

# COMPACT AT WORK



## Improving awareness of autism in Redbridge

Autism Ambassadors and Redbridge Autism Awareness Roadshow are projects designed and delivered by young people with autism, using funding from Redbridge Council and management support provided by local charity Sycamore Trust. Through working in partnership with the local authority and other organisations, these projects have increased understanding of the issues affecting people with autism and have led to significant improvements in the accessibility of local services.

### What Happened

Since 2013, the London Borough of Redbridge has funded local charity Sycamore Trust to manage the Autism Ambassadors project, in which young people with autism deliver training sessions to raise awareness of autism and the barriers people with autism face in accessing services. Ambassadors are recruited from Sycamore Trust's existing membership and by promoting the opportunity in schools and colleges, and via social services, children's services and partner agencies.

In 2014, the Redbridge Autism Awareness Roadshow was created as an offshoot of the Autism Ambassadors project. The Redbridge Autism Awareness Roadshow investigates how providers can make reasonable adjustments to remove barriers to disabled people using their services through an accessibility audit survey. The survey was created by a person with autism, who also manages the project.

Both projects allow for a broad range of participants by using a variety of communication methods, including

Makaton and the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS).

### Impact

Over 50 young people with autism have become Ambassadors, enabling them to learn new skills and gain increased confidence. Three disabled people have gained paid employment working on these projects.

Over 150 sessions have been delivered to over 4,000 individuals. The projects have worked with local authorities, public health providers and voluntary organisations to help them make their services more accessible.

Examples of the projects' achievements include significant changes made to Job Centres' entrances and reception areas; local authority call centre staff receiving training to enable them to communicate better with people with autism; and sessions held in schools helping to reduce instances of bullying. Work has also been done with shops, banks, and leisure services to look at access issues.

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### Compact Principles

2. Designing policies and services
5. Promoting equality and fairness

### Tags

Engagement

...Continued

A new collaboration with Transport for London (TFL) has seen ambassadors meet with managers, drivers, trainers, internal staff, security, inspectors and engineers in order to look at ways to encourage more people with autism to utilise London's public transport.

One of the coordinators of the Autism Ambassadors project is working in partnership with the council and other organisations to host a consultation event to gain the opinions of people in the borough who have autism or are affected by it. The results of this consultation will feed in to the council's autism plan, which is being created with support from Sycamore Trust.

## Quote

"I really enjoy being an ambassador. It has helped me to become more confident in meeting new people. I like going out with the ambassadors and visiting new places to raise autism awareness. People ask us questions and really listen to our answers."

*Autism Ambassador*

## Relevant Compact Principles

2. Designing policies and services.
5. Promoting equality and fairness.

## Related links

- Sycamore Trust's webpages on Autism Ambassadors and Redbridge Autism Ambassadors Roadshow:  
<http://www.sycamoretrust.org.uk/our-services/professional-services>



Pictured: Autism Ambassadors Alex Rowley and Robert Lamb, and Keith Smith, Development Manager at Sycamore Trust, accept the Innovation Award from Karl Wilding, Director of Public Policy at NCVO, at the 2015 Compact Awards ceremony