

## AUTSCAPE ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

Autscape tries to make our events as accessible as we can to everyone. Our purpose is to run events to benefit autistic people. So we will prioritise the needs of autistic people when we make decisions about accessibility. (See Equalities Act 2010 below).

However, we realise that autistic people are just as likely to have other disabilities as non-autistic people. We also have a moral duty to promote disability rights in general, not just those which affect autistic people. So Autscape will try to make our events physically accessible.

We also realise that autistic people are likely to have less money than non-autistic people. This is because many autistics experience difficulties accessing employment and have social and family stresses. Some cannot get jobs at all. Others find it difficult to get or keep higher paying jobs, even when they have the skills and qualifications for those jobs. So Autscape will try to make our events accessible to people who struggle to pay for them.

Sometimes, making an event more accessible to one group means doing something which makes it less accessible to another group. We realise that choosing a venue which is physically accessible and has ensuite and single rooms usually means higher costs. And choosing a cheaper venue often means that it isn't very accessible for those with mobility needs and may not have ensuite or single rooms. We try to balance everyone's needs by giving priority to different needs each year.

### **Our aim:**

Autscape will try to make sure that anyone who wants to come to an Autscape event can reasonably access one at least once every two or three years.

### **Ways in which we will try to help**

We know that lots of things can affect whether autistic people can access our events. Below are some of the ways in which we will try to help.

ACCESS NEED	ADJUSTMENT
Difficulty getting things done on time because of inertia	Try to avoid 'first come, first served' Prompt people several times to do things Give information all together to make tasks easier
Difficulty responding to open questions	Give menus of choices or a clear structure for responding to questions
Obsessive compulsive issues around cleanliness	Choose venues with some en-suite bathrooms
Social or sensory issues making sharing a room impossible	Choose venues with some single rooms
Visual/sensory processing difficulties	Choose more accessible fonts and colours for our documents

Need for detailed information	Give people very detailed information about our events
Sensitivity to smell	Have a rule banning use of strongly scented products at our events
Difficulties initiating/engaging in verbal communication	Give people ways of communicating without speaking (such as initiation control badges, access to pen and paper)
Sensory issues with noise	Choose venue in quiet location away from busy road or other noise Ask venue to stop other noisy activities
Need for extra personal space and interaction free space	No interaction table and red badge Choose a venue with lots of open space (indoor and out)

## EQUALITIES ACT 2010

The Equalities Act 2010 gives disabled people the right to ask for reasonable adjustments. However, Autscope legitimately claims Charity exception from the Equalities Act 2010 in that a charity is allowed to limit its benefits to people who share a protected characteristic even though this may exclude (and therefore discriminate against) people with other protected characteristics.

Whilst Autscope will try to meet individual reasonable adjustments requests it reserves the right not to, particularly in the following instances:

1. Where an adjustment to meet an individual need would be incompatible with the needs of a significant proportion of its participants. Autscope recognises that some people may need to request an adjustment for various reasons. However, Autscope will consider if making such an adjustment will impact on the other participants and attempt to meet the need if at all possible.
2. Where an adjustment to meet an individual need would cost Autscope a disproportionate amount of money. As a not for profit organisation costs would probably have to be met by an increase in fees for all participants and it is our duty to try and keep fees as low as possible to meet the access needs of autistic people. However, Autscope will consider and attempt to meet the needs in other ways if at all possible.
3. Where an adjustment to meet an individual need requires the participant to bring an assistance dog. Autscope understands that a significant proportion of its participants have sensitivities towards dogs or dog phobias. Therefore, to meet the access needs of autistic people, where venues permit assistance dogs, Autscope may compromise and accept assistance dogs only in the following circumstances.

These are:

- A. That Autscope may limit the amount of assistance dogs present at each Autscope event based on requirements imposed by the venue and the audience's known access needs. no more than two assistance dogs will be at any Autscope event at any one time.

- B. That the assistance dog, in the opinion of Autscape, is trained to a sufficiently high standard that it will not interfere with other participants' enjoyment of the event."
- C. That the assistance dog must be identifiable as an assistance dog at all times
- D. That the owner of the dog will comply with any rules the venue impose e.g. which bedrooms dogs are allowed in, where dogs should be fed etc
- E. That the owner of the dog will comply with any rules Autscape impose

When a person intends to bring an assistance dog they must notify the registrar when booking. The registrar will ask for further details so a decision can be made by the organising committee whether the assistance dog can be accommodated.

Where assistance dogs are accepted the owner will be asked to sign an agreement accepting responsibility for the dog whilst at an Autscape event and a willingness to comply with any rules set.

### **Monitoring and Learning**

Accessibility will be reviewed periodically to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

### **Responsibility**

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the board of trustees.

### **Review**

This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.

Adopted on 11th May 2019