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*Beyond Barriers: Nurturing an Inclusive  
Art Museum Landscape for Adults with  
Autism in Scotland*

Student ID: 2692133

## AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Printed Name: Rebecca Pursley

Signature: 

Date: August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024

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## ABSTRACT

In recent years, the growing recognition of neurodiversity has prompted a critical reassessment of inclusivity within cultural institutions. This desk-based study examines the current accessibility for adults with autism in Scottish art museums, looking at the Burrell Collection, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, the National Gallery of Scotland, and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. By analysing existing policies, programs, and physical spaces, this research identifies significant gaps that hinder full participation by neurodiverse individuals. It highlights the challenges faced by autistic adults in navigating museum environments, such as sensory overload, lack of tailored communication, and insufficient staff training. Based on these findings, recommendations for improvement are proposed, advocating for inclusive design principles, enhanced staff education, and the creation of specialised programs. This framework aims to foster a more inclusive museum experience, ensuring that art museums in Scotland can serve as welcoming spaces for all visitors, regardless of neurodiversity.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“Autism, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), refers to a broad range of conditions characterised by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviours, speech and nonverbal communication” (*Autism Spectrum disorder (ASD)*). This dissertation explores the current state of autism inclusion for adults in art museums in Scotland, with a specific focus on the Burrell Collection, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, and two of the National Galleries of Scotland museums, the National Gallery, and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. A comprehensive data analysis will be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of current methods and identify areas needing improvement. The aim of this research is to develop tailored recommendations that art museums in Scotland can adopt and implement to create more inclusive and accommodating environments for adults with autism. Doing so can enhance the experience of individuals on the autism spectrum, promote accessibility, and foster a more inclusive landscape in Scotland's art museums. If art museums embrace the findings of this investigation, they have the potential to create a more inclusive and diverse cultural experience for everyone who visits.

Scotland is home to four exceptional museums central to its artistic landscape: the Burrell Collection, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, the National Gallery of Scotland, and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. Each of these institutions offers a unique and enriching experience to visitors. The Burrell Collection in Pollok Country Park in Glasgow houses Sir William Burrell's collection of over 9,000 artworks. This eclectic collection spans several centuries and styles, from medieval tapestries and stained glass to Chinese ceramics, European paintings, and sculptures by Rodin and Degas (*About the Burrell the Collection*). Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, also in Glasgow, is one of the most visited museums in Scotland. It offers diverse exhibits across its twenty-two galleries, including natural history, arms and Armor, art from various periods, and artefacts from ancient civilisations. Its collection features work by renowned artists such as Salvador Dalí and the Glasgow Boys, making it a significant cultural hub in the city. In Edinburgh, the National

Galleries of Scotland manage multiple venues, including the Scottish National Gallery and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. The Scottish National Gallery on the Mound highlights a fine art collection from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century, highlighting masterpieces from renowned artists such as Botticelli, Titian, Rembrandt, and Turner. It also houses a gallery focused solely on Scottish art from 1800 to 1945, including works by the Glasgow Boys, Phoebe Anna Traquair, William Bell Scott, and Charles Rennie Mackintosh (*National*). Meanwhile, the Scottish National Portrait Gallery presents a visual history of Scotland through portraits of famous Scots, including writers, scientists, royals, and politicians such as Billy Connolly, Mary Queen of Scots, and Mackintosh (*Portrait*). Its impressive neo-Gothic architecture and extensive collection offer insights into Scotland's history, heritage, and people. These museums were chosen for my dissertation on strategies for adult autism inclusion within Scottish art museums due to their extensive and diverse collections, offering a broad spectrum of experiences for analysis. Each institution has demonstrated a strong commitment to accessibility and inclusivity, implementing various initiatives to improve access for individuals with disabilities, including autism. These venues provide a comprehensive overview of how different art museums can implement inclusion guidelines by including various museum types—national galleries, local collections, and mixed-exhibit museums. Their respected reputation and influence within the museum community make them perfect for creating best practices with widespread impact. These institutions provide excellent case studies for enhancing inclusivity in the art museum sector and ensure that the developed recommendations that are practical and universally applicable.

The inspiration for my dissertation topic on autism inclusion in art museums was ignited during my studies in Glasgow. This course, which focused on access and inclusion within museums, led me to explore autism inclusion in museums, with a particular emphasis on US practices. What I gained from this exploration has not only strengthened my determination to contribute to the discourse on autism inclusion in Scotland but also underscored the importance of my commitment to this cause. The significance

of this topic cannot be overstated, as it has the potential to foster an environment that offers comfort and accessibility to all individuals. I understand the importance of creating inclusive museum spaces to provide diverse audiences with engaging opportunities. This commitment, rooted in my recognition of the potential challenges individuals may encounter in a museum setting, regardless of whether they are on the autism spectrum, is a driving force behind my dissertation. Acknowledging the essential role of museums as cultural and educational institutions, my dissertation seeks to underline the universal importance of inclusivity in these spaces, exceeding individual experiences and advocating for a collective commitment to creating a welcoming museum environment for everyone.

Museums often prioritise physical accessibility when structuring exhibits. Without a doubt, the physical needs of the museum patrons are extremely important. When focusing on these exceptionalities, museums can fail to consider the overall environment of the museum. While they offer opportunities for learning and discovery, not everyone feels comfortable in such settings. Individuals with autism, for instance, may feel overwhelmed by the crowds and noises commonly found in museum spaces. Unfortunately, there is no one-size-fits-all solution for museums seeking to accommodate individuals with autism. “Museum educators often consider access through the lens of the physical body (can visitors get through the exhibition?) and educational access (can a wide spectrum of visitors understand didactic panels, labels, or other interpretive materials?).” (Richardson and Kletchka, 2022, p.144). Existing research in this area tends to focus on individual museums and their specific programs primarily involving children on the spectrum rather than offering a universal blueprint for museum education. Autism inclusion within museum education is not just for children. It is also for adults with autism. Museums tend to forget that a child with autism grows up to be an adult with autism. Creating recommendations for art museums to use for autism inclusion for adults will bridge the gap between feeling comfortable in a museum as a child and feeling uncomfortable as an adult.

This dissertation adopts a desk-based research methodology to investigate strategies for enhancing autism inclusion among adults in Scottish art museums. The inquiry relies on a comprehensive review of existing case studies and policies relevant to autism inclusion within the museum landscape. By examining documented instances and official frameworks, the study aims to provide practical insights and detect overarching patterns in the approaches employed by Scottish museums. The analysis of case studies will provide contextualised narratives, offering an understanding of the diverse methodologies and outcomes in autism inclusion initiatives within the Scottish museum landscape. Simultaneously, examining significant policies spanning regional and museum-specific areas, including those from the Scottish government, contributes to interpreting the broad landscape shaping autism inclusion practices. The synthesis of findings from the case studies in the United States and the UK and policy analyses serves as the foundation for the development of evidence-based recommendations. These recommendations are rooted in the information gained from the studies and by the interpretation of the policy documents from art museums and the Scottish government, with help to provide the information required to create the recommendations.

A study on creating recommendations for art museums in Scotland regarding educational programs, exhibition updates, and visitor assistance for adults with autism holds significant importance for several reasons:

1. **Enhancing Accessibility and Inclusivity:** The study aims to promote inclusivity within art museums by developing recommendations and seeking to ensure that educational programs, exhibitions, and visitor assistance initiatives are designed for a diverse range of audiences, including individuals with varying needs and backgrounds. This inclusivity is essential for equalising access to cultural resources and nurturing a sense of inclusion for everyone.

2. **Cultural Enrichment and Education:** Art museums play a pivotal role in cultural enrichment and education. Effective educational programs can be powerful tools for sharing knowledge, developing critical thinking, and nurturing an appreciation for the arts. The study's focus is on creating

recommendations for educational programs that aim to enhance the cultural and educational impact of museums on their visitors.

3. **Contemporary Relevance:** Updating exhibitions is vital to ensuring that museums remain relevant and engaging in the face of evolving societal norms, artistic trends, and cultural dynamics. Approaches in this regard contribute to the adaptability and contemporary resonance of museum exhibitions, making them more appealing and meaningful to diverse audiences.

4. **Visitor Experience Improvement:** The study's emphasis on visitor assistance seeks to improve the overall experience of museumgoers, particularly adults with autism. By providing a framework for practical visitor support, the research aims to address the needs of patrons, making their interactions within the museum more enjoyable, educational, and accessible. A positive visitor experience can contribute to increased museum attendance and engagement. Moreover, by creating a more inclusive and accommodating environment, museums can attract a broader range of visitors, including those with autism, thereby fostering a more diverse and enriching cultural experience.

5. **Professional Development for Museum Practitioners:** The study's strategies can serve as valuable resources for museum professionals. They offer practical insights and best practices, contributing to the ongoing professional development of museum staff. This, in turn, can lead to improved institutional practices and a higher standard of service provision.

The significance of this study is its potential to positively impact the cultural, educational, and social dimensions of Scotland's art museums, fostering a more inclusive and enriching environment for both local communities and visitors.

The primary goals and objectives of this dissertation centre on the development of the design and implementation of educational programs, exhibition updates, and visitor assistance initiatives. Through research and critical analysis of different practices, this dissertation aims to provide

museums with a strategic framework that aids in the creation of educational programs tailored to diverse audiences. Furthermore, it will attempt to provide insights into practical strategies for curatorial updates, ensuring exhibitions resonate with contemporary sensibilities. Additionally, the recommendations aim to offer valuable recommendations for enhancing visitor experiences by addressing various aspects of support and engagement. By combining these components, this dissertation seeks to contribute to the advancement of museum practices, fostering a more enriching and accessible cultural environment for visitors in the Scottish art museum landscape. The research will seek to answer these questions: How do current museum policies in Scotland address the diverse needs of adults with autism, and what strategies can be established to promote a more universally accessible and accommodating museum environment? How much do museums in Scotland incorporate social and communication standards to support the inclusion of adults with autism? What are the perceptions and experiences of adults with autism in Scottish museums, and what recommendations can be developed to ensure a more positive and inclusive cultural engagement?

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

As awareness of neurodiversity grows, there is an increasing recognition of the need for cultural institutions, including art museums, to become more inclusive and accessible to all visitors. This literature review examines the intersection of autism in adults, Scottish museum policies, and autism in museums focused on enhancing accessibility for neurodiverse individuals in art museums. While autism is often associated with children, there is a significant and growing population of autistic adults whose unique needs and challenges are frequently overlooked in public spaces. In Scotland, cultural policies have made strides toward inclusivity, yet there remains a notable gap in addressing the cognitive and sensory needs of neurodiverse individuals, particularly in art museums. This review will explore existing research on autism in adults, assess the effectiveness of current Scottish policies for museums, and analyse case studies from art museums that have successfully implemented autism-friendly practices. By synthesising these perspectives, this review aims to highlight the progress made and the ongoing challenges in creating museum environments that are genuinely welcoming and accessible to all.

In recent years, a substantial body of research has examined the challenges faced by autistic individuals in various public and cultural settings. Studies have highlighted the sensory sensitivities, communication differences, and social interaction challenges that are often experienced by individuals with autism, which can create significant barriers in environments that are not designed with these needs in mind. Within the context of art museums, these barriers can manifest in various forms, such as overwhelming sensory stimuli, unclear signage, and interactions with staff who may lack an understanding of neurodiversity.

Existing literature also points to the importance of inclusive design principles, which advocate for spaces accommodating a wide range of sensory and cognitive needs. Museums that have successfully implemented such principles often report positive outcomes, including increased engagement from neurodiverse visitors and a broader sense of inclusivity. However,

research specifically focused on Scottish art museums remains limited, highlighting a gap in the literature that this dissertation seeks to address.

Furthermore, the role of staff training in fostering an inclusive museum environment has been emphasised in several studies. Effective training programs that educate staff about neurodiversity and equip them with practical strategies for supporting autistic visitors are crucial for creating a welcoming atmosphere. However, despite the growing awareness of this need, there remains a lack of standardised training approaches across museums, particularly in Scotland.

This literature review will critically examine these critical areas—sensory and cognitive accessibility, inclusive design, and staff training—drawing on both international research and the more limited studies specific to Scotland. By synthesising the existing literature, this review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current challenges and opportunities related to autism accessibility in Scottish art museums. This will lay the foundation for the subsequent analysis of current practices and the development of a framework for improvement.

## **2.1 Autism:**

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is often simplistically portrayed, reducing its multi-faceted nature to mere stereotypes about social awkwardness or peculiar behaviours. However, this portrayal fails to encapsulate the profound complexity of ASD as a neurodevelopmental condition characterised by distinctive challenges in social interaction, communication, and behaviour. ASD is frequently depicted within societal narratives as a condition affecting children, which results in a widespread lack of awareness regarding the unique challenges that persist into adulthood (*Autism*, 2023). This pervasive misconception has substantial implications for adults with autism, particularly in their ability to navigate the complexities of daily life and fully engage with cultural and educational institutions such as museums. Despite the considerable advancements in understanding ASD in children, there remains an alarming deficiency in resources, support systems,

and accommodations explicitly tailored for autistic adults. Consequently, this gap extends significantly into the barriers of inclusion and accessibility, adversely impacting their quality of life. Drawing on current research and best practices within the field, this analysis aims to illuminate how adaptations in exhibit design, staff training, and visitor services can significantly enhance the museum experience for adults with ASD. By doing so, it underscores the broader imperative for cultural institutions to evolve beyond traditional paradigms of access and embrace a more nuanced approach to inclusivity that genuinely caters to the diverse tapestry of its audience.

It has become evident that the experiences of adults with autism are often marred by systemic neglect and insufficient accommodations, particularly in contexts like museum visits, which are vital for cultural engagement and personal growth. Barnard (2001) highlights that while considerable attention has been given to caring for children with autism, a glaring oversight persists in providing adequate support as these individuals transition into adulthood. This gap is highlighted by societal structures that fail to recognise or accommodate the needs of autistic adults, leading to exclusionary practices that undermine their dignity and intensify the feeling of isolation. As public spaces, museums are designed to offer educational enrichment and leisure and should embody inclusivity; however, they frequently lack tailored resources such as sensory-friendly exhibits or trained staff who can effectively communicate with and assist autistic visitors. Empirical studies corroborate these findings by illustrating how sensory overloads, unaccommodating social interactions, and unstructured environments within museums create substantial barriers for autistic adults (Barnard, 2001). Addressing these challenges requires more than superficial adjustments; it necessitates a change in thinking towards proactive inclusivity—embedding accessibility at the core of museum design and operations.

