**Scottish Government Autism Strategy**

Improving Understanding of Autism in Scotland Programme

**We are looking for autistic people to provide input and opinions to the programme at new regional forums being set up across Scotland.**

**Background**

The Improving Understanding of Autism programme of work is a direct response to Scottish Government’s 2017 Engagement Exercise, which emphasised the need to raise understanding of autism amongst the non-autistic population. The consultation highlighted the importance of increasing understanding, awareness and acceptance of autism, reducing autism stereotypes and building a society which is accessible, inclusive and values neurodiversity.

Inspiring Scotland are working with Scottish Government and other partners in the sector to deliver this programme. It will have a positive approach and consist of a marketing campaign managed by Scottish Government and funded charity projects supported by Inspiring Scotland.

This programme aims to address the lack of understanding across Scottish society about the needs of autistic people and the challenges that they face, but also about their strengths and assets as well as their needs and rights.

We are continuing to work hard to ensure the programme is guided by autistic people, whose voice must be at the centre of all that we do.

We aim to develop campaign messages that reflect the diversity of the community, therefore we want to ask the opinions of, and seek input from, the autistic community as this new programme develops.

**How do we want to gather the input?**

We are setting up regional Advisory Forums in four locations across Scotland.

These will allow input to be gathered from autistic people and others who feel they have a contribution to make to the programme.

In addition to the regional forums we are keen to offer a more widely accessible option of engagement for those who might not be able to or want to attend in person. Our goal is to allow all members of the autistic community to feel that they are able and welcome to contribute. We will continue to investigate with key stakeholders and others on how we can work in ways that can make this as inclusive as possible for the varying needs of all autistic people.

We welcome feedback on improving accessibility options. There is a question in the application form which allows you to give us feedback on this. We will do our best to act on the feedback and advice we receive on accessible options.

**Is the Advisory Forum for me?**

We welcome applications from autistic people (and others who feel they have a contribution to make to the programme) to sit on the forums.

The Advisory Forums will give input to the programme as it develops. These comments will be fed back to the programme Steering Committee who manage the overall direction of the programme.

As a participant, you will be sharing your personal opinion.

Please note that the minimum age to sit on the Advisory Forum is 16.

**How many and where?**

We are looking for a minimum of 10 individuals to sit on each of the four regional Advisory Forums. These will be held in Inverness, Aberdeen, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

You will be asked to choose your preferred location and attend three meetings at this location between September 2019 and March 2020. Dates will be finalised and communicated after the representatives have been selected.

Each meeting will last two hours.

We recognise the contribution and commitment participants will be making. Participants will receive expenses for their involvement. Each participant will receive £20 per hour or equivalent voucher of their choice plus travel expenses.

**How do I apply?**

There is an online application that needs to be completed **by 4pm on the 14th August.**

The application can be found at: <https://www.tfaforms.com/4751034>

Note:

1. A named representative can complete the application on behalf of the applicant.
2. If you require support to participate please contact us on autismenquiries@inspiringscotland.org.uk. There is also a question relating to support requirements on the application form. We will endeavour to accommodate your needs.
3. If you or your representative want to discuss support needs please contact us on 0131 442 8760 or private message via twitter using @InspiringSland
4. This will be your only payment for this research and you’re responsible for any tax that might be due as a result.

**How will the forums run?**

All materials, details of the venue and the agenda will be sent in advance. Applications are open to autistic people, parents / carers, local charities and others who feel they have a contribution to make to the programme. The majority of participants will be autistic people. We are particularly interested in hearing from and involving autistic people including autistic parents.

**What topics will be discussed?**

Below are two examples of topics which would be discussed at an Advisory Forum meeting:

* The Scottish Government’s marketing team will be working with a creative agency to develop a marketing campaign to raise understanding of autism. The marketing team will be looking for opinions and input on the marketing campaign as it develops.
* Inspiring Scotland would like to share a shortlist of the initiatives which have requested funding as part of this programme. We would like input on the initiatives which you think would make the biggest difference.

**Summary**

Vital to the success of this programme will be the involvement of autistic people.

Can you help us and give your input to shape this important work?

To apply to join the Advisory Forum, please complete this application form **before 4pm on the 14th August 2019.**

**Click on link below to apply:**

<https://www.tfaforms.com/4751034>

If you have any questions. Please email autismenquiries@inspiringscotland.org.uk