether the environment, communication, staff response or policy contributed to the event and update the access plan rather than documenting only the person's behavior.

Dignity in safety

Use the least restrictive, most respectful response consistent with immediate safety and local law. Distress should trigger support and assessment, not automatic exclusion.

SECTION 14

Inclusive Communities Across the Lifespan and Diverse Needs

Design for changing needs, intersectionality and different levels of support.

Children and families

Family participation, predictable routines, safeguarding and age-appropriate choice may be central. Avoid creating spaces where the child's needs make the whole family unwelcome.

Young people and adults

Respect privacy, direct communication and adult status. Supporters can help, but should not automatically be treated as the decision-maker.

Older autistic adults

Consider changing mobility, sensory, cognitive, health and social-support needs and avoid assuming that autism-related adjustments are only relevant to younger people.

Intellectual disability and high support needs

Use reliable communication, personal assistance, familiar supports, accessible environments and meaningful choice. Lack of speech does not mean lack of preference.

Intersectionality

Culture, language, gender, poverty, race, migration, rurality, physical disability, mental health and other factors can compound barriers. Inclusion plans should not treat autism in isolation.

SECTION 15

Measurement, Complaints, Feedback and Continuous Improvement

Make inclusion visible in data, decisions and accountability.

Measure the participation journey

Track access requests, completed visits, abandoned bookings, complaints, incidents, repeat participation, satisfaction and barriers by service stage where feasible.

Collect feedback accessibly

Offer short written, visual, verbal, digital or supported options. Do not require a phone call as the only way to complain or request help.

Close the feedback loop

Tell people what changed, what cannot change and why. Repeated unresolved barriers should be escalated to governance, not left as individual complaints.

Use experience with operational data

Pair lived-experience feedback with wait times, queue data, incident reports, access requests and service-use patterns.

Review with autistic people

Use periodic co-design reviews to test whether changes work in practice. A policy can exist and still fail during real journeys.

APPENDIX A

Practical Tools and Templates

These tools are designed to be copied, localized and used in real community settings. They are not legal compliance certificates. Organizations should add local accessibility duties, emergency procedures, contact details, safeguarding routes and building or transport requirements before operational use.

Tool	Purpose
A1	Community Access Audit
A2	My Community Access & Communication Card
A3	Venue Sensory Profile
A4	Accessible Information & Communication Checker
A5	Wayfinding & Signage Checklist
A6	Quiet / Calm Space Setup Checklist
A7	Accessible Event Plan
A8	Transport & Journey Access Plan
A9	Adjustment Request Form
A10	Frontline Staff Briefing Card
A11	Accessible Public-Service Encounter Guide
A12	Emergency Inclusion Checklist
A13	Autistic Co-Design Session Plan
A14	Community Group & Volunteering Inclusion Plan
A15	Safeguarding & Incident Review Record
A16	Accessible Feedback & Complaint Form
A17	Community Inclusion KPI Tracker
A18	Institutional Community Inclusion Self-Assessment

TOOL A1

Community Access Audit

Review the full journey from information to departure and feedback.

Stage	Barrier observed	Adjustment / action	Owner	Due
Website / information				
Booking / contact				
Transport / arrival				
Entrance / security				
Waiting / queue				
Navigation / signage				
Communication				
Sensory environment				
Participation / activity				
Toilets / breaks				
Payment / administration				
Departure / transport				
Feedback / complaint				

TOOL A2

My Community Access & Communication Card

A portable summary controlled by the autistic person.

Name or preferred identifier _____

Preferred communication method _____

Support person / contact if I choose _____

Important access needs _____

- ☐ Please use direct, concrete language.
- ☐ Please give me extra processing time.
- ☐ One person speaking at a time helps.
- ☐ I may use AAC, writing, gestures or a supporter.
- ☐ Please tell me before changes or delays.
- ☐ I may need a quieter place or a short break.
- ☐ Please ask before touching me or my belongings.

Other information I want staff to know

What helps _____

What makes things harder _____

How I show distress _____

How I prefer staff to help _____

TOOL A3

Venue Sensory Profile

Publish or use internally to make sensory conditions predictable.