To further understand the complexities faced by adults with autism, it is essential to delve into the specific ways this neurodevelopmental disorder manifests and impacts their lives. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in adults is

marked by a wide range of symptoms and severities, from subtle social difficulties to profound impairments that significantly hinder daily functioning. Research by Fombonne (2012) illustrates that while approximately 1% of both young and older adults are affected by autism, the spectrum's breadth results in an equally diverse array of experiences and challenges for those diagnosed. For instance, sensory sensitivities can make ordinary environments overwhelming, leading to heightened anxiety and avoidance behaviours. Moreover, communication barriers often result in misunderstandings and difficulties in expressing needs or emotions clearly. These factors contribute to social isolation, compounded by societal misconceptions about autism, which frequently stigmatise individuals rather than foster understanding or support. Additionally, he indicates that access to appropriate healthcare remains a significant hurdle; many healthcare professionals lack training in addressing the unique needs of autistic adults, resulting in suboptimal care outcomes (Fombonne, 2012). Consequently, enhancing awareness about these varied experiences through targeted research and inclusive policies is crucial. This will not only bridge gaps within existing support systems but also facilitate a more accommodating society that values the contributions and potential of all its members.

This is because social expectations and support systems change as they grow up. Howlin et al. (2004) says that even though help for adults with autism has gotten better, many still rely a lot on others. There is a significant difference between the help kids get and what adults are expected to do on their own. For example, adults often have to manage complex social situations alone, like dealing with work stress or fitting into the community, without the direct help they got in school. These higher expectations can cause more anxiety and loneliness if they do not get enough support as they grow up. Howlin et al. (2004) also points out that success and well-being mean different things for adults. So, the help they get needs to be specific to their challenges. Helping autistic adults means providing job opportunities, mental health services, and social skills training. This kind of support is

essential for improving their lives and recognising their unique needs as they move from being kids to adults.

It is essentially vital to see that autism shows up in both kids and adults through similar traits. These include social communication problems and limited interests. However, there are significant differences in how they cope, what society expects, and the help they need. Donnellan et al. (2013) point out these differences and say we need different approaches for different ages. For example, kids with autism often need structured school programs and routines from parents or teachers. Adults, however, are expected to manage complex social settings like work or community on their own (Donnellan et al., 2013). This can cause more anxiety and loneliness if they do not get enough support. Society also pressures autistic adults to develop better coping methods, like personal routines or special interests, unlike the guidance they got as kids. Donnellan et al. (2013) say that not adjusting support for adults can hurt their quality of life as they grow up. So, we need a complete plan that includes job opportunities, mental health services, and ongoing social skills training. This helps autistic adults become more independent and included in society. By using these specific supports, we can better address the unique challenges faced by autistic adults and help them live more independently and socially connected lives.

Understanding autism is more than just about kids. Adults with autism face new challenges and need unique support. Coping strategies change from youth to adulthood. Traditional support systems often do not help adults enough. Kids get structured help and school accommodations. Adults struggle in social settings like work and living alone with little help. There is a big gap in support between childhood and adulthood. We need to focus on lifelong interventions. By recognising these needs, we can make inclusive spaces for autistic people to thrive. It is essential to look at autism through all stages of life to make effective support systems.

## 2.2. Museums and Autism:

According to ICOM International Council of Museums, a museum is defined as

“a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that research collects conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible, and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally, and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection, and knowledge sharing” (*Museum definition 2023*).  
 (“Museum Definition - International Council of Museums”)

However, despite their inclusive mission, these spaces frequently fall short of accommodating the unique needs of individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Autism spectrum disorder presents distinctive challenges for adults when navigating museum environments, such as sensory sensitivities, difficulties with social interactions, and the need for predictable routines. These hurdles can transform a potential sanctuary of learning into an overwhelming ordeal.

Building on this understanding, museums must take deliberate steps to address the challenges faced by adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) to create truly inclusive spaces. Research indicates that sensory sensitivities are among the most significant hurdles for individuals with ASD when visiting museums. Bright lights, loud sounds, and crowded spaces can cause intense discomfort, leading to anxiety and stress that hinder the enjoyment and educational potential of the visit. To mitigate these issues, museums can implement "quiet hours" or designated low-sensory zones where environmental stimuli are minimised. Additionally, difficulties with social interactions necessitate specialised staff training programs to equip museum employees with strategies to engage sensitively and effectively with visitors with ASD. Predictable routines are another crucial consideration; therefore, offering detailed pre-visit materials such as visual schedules or virtual tours

can help visitors prepare mentally and emotionally for their museum experience. These adaptations not only make museums more accessible but also demonstrate a commitment to embracing diversity within their audience. Ultimately, by adopting an inclusive approach tailored to the unique needs of adults with ASD, museums not only uphold their mission of accessibility but also enrich the cultural landscape for all visitors.

Building on the necessity for museums to address sensory sensitivities and social interaction difficulties, it is essential to delve deeper into how museums can utilise social learning theory to create inclusive and effective programs for adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). According to Baldino (2013), employing a model based on social learning theory in museum settings can be particularly beneficial for learners on the autism spectrum. This approach emphasises structured, interactive learning experiences that allow individuals with ASD to engage in meaningful ways while minimising overstimulation. For instance, incorporating multi-sensory exhibits that offer tactile, visual, and auditory stimuli in controlled environments enables visitors with ASD to engage at their own pace and comfort level. Additionally, guided tours led by trained staff who understand the nuances of ASD can facilitate positive social interactions and provide personalised support during visits. Another critical element involves creating flexible exhibit spaces where individuals can choose different paths or modes of engagement according to their preferences and needs. This flexibility respects the diverse ways in which people with ASD process information and interact with their surroundings. By integrating these principles into program design, museums not only enhance accessibility but also contribute significantly to equality and social justice by ensuring that all visitors have equitable opportunities to experience cultural enrichment (Baldino, 2013). Therefore, through thoughtful application of social learning theory, museums can effectively address the unique challenges faced by adults with ASD and foster an inclusive environment conducive to lifelong learning.

Ribeiro, Derenji, and Filho (2021) highlight that sensory sensitivities, communication barriers, and unpredictable social interactions are significant

obstacles faced by adults with ASD in museum settings. Besides, training staff in autism awareness can lead to more sensitive and effective engagement strategies tailored to the needs of visitors with ASD. Pre-visit materials like visual schedules or virtual tours can help prepare autistic individuals mentally and emotionally, making their visits less overwhelming and more enjoyable. While there is no single solution to ensure the inclusion of autistic people in museums, innovative developments such as interactive multi-sensory exhibits, flexible exhibit spaces, and personalised guided tours led by trained staff can create a more welcoming environment (Ribeiro et al., 2021). By adopting these inclusive practices, museums demonstrate a commitment to accessibility that enriches the cultural experience for all visitors while addressing the distinct needs of those on the autism spectrum.

In addressing the shortcomings of museums in accommodating adults with autism, it becomes clear that significant steps must be taken to transform these cultural institutions into genuinely inclusive spaces. Reiterating the central thesis, while museums have made strides in enhancing accessibility for children with autism and their families, a glaring gap persists when it comes to adult visitors with autism. By investing in comprehensive staff training, implementing quiet hours and sensory maps, providing virtual tours, and adopting specialised technologies tailored to the unique needs of autistic adults, museums can foster welcoming and genuinely supportive environments. Creating dedicated sensory-friendly exhibits and narrative tools like social stories further underscores this commitment to inclusivity. As society moves toward more significant equity and understanding, these measures are crucial not just for enriching the museum experience for autistic adults but also for promoting broader societal acceptance. Ultimately, transforming museums into inclusive sanctuaries will enrich the cultural landscape for everyone, reflecting a more profound understanding of diversity and a more substantial commitment to serving all community members. By pioneering such inclusive initiatives, museums can lead by example and contribute significantly to societal progress toward true inclusivity and equity.

### 2.3. Scottish Law and Policy:

In recent years, Scotland's museum policies have increasingly embraced principles of inclusion and accessibility. However, it is essential to note that one demographic, adults with autism, continues to be significantly underrepresented. This oversight persists despite growing recognition within museum theory that true inclusivity must account for the diverse needs of all visitors. Museums are not merely sources of artefacts but spaces where communities engage with cultural heritage and build shared experiences. For adults with autism, however, sensory sensitivities, social anxiety, and other unique challenges often create barriers to such engagement. Consequently, these individuals remain underrepresented in cultural institutions designed for everyone. Considering Scotland's current museum policies on inclusive practice, museums must prioritise the accommodation and inclusion of adults with autism. Doing so will not only fulfil ethical obligations toward equality but also enrich the communal fabric by ensuring that all individuals can access and enjoy these vital public resources. Through targeted interventions—such as sensory-friendly exhibits, specialised staff training programs, and adaptive communication tools—museums can become genuinely inclusive environments that cater to the needs of autistic adults alongside those of other visitors.

Autism inclusion within Scottish art museums started off with the commitment to encourage children and young adults to visit and engage with the museum. This encouragement includes welcoming families with autistic children through specialised programs and sensory-friendly initiatives that ease the challenges posed by traditional museum environments. By expanding such successful models to accommodate specifically adult visitors, museums can bridge an existing gap in their inclusivity measures. Implementing quiet hours, offering sensory maps, and employing staff trained in autism awareness are practical steps that can make a significant difference. Moreover, aligning these practices with current museum theory emphasises that creating an environment where all individuals feel valued and accommodated benefits the entire community. By ensuring that adult visitors with autism experience equal access and enjoyment within cultural institutions, Scottish museums

fulfil both their ethical obligations and enhance their mission of fostering inclusive spaces for all. Thus, advancing targeted interventions based on proven strategies will significantly contribute to more equitable accessibility across Scotland's public cultural institutions.

A significant component of Scottish approaches toward autism inclusion encompasses the Equalities Act 2010, obligating that every person, including those diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders, be granted similar opportunities across societal domains, including cultural institutions like art museums. Additionally, the Scottish Strategy for Autism strengthens this by targeting enhancements in services and support provided to individuals with autism, aiming at their integration within all community life aspects, including cultural endeavours.

Building on this framework of inclusivity, Scottish art museums have implemented specific measures to actualise their commitment to autism inclusion, guided by the robust provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and the Scottish Strategy for Autism. These policies are designed not merely to comply with legal requirements but to create genuinely engaging and accessible experiences for individuals on the autism spectrum. For instance, many museums have introduced sensory-friendly hours and quiet spaces that accommodate visitors with varying sensory needs, thus fostering an environment where they can fully enjoy the exhibits without feeling overwhelmed. Moreover, training programs for museum staff focus on increasing awareness and understanding of autism, enabling them to provide more personalised assistance tailored to each visitor's unique requirements. Additionally, collaborative efforts with organisations such as LEAP ensure that these policies are co-designed by people with lived experiences of neurodivergence, thereby enhancing their effectiveness and authenticity (*Learning disabilities, autism and Neurodivergence Bill: Consultation 2023*). Through such comprehensive strategies, Scottish art museums not only adhere to legislative guidelines but also pioneer in offering inclusive cultural experiences that respect and celebrate neurological diversity.

Continuing this trajectory of fostering inclusivity, the successful implementation of autism inclusion policies in Scottish art museums is further evidenced by their alignment with both the Equality Act 2010 and the Scottish Strategy for Autism. By leveraging these legislative frameworks, museums have initiated various innovative programs designed to create equitable access for individuals on the autism spectrum. According to J Hutson and P Hutson (2024) in *Smart Museums: Engaging Neurodiverse Audiences*, this strategic approach bridges significant gaps in our understanding of accessibility and inclusion. For example, many institutions have adopted digital engagement tools that provide customisable experiences tailored to individual sensory preferences. Furthermore, interactive exhibits often include visual guides and social narratives that help visitors anticipate and navigate through museum spaces effectively (Hutson & Hutson, 2024). This approach not only aids in reducing anxiety but also enhances the overall visitor experience by allowing greater autonomy and confidence during visits. Additionally, partnerships with local advocacy groups contribute to a feedback loop that ensures continuous improvement and relevance of these accessibility measures (*Learning disabilities, autism, and Neurodivergence Bill: Consultation 2023*). Consequently, Scottish art museums exemplify how combining legislative mandates with innovative practices can lead to meaningful inclusivity, thereby promoting equal opportunities for adults with autism to engage fully with cultural resources.

Building upon these legislative and strategic frameworks, it is evident that Scottish art museums have effectively utilised the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and the Scottish Strategy for Autism to foster an inclusive environment attuned explicitly to the needs of adults on the autism spectrum. These institutions have not only adopted sensory-friendly hours and spaces but have also implemented specialised training programs for staff, ensuring a deep-seated understanding of neurodiversity. This comprehensive approach extends to digital innovations where customisable engagement tools allow individuals to tailor their experiences according to personal sensory preferences, thus enhancing comfort and accessibility. Interactive exhibits

featuring visual guides and social narratives further aid in navigating museum spaces with reduced anxiety and increased independence. Additionally, collaborations with advocacy groups create an essential feedback loop that ensures ongoing refinement and effectiveness of these policies. This dynamic interplay between adherence to legislative requirements and adoption of best practices demonstrates how Scottish art museums serve as exemplars in promoting inclusivity, thereby ensuring that individuals on the autism spectrum have equitable opportunities to engage fully with cultural resources.

Building on these foundational measures, Scottish art museums have further cemented their role as leaders in autism inclusion by integrating innovative digital technologies alongside traditional accessibility practices. As emphasised by Varriale et al. (2022), implementing imaginative museum concepts enhances the inclusivity of cultural spaces for individuals on the autism spectrum. These intelligent technologies include mobile applications that allow visitors to customise their sensory experiences within the museum, utilising features such as adjustable lighting and sound levels to suit personal preferences (Varriale et al., 2022). Moreover, virtual reality tours offer an alternative means for those who might find physical visits overwhelming, thereby expanding access without compromising comfort or engagement. Additionally, digital guides equipped with augmented reality functions can interactively provide contextual information, making the exhibits more engaging and understandable for neurodiverse audiences. Such technological advancements not only align with but also extend the inclusivity goals set forth by legislative frameworks like the Equality Act 2010 and strategic initiatives under the Scottish Strategy for Autism (Hutson & Hutson, 2024). Through this multifaceted approach combining policy-driven inclusivity with innovative digital solutions, Scottish art museums exemplify how comprehensive strategies can effectively promote equal access and enriching experiences for adults on the autism spectrum.

Furthering this dialogue on integrating advanced digital technologies, Scottish art museums have also demonstrated remarkable success in engaging neurodiverse audiences through strategic partnerships and community

involvement. As Varriale et al. (2022) highlight, collaborations with local autism organisations and advocacy groups are instrumental in refining museum practices to better cater to the needs of individuals on the autism spectrum. These partnerships foster a reciprocal relationship where feedback from neurodiverse visitors informs continual improvements in museum accessibility measures. For instance, feedback loops have been established through regular surveys and focus groups involving autistic adults, ensuring that their experiences directly shape future inclusivity efforts. This community-engaged approach enables museums to adapt dynamically to evolving needs, providing tailored support such as sensory-friendly tours guided by trained staff who understand neurodiversity (Hutson & Hutson, 2024). Moreover, by incorporating insights from these advocacy groups into staff training programs, museums ensure that their personnel are equipped with the skills necessary to offer empathetic and informed assistance. This collaboration extends beyond internal policies, influencing broader cultural initiatives like public awareness campaigns that promote understanding of autism within society. Thus, through sustained community engagement and strategic alliances underpinned by legislative mandates like the Equality Act 2010 and the Scottish Strategy for Autism, Scottish art museums continue to lead in crafting inclusive environments where neurodiverse individuals can thrive culturally and socially.

