Autonomy

Sunderland Culture Annual Review 2024-25 →

Autonomy brought together a Sunderland community of autistic young adults at risk of loneliness and social isolation. Through an 11 month, high quality, targeted programme of events and activities, Autonomy supported 303 autistic young adults to experience new things, make connections and build a new creative community.

Working alongside professional artists, the programme saw students from Sunderland College's Directions and Foundations SEND provision co-creating and developing their own exhibition in National Glass Centre and NGCA, with the support of specialist artists and professionals. Engagement with autistic young people was made possible through partnerships with Sunderland College, Grace House, ESPA and a public call out for participation.

The legacy of the programme has seen the development of a weekly Special Interest Club at Arts Centre Washington, where young autistic adults are invited to explore and celebrate their special interests such as gaming, music, animation, photography, print alongside specialist trained artists.

Autonomy was made possible thanks to the Association of Independent Museums (AIM) Connected Communities programme which is funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Know Your Neighbourhood Fund, through Arts Council England.

"This project has had truly life changing outcomes for our students. The impact that it's had on our students' confidence, as a result of the experiences they have had, has been incredible. Long may this partnership continue."

Michelle Patterson, Lecturer and Programme Leader for Directions at Sunderland College

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