Autism friendly screenings with Dimensions

2018/2019 guest feedback survey

Proving life can get better
We asked people with autism about their experiences and our autism friendly screenings

Respondents were mostly carers ages 30+

Respondents are mostly existing guests to our AFS

1,675 people completed the survey
Key takeaways

- 80% of people have felt excluded from their local community
- The thing people worry most about is being judged by other people
- People rated not feeling judged as the most important adjustment
- The thing people appreciate most about AFS is being able to enjoy the same films as everyone else
- Over 90% of people would go to the cinema more often if they showed extra AFS
First we asked about their experiences...
Have you ever felt excluded from your local community?

80% of people have felt excluded

- Yes, always: 37.13%
- Yes, often: 34.99%
- Yes, occasionally: 7.52%
- Rarely: 7.70%
- Unsure: 7.46%
- Never: 5.19%
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"Even a local group who do a specific night for special needs, the other nights for 'normal people' if you can't go yourself without support you are not allowed to other activities."

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"Have felt embarrassed in the past resulting in lack of confidence."

"I am seven and often don’t understand why people behave differently to me."

"Feel always being watched and judged by other people with perfect children."
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This doesn’t change as they get older. Autism can be seen as a children’s disability when it’s lifelong. Our guests are growing up.
"My son is 24 and as he has 'aged out' of toddler groups and activities there is nothing to replace them - especially during the daytime in the week - and is asleep by 8pm and doesn't like crowds. It can be a real challenge!"

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“Our son is 12 and 5ft 7in but acts like a 5 yr old.”
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“I haven't been to the cinema for 25 years and would love to. Autism friendly screenings tend to be children's films and it doesn’t go away once we grow up!”
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Having physical disabilities and sensory sensitivities can make finding activities and environments a difficult, disheartening and lonely challenge.
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“My daughter has non-verbal autism and this can make accessing the community a challenge. Our biggest issue is toilets with accessible changing beds as she is still in nappies and at 9 it’s becoming impossible to change her in a dignified way.”
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“[I have] another severely disabled child who is unable to attend the cinema. I have to fit [the cinema] around respite and I’m a single parent.”
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Things are getting better. Change is slow and happening in pockets across the country, but it needs to be seen nationally and become the norm. Cinema plays a huge role in this.
"I am mum to two autistic boys, ages 7 and 3. We make a point of going out and about everywhere. We occasionally get looks, although they are usually more inquisitive than dirty, so we explain about autism and then we find people to friendly and accepting and offering to help...People are slowly but surely becoming more aware. If we are visiting a place we go regularly such as Tesco, all the staff know us and are very welcoming and greet the boys by name. But we also know our limitations, some places are difficult to go to ie swimming/soft play and we would love to see autism friendly sessions at these places as currently they don't exist."

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“As my son was growing up there wasn’t a lot of awareness around and so things weren’t adapted to my sons needs as they are now.”
Which of the following do you worry about when going to the cinema?

- Being judged by other people
- Not being understood by other people
- Staff not being trained in autism awareness
- The lights being too bright
- There being too much noise
- Having to sit through adverts and trailers
- Having to sit and stay in a specified seat
- Other

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“The stress free environments of not being judged and able to walk in and out without disturbing other customers.”

“People can be very cruel and make fun of people like our daughter so a lot of situations we stay away.”
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"Autistic Teenager who shouts out and comments loudly during film which is not really fair on other patrons - although a lot of the comments are highly amusing to most - I understand this will spoil the film for others."

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Sensory sensitivities are also a key concern, which are directly addressed by autism friendly adjustments.
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“Very smelly food is a problem, I had to leave a film due to someone having chilli hotdog, it was intolerable.”

“The chaos of the ticket area beforehand and the chaos when the films finish.”
What do you like about going to autism friendly screenings?

- It makes me feel more involved in my community
- It means I can enjoy the same films as everyone else
- It helps me socialise with other people
- It makes me feel valued and understood
- It gets me out of the house
- I haven't been to an AFS yet
- Other

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Some people like to be able to enjoy the latest films, and it gives them something to talk about with friends and acquaintances.
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“Nathan can talk about the films to his peers. I love the comfortable surroundings - being around parents that understand and do not judge - we all feel so relaxed! This is a massive gift for our family. A million thanks!”

Some people like to be able to enjoy the latest films, and it gives them something to talk about with friends and acquaintances.
Some people are thankful they can be involved in an activity other people do. It helps them feel involved in their community and raises awareness and acceptance.
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“It helps my son to be included everyday activities others enjoy. I wish there could be more.”

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“To be able to take our son to an autism screening means we feel part of society and acknowledged for his differences but also accepted.”

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“As a mum of 2 autistic boys, it makes me feel like I’m doing ‘normal’ activities.”
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“It's so nice to watch a film like a normal family and being relaxed not worrying about other people judging and/or commenting on their behaviour.”

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“It gives my son the opportunity to learn in social setting, i.e pay, sit still, as well as see the movies.”

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The cinema experience is one our guests enjoy.
“Autistic teenager absolutely loves the cinema experience - the big screen, the sound experience and getting to see new films. It is a vitally important part of his life. Also he is not good with crowds of people so the quieter autism friendly screenings are perfect.”