Building on the integration of advanced digital technologies and community partnerships, Scottish art museums have also achieved notable progress in incorporating specific tools and strategies that support neurodiverse visitors, particularly those on the autism spectrum. According to Hutson and Hutson (2024), these institutions have employed visual schedules and social stories to assist visitors in preparing for their museum experience, effectively reducing anxiety and enhancing accessibility. For example, clear visual guides are used to outline what visitors can expect during their visit, thereby providing a structured pathway that aligns with the predictability often required by individuals with autism. This proactive approach is complemented by sensory maps indicating quiet zones and sensory-friendly

areas within the museum spaces, further promoting a comfortable environment (Hutson & Hutson, 2024). Additionally, through thoughtful design considerations such as low-sensory exhibition spaces and timed entry slots specifically designated for autistic individuals, museums minimise overstimulation—a common challenge for people on the autism spectrum—thereby fostering an inclusive atmosphere. Combining these targeted measures with legislative frameworks like the Equality Act 2010 and strategic initiatives under the Scottish Strategy for Autism exemplifies how Scottish art museums do more than comply with legal requirements; they actively innovate to create welcoming spaces where neurodiverse individuals can enjoy cultural engagement fully.

Complementing these inclusive practices, the success of Scottish art museums in fostering environments conducive to the needs of adults on the autism spectrum can be further attributed to their adherence to and implementation of policies underpinned by the Equality Act 2010 and the Scottish Strategy for Autism. The Equality Act 2010 mandates that public spaces, including museums, eliminate barriers that may hinder individuals with disabilities from accessing services fully. In this vein, Scottish art museums have proactively adopted various strategies such as training staff in autism awareness and developing quiet hours during which sensory inputs like lighting and noise are adjusted to suit neurodiverse visitors better. Furthermore, museum initiatives aligned with the Scottish Strategy for Autism focus on creating tailored programs that engage autistic adults through specialised tours and workshops designed in collaboration with local autism advocacy groups (Hutson & Hutson, 2024). By integrating feedback from neurodiverse communities into policy formulation and program execution, these museums not only comply with legal requirements but also champion best practices for inclusivity. Consequently, Scottish art museums serve as exemplary models of how legislative backing combined with innovative approaches can foster truly inclusive cultural spaces where everyone can participate meaningfully in artistic experiences.

Building on these robust foundations of technological integration and community collaboration, I will argue that Scottish art museums have successfully implemented policies for autism inclusion in adults through the strategic application of the Equality Act 2010 and the Scottish Strategy for Autism, thereby promoting equal access and opportunities for individuals on the autism spectrum. Central to this achievement is a comprehensive understanding of autistic behaviours and needs, as described by McClure and Rutherford (2021), who emphasise the importance of identifying significant levels of individual specificity (IS) to tailor interventions effectively. By rigorously training staff in autism awareness—embedding insights from neurodiverse communities—and creating inclusive environments through adjusted sensory inputs, these institutions actively dismantle barriers to accessibility (McClure & Rutherford, 2021). This approach is evident in sensory-friendly initiatives such as quiet hours, visual schedules, and social stories that prepare autistic visitors for their museum experience. Moreover, these efforts are augmented by legislative mandates requiring equitable treatment across public spaces. Not only do Scottish art museums meet legal standards set forth by the Equality Act 2010, but they also exemplify best practices by engaging autistic adults through specialised programs developed collaboratively with local autism advocacy groups (Hutson & Hutson, 2024). These integrated strategies illustrate how policy frameworks can be operationalised innovatively to craft cultural spaces where neurodiverse individuals can engage meaningfully and comfortably with artistic content. Thus, through a synergistic combination of legislative adherence and community-driven initiatives underpinned by empirical research on autism inclusion, Scottish art museums stand out as pioneering models in promoting cultural inclusivity.

Furthermore, the commitment of Scottish art museums to fostering environments that cater to the needs of autistic adults is not merely a matter of adhering to legislative frameworks. However, it extends into everyday practice and strategic innovation. These museums prioritise inclusive access by incorporating comprehensive training for staff, ensuring they are well-

versed in autism spectrum disorder characteristics and best practices for engagement. Specifically, the inclusion of more intensive school programs paves the way for both children and adults with autism spectrum disorder to visit the museum with their families without experiencing overwhelming sensory inputs or social anxieties. Through these specialised training sessions and practical adaptations such as quiet hours and sensory-friendly tours, Scottish museums create safe spaces where neurodiverse individuals can explore cultural artefacts at their own pace. Moreover, initiatives driven by feedback from local autism communities ensure that museums remain responsive to evolving needs and preferences, adjusting exhibitions and programs accordingly. This dynamic interaction between policy requirements under the Equality Act 2010, strategic actions outlined in the Scottish Strategy for Autism, and community engagement exemplifies how inclusive cultural policies can be successfully implemented on the ground. By continually refining their approaches based on empirical insights and direct input from neurodiverse visitors, Scottish art museums do more than comply with existing regulations—they set a benchmark for inclusivity in public cultural spaces, providing meaningful access to artistic experiences for all members of society.

In addition to these concerted efforts, the measurable success of Scottish art museums in fostering inclusivity for autistic adults can be attributed to the effective policies inspired by both legislative frameworks and community engagement. As Ballantyne et al. (2022) highlight, the seamless integration of strategies from the Equality Act 2010 and the Scottish Strategy for Autism is pivotal in promoting equal access within cultural institutions. These policies require that public spaces eliminate physical and social barriers to ensure comprehensive accessibility (Ballantyne et al., 2022). The implementation of sensory-friendly measures such as visual guides and adapted tours explicitly tailored for autistic visitors exemplifies this approach. By aligning their practices with these legal mandates, Scottish museums also foster environments where neurodiverse individuals feel welcomed and understood, demonstrating a profound commitment beyond mere compliance. The participation of autism advocacy groups further

enhances this model by providing continuous feedback that refines museum programs to better meet the specific needs of autistic adults. In effect, Scottish art museums not only adhere strictly to regulatory standards but also leverage them innovatively to advance inclusivity significantly. This comprehensive approach underscores how adherence to legislative guidelines combined with proactive community collaboration can establish cultural spaces that are genuinely inclusive—affirming Scottish art museums as leading examples in the domain of accessible cultural engagement.

#### **2.4. Autism in Museums:**

The evolution of art museums towards greater inclusivity is not only a reflection of societal progress but also a crucial advancement in ensuring that art and culture are accessible to all. Art museums are traditionally viewed as institutions of high culture and exclusivity, but they recognise the importance of diversity and inclusion within their walls. By examining specific programs tailored for children and adults with autism, we can uncover how these initiatives not only foster accessibility but also improve the cultural landscape by welcoming a broader audience. Real-life examples in the United States and the United Kingdom serve as ideal models for other institutions that aim to bridge the gap between exclusivity and inclusivity in their offerings—looking at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Dallas Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, the National Gallery in London, Glasgow Museums and others. The focus on real-world examples from different regions underscores the universal significance of such efforts, shedding light on both successful strategies and ongoing challenges in creating an environment where everyone can engage with art meaningfully.

Building on the argument that inclusivity initiatives in art museums have had successful outcomes, it is crucial to delve into specific case studies involving adults with autism and children to support this claim. For example, institutions such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City have developed sensory-friendly programming that includes tailored gallery tours and art-making workshops designed specifically for autistic visitors. These initiatives, developed in collaboration with local communities and special

education experts, demonstrate a commitment to accessibility by providing structured environments where children and adults can engage with art through tactile activities and visual storytelling without being overwhelmed by sensory input. Moreover, case studies reveal that such programs can significantly enhance communication skills and emotional expression among participants, offering a non-verbal medium through which they can articulate their thoughts and feelings. By aligning these cultural spaces with best practices in inclusive design, museums not only fulfil their educational missions but also foster a sense of belonging for individuals who are often marginalised. As highlighted by Emily F. Snider's research, holistic approaches to accessibility—which encompass physical modifications as well as programmatic adjustments—are essential for creating museum environments where persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities can thrive. Therefore, these American case studies further affirm that when art museums adopt inclusive practices geared towards accommodating neurodiverse populations, they make significant strides toward broader societal acceptance and integration while enriching the cultural tapestry for all patrons involved.

Continuing from these initiatives in the United States, further evidence underscores the significance of inclusive practices within art museums for individuals with autism, as supported by empirical data and real-life experiences. According to research conducted by Kulik and Fletcher (2016), implementing accessibility strategies such as sensory-friendly maps, designated quiet zones, and training staff on autism awareness at the Dallas Museum of Art notably decreased negative emotional responses among autistic visitors. These measures not only provide a scaffold that aids both children and adults in navigating the museum environment more comfortably but also instil a sense of hope and optimism for the future. Furthermore, Hladik et al. (2022) developed an evaluation toolkit designed to enhance inclusivity for families with children on the autism spectrum across various cultural institutions. This toolkit serves as a valuable resource for museums seeking to conduct self-assessments and implement best practices that foster a welcoming atmosphere for neurodiverse populations (Hladik et al., 2022). The

study emphasises the importance of stakeholder collaboration in creating effective programming tailored to meet specific needs, thereby promoting a sense of community and belonging. By integrating these comprehensive tools into their operational frameworks, museums can transform themselves into inclusive spaces where autistic individuals feel valued and engaged. Such systemic changes not only enrich the cultural experiences of those directly involved but also contribute to broader societal shifts toward acceptance and empathy, illustrating how targeted efforts can yield profound benefits both domestically and internationally.

Moreover, the inclusion of individuals with autism in art museums yields transformative impacts. Specific case studies in both the United States and the United Kingdom provide evidence of this. For instance, research by Deng (2016) underscores how museum learning experiences can positively influence the behaviour and engagement of children diagnosed with autism at institutions like the Columbia Museum of Art (CMA). This study highlights that carefully designed programs facilitate not only cognitive and emotional growth but also enhance social interactions among autistic visitors. These findings are corroborated by other instances, such as those documented at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City, where specialised workshops have allowed participants to express themselves creatively in a supportive environment free from typical societal judgments. The positive outcomes observed include improved communication skills, increased confidence, and heightened sensory awareness among participants (Deng, 2016). Additionally, these educational interventions underscore that when museums prioritise inclusivity through adaptive programming and accessible facilities, they foster an environment conducive to both learning and personal development for neurodiverse individuals. Such progressive initiatives set a benchmark for global cultural institutions, demonstrating that inclusive art spaces fulfil their educational mission and contribute significantly to social cohesion and empathy across diverse audiences. By integrating tailored activities that cater specifically to the needs of autistic visitors, museums transform into

sanctuaries of acceptance where neurodiverse populations can explore, engage, and thrive on their own terms.

Furthermore, the therapeutic impact of incorporating individuals with autism into art museums is vividly illustrated through multisensory art experiences.

Building upon the multisensory initiatives explored, further empirical evidence underscores the beneficial effects of integrating individuals with autism into art museums on a global scale. A study by Bogéa Ribeiro and da Silveira Derenji (2021) reveals that inclusive programs in art museums serve as powerful catalysts for social and cognitive development among neurodiverse populations. At institutions like the Institute of Museum and Library Services, such initiatives have effectively integrated autistic individuals into cultural spaces, fostering an environment where they feel valued and understood (Ribeiro et al., 2021). For instance, case studies at various museums demonstrate how tailored educational activities can promote engagement and interaction among both children and adults with autism. These programs include specialised workshops that leverage visual art to boost participants' communication skills, creativity, and self-confidence. The research also highlights success stories from the United Kingdom, where structured involvement with museum exhibits has led to significant behavioural improvements. One case study at the National Gallery in London detailed how guided tours adapted to meet sensory needs resulted in heightened levels of attention and participation among autistic visitors (Ribeiro et al., 2021). By offering an adaptive approach through specific programmatic interventions—such as quiet hours or interactive sessions designed around sensory preferences—museums can establish themselves as inclusive sanctuaries that foster emotional well-being and cognitive growth for individuals with autism. Consequently, these international examples illustrate that systemic inclusivity efforts not only fulfil educational mandates but also pave the way for broader societal acceptance and empathy towards neurodiverse communities, highlighting the global impact of such practices.

A prominent example of the positive impact that inclusion can have on individuals with autism is illustrated by the initiatives undertaken by Glasgow Museums in Scotland. By embedding autism acceptance into their operational framework, Glasgow Museums has implemented measures such as visual storyboards, sensory kits, and quiet, safe spaces to create an accommodating environment for autistic visitors (*Autism-friendly programme at Glasgow Museums 2023*). These efforts not only facilitate a more accessible and enjoyable experience for individuals with autism but also demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity that other institutions can emulate. For instance, Glasgow's early openings and family workshops specifically designed for autistic visitors ensure that families can engage with cultural exhibits in a calmer and more supportive setting, thereby reducing anxiety and sensory overload (*Autism-friendly programme at Glasgow Museums 2023*). This case study emphasises the benefits of including autistic individuals within art museums, showing how thoughtfully designed programs can significantly enhance their quality of life while promoting broader societal empathy and understanding.

In addition to the cognitive and emotional benefits underscored by Antonetti and Fletcher (2016), the inclusion of individuals with autism in art museums also promotes positive social behaviours, as elucidated through detailed case studies. L Deng's (2017) research in "Curator: The Museum Journal" provides compelling evidence that guided gallery tours tailored for neurodiverse visitors significantly impact learning and social interaction. Specifically, Deng examined how forty-five-minute guided gallery tours facilitated cognitive enrichment and meaningful social engagement among children and adults with autism spectrum disorder. One example from Deng's study involved an American art museum program where participants engaged in guided discussions about artworks, resulting in improved communication skills and heightened social awareness (Deng, 2017). Likewise, similar initiatives at institutions like the Metropolitan Museum of Art have implemented structured tour programs designed to cater to the sensory preferences of autistic individuals, thereby fostering an inclusive atmosphere

that encourages reciprocal interactions among participants. These carefully curated experiences underscore how art museums can serve as vital community spaces where neurodiverse individuals feel empowered and connected. By creating environments that are sensitive to the unique needs of autistic visitors, museums not only enhance their educational reach but also cultivate empathy and understanding within broader societal contexts. Consequently, such inclusive practices highlight the transformative potential of cultural institutions when they commit to accessibility and adaptability for all visitors.