Area / feature	Typical condition	Quieter option / timing	Notes
Lighting			
Sound / music / announcements			
Crowding			
Smell			
Touch / physical contact			
Temperature			
Movement / visual effects			
Queues / waiting			
Toilets			
Food area			
Emergency alarms			

TOOL A4

Accessible Information & Communication Checker

Use before publishing visitor, service or event information.

- ☐ Purpose is clear in the first screen or paragraph.
- ☐ Steps are shown in the order they happen.
- ☐ Dates, times, costs, locations and eligibility are explicit.
- ☐ Photos, maps or visual information are used where useful.
- ☐ Sensory conditions and major changes are disclosed.
- ☐ Adjustment request route is easy to find.
- ☐ Contact options include more than a phone call where feasible.
- ☐ Language is concrete and avoids unnecessary jargon.
- ☐ Captions / transcripts / alt text are provided where relevant.
- ☐ Emergency or cancellation information is easy to locate.

TOOL A5

Wayfinding & Signage Checklist

Check that a person can navigate with minimal guesswork.

- ☐ Same names are used on website, booking confirmation, maps and signs.
- ☐ Entrance and accessible entrance are clearly identified.
- ☐ Queue, check-in and waiting points are marked.
- ☐ Toilets, exits, quiet areas and help points are signed.
- ☐ Signs are readable at relevant distance and height.
- ☐ Arrows and symbols are consistent.
- ☐ Temporary route changes are clearly explained.
- ☐ Staff can give simple step-by-step directions.

TOOL A6

Quiet / Calm Space Setup Checklist

Create a usable regulation space without turning it into isolation.

- ☐ Location is easy to find and included in access information.
- ☐ Space is available during the relevant service or event hours.
- ☐ Lighting can be reduced or controlled.
- ☐ Noise is low or can be reduced.
- ☐ Seating options are available.
- ☐ Rules are simple and do not require unnecessary explanation.
- ☐ The space is not used as overflow storage.
- ☐ Staff understand that people may use it before distress escalates.
- ☐ Emergency egress and supervision requirements are maintained.

TOOL A7

Accessible Event Plan

Use for festivals, performances, meetings, conferences and public events.

Event _____

Date / time _____

Access lead _____

Emergency lead _____

Adjustment contact _____

Access area	Plan / action	Lead	Status
Pre-event information			
Ticketing / registration			
Transport / parking			
Entrance / security			
Queues			
Seating / movement			
Sensory effects			
Quiet space			
Communication access			
Toilets			
Food / medication			
Re-entry / breaks			
Emergency / evacuation			
Feedback			

TOOL A8

Transport & Journey Access Plan

Prepare the route, expected changes and contingency options.

Destination _____

Outbound route _____

Return route _____

Preferred travel time _____

Ticket / payment method _____

Support person if any _____

Journey step	What to expect	Support / adjustment	Backup plan
Home to stop / station			
Ticketing			
Waiting			
Boarding			
Transfer			
Arrival			
Final walk / connection			
Return journey			

TOOL A9

Adjustment Request Form

A simple route for people to request what they need.

Service / venue _____

Date / booking reference _____

Preferred contact method _____

Adjustment requested _____

Why it helps / relevant access information

Response / arrangement agreed _____

Named contact _____

TOOL A10

Frontline Staff Briefing Card

A one-page practical standard for public-facing teams.

- 1. Introduce yourself and explain what will happen next.
- 2. Use clear, literal language and one instruction at a time.
- 3. Allow processing time; do not fill every silence.
- 4. Ask how the person communicates and what would help.
- 5. Explain delays, changes and waiting time.
- 6. Ask before touch, moving belongings or involving a supporter.
- 7. Reduce sensory demands or offer a quieter option when possible.
- 8. Treat distress as information; lower demands and keep communication simple.
- 9. Do not assume lack of eye contact, unusual movement or delayed response means non-compliance.
- 10. Know the access lead, safeguarding route and emergency escalation process.

TOOL A11

Accessible Public-Service Encounter Guide

For government offices, community services and other administrative interactions.

