

Inclusive Environments Toolkit

with thanks to Spectrum Gaming who created this document, which we have adapted for SYT's work with children, young people & families in Somerset



SOMERSET
YOUTH
THEATRE co.



**PRACTICAL IDEAS
FOR ACCESSIBLE,
ENGAGING SPACES**



**INDOORS
EDITION**



**SUPPORTING
INCLUSION IN EVERY
ENVIRONMENT**

SENSORY AUDIT

Some young people may experience sensory input more intensely, noticing things that others might not. If you haven't experienced these differences yourself, it can be hard to know what to look out for!

This page is here to help you think about and better understand sensory differences. Please visit SYT's resources page on our website too, for a sensory audit for rooms template

Selecting a Venue

You may be able to choose your venue. Or you may be given a place for delivery.

Here are some preferences to think about when deciding on a venue, based on individual sensitivities:

The basics

- Is there a quiet room available? If not, is there a space that can be used as the quiet area?

General

- Do they use easy read signs?
- Simple building layout

Sight

- Soft lights and dimmer switches, rather than hard lights
- Use cream colours rather than white
- Light protection at windows (curtains, not blinds)
- Materials that do not reflect light
- Plain walls with minimal decoration

Sound

- No or silent hand dryers
- No blaring fire alarms (fire alarm uses a voice instead?)
- Sound absorbing materials e.g. carpets
- Low amounts of ambient noise (fridges, lighting)
- Sound proofing between walls and floors
- Silent clocks
- No music
- No automatic flushing toilets

Touch

- Lots of space
- Comfortable furniture
- No draughts

Smell

- Fragrance free items
- no 'smelly' paints/ furnishings
- Natural smelling toilets e.g. extraction fan
- No harsh cleaning chemicals



SENSORY AUDIT

Improving Your venue

Ways to improve the venue you are working with young

people in...



Here are some suggestions for improving the venue you are working in:

Zone warning system:

Rate different rooms and areas in the venue on how much sensory stimulation there is out of low, medium and high so people are aware of the differences throughout. With each sign can be equipment to help with the move to a 'higher sensory zone', for example:

- Ear defenders
- Sunglasses
- Stress relievers, such as fidget spinners and squash balls
- Distractions such as magazines and word searches/ mazes/ colouring activities
- Weighted lap pad or massager
- Visuals to make communication easier

Turn off hand dryers But also bring paper towels!

Put up easy to read signs/ directions to the toilets, the quiet room and other rooms that will be used

Space out tables chairs and other furnishings

Ask if it is ok to remove unnecessary decoration/ clutter

No music

Is it possible for someone to visit the venue and do a sensory audit?

There are lots more ways to make venues more sensory friendly, and visiting in advance helps to identify what needs to be done

Is there an accessible and easy to read map of the building?

PREPARATION

What to do before the day

In advance of the day, you should be clear about:

- The purpose of the day and who is attending
- Detailed instructions for travel and parking
- The schedule, activities and overall intended outcomes/ learning
- purpose
- Who the contact is for any problems
- in the venue
- If anything needs to be prepared in advance
- The rules and expectations of the activity, delivery partners, venue
- The adjustments that will be in place
- You also need to ask for any specific accessibility/ dietary requirements so you can plan for them!



The above information should be shared as soon as possible with anyone involved; participants, staff, families/carers as relevant

Think about best communication styles, who you are communicating with and what is the best way to get, share and store information, safely. There are a variety of ways to do so, whether it is via email, it is explained in a leaflet or poster, or written in the form of a Social Story. Communication & planning is key!

PREPARATION

What to do before the day

Here are some examples of helpful things to

share:

Include pictures of the venue and the rooms in the information you share with participants

Share information on toilets, changing rooms and kitchen facilities

Share named pictures of the delivery team

Have relaxed arrangements where possible



Allow people to wear what they find comfortable
Make it clear you don't have to sit on a chair for people who find it difficult to sit still and concentrate. Beanbags, mats are really great! It's ok to pace the room, stim, stand up, sit on the floor - let people know.