Building on the successful implementation of autism-friendly programs in museums like those in Glasgow, similar strides have been made in the United States to create enriching and inclusive experiences for individuals with autism. Furthermore, additional case studies specifically address the positive outcomes of inclusive art activities designed for individuals with autism. For example, Schleien, Mustonen, and Rynders (1995) provide evidence that inclusive art activities not only promote cooperation and positive engagement but also offer therapeutic benefits to autistic participants. Their study discusses a children's art gallery and studio at the Minnesota Museum of Art in St. Paul, which was tailored to include children with autism in its programming. Here, children with autism exhibited increased levels of social interaction and improved communication skills when involved in structured art activities (Schleien et al., 1995). These sessions fostered an environment where neurodiverse children could explore their creativity while developing critical social skills through cooperative projects. Moreover, another compelling aspect of their findings relates to the behavioural improvements observed in participating children; they exhibited reduced anxiety and increased focus during these inclusive sessions. The success stories from such initiatives underscore the broader implications for museums aiming to implement similar programs both in the United States and the United Kingdom. By systematically incorporating sensory-friendly environments and adaptive educational models—like those implemented at institutions such as the Tate Modern or San Francisco Museum of Modern Art—

museums can effectively support both cognitive development and emotional well-being among autistic visitors. Therefore, these real-life experiences substantiate that integrating individuals with autism into art museum activities holds transformative potential for fostering inclusivity, empathy, and societal acceptance internationally.

## **2.5. Overview:**

The literature on autism in adults highlights the unique challenges faced by this population, particularly in navigating public spaces and engaging with cultural institutions. Unlike children with autism, adults often encounter a lack of tailored support and resources, which can lead to social isolation and reduced participation in community activities. The research underscores the importance of understanding the sensory sensitivities, communication differences, and social interaction challenges commonly experienced by adults with autism. These factors can significantly impact their ability to fully engage with environments that are not designed with neurodiverse needs in mind. Studies also emphasise the need for increased awareness and accommodations that consider the specific requirements of autistic adults, particularly in spaces like art museums that are often sensory-rich and socially demanding.

Scottish cultural policies have increasingly recognised the importance of inclusivity and accessibility in public institutions, including museums. However, the integration of neurodiversity, particularly autism, into these policies has been uneven. While there are general guidelines promoting accessibility, specific provisions for neurodiverse individuals, such as those with autism, are often lacking or inconsistently applied. Existing policies primarily focus on physical accessibility, with less attention given to cognitive and sensory accessibility. This gap reflects a broader need within Scottish cultural policy to more fully embrace the principles of neurodiversity more fully, ensuring that museums are inclusive spaces for all members of the community, including autistic adults. The literature suggests that more robust, targeted policies are required to address the specific needs of neurodiverse populations in Scottish museums.

Looking at studies from various art museums provides valuable insights into practical strategies for enhancing accessibility for autistic individuals. These studies highlight several successful approaches, including implementing sensory-friendly programs, using clear and supportive signage, and creating quiet spaces where visitors can take breaks if overwhelmed. Most of the research done on autism in museums is on children with autism. Additionally, museums that have trained their staff in understanding autism and neurodiversity report a more welcoming and accommodating environment for autistic visitors. Examples from museums outside Scotland, such as those in the United States and the United Kingdom, demonstrate that tailored programs and exhibitions can significantly improve the museum experience for autistic adults. However, within Scotland, such initiatives are still emerging, with only a few museums taking initiative-taking steps to address these needs.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. Aim of the Study:

This desk-based dissertation seeks to fill a crucial gap in the existing literature and research by developing achievable recommendations as suggestions for art museums in Scotland to enhance inclusivity and accommodation for adults with autism. The potential impact of this study is significant, as it aims to create more accessible, welcoming, and engaging museum environments and programs that cater specifically to the needs and preferences of adults with autism. To achieve this, the research will undertake a comprehensive review of current practices in three Scottish art museums, looking at accessibility, analysing case studies of successful inclusion initiatives, and consulting with museum staff from Glasgow Life and the National Galleries of Scotland on the policies and practices that are used. This collaborative approach, which values the experiences and expertise of those working in the field, ensures that the resulting framework will provide practical recommendations for museum staff training, museum design, maps, sensory-friendly programming, and communication strategies. By addressing these critical areas, the dissertation aims to foster a deeper understanding of how art museums can better serve the autistic community, ultimately enriching the cultural experience for all visitors.

#### Research questions:

How do current museum policies in Scotland, such as the Equalities Act 2010, address the diverse needs of adults with autism? What strategies can be established to promote a more universally accessible and accommodating museum environment? To what extent do the Burrell Collection, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, the National Museum of Scotland, and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery incorporate social and communication standards to support the inclusion of adults with autism? What are the perceptions and experiences of adults with autism in Scottish museums, and what recommendations can be developed to ensure a more positive and inclusive cultural engagement?

### Significance of the Study:

This study has significant implications for theory and practice across museum studies, disability studies, and autism research. Synthesising existing knowledge and generating new insights advances our understanding of how museums can effectively support individuals with autism and create more inclusive cultural spaces. The findings of this study can directly inform policy and practice within the museum sector in Scotland and beyond. The strategies developed through this research can provide museums with practical recommendations for improving accessibility and inclusivity. These proposals encompass museum staff training, museum design, maps, sensory-friendly programming, and communication methods. If implemented by Scottish Art Museums, these recommendations can significantly enhance the cultural engagement of autistic adults. Moreover, this study promotes awareness and understanding of autism within the museum sector and contributes to greater social inclusion and equity for adults with autism in society at large. By fostering a deeper comprehension of the specific needs of autistic individuals, the research supports the creation of more welcoming and engaging environments, enriching the cultural landscape for all visitors.

### 3.2. Research Paradigm:

**Identification of Existing Literature and Best Practices:** One of the study's primary aims is to comprehensively review academic literature, reports, and relevant documents focusing on autism inclusivity in museum settings. By synthesising existing knowledge and best practices, the study seeks to identify key themes, trends, and insights related to designing, implementing, and evaluating inclusive strategies for individuals with autism.

#### Analysis of Case Studies:

The study analyses case studies of museums in the United States and the United Kingdom that have successfully implemented inclusive practices for individuals with autism. By examining real-world examples, the study aims to extract valuable lessons learned, challenges faced, and innovative approaches adopted by museums to create autism-friendly environments.

These case studies provide practical insights and inspiration for developing tailored recommendations for museums in Scotland.

Development of Comprehensive Recommendations: Building on the insights gained from the literature review, case studies, policies, and data collected for the three museums, the study aims to develop a comprehensive set of recommendations tailored to the context of art museums in Scotland. These recommendations will encompass a wide range of areas, including physical accessibility, sensory-friendly design, staff training, communication strategies, programming, and community engagement. The aim is to provide museums with practical, evidence-based recommendations that can be implemented to promote inclusivity and accommodation for adults with autism.

### **3.3. Method of Collecting Data:**

#### **1. Literature Review:**

The literature review constitutes a foundational component of the data collection process. It systematically searches and analyses academic databases, journals, reports, and relevant documents related to autism inclusivity in museum settings. The search strategy employs a combination of keywords and controlled vocabulary terms to ensure a comprehensive coverage of autism in adults. These sections were chosen due to their importance in helping adults with autism feel comfortable visiting art museums.

- Sensory-friendly environments:

This section explores research and best practices for creating sensory-friendly museum spaces that accommodate the sensory sensitivities of individuals with autism.

- Accessibility measures:

Examine strategies and recommendations for enhancing physical accessibility within museum facilities, including wheelchair access, signage, and seating arrangements.

- Communication strategies:

This section analyses effective communication techniques for engaging individuals with autism, including visual supports, social stories, and clear verbal instructions.

- Transformative staff training:

This section reviews literature that underscores the transformative potential of staff training and education. By fostering understanding and empathy toward visitors with autism and equipping museum staff with the necessary skills to provide support and assistance, staff training can inspire and motivate museum professionals to create a more inclusive environment.

- Collaborative community engagement initiatives:

This section explores community-based approaches to inclusivity, emphasising the collaborative nature of partnerships with autism advocacy organisations, co-design processes involving individuals with autism, and outreach programs aimed at raising awareness and promoting accessibility. These initiatives are designed to make museum professionals feel connected and part of a more significant movement toward inclusivity.

This section of the literature review involves synthesising and critically analysing findings from diverse sources to identify key themes, trends, and gaps in knowledge. It serves as a foundation for understanding existing evidence-based practices and informing the development of tailored recommendations for art museums in Scotland.

## 2. Autism in Museums:

This analysis provides invaluable insights into real-world examples of museums that have successfully implemented inclusive practices for individuals with autism. The selection on autism in museums involves identifying museums recognised worldwide for their commitment to accessibility and inclusivity, particularly concerning autism.

- Demonstrated commitment to accessibility and inclusivity as evidenced by public statements, policies, and initiatives.
- Implementation of innovative approaches and best practices for accommodating individuals with autism.

Case studies are analysed using qualitative methods to extract key insights, lessons learned, and challenges in implementing inclusive practices. This analysis examines museum initiatives across various domains, such as physical environment modifications, staff training programs, sensory-friendly programming, and community partnerships.

### 3. Policy Analysis:

In addition to the literature review on autism and case studies, the policy analysis provides a critical lens to examine the broader institutional and societal contexts shaping autism inclusivity in museums. This component involves reviewing relevant policies, guidelines, and legislation at the local, national, and international levels that impact providing inclusive services and accommodations for individuals with autism.

- **Legislative frameworks:** Examination of laws and regulations governing disability rights, accessibility standards, and discrimination prevention.
- **Government initiatives:** Review government-led programs, funding opportunities, and policy initiatives to promote accessibility and inclusion in cultural institutions.
- **Professional standards:** Analysis of industry guidelines, standards, and best practice recommendations issued by professional associations and advocacy organisations.

Policy analysis contextualises the findings from the literature review and case studies within broader policy frameworks and institutional contexts. It helps identify gaps, inconsistencies, and areas for improvement in current policies and practices related to autism inclusivity in museums.

#### 4. Data Collection from Museums:

The information gathered from the approaches above enables a comprehensive data collection from the Burrell Collection, Kelvingrove Art Gallery, the National Gallery of Scotland, and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. This process involves an in-depth review of each museum's website, an in-person evaluation of their physical spaces, and the collection of information from staff on issues that cannot be found in these two other processes. These four museums were selected for their prominent locations and a strong commitment to disability inclusion within their exhibits and educational programs. By focusing on these institutions, the study aims to understand how well these leading cultural sites in Scotland cater to the needs of autistic adults, ensuring their environments and services are genuinely accessible and inclusive.

The first step of the data collection from these four museums involves reviewing the information provided on their websites. This process includes examining the accessibility sections to identify specific accommodations mentioned for individuals with autism, such as sensory-friendly tours. The visitor services pages are also scrutinised to determine if support services, like sensory kits, noise-cancelling headphones, or visual guides, are available. Additionally, the websites are searched for events and programs tailored to autistic adults, including sensory-friendly hours or specialised tours, noting the frequency and accessibility of these events. Finally, contact information for accessibility coordinators or customer service is checked to ensure that inquiries regarding accessible services can be easily addressed.

The second step of my data collection process involves conducting in-person observations at all four museums, with a focus on assessing how well they accommodate the needs of autistic adults. During these visits, I will closely examine the sensory environment, paying particular attention to lighting and noise levels throughout the museum. I will identify areas with bright or flickering lights, as well as noisy spaces, and check for the presence of designated quiet areas where visitors can take a break. Additionally, I will evaluate the museum's navigation by assessing the clarity of signage and

maps, ensuring they are easy to understand and follow. I will also look for sensory-friendly pathways that help visitors avoid crowded or overstimulating areas, which can be particularly important for autistic adults seeking a more comfortable and accessible museum experience.

The last step of my data collection process is emailing questions to staff members at the organisations that run the four museums. Glasgow Life runs the Burrell Collection and Kelvingrove Art Gallery, and the National Galleries of Scotland runs the National Gallery and the National Portrait Gallery. I will email staff members in the Learning and Access department and the Communities & Access Learning Coordinators within the museum organisations regarding information that cannot be obtained through online and in-person data collection.

1. What in-house policies are used within the museum while creating autism-friendly programs and spaces?
2. Does museum staff have any training on how to communicate with a visitor with autism?
3. Does (insert museum name) partner with any autism associations?
4. Are there national policies the museum must follow while creating autism programs?

After collecting the data online and in person, I will compare the information gathered from each museum, see the similarities and differences, and identify the gaps in the museum's inclusivity for autism. Overall, the combined approach of the literature review of autism in adults, case studies, and policy analysis with the data collection of the four museums online, in-person, and questions answered by staff provides a comprehensive and multi-dimensional understanding of autism inclusivity in an art museum setting in Scotland. Using the data from these diverse sources generates insights that inform the development of recommendations for art museums in Scotland, thereby advancing the field of accessibility and inclusion within the cultural sector.

### **3.4. Data Analysis:**

Thematic analysis, a qualitative method used to identify patterns, themes, and meanings within collected data, is central to this study's approach. It is applied both to the literature review and the analysis of case studies. The process begins with theme development, where codes are organised into broader themes and sub-themes that capture crucial issues such as autism inclusivity, physical accessibility, sensory accommodations, communication strategies, staff training, and community engagement. These themes are then interpreted and analysed in relation to the study's research questions and objectives, allowing for the examination of relationships between themes, identification of commonalities and differences across data sources, and exploration of underlying patterns and implications. A comparative analysis follows, comparing findings from various sources, including literature and case studies, to identify similarities, differences, and trends. This analysis compares approaches, strategies, and outcomes of museums worldwide that have implemented inclusive practices for individuals with autism, identifies common themes and best practices, highlights variations in policies and contextual factors, and explores transferable lessons for museums in Scotland. Finally, the synthesis process integrates and synthesises findings from both thematic and comparative analyses to develop comprehensive insights and recommendations. This involves bringing together key themes to create a holistic understanding of autism inclusivity in museums, generating evidence-based recommendations for museums in Scotland, and contextualising these recommendations to ensure they are relevant and applicable to the specific needs, resources, and cultural context of Scottish museums.

### **3.5. Ethical Considerations:**

- **Confidentiality:** Ensure confidentiality of sensitive information obtained from literature sources and case studies.

- Acknowledgment: Properly cite and attribute sources to acknowledge the contributions of researchers and institutions.
- Bias: Researcher bias
- On-Site: Visitor and staff involvement

### **3.6. Limitations of the Study:**

Conducting a desk-based research study on adult autism inclusion in museums presents several inherent limitations. Firstly, unlike studies involving primary data collection, such as interviews or surveys, desk-based research may lack direct engagement with individuals with autism, museum staff, or policymakers. This absence of direct interaction can limit the understanding of their perspectives and experiences, potentially impacting the depth and richness of the analysis. Secondly, time and resource constraints pose significant challenges in conducting thorough literature reviews, synthesising data, and analysing findings. The comprehensive nature of desk-based research requires ample time and access to a wide range of sources, which may be limited, particularly within constrained dissertation timelines. Thirdly, the quality and reliability of available sources vary, ranging from peer-reviewed journals to anecdotal accounts. Navigating this diversity of sources demands scrutiny to ensure the validity and credibility of the findings. Finally, researcher bias and interpretation play a crucial role in desk-based research; this analysis relies heavily on existing literature and personal interpretation. It is imperative to evaluate sources critically, consider alternative perspectives, and remain vigilant against potential biases to uphold the integrity of the research findings. While desk-based research offers valuable insights into adult autism inclusion in museums, navigating these limitations conscientiously produces robust and credible results.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The research on the creation of a welcoming atmosphere for adults in Scottish art museums is of paramount importance. It addresses the pressing need to develop targeted strategies for a universally accessible and accommodating museum environment and educational programs for autistic adults. This study is crucial in understanding the intricate framework of adult autism incorporation within the Scottish art museum setting. It analyses existing museum protocols, particularly the Equalities Act 2010, and explores potential methodologies to foster a more broadly reachable and supportive museum atmosphere. The objective is to illuminate the efforts of art museums in Scotland, such as the Burrell Collection, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, the National Gallery of Scotland, and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, in weaving social and communication benchmarks into their operations for the assistance of adults living with autism. This research concerns the present and shaping a more inclusive future for all.

