

“Dawnosaurs was a wonderful opportunity to do something we could never have done normally, thank you so very much! We all enjoyed family time together. **Memories like this will last a lifetime.**” (Parent/Carer)



## Dawnosaurs 2.0

Thanks to the generous support of the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation, the NHM launched Dawnosaurs in 2016. Dawnosaurs sessions are held throughout the year on Saturday mornings, with the Museum opening early to enable children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their families and carers to experience the Museum before it opens to the general public. Dawnosaurs transforms a stressful visit to the often-busy NHM into an enriching learning experience for all the family.

With the continued support of the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation the NHM will build on the achievements of Dawnosaurs by continuing the programme for a further three years. The NHM will retain what has made the programme so successful to date as well as introducing new elements such as themed-sessions. Dawnosaurs 2.0 will give thousands more children and their families the opportunity to experience the wonders held within the Museum in a stress-free environment.

# Dawnosaurs – the success story so far

Welcoming around 5 million visitors a year, including 1.6 million children, the Natural History Museum (NHM) is one of the UK's most visited museums. This also makes it one of the busiest. Every day the NHM offers a wide range of interactive educational experiences for children and young people to learn from and enjoy.

Many children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) require a structured, calm and crowd-free environment in order to enjoy and get the most out of a visit to the NHM. Dawnosaurs was created to overcome the barriers preventing children with ASD and their families and carers from visiting and participating in the NHM programme.

A special early opening of the NHM on select Saturdays throughout the year, Dawnosaurs allows children with ASD aged 5-15 years to avoid the hustle and bustle of a normal visit to the Museum and experience all the NHM has to offer. Crucially, Dawnosaurs offers more than early access alone - specially selected bespoke activities elevate the visiting experience to new heights.

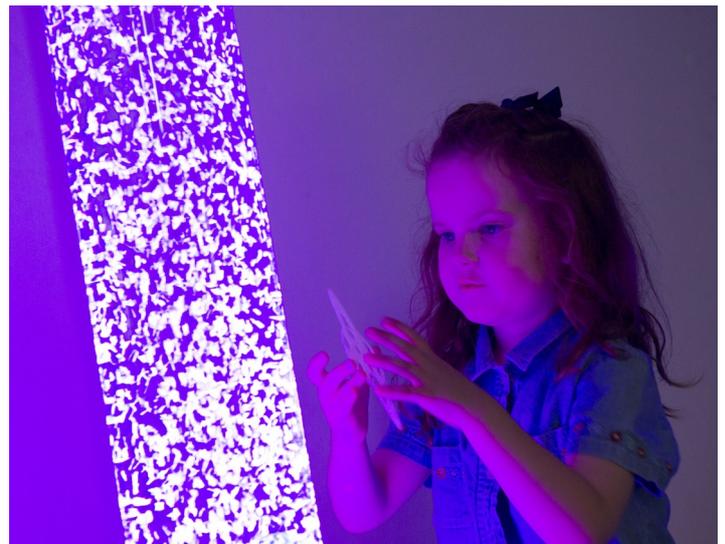
Thanks to the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation, to date the NHM has held nine Dawnosaurs sessions which have been attended by 3,049 visitors (including 1,490 children). By May 2018 at the end of this three-year programme we will have held 11 sessions, aiming to reach 4,000 visitors.

## Our continued vision for Dawnosaurs

Specially designed sessions will be held in a welcoming, supportive, safe and non-judgemental environment. We aim to enable children and young people with ASD and their families and carers to:

- Engage and be stimulated by our galleries, activities and natural history specimens;
- Learn, experience and share with other visitors with ASD and their families and carers;
- Be welcomed by and interact with specially-trained Museum staff and professionals who are experienced in working with young people with ASD;
- Feel more confident and comfortable while visiting the Museum and other similar institutions in the future.

At the NHM we are particularly proud of the overall institutional impact which has resulted from the introduction of Dawnosaurs. With Dawnosaurs as the bedrock, it is our ambition to evolve as a leader in autism best practice.



## Dawnosaurs 2.0

In Dawnosaurs 2.0 we will build on the success of Dawnosaurs to continue providing a varied, informative and stimulating programme of activities in a stress-free and calm learning environment.

In order to provide a fresh and continually developing offer to our many returning families, the NHM will launch new themed sessions which explore a particular element of the NHM's collection. The huge breadth and depth of the collection (with specimens ranging from insects to meteorites, from fossils to gems) means the possibility for these themes is potentially limitless. In doing this we hope to continue appealing to returning families while providing new and interesting learning experiences to newcomers.

For those children who are already enthused by aspects of our collection, these sessions will provide further opportunities to engage with their special interest. For those who are new to our collections, we hope that these sessions will ignite their curiosity and spark an interest for the future - potentially inspiring a lifelong passion, as well as encouraging further engagement with science and the natural world.

The overall structure of the sessions provide a calm, stable and structured environment with the presence of more generalised activities, such as the 'Animal Man' shows, ensuring enough variety to appeal to every child's interest.

Annual evaluation of Dawnosaurs will keep us in touch with the views, needs and expectations of our visitors and will ensure improvements are on-going, providing the best possible event for Dawnosaurs participants.

From 2018 to 2021 the NHM will:

- Host **15** Dawnosaurs sessions (five per year) with the ambition of achieving **7,000** visitors
- Undertake **three** evaluations (one per year)
- Organise **three** training sessions for NHM staff (one per year)
- Hold **one** knowledge exchange session with other London institutions hosting similar programmes

## Beyond Dawnosaurs

'Autism Awareness' training sessions at the NHM will allow continued staff development year on year, further imbedding best practice at the heart of the NHM.

As part of the next stage of Dawnosaurs we propose to host a knowledge exchange event with peer institutions in order to share institutional best practice. Ultimately, it is our ambition to promote a culture of collaboration and open and accessible knowledge-sharing.

We will also embrace opportunities to showcase Dawnosaurs and other aspects of our autism best practice nationally and internationally, both within the sector and beyond.

# The Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation

Dawnosaurus has only been possible thanks to the vision and generosity of the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation. With the Foundation's support we have been able to build an engaging programme of activities which enables all children to visit and experience the Natural History Museum alongside their siblings, parents, grandparents and