Step	Accessible practice
Before appointment	Send clear purpose, documents needed, location, duration and adjustment route.
Arrival	Explain check-in and waiting; offer quieter waiting where feasible.
Identity / forms	Explain why information is needed; support accessible completion.
Interview / discussion	One topic at a time; concrete questions; processing time; written choices if useful.
Decision	Explain outcome, next step, deadline and review / complaint route.
After	Provide written summary in the person's preferred accessible format where appropriate.

TOOL A12

Emergency Inclusion Checklist

Use inside established emergency and evacuation systems.

- ☐ Emergency messages are clear, repeated and available visually where possible.
- ☐ Staff know how to support people who may freeze, shut down, flee or lose speech under stress.
- ☐ AAC and essential communication devices remain with the person whenever safe.
- ☐ Support persons are included where appropriate and permitted.
- ☐ Medication, mobility and sensory needs are considered in shelter / waiting plans.
- ☐ Reunification / missing-person processes are defined.
- ☐ Quiet or lower-stimulation waiting can be identified where safe.
- ☐ Emergency changes to services are communicated through multiple channels.
- ☐ Post-incident review includes accessibility barriers.

TOOL A13

Autistic Co-Design Session Plan

Make participation accessible and influential.

Decision / service being designed _____

What participants can influence _____

What is fixed and why _____

Participants / representation plan _____

Payment / reimbursement approach _____

- ☐ Agenda and questions sent in advance.
- ☐ Remote / written participation offered.
- ☐ Breaks and sensory needs planned.
- ☐ AAC / communication support welcomed.
- ☐ No requirement to disclose more personal information than needed.
- ☐ Actions, owners and deadlines recorded.
- ☐ Participants receive a “what changed” follow-up.

TOOL A14

Community Group & Volunteering Inclusion Plan

For clubs, charities, faith groups and volunteer programs.

Area	Current practice	Barrier / risk	Change to test
Joining / orientation			
Communication			
Task clarity			
Group norms			
Sensory environment			
Schedule / attendance			
Breaks			
Support person			
Safeguarding			
Feedback			

TOOL A15

Safeguarding & Incident Review Record

Review both immediate safety and system contribution.

Date / location _____

What happened _____

Immediate safety action _____

Communication method used _____

Environmental / sensory factors _____

Policy or staff-response factors _____

Safeguarding referral if required _____

Person's / supporter's perspective _____

Corrective action _____

Owner / review date _____

TOOL A16

Accessible Feedback & Complaint Form

Allow feedback without requiring a complex narrative.

Service / place _____

Date _____

Preferred response method _____

What was your experience?

- ☐ Information was clear.
- ☐ The journey / arrival worked.
- ☐ Staff communicated respectfully.
- ☐ Sensory conditions were manageable.
- ☐ I could request help or an adjustment.
- ☐ I felt safe and respected.
- ☐ I would use this service again.

What worked well _____

What was difficult _____

What change would help _____

Do you want a response? Yes / No _____

TOOL A17

Community Inclusion KPI Tracker

Track implementation and lived experience together.

Indicator	Baseline	Current	Target	Evidence / action
Accessible information published				
Adjustment requests fulfilled				
Average response time to access requests				
Accessible / low-sensory sessions offered				
Staff trained / briefed				
Access-related complaints				
Safety / distress incidents reviewed				
Autistic co-design actions completed				
Repeat participation / return use				
Participant-rated accessibility				

TOOL A18

Institutional Community Inclusion Self-Assessment

A quick audit for local authorities, venues, transport and public services.

Standard	Not yet	Partial	Consistent	Evidence / action
Autistic people participate in design and review				
Access information is published before arrival				
Adjustment requests have a clear route				
Communication options are available				
Sensory barriers are identified and reduced				
Waiting / queues are actively managed				
Wayfinding and signage are consistent				
Staff use respectful autism-inclusive practice				
Safeguarding and emergency plans include accessibility				
Feedback and complaints are accessible				
Incident reviews examine system contribution				
Inclusion outcomes are reported and improved				

Suggested use

Review quarterly. Select a small number of high-impact actions, assign an owner and deadline, then verify the change with autistic users rather than marking it complete from policy alone.