By integrating social and communicative norms into their operational practices, entities such as the Burrell Collection, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, the National Gallery of Scotland, and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery can further enhance their efforts to include individuals with autism. Grasping the perceptions alongside the experiences of adults with autism in Scottish art museums is integral to formulating recommendations that nurture positive and inclusive engagement within the cultural sphere.

### 4.1. Policies:

It is essential to examine the existing museum policies in Scotland that meet the diverse needs of individuals on the autism spectrum. The Equalities Act 2010 holds substantial significance in guaranteeing that museums afford accessible and inclusive settings for the entirety of their visitors, including those classified as being on the autism spectrum. Nonetheless, a pronounced necessity exists for more detailed strategies and formal guidelines to encourage a genuinely universally accommodating experience within museums for adults with autism.

Each museum organisation has their own in-house policies that they use in conjunction with national policies. The Burrell Collection and Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum use in-house policies to support the Glasgow community. In 2017, they signed up for Glasgow City Council's Autism-Friendly City Initiative. With the signing up, they agreed to deliver awareness training to staff, promote good customer care, and provide guidance in any area that might present challenges for autistic individuals. The National Gallery of Scotland and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery's house policies are NGS Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion commitments and NGS Protection of Children Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy. With both of these in-house policies the National Galleries are seeking "to enable all visitors, in person and online, to have a positive experience that is welcoming and inclusive" (*Developing equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) commitments*).

#### **4.2. Collaboration and Partnership:**

Collaborations and partnerships play a critical role in enhancing inclusion for adults with autism within art museums in Scotland. By engaging with local autism organisations, art institutions can gain necessary insights and feedback on methods to address the unique requirements of this demographic more effectively. These partnerships can lead to the development of specialised programs and resources to ensure autistic adults experience a welcoming and supportive atmosphere in museum environments. Moreover, alliances with specialists in the autism sector can help apply ideal practices concerning communication and social interactions within the physical spaces of museums. By nurturing these collaborative efforts, art institutions can strive towards establishing an environment that is more universally accessible and accommodating, thereby fostering engagement for adults with autism.

Engagement with local communities represents a significant factor in the promotion of inclusivity in art museums, especially concerning adults diagnosed with autism. By instituting frameworks for ongoing consultation, institutions such as the Burrell Collection and the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum facilitate the incorporation of insights from autistic individuals and

their families into the development of programs and initiatives aimed at improving museum accessibility. Such collaborative methodologies aid museums in recognising obstacles encountered by this group and thus allow for the customisation of their offerings, thereby encouraging a sense of belonging and improving the overall visitor experience. It is imperative for art institutions to weave community feedback into their decision-making frameworks, ensuring that museum environments are rendered both accessible and reflective of the diverse preferences and necessities of autistic visitors. This strategy not only enhances the cultural diversity of the institution but also underscores the museum's dedication to social responsibility and inclusivity, thereby setting a foundation for broader involvement within the arts community.

Forming robust collaborations with autism organizations holds significant importance for Scottish art museums aiming to bolster inclusivity and accessibility for adults within the autism spectrum. By engaging with these entities, museums can acquire invaluable insights regarding the distinctive needs and preferences characteristic of adults with autism, thereby nurturing a more welcoming and accommodating atmosphere across institutions, which include the Burrell Collection, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, and the National Galleries of Scotland. Through the adoption of a comprehensive approach, museums have the opportunity to craft specific programs that promote participation and elevate engagement, drawing from the lived experiences of individuals with autism. Through the research it suggests that this strategy noticeably enhances patient experiences within healthcare contexts, reinforcing the significance of understanding and inclusivity in service provision. In addition, such partnerships may enable the dispersion of resources and methodologies, ultimately aiding in the cultivation of innovative spaces that facilitate self-expression and the forming of meaningful connections within the realm of art, as highlighted in the comprehensive perspective examined in investigations concerning health-related transitions.

The task of establishing an inclusive atmosphere in art museums necessitates the implementation of thorough marketing and outreach strategies that are specifically tailored to autistic adults. In order to truly engage this demographic, it is crucial to forge partnerships with organisations that advocate for autism, as well as local community groups, thus ensuring that the marketing materials are in tune with the intended audience. Certain museums, such as the Burrell Collection and Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, have initiated adaptations to their programming through outreach endeavours that actively involve autistic adults in the planning stages. This involvement assists in shaping experiences that authentically mirror the needs and desires of the autistic community. Furthermore, through deliberate outreach efforts, art institutions are capable of creating museum environments that are more conducive and supportive, ultimately minimising sensory overload and making the visitation experience more pleasurable and attainable. The significance of these initiatives cannot be ignored, as effective marketing not only raises awareness but also promotes participation and fosters a sense of belonging for autistic individuals within cultural contexts.

The Burrell Collection and Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum work with local groups such as Projectability, the National Autistic Society, and local schools. With both museums being a part of Glasgow Life, they work with the Glasgow Museums Access Panel, which is comprised of representatives from different organisations who advise us on access needs within museum services, such as autism. Due to these partnerships, the museums now have storyboards on their websites for visitors to use before visiting the museums. These storyboards provide visitors with helpful knowledge before visiting the museum (see appendix Navigation, pp 83-88). Glasgow Life also has a contact list for organisations and individuals who have expressed an interest in their autism-friendly programs. This list is also crucial to them reaching out to individuals who would benefit the most from their autism programs. It also allows the museum to get information out to the local autism networks (see appendix Email, pp 72- 76). The main reason this

list exists is that the resources, programs, and offerings reach the people who need these resources the most.

The National Gallery of Scotland and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, both of which are a part of the National Galleries of Scotland, work with PAMIS (Promoting a More Inclusive Society), which has helped them create the sensory stories program. PAMIS is “is the only organisation in Scotland that works solely with people with profound and multiple learning disabilities and their families for a better life” (*Pamis Creative Arts*). They also work with the Ark Housing Association. Ark specialises in supporting people with mental health conditions, learning disabilities, and autism spectrum conditions, and they offer care and support services for people wherever they live (*What We Do*). Ark worked in partnership with the National Galleries of Scotland to create the Relaxed Afternoons for Adults program. They also work with independent access consultants who specialise in working with neurodiverse audiences (see appendix Email, p 69- 70). Working with these associations helps the museum understand the diverse needs that adults with autism will need while visiting the museum, creating programmes, and interacting with the programmes that they offer.

#### **4.3. Staff Training:**

To establish a truly inclusive setting, staff must be trained with the understanding and skills necessary to identify and respond to the distinct communication methods and sensory sensitivities that adults with autism may have. Introducing specialised training Museums can significantly improve visitor experiences, thereby not only adhering to legal obligations but also creating authentic engagement from visitors who might otherwise feel excluded. Additionally, developing partnerships with organisations advocating for autism can provide valuable guidance on effective strategies, ensuring that museums follow modern standards of inclusivity and foster a more compassionate outlook toward involvement from everyone.

Improving the training and awareness of personnel within art museums emerges as an essential component for nurturing inclusivity aimed at adults

diagnosed with autism. Specific workshops are capable of furnishing staff with essential competencies to grasp the unique requisites of individuals on the autism spectrum, thereby fostering a museum climate that is both empathetic and adaptable. By forging collaborations with entities specialising in raising autism awareness, museums could institute training regimens that blend theoretical insight with hands-on experience, exemplified through role-playing exercises and modules centred around sensory experiences. Incorporating feedback from staff members is indispensable, facilitating a progressive enhancement of educational strategies and content. In addition, the establishment of persistent affiliations with local autism advocacy organisations can aid museums in remaining cognizant of the changing demands within the community, which is instrumental in maintaining the relevance and effectiveness of their programmatic efforts. In conclusion, these methodologies have the potential to markedly enrich the museum experience for both personnel and attendees, thereby fostering a culture imbued with acceptance and comprehension.

The Burrell Collection and Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum both use the same form of staff training. They carry out in-house training delivered by staff with experience and research in this engagement area. This training is delivered to the front-of-house museum staff, not just the Learning and Access team, so the museum offers an autism-friendly environment to the entire staff. The Learning and Engagement team has also received training from the National Autistic Society. Staff also receive aphasia and communication training by the Chest Heart Stroke Scotland; this training applies to groups and individuals with communication and sensory needs like autism. Glasgow Life works in partnership with third-sector charities and organisations for neurodiverse groups. These partnerships are familiar with these groups' needs and challenges and help develop and provide staff training (see appendix Email, pp 71- 75).

The National Gallery and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery both use the same method for staff training. Staff within each museum have equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) training. EDI training “should go beyond

legal compliance and take an intersectional approach to EDI, which will add value to an organisation, contribute to the wellbeing and equality of outcomes and impact on all employees” (*Equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace: Factsheets 2022*). The front-of-house staff has training that covers Autism as part of their general disability training (see appendix Email, pp 69- 70). This approach reflects on the galleries' commitment to inclusivity, ensuring that all visitors, regardless of their neurodiversity, can enjoy and benefit from their cultural offerings.

#### 4.4. Programs:

The understanding of adult autism requires the formulation of specialised programs that recognise diverse sensory and social requirements. Scottish art museums, such as the Burrell Collection and the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, may be accomplished through deliberate partnerships with autism advocacy organisations, guaranteeing that programming is shaped by the actual experiences of those on the spectrum. The incorporation of sensory-friendly museum environments—like specific quiet zones and adaptable schedules to suit different sensitivities to sensory inputs—could significantly improve inclusivity. Moreover, initiatives that provide guided tours led by facilitators trained in both art comprehension and autism awareness may foster a more welcoming environment for those involved. Suggestions for realising such aims include periodic evaluations of current programs, continuous professional development for staff, and the formation of mechanisms to gather community feedback for the continual refinement of offerings. Such a layered strategy is crucial in promoting a more inclusive atmosphere within cultural institutions.

Glasgow Life offers family workshops, quiet opening hours and special events. Currently, the Burrell Collection is offering quiet and relaxed early openings with four sessions between 5<sup>th</sup> April- 18<sup>th</sup> October 2024 (*Quiet and relaxed early openings at the Burrell Collection - Sensory Friendly Programme*). While Glasgow Life does not have any dedicated programmes at the moment for adults with autism, they have recently set up a group within Glasgow Museums to look at what they can provide for adults with autism.

They have done this due to the number of enquiries they have received about their family's autism-friendly programmes. They are currently reviewing their programmes and resources to hold a consultation event with representatives from the local autism organisations. In the fall of 2024, they are planning on trying a 'relaxed session' in the evening at Kelvin Hall to accommodate those who do not wish to go to their family events or cannot make it to the events held during the day. While this is happening, they are updating their terminology and reviewing their programmes to meet the needs of autistic adults. (see appendix Email, pp 71- 75)

The National Galleries does have programs dedicated for adults with autism. One such program is their Sensory storytelling (Profound disability-friendly). This programme is “a fully inclusive multisensory storytelling event for people of all ages with profound and multiple learning disabilities and their families, friends and supporters” (Sensory-friendly). PAMIS hosts these events, and one of the volunteers reads the story. They also host relaxed afternoons for adults. This event is done at the Portrait Gallery, and it is a relaxed, sensory-friendly afternoon for autistic adults and those with other learning disabilities. This event it allows for autistic adults to meet other people, see artwork in the gallery space and complete a creative activity in a quiet, comfortable environment. These events allow for neurodivergent adults to go to these cultural institutions in an environment where they can be comfortable.

#### **4.5 Navigation:**

The advancements that have occurred recently in the realm of technology are contributing notably to the formation of inclusive environments within art museums, especially for adults diagnosed with autism. The incorporation of digital tools, which include interactive map applications and virtual tours, allows institutions to streamline navigation for patrons who might find themselves overwhelmed by sensory inputs in conventional environments. Such initiatives serve not only to enhance the experiences for individuals who are neurodivergent but also to promote a culture characterised by accessibility that ultimately serves all visitors.

The National Gallery of Scotland and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery each have sensory maps and videos of the museums located on their websites (see appendix Navigation, pp 80- 82). These maps allow visitors to see what areas of the museum are more crowded, have stronger lights, and loud noises. These maps are available online and at the information desks. Another aspect the National Galleries take to make their museums more accessible are the short videos that introduce the museum (*Accessibility: Autism, learning disability and sensory-friendly access*). These videos explain how to enter and navigate the museum's essential aspects. Having these accessible navigation tools allows for more people to be able to access the museum space by feeling comfortable to enter and being aware of what they will encounter.

#### **4.6. Sensory:**

Sensory needs are a crucial consideration in museums for autistic adults, as these environments can often be overwhelming due to their sensory-rich nature. Many autistic individuals experience heightened sensitivity to stimuli such as bright lights, loud noises, and crowded spaces, which can lead to sensory overload and make navigating and enjoying museum experiences challenging. Addressing these sensory needs is essential to creating an inclusive environment where autistic adults can engage with the exhibits comfortably and meaningfully. By incorporating features such as quiet areas, sensory-friendly tours, and adjustable lighting and sound levels, museums can reduce potential triggers and provide a more accessible experience. Accommodating sensory needs not only enhances the comfort and enjoyment of autistic visitors but also demonstrates a commitment to inclusivity, ensuring that museums are welcoming spaces for all individuals, regardless of their sensory sensitivities.

At the National Galleries, they offer in their art carts at their information desks “drawing materials, books, cushions, ear defenders (adult and child-sized), sketchbooks and sensory materials” (*Accessibility: Autism, learning disability and sensory-friendly access*). The ear defenders are also available at the information desk. Glasgow Life does not yet fully offer

sensory kits at all of their museums at the moment, they are only available at the Gallery of Modern Art, St Mungo Museum of Religious Life & Art, and Riverside Museum. They are “working with the autistic community to improve these kits, which is why they are currently only available in three pilot venues” (*Our full range of sensory kits*). These kits are similar to what is offered at the National Galleries, and adult-sized ear defenders are available at the reception desk. The Burrell Collection has one thing that the other three museums do not: it has a quiet room (see appendix Navigation, p 85-88). By having this room, it adds another space for someone to get away from too many stimuli that might come from visiting a museum.