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“My little boy is extremely happy when we get to go to the autism friendly screenings he looks round at everyone amazed and he smiles so much. It's amazing to see my boy be part of the community and doing what other children are doing.”
Next we asked what they’d like from Autism Friendly Screenings…
Rate the importance of these adjustments out of 100

1. I can get free entry for one carer (guaranteed with CEA Card)
2. I have plenty of time to plan and know what will be screened and when
3. I can sit anywhere I want to and move around
4. There aren’t any trailers or adverts before the film
5. The light and sound levels are reduced
6. I can be around people who understand and don’t judge
7. The staff are trained in autism awareness

All adjustments are similarly important but being around people who don’t judge is most important.
What age rated films would you like to see at AFS?

The large pool of parent/carers responding could show why there’s still top demand for child films.
What film genres would you like to see at AFS (3 choices)?

- Independent
- Docudramas
- Crime
- Horror
- Thriller
- Anime
- Live event streaming
- Sci-fi/fantasy
- Action/adventure
- Musical
- Comedy
- Superhero
- Family - other
- Family - animation

But some age appropriate films can still be suitable for older audiences (e.g. Marvel films)
Some questions to our existing guests gives some helpful insights (and why they haven’t been to a partner cinema)…
We determined how many respondents have been to a screening at our partner cinemas

Over 70% of respondents go to ODEON, Cineworld, Vue or Showcase. Nearly 30% go elsewhere.
And for how long

Most people have been going to AFS for 1-3 years
I am answering this on behalf of my Son. I have taken my son to Dimensions autism friendly screenings from when they started. We have only missed 3 films! Due to my son not liking them.
And their frequency

Most people go to AFS once every 2-6 months.
If your local cinema showed AFS for older audiences and family, would you go to the cinema more often?

But most people would go more often if there were more opportunities.
I haven’t been to an AFS at a partner cinema because...

- There isn’t one close to me: 9.31%
- I can’t get to one for their start time: 27.71%
- I don’t like the film choices: 13.64%
- I’m concerned to go to the cinema: 14.50%
- I can’t afford it: 14.72%
- I don’t understand the adjustments: 9.52%
- I’ve never heard of them before: 7.36%
- Other: 9.52%

But not going to a partner AFS isn’t through choice.
There are many challenges and considerations people need to take before going out.

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- Weather: some people will go more when the weather isn’t nice, and some won’t go outside in certain weather (e.g. bright sun).
If more opportunities were available people would be grateful for wider choice of films, locations, days and times.
More opportunities would mean people wouldn’t have to miss out

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"We go more often during school holidays when extra showings are on, if this was the same all year round we would attend more."

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“At the moment there is only one a month and if you have other commitments i.e work your child then has to wait another month to see a film.”

If more opportunities were available people would be grateful for wider choice of films, locations, days and times.
More opportunities would mean people wouldn’t have to miss out (though some guests have taken a long time to get used to their cinema and might struggle to transition to another one).
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“My child doesn’t accept change well so we would need to go to the cinema he knows well.”

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If more opportunities were available people would be grateful for more variety (particularly those who don’t want to see children’s films).
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"My son is 24, he enjoys animated movies but would also like to go and watch age appropriate movies."

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"Sometimes the movie isn't suitable for an 11 year old - he isn't into 'little kids' movies anymore. So extra screenings with a movie for older/more mature under 18’s would be good!"

If more opportunities were available people would be grateful for more variety (particularly those who don’t want to see children’s films).
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And those who struggle to make the Sunday morning screenings (we had a lot of comments about public transport and church)
More opportunities would mean people wouldn’t have to miss out.

“Since they are always on Sunday mornings I can feel guilty about skipping church to go to the cinema but I also want my autistic daughter to experience watching movies in a safe non judgemental place.”

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“The screening are on Sundays round here and the buses are almost non existent on Sundays.”

“Public transport doesn’t start until after 10 on Sundays.”
Weekends are still the most popular time for people to go, including Saturday and Sunday mornings and afternoons.

Respondents would like to go at weekends.
We all play a vital role in making these opportunities known to more people…
People would like to hear about AFS through the cinema directly, local events listings and local schools.
People would like to hear about AFS through the cinema website, local Facebook groups and Dimensions website

Cinemas play a vital role in online promotion

- Local events listings: 18.69%
- National events listings: 64.21%
- Local Facebook Groups or Pages: 38.92%
- National Facebook Groups or Pages (such as autism support page): 54.97%
- Twitter: 38.85%
- Through the cinema website: 69.84%
- Through the cinema social media: 47.88%
- Through Dimensions website: 17.03%
- Through Dimensions social media: 52.47%
- Other: 17.03%
Facebook is the most used social media platform. Twitter is popular, but only 17% want to hear about AFS on it.

Cinemas play a vital role in online promotion.
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80% of people have felt excluded from their local community.
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**Dimensions**

**Autism friendly**
Recap…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>80% of people have felt excluded from their local community.</th>
<th>The thing people worry most about is being judged by other people.</th>
<th>People rated not feeling judged as the most important adjustment.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The thing people appreciate most about AFS is being able to enjoy the same films as everyone else.</td>
<td>People would mostly like to see U, PG, 12 and 12A rated films…</td>
<td>…and family animation, family other, superhero, comedy and musical films are in most demand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most people have been going to AFS for 1-3 years…</td>
<td>…and most people go every 2-6 months…</td>
<td>…though over 50% of people would see both family and older audiences films if their local cinema offered more AFS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 90% of people would go to the cinema more often if they showed extra AFS…</td>
<td>…but most people would still like to see films on a Saturday or a Sunday. But those who don’t shouldn’t be discounted.</td>
<td>We can tell people about it through local cinemas, groups, schools, Facebook and our websites.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Get in touch

@DimensionsUK on social media

www.dimensions-uk.org/autismfilms

autismfilms@dimensions-uk.org

0300 303 9062