APPENDIX B

90-Day Implementation Roadmap

This roadmap is for organizations that want to move from awareness to a repeatable community-inclusion system. Adapt timing to local governance and legal requirements.

Period	Priority actions	Outputs
Days 1-30	Name an access lead; map the participation journey; review current complaints and incidents; recruit autistic co-design participants; identify local legal requirements; select pilot service or venue.	Current-state map; barrier register; co-design plan; local requirements list; pilot scope.
Days 31-60	Publish practical access information; introduce adjustment route; complete sensory and wayfinding audit; brief frontline staff; pilot quiet/waiting options; test emergency and escalation routes.	Access guide; adjustment form; audit actions; staff card; pilot adjustments; emergency accessibility actions.
Days 61-90	Collect autistic-user feedback; review incidents and denied adjustments; fix priority barriers; introduce KPI tracking; report co-design decisions; agree next-quarter improvement plan.	User-tested changes; KPI baseline; incident review; governance report; 90-day improvement plan.

Minimum implementation indicators

- Percentage of services / venues with current practical access information.
- Percentage of adjustment requests responded to within the organization's defined standard.
- Number and type of barriers identified through autistic co-design.
- Percentage of frontline staff receiving practical access briefing.
- Number of access-related complaints, abandoned visits or incidents and the actions taken.
- Participant-rated clarity, sensory manageability, staff respect and ability to request support.
- Number of verified accessibility improvements completed.

Implementation test

A policy is not an inclusion outcome. Test whether autistic people can actually plan, reach, use, participate in and return to the service with dignity.

APPENDIX C

References and Further Reading

1. World Health Organization. Autism. Fact sheet. Updated 17 September 2025. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/autism-spectrum-disorders>
2. United Nations. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including Article 9 (Accessibility), Article 19 (Living independently and being included in the community), Article 20 (Personal mobility), Article 29 (Participation in political and public life) and Article 30 (Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport). <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities>
3. Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. General Comment No. 5 (2017) on living independently and being included in the community. CRPD/C/GC/5.
4. World Health Organization. WHO Policy on Disability. 2021. <https://www.who.int/about/policies/disability>
5. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). Autism spectrum disorder in adults: diagnosis and management. CG142. Published 2012; last updated 2021. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg142>
6. United Nations. Article 9 - Accessibility, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-9-accessibility.html>

Evidence and localization note

The references above support rights-based, accessible and participatory community practice. They do not create identical duties in every country. Before operational use, verify current local disability law, building and fire codes, transport rules, public-service duties, emergency requirements, safeguarding processes, data-protection requirements and complaint procedures.

Suggested citation

Global Autism Research Center (GARC). (2026). GARC Community Inclusion Autism Toolkit: A Practical Evidence-Informed Guide for Accessible Public Spaces, Services, Transport, Culture, Recreation, Events and Civic Participation. Edition 1.0.

ABOUT GARC

Global Autism Research Center

Global Autism Research Center (GARC) develops research, evidence resources, practical toolkits, frameworks, partnerships and knowledge products intended to strengthen autism-related policy, practice and institutional capacity internationally.

GARC Practical Toolkits Series

The series translates evidence and rights-based principles into practical resources for families, schools, universities, workplaces, healthcare systems, researchers and community institutions.

No.	Publication
01	School Community Autism Toolkit
02	Family & Caregiver Autism Toolkit
03	Educator Autism Toolkit
04	Early Years Autism Toolkit
05	University & Higher Education Autism Toolkit
06	Workplace & Employer Autism Toolkit
07	Healthcare Professional Autism Toolkit
08	Autism Research Participation Toolkit
09	Autism Transition to Adulthood Toolkit
10	Community Inclusion Autism Toolkit

Series direction

The practical toolkits are designed to function as a coordinated autism inclusion library: each guide addresses a different real-world system while using consistent principles of dignity, accessibility, participation, evidence and continuous improvement.

Website

globalautismresearch.org.uk