While visiting each museum in person it gave a better understanding of the sensory environment of the spaces. These museums vary in their architectural design, exhibit layout, lighting, sound levels, and overall atmosphere, all of which play a crucial role in how sensory stimuli are perceived. By exploring these diverse settings, researchers can gain a comprehensive understanding of the different sensory challenges and opportunities that exist across various museum types. For instance, the Burrell Collection’s modern, open spaces may offer different sensory experiences compared to the historic and intricate design of the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum. Similarly, the National Gallery of Scotland and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, with their distinct focuses and exhibit styles, may present varying levels of sensory stimulation that could either enhance or hinder the experience for autistic adults. By visiting these museums, it becomes possible to identify best practices and areas for improvement in terms of sensory accommodations. This firsthand examination is essential for developing informed recommendations that can help create more accessible and inclusive environments for neurodiverse visitors across Scotland’s cultural institutions. (See appendix Observation Notes, p 76- 79)

#### **4.7. Recommendations for Inclusion:**

Strategies could be implemented to foster a museum environment that is more universally accessible and accommodating toward adults who have autism. Initially, it is pivotal that museum personnel are engaged in

specialised developmental training to enhance their cognisance of the diverse needs prevalent among individuals on the autism spectrum. Such training may encapsulate the methods for efficaciously interacting with visitors diagnosed with autism, establishing sensory-friendly areas within museum confines, and facilitating visual schedules that assist individuals in navigating the museum's layout. Furthermore, the infusion of social and communication standards—entailing unambiguous signage, tranquil zones, and tactile interactive exhibits—significantly enriches the museum experience for adults with autism. By diligently striving to cultivate a more inclusively oriented environment, institutions such as the Burrell Collection, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, the National Gallery of Scotland, and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery can ascertain that individuals with autism are welcomed and esteemed within cultural settings.

The involvement of adults who have autism in art museums calls for a significant change in both the policies and the operational practices of institutions such as the Burrell Collection, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, and the National Galleries of Scotland. There is a pressing need for museums to give primary importance to the creation of specialised programs that specifically cater to the distinct sensory requirements of this group. This entails incorporating quiet areas and organising sensory-friendly events aimed at minimising overstimulation, which in turn could improve engagement. By collaborating with organisations that advocate for autism, museums can develop thorough training initiatives for their staff, enabling them to comprehend better and address the specific necessities of autistic visitors. Additionally, forming strategic alliances with community organisations can support the organisation of more inclusive events, including the distribution of maps and guides that detail the accessibility options available within museum facilities. The adoption of these strategies would allow art museums to reshape their environments into more accessible cultural venues, thereby enhancing the experiences of adults on the autism spectrum and fostering a greater appreciation for the arts as a whole.

Efforts pursuing the enhancement of inclusivity within Scottish art museums necessitate an emphasis on programming tailored specifically and modifications to the environments in order to accommodate adults diagnosed with autism. Notable institutions such as the Burrell Collection, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, alongside the National Gallery and Scottish National Portrait Gallery, stand to gain considerably from initiatives focused on integrating resources that cater to sensory needs and plans that are structured for access. Collaboration with organisations that advocate for autism can cultivate an increased awareness and sensitivity, concurrently developing programs aimed at training staff can ensure these individuals are adequately equipped to address various needs. Furthermore, the creation of areas designated as quiet within museum spaces holds the potential to offer an essential reprieve for visitors who might experience feelings of being overwhelmed. By actively engaging in the design of exhibitions and events that present the artwork within a framework that is supportive, these institutions can promote an atmosphere that welcomes participation and engagement, thereby reinforcing the notion that art is indeed accessible to all individuals.

In considering the path of inclusion as it pertains to cultural institutions, it becomes clear that a multifaceted method is crucial for cultivating settings that accept adults who experience autism. The Burrell Collection and Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, along with the National Gallery and Scottish National Portrait Gallery, stand out as significant instances of how specific experiences can augment accessibility. Suggestions for these art museums to enhance their inclusive practices include the utilisation of sensory maps to help navigate their facilities, forming alliances with autism advocacy groups, and developing programs that cater to distinct needs and preferences. The establishment of workshops that emphasise communication and social skills training will not solely aid museum personnel but concurrently encourage social engagements among patrons. In conclusion, the ongoing future relies heavily on an unwavering dedication to continuous collaboration, persistent training, and the integration of feedback sourced

from the autism community, guaranteeing that cultural institutions become genuinely inviting for every visitor.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In recent years, the growing recognition of neurodiversity has led to a reassessment of cultural institutions' inclusivity, particularly in relation to adults with autism. This study examines the current state of accessibility in Scottish art museums, revealing substantial gaps and proposing a framework for improvement. To facilitate meaningful engagement, these museums can implement targeted recommendations that address the unique needs of this demographic. Key strategies include developing sensory-friendly exhibition spaces, offering tailored programming that accommodates varying communication styles, and providing comprehensive training for staff on autism awareness. Additionally, establishing feedback mechanisms with the autistic community, including direct consultations and advisory panels, can ensure that the adaptations made are both relevant and practical. Regular evaluation of these practices will help museums to remain responsive to evolving needs and preferences. Enhancing inclusivity in cultural institutions is crucial, as it not only improves accessibility for autistic adults but also enriches the overall cultural experience, fostering a more diverse and welcoming environment for all visitors.

The global conversation around autism spectrum disorder (ASD) has expanded significantly in recent decades, highlighting the challenges faced by adults with the condition. Recent estimates suggest that approximately “13,666 (0.6%) adults aged 16-64 years, and 698 (0.1%) adults aged 65 years and over in Scotland were known to have autism,” underscoring the increasing recognition and prevalence of autism within adult populations (Mental Health: Autism 2024). This demographic shift necessitates a reevaluation of societal structures, including cultural institutions like art museums, which often overlook the unique needs of autistic adults. This desk-based study reveals that Scottish art museums must adopt more inclusive practices that create sensory-friendly environments and provide staff training to better accommodate the sensory sensitivities and communication preferences of autistic individuals. Fostering an inclusive atmosphere not only enhances the

cultural experience for adults with autism but also enriches the cultural fabric of Scottish society.

This dissertation explores and addresses the critical issue of accessibility for adults with autism in Scottish art museums. The research reveals that while progress has been made towards inclusivity, significant gaps remain in both policy and practice. Current accessibility efforts often fall short of meeting the needs of neurodiverse individuals, particularly those with autism, who may experience sensory sensitivities, communication challenges, and other barriers that hinder full engagement within museum spaces.

Art museums have historically served as vital venues for cultural engagement, yet their ability to inclusively address the needs of adults on the autism spectrum remains insufficiently examined. Strategic partnerships and collaborative efforts with institutions like the Burrell Collection, the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, the National Gallery and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery could enhance accessibility by developing specialised programs that consider sensory sensitivities and communication variations. Initiatives such as quiet hours, tailored programs, and multisensory experiences could significantly improve participation among autistic individuals. Additionally, the development of maps and resources tailored for neurodiverse visitors could promote independent exploration and foster a sense of inclusion within these cultural environments. These improvements broaden their audience and contribute to a more inclusive societal framework, thereby enriching the cultural narrative for all participants.

The integration of adults with autism into the frameworks of Scottish art museums presents a significant challenge that demands immediate attention. An analysis of institutions such as the Burrell Collection, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, and the National Galleries of Scotland highlights the prevalent challenges and potential improvements in these cultural venues. The findings suggest that deliberate collaborations and alliances, which support customised initiatives, are crucial in creating welcoming environments that promote engagement and educational opportunities for adults on the autism spectrum. Key recommendations

include the utilisation of sensory-sensitive design within exhibition spaces and the establishment of specialised training for museum personnel to enhance their understanding and responsiveness to the unique needs of this demographic. Additionally, involving individuals on the autism spectrum in the development of programs ensures that museum offerings genuinely resonate with this audience, advancing a more inclusive cultural environment.

Initially, the study aimed to create recommendations for Scottish art museums to be more inclusive for adults with autism. However, there are limitations to this approach. A significant limitation is the lack of direct involvement of adults with autism in the research process. This absence of firsthand input may limit the relevance and effectiveness of the recommendations, as they might not entirely reflect the actual needs and preferences of the autistic community. Additionally, relying solely on secondary sources or the perspectives of non-autistic individuals risks bias in interpreting the experiences of adults with autism, potentially leading to recommendations that do not entirely capture the complexity of their needs. Furthermore, the study may not have adequately considered intersectional factors such as gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status, which can significantly influence how adults with autism experience museum spaces. Future studies should actively involve adults with autism in the research and design process. This is crucial to ensuring that the recommendations are truly inclusive and representative of the diverse experiences within the autistic community.

Throughout this dissertation, it has been found that there is not much research done about adults with autism and their experiences in museums. This area needs to be researched to its fullest because, yes, autistic adults have some of the exact needs as children, but they do have different ones that also need to be addressed. An area needing further investigation regarding the inclusion of autism in museum contexts is the enhancement of collaborations and partnerships among various institutions. Specifically, analysing how establishments such as the Burrell Collection, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, the National Gallery, and the Scottish National Portrait

Gallery can develop specialised programs tailored to meet the diverse needs of autistic adults is essential. Research should focus on the collaborative design of initiatives with autistic individuals and their families to ensure the creation of meaningful experiences that enhance engagement and accessibility. Additionally, exploring the dynamics within museum contexts is important; this involves assessing sensory-friendly environments and interactive components that cater to different sensory profiles. Another area for further research is the implementation of programs directed explicitly at adults with autism. Current research shows a lack of such programs in art museums, with most educational initiatives designed for autistic individuals focusing on children and their families. These programs often create sensory-friendly environments, provide structured activities, and offer specialised resources that cater to the developmental and social needs of young autistic visitors. By exploring these complex approaches, subsequent studies may pave the way for strategic recommendations that enhance inclusivity while enriching visitor experiences for adults on the autism spectrum. Future studies should prioritise the inclusion of adults with autism in art museums.

The proposed framework for improvement offers a practical roadmap for Scottish art museums seeking to enhance their accessibility. It advocates for a comprehensive approach that integrates physical, sensory, and educational adaptations, ensuring that all aspects of the museum experience are accessible to adults with autism. Implementing these changes aligns with broader societal shifts towards inclusivity and enriches the museum experience for all visitors by fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of neurodiversity. The implication of these recommendations is that they are not just for neurodivergent individuals; they can also add to the experience of those who are neurotypical—in conclusion, recognising neurodiversity as a vital aspect of human diversity challenges art museums to rethink traditional models of accessibility. By embracing this challenge, Scottish art museums have the opportunity to lead the way in creating spaces that are not only physically accessible but also emotionally and cognitively inclusive. This dissertation emphasises the importance of continued research

and action in this area, urging museums to prioritise accessibility as a core component of their mission. In doing so, they can ensure that their cultural offerings are genuinely open to everyone, reflecting the richness and diversity of the communities they serve.

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## APPENDIX

### Email:

These are the email responses from the National Galleries and Glasgow Life.

### National Galleries:

8/13/24, 4:08 PM

Mail - Rebecca Lynn Pursley (student) - Outlook

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**From:** Rebecca Lynn Pursley (student) <[2692133P@student.gla.ac.uk](mailto:2692133P@student.gla.ac.uk)>  
**Sent:** 11 June 2024 21:28  
**To:** Learning <[learning@nationalgalleries.org](mailto:learning@nationalgalleries.org)>  
**Subject:** Question about access and inclusion

You don't often get email from [2692133p@student.gla.ac.uk](mailto:2692133p@student.gla.ac.uk). [Learn why this is important](#)

My name is Rebecca, and I'm a master's student at the University of Glasgow in the EDUMah International Masters in Museum and Heritage Education program. I'm currently writing my dissertation about creating guidelines for Scottish art museums on adult autism inclusion. I am emailing to see if you could help me with an aspect of my paper by answering a few questions about the in-house policies, practices, and programs the galleries use while working with adults with autism. If you can, that would be great, but if not, would you be able to point me in the direction of someone within the staff who could answer these questions?

The questions are:

What in-house policies are used within the museum while creating autism-friendly programs and spaces (Children & Adults)?

Does museum staff have any training on how to communicate with a visitor with autism?

Do the National Galleries partner with any autism associations?

Are there national policies the museum must follow while creating autism programs?

Thank you, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Rebecca Pursley

<https://outlook.office.com/mail/inbox/id/AAQkADY1NjA0YWJkLWJlZlZlTDEwOC05OWFmLTk3YWlyZjU0NGQxNwAAQAOHsiMRsj8pOkpnrHj2c7xk%3D> 2/2

**RE: Question about access and inclusion**

Meg Faragher &lt;MFaragher@nationalgalleries.org&gt;

Wed 6/26/2024 4:39 PM

To: Rebecca Lynn Pursley (student) &lt;2692133P@student.gla.ac.uk&gt;

Cc: Maro Psyrra &lt;MPsyrra@nationalgalleries.org&gt;

Dear Rebecca,

Thank you for your interest in our learning programmes for autistic adults. My colleague Maro and I (copied in) are Communities & Access Learning Coordinators at the National Galleries.

Please find information about programmes and resources that may be of interest here: [Sensory-friendly | National Galleries of Scotland](#)

As well as the NGS accessibility page which contains pre-visit information for visitors with access needs: [Accessibility | National Galleries of Scotland](#)

Please find answers to your questions below:

What in-house policies are used within the museum while creating autism-friendly programs and spaces (Children & Adults)?

- NGS Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion commitments  
[Developing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) Commitments | National Galleries of Scotland](#)
- NGS Protection of Children Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy  
[NGS Protection of Children Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy \(nationalgalleries.org\)](#)

Does museum staff have any training on how to communicate with a visitor with autism?

- Covered as part of general disability awareness training for front of house staff
- EDI training offered to NGS staff

Do the National Galleries partner with any autism associations?

- The Sensory Stories programme was created and is delivered in partnership with PAMIS (Promoting a more inclusive society)  
[PAMIS | Promoting a more inclusive society](#)
- The Relaxed Afternoons for Adults programme was created in partnership with participants from Ark Housing Association [Ark | Ark Housing \(arkha.org.uk\)](#) and an independent access consultant specialising in working with neurodiverse audiences.

Are there national policies the museum must follow while creating autism programs?

- The Equalities Act 2010

I hope this helps, please don't hesitate to get in touch if you need more information.

Best wishes,

Meg

8/13/24, 4:09 PM


Mail - Rebecca Lynn Pursley (student) - Outlook

**Re: Question**

Alicia Watson <Alicia.Watson@glasgow.ac.uk>

Sun 6/9/2024 2:52 PM

To: Rebecca Lynn Pursley (student) <2692133P@student.gla.ac.uk>

 1 attachments (20 KB)

Autism questions for student.docx;

Hi Rebecca,

I hope you have had a nice weekend, please find attached my answers to your research questions. Let me know if anything else crops up in your research, wishing you lots of luck with your dissertation.

Alicia Watson  
Learning and Access Curator  
Glasgow Museums

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**From:** Rebecca Lynn Pursley (student) <2692133P@student.gla.ac.uk>

**Sent:** 04 June 2024 15:36

**To:** Alicia Watson <Alicia.Watson@glasgow.ac.uk>

**Subject:** Re: Question

Hi Alicia,

By the end of this week would be great if you can but by the end of next week is totally fine.