Make sure photo permissions are agreed with parents carers if you plan to take any - always ask young people, even if permission given

Do not use a flash

Let people know they are welcome to leave or go for a break at any time

It can be useful to make a shared agreement, or 'things I need to feel safe and brave' agreement for longer projects. Listen, Document. Draft, Agree,

Brief the staff at the venue so they are aware of your event/sessions and discuss what to expect, what is expected. Work together to create safer spaces.

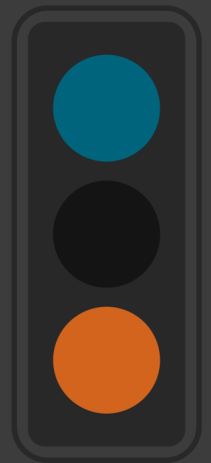
During Delivery of your sessions

How to help the event run smoothly (part 1/3)

Here are some ways to make the event itself more accessible and enjoyable for young people who may have communication differences:

Traffic Light System for social interaction:

Offer three different coloured stickers that people can use depending on how much interaction they would like from others. Most people who use this system actually choose a green sticker anyway, but just having the option helps to lower anxiety and makes it easier to attend groups and sessions. Make sure that people are able to (and know they are able to) change their sticker to a different colour at any time:



Optional Name Tags

Because remembering names can be difficult! You can also put the traffic light sticker on the name tag so it is easier to see.

Use a visual timetable - So people can see if you are on track with the schedule.

Make sure the quiet room is quiet.

Consider an extended registration/ arrival time to avoid queues.

Provide handouts where applicable (preferably on cream paper and with font size of at least 14).

Provide whiteboards and pens for people who are not comfortable with talking (whiteboard is more comfortable than pen and paper as you can erase what you write!)

During Delivery of your sessions

How to help the event run smoothly (part 2/3)

Activities to do during wait times and sensory regulation (recommended for when transitioning between activities as well as when someone appears over or understimulated - try doing regulatory activities at regular intervals throughout the day)

- **For general waiting**

- Drawing, doodling, play-doh, mazes etc. Games
- and other distractions

- **Equipment free**

- Hard/ crunchy foods
- Giving 'push fives' (high fives, but where you push for a while, but try not to topple each other at the same time!)
- Finger nail squeezes (squeezing the base of each nail for 5 seconds)
- Triangle or box breathing
- Stair climbing
- Carrying heavy items
- Body stretches
- Joint compressions
- Running, skipping and hopping
- Jumping jacks/ wall pushups
- Wheelbarrow walking
- Any hanging/ pushing/ pulling/ lifting heavy objects
- Mindfulness/ visualisation techniques

- **Using equipment (yours or own)**

Hand fidgets

- Stress ball

Hand putty (search online how to make your own or use blue tack)

Weighted backpack

Scent cards

Tag of war

- Catching and throwing

Kicking e.g. a football

Scooterboard activities

- Lego, magnetic toys etc.

Stretchy toys

- Chew tubing play dough

Trampoline Move 'n' sit cushion

Vibrating pillow, pen, toy massager

During Delivery of your sessions

How to help the event run smoothly (part 3/3)

Have someone (or some people) available to welcome and guide newcomers. We use buddies and young leaders

Schedule regular comfort breaks, you can add in sensory regulation exercises during these breaks (anything that is heavy muscle work or any form of deep pressure has a regulating effect)

Use flapplause - this is where you wave your hands in the air rather than clapping, helpful when people who are sensitive to sound are present!

Leave time for feedback, so you know how to improve for next time. We send out google forms on the day, use emojis or 'things I want to say' boxes in the rooms.



Above all, let's work together to make a difference through safer spaces where young people feel welcome, valued and can be themselves

We are always learning and working towards neuro-affirming spaces. If you have any suggestions, or feedback to improve this document, please email info@somersetyt.com or info@spectrumgaming.net