Rebecca Pursley

---

**From:** Alicia Watson <Alicia.Watson@glasgow.ac.uk>

**Sent:** Tuesday, June 4, 2024 2:50:27 PM

**To:** Rebecca Lynn Pursley (student) <2692133P@student.gla.ac.uk>

**Subject:** Re: Question

Yes I can pull together some information for you in response to these questions. What is your deadline for collecting this? I can try to get it back to you this week.

Alicia

Sent from [Outlook for iOS](#)

---

**From:** Rebecca Lynn Pursley (student) <2692133P@student.gla.ac.uk>

**Sent:** Tuesday, June 4, 2024 2:11 pm

**To:** Alicia Watson <Alicia.Watson@glasgow.ac.uk>

**Subject:** Re: Question

Hi Alicia,

This information would be helpful for my paper. Could you share these plans?

Also, the few questions that I have are;

What in-policies are used within the museum while creating autism friendly programs and spaces?

<https://outlook.office.com/mail/inbox/id/AAQkADY1NjA0YwJkLWJlZTctNDEwOC05OWFmLTk3YWlyZjU0NGQxNwAAQAPC1aTQUi5lpZy4PZBw9q0%...> 1/2

8/13/24, 4:09 PM

Mail - Rebecca Lynn Pursley (student) - Outlook

Do museum staff have any training for how to communicate with a visitor with autism?  
Does the Burrell collection or Kelvingrove, (Glasgow Life), partner with any autism associations?  
Are there national policies the museum must follow while creating these programs?

Thank you,  
Rebecca Pursley

---

**From:** Alicia Watson <Alicia.Watson@glasgow.ac.uk>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 31, 2024 2:21 PM  
**To:** Rebecca Lynn Pursley (student) <2692133P@student.gla.ac.uk>  
**Subject:** Re: Question

Hi Rebecca

Yes I can help answer your questions on behalf of Glasgow museums which cover all our venues includes kelvingrove and the Burrell. However, it is worth noting that we don't currently have a programme for adults with autism although this is our aim to look at this over the next year and pilot a few adult offers. We do however offer an autism friendly offer for families including workshops, early opening etc so happy to share information on these and what our plans are for the future as we have identified the need for a specific adult programme for those with autism. Let me know if this will help and if you want to send me any questions or meet via teams whichever is best for you.

Alicia

Sent from [Outlook for iOS](#)

---

**From:** Rebecca Lynn Pursley (student) <2692133P@student.gla.ac.uk>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 31, 2024 10:56:03 AM  
**To:** Alicia Watson <Alicia.Watson@glasgow.ac.uk>  
**Subject:** Question

Hi Alicia,

My name is Rebecca, and I'm a master's student in the EDUMah Museum and Heritage Education program. I'm currently writing my dissertation about creating guidelines for Scottish art museums on adult autism inclusion. Maggie McColl gave me your email in hopes you could help me with an aspect of my paper by answering a few questions through email about the in-house policies, practices, and programs that Kelvingrove and the Burrell collection use while working with adults with autism. Or if you can not, could you send me to the right people within each museum who would possibly be able to help me?

Thank you, and I look forward to your response,  
Rebecca Pursley

<https://outlook.office.com/mail/inbox/id/AAQkADY1NjA0YwJkLWJlZTctNDEwOC05OWFmLTk3YWlyZjU0NGQxNwAQAAPC1aTQUt5lpZy4PZ8w9q0%...> 2/2

Rebecca -Autism Questions – Glasgow Museums:

**What in-policies are used within the museum while creating autism friendly programs and spaces?**

Glasgow Life is a charity set up to benefit the people of Glasgow, we deliver cultural and sporting programmes and events that improve the mental, physical and economic wellbeing of the city.

Glasgow Museums do this by producing high -quality specialised programmes and experiences, and localised, accessible programmes.

Our autism programmes and autism- friendly resources are supported by two of Glasgow Life's main strategic priorities to;

1. Advance culture and sport in the city,
2. Improve mental and physical wellbeing of local communities.

In 2017 Glasgow Museums signed up for Glasgow City Council's Autism-Friendly City initiative. By signing up, we agreed to deliver awareness training to staff, promote good customer care, and provide guidance in any areas that might present challenges to autistic people.

Kids in Museums also offer good advice and guidance for the museum sector that has influenced our programmes and provisions: <https://kidsinmuseums.org.uk/resources/how-can-your-museum-better-welcome-families-and-young-people-with-autism/>

**Do museum staff have any training for how to communicate with a visitor with autism?**

We have carried out in-house staff training delivered by those with experience and research in this area of engagement work and we have also held briefing sessions to all our front of house museum staff, this can help ensure that we are offering an autism friendly offer throughout the museum and not just delivered by the Learning and Access team..

Learning and Access team members have received autism awareness training from the National Autistic Society, and we are looking to roll this training out again to both new and old members of the team as a refresher and also for front of house staff, so being autism friendly is embedded in all our buildings, programmes and the welcome you receive on entering our buildings.

Glasgow Life also have an online training platform called GOLD, where we have two autism awareness training courses, these count towards staff's PDPs- personal development plans.

Aphasia and Communication training also was recently delivered by Chest Heart Stroke Scotland for our staff. This training is applicable for delivering to many of our audience groups with communication or sensory needs.

Quite often we work in partnership with third sector charities and organisations to develop our services for identified audience groups, such as neurodiverse. These partners are familiar with the needs and challenges faced by these groups and have lived experiences. Where possible we work with these partners to develop and provide our staff training.

We are always learning and adapting our programmes and resources from feedback from those with lived and loved experience (those with autism and those with loved ones who have autism). Continued consultation and co-production is key to all our work with community groups, in order to ensure our offer is relevant to their needs and constantly looking how we can improve that service and welcome.

### **Does the Burrell collection or Kelvingrove, (Glasgow Life), partner with any autism associations?**

Glasgow Museums work with local groups such as Projectability, the National Autistic society and local schools. Glasgow Museums Access Panel is made up of representatives from different organisations who advise us on access needs within our museum service, the panel includes partners such as RNIB, Alzheimers Scotland, Deaf Scotland, Glasgow Mental health foundation and the Autism society.

These partners have helped to inform and create our storyboard resources that are now available on our webpage and used by many visitors and groups not just those with autism.

We also have a contact list for those organisations and individuals who have expressed an interest in finding out more about our autism friendly programmes, so we keep in regular contact with them. This contact list is key to us reaching those who would benefit most from these programmes and getting information out around local autism networks. There is no point having autism friendly resources, programmes and offering if people are not aware that they exist.

### **Are there national policies the museum must follow while creating these programs?**

**Kids in Museums offer good advice for the museum sector:**

<https://kidsinmuseums.org.uk/resources/how-can-your-museum-better-welcome-families-and-young-people-with-autism/>

Attached is a paper on Glasgow Museums autism offer, outlining the project and the challenges we have faced:

<https://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/CASE-STUDY-Glasgow-Museums-Autism-Friendly-Programme.pdf>

As autism is a lifelong developmental disability, we adhere to the Equality Act 2010 in all our work to ensure that we do not discriminate audiences from accessing our buildings and programmes who have any of the 9 protected characteristics, disability being one of these.

**Plans to offer sessions for adults with autism:**

We have recently set up a working group within Glasgow Museums to look at what provision we can provide for young adults and adults with autism. This is in direct response to the numerous enquiries we have received from advertising our family autism -friendly programmes.

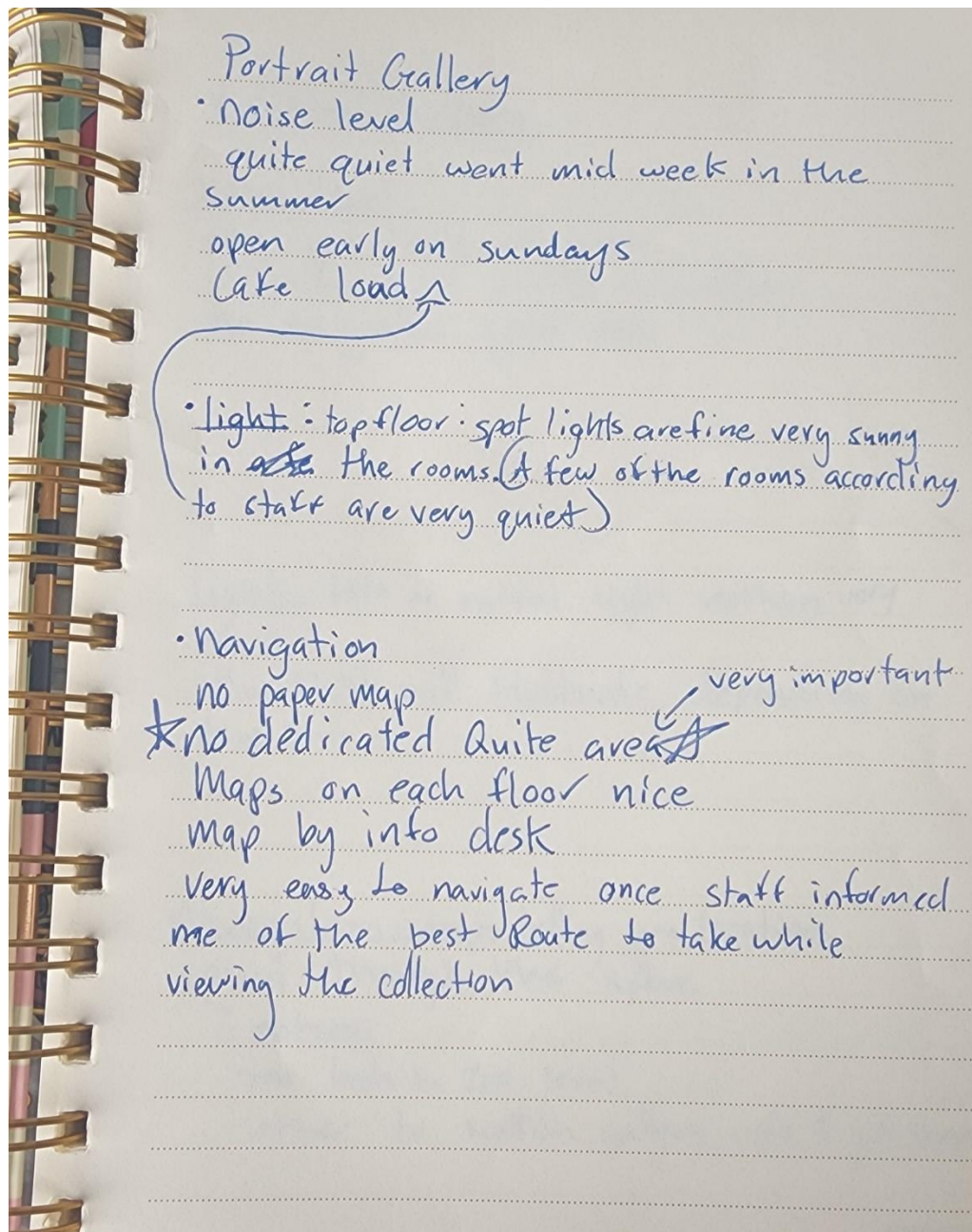
In the autumn of 2024 we are planning on piloting an evening 'relaxed session' at Kelvin Hall, to accommodate those who work or who are at college during the day and cannot or don't want to attend our family programmes.

We are currently reviewing our programmes and resources and will be holding a consultation event with representatives from local autism organisations over the coming months. We are keen to address appropriate use of terminology, how to further reach and market to this audience group and to review the content and needs for an adult programme.

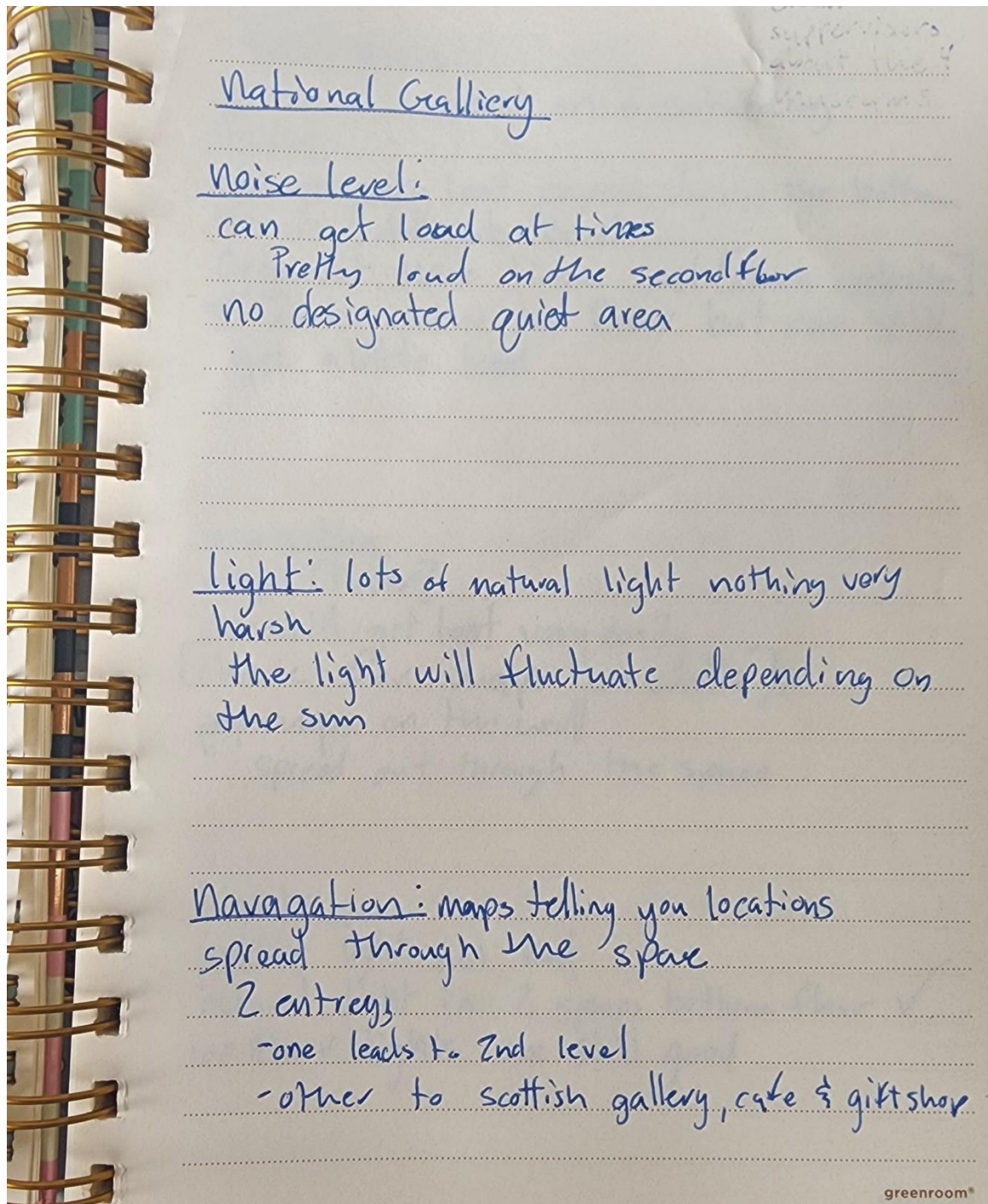
<https://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/museums/glasgow-life-museums-are-autism-friendly>

## Observation Notes:

### Scottish National Portrait Gallery:



## National Gallery of Scotland:



## The Burrell Collection:

### Burrell Collection

#### navigation

map at info desk

~~To~~ ~~map~~ list of areas by stairs

main ~~to~~ halls with key items like toilet

#### light

uses lots of natural light

warm light in areas that don't use natural

#### Noise

quit room (not on map) at front by small  
Cafe

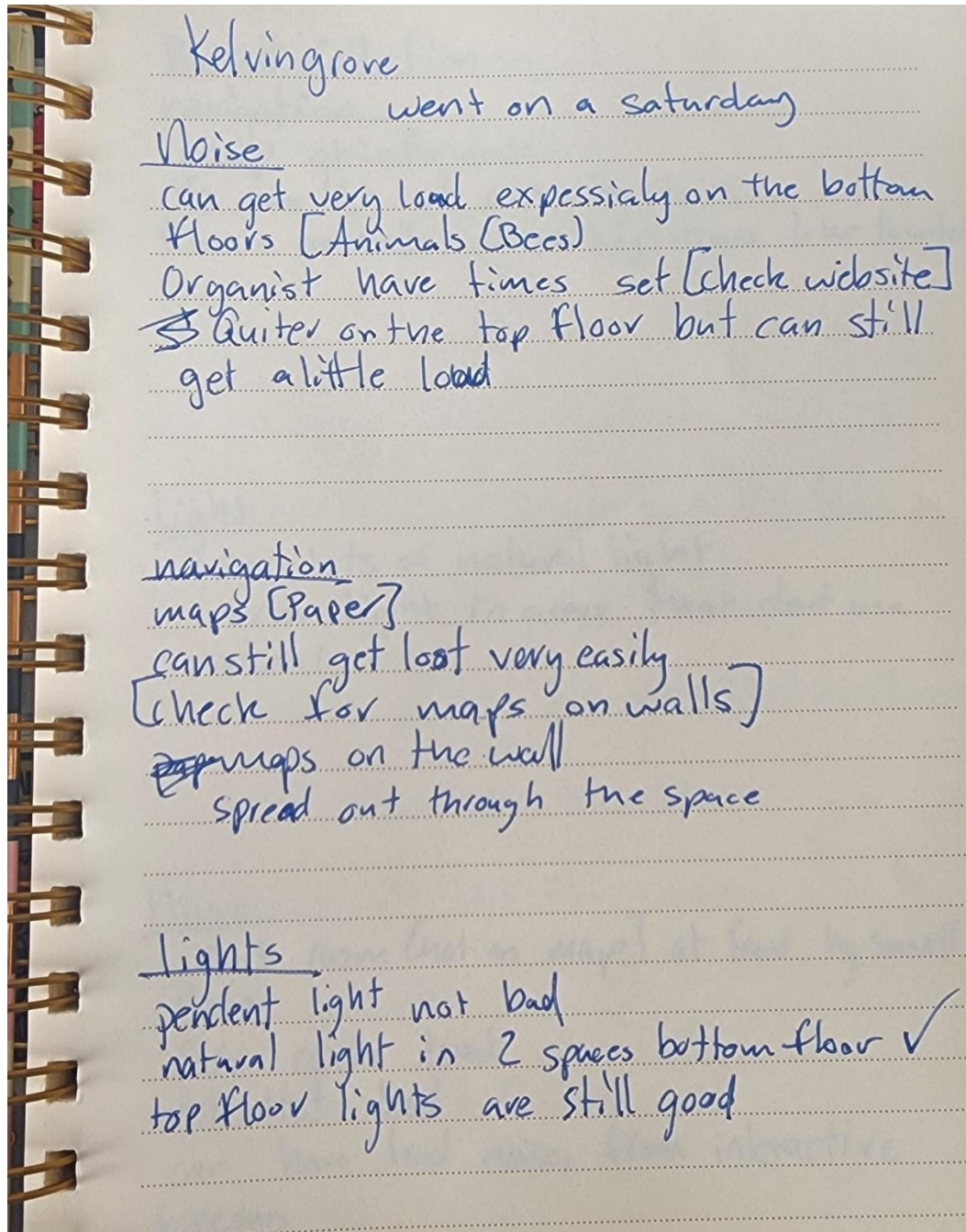
Cafe can be loud

not that loud

can have loud noises from interactive

Screens

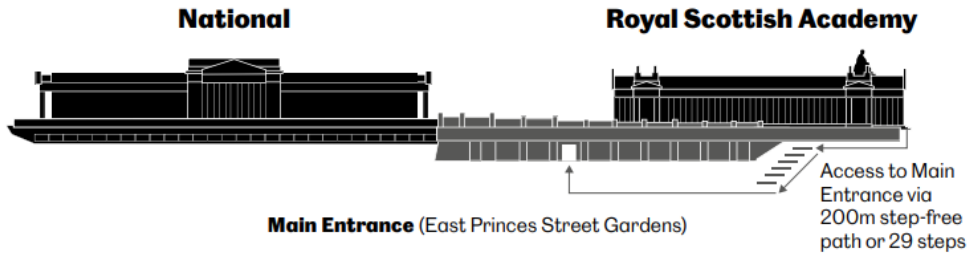
greenroom®



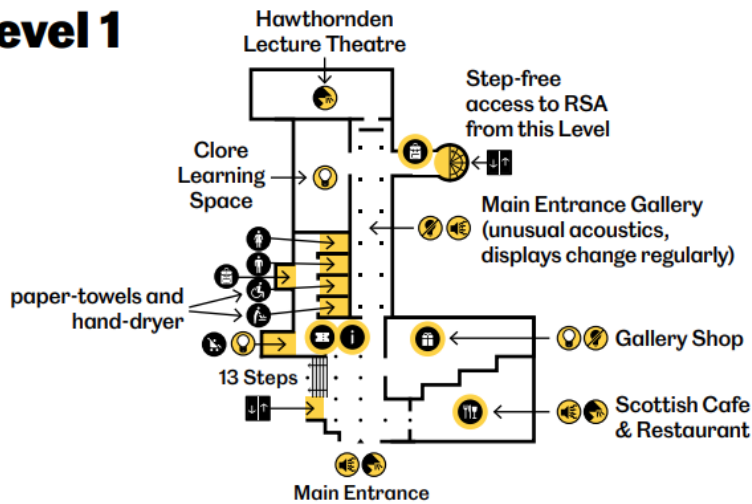
## Navigation:

I have attached the sensory maps from the National Galleries and the storyboards from Glasgow Life.

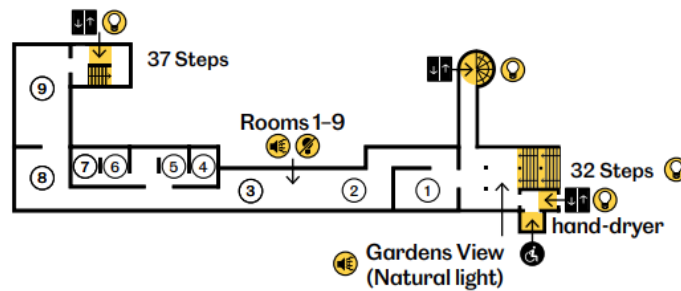
## National Gallery:



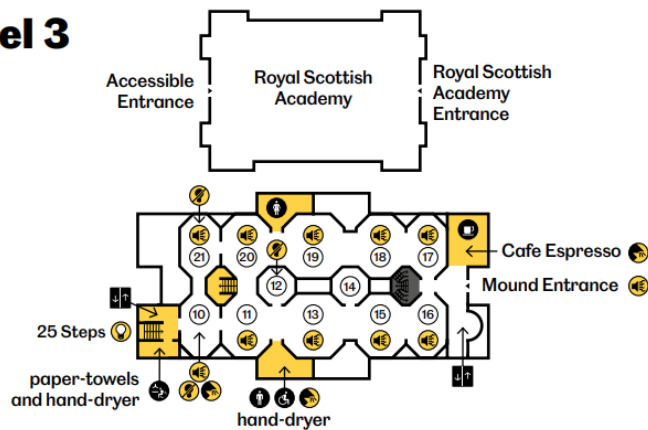
## Level 1



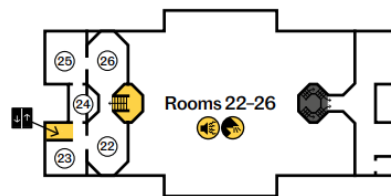
## Level 2



### Level 3



### Level 4



The National is a busy city-centre venue. Please ask a member of the gallery team if you need a quiet space.

Ear defenders for adults and children are available on Level 1 at the Main Entrance from the Information desk and the Art trolley. Sensory bags are available from the Art trolley on Level 1.

There are 2 cabinets with objects you can touch on Level 2, usually in rooms 4 and 7.

There's seating and portable stools available throughout the gallery.

Please speak to a member of the gallery team if you have a query, we are here to help.

#### Key

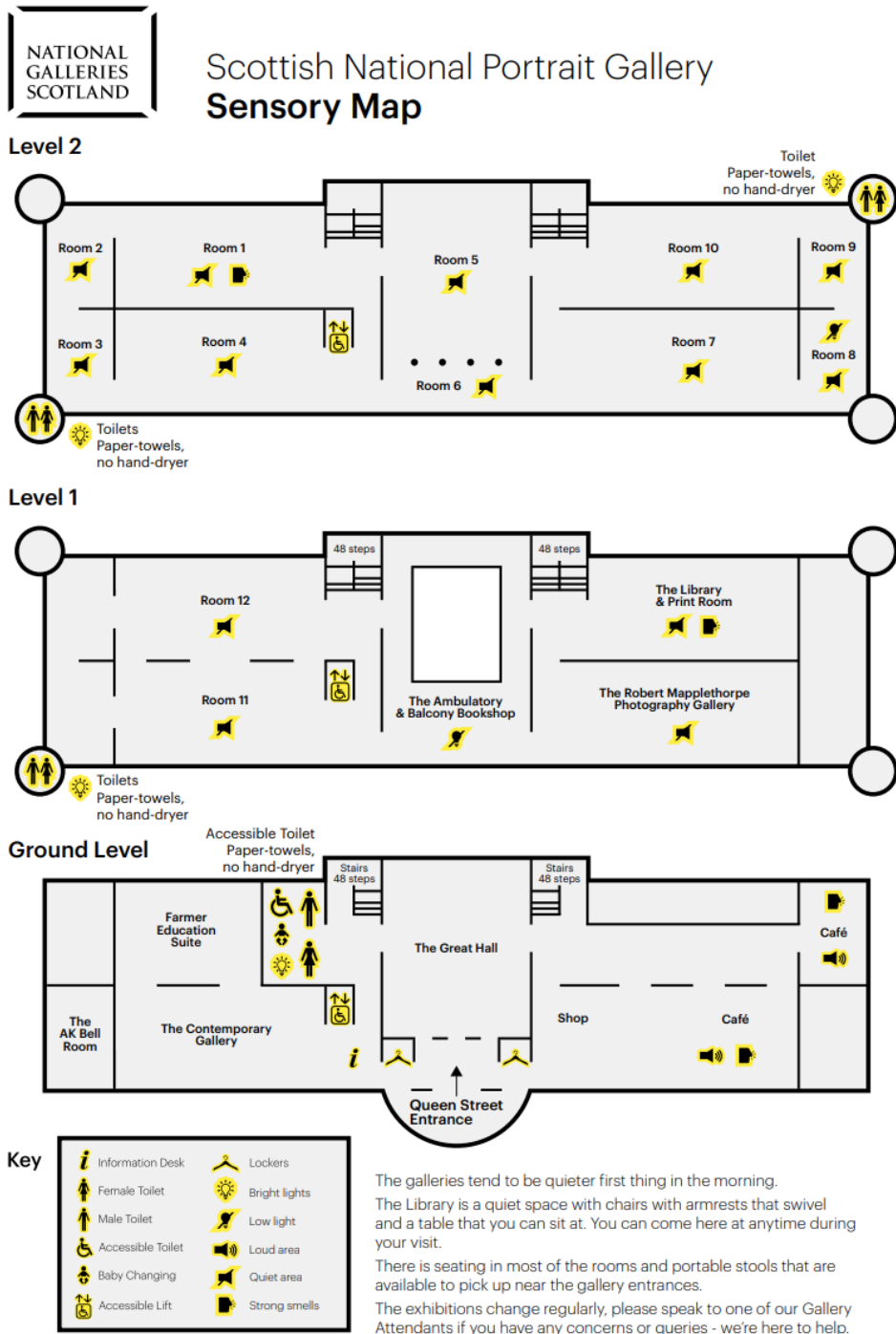
- |                     |                 |                          |
|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| ① Information Desk  | ♿ Baby Changing | 👤 Strong smells          |
| ♀ Female Toilet     | 🗄 Lockers       | 🚻 Changing Places Toilet |
| ♂ Male Toilet       | ☀ Bright lights | 🚗 Lift                   |
| ♿ Accessible Toilet | 💡 Low light     | ☕ Café                   |
|                     | 🔊 Loud area     |                          |



The sensory map for the National Gallery of Scotland can be accessed on the National Galleries website.

[https://www.nationalgalleries.org/sites/default/files/venues/floor\\_plans/national\\_sensory\\_floor\\_plan.pdf](https://www.nationalgalleries.org/sites/default/files/venues/floor_plans/national_sensory_floor_plan.pdf)

# Scottish National Portrait Gallery:



The sensory map for the Scottish National Portrait Gallery can be accessed on their website.

[https://www.nationalgalleries.org/sites/default/files/venues/floor\\_plans/SNPG%20Sensory%20Map%202022.pdf](https://www.nationalgalleries.org/sites/default/files/venues/floor_plans/SNPG%20Sensory%20Map%202022.pdf)

## The Burrell Collection:

Here are some images from Glasgow Life storyboards for the Burrell Collection.

<https://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/media/z4dfpdar/the-burrell-collection-visual-storyboard-2023.pdf>



This is The Burrell Collection.



There is a quiet room.



Some rooms are dark. Some rooms can be bright.



There are interactive games, screens and other things that you can touch.





The Enquiry Desk is to your left. A gallery assistant can help you.



Museum staff all wear a purple 'g' logo.

Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum:

Here are some images from the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum visual storyboard.

<https://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/media/1yombrs5/kelvingrove-art-gallery-visual-storyboard-august-2018.pdf>



This is Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum.



The fire alarm makes a loud siren noise.

Museum staff will guide you out of the building through a fire exit.

Do not go back inside the building unless a member of museum staff tells you that it is safe.



The organ is very loud. You can listen to the organ being played at 3pm on Sundays and at 1pm every other day.



There are toilets.

There are lifts and stairs between all three floors of the museum.



**This is the ground floor.**

This is the Centre Hall. There is a reception desk. A gallery assistant can help you if you ask.

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*Rebecca Pursley*  
*07/11/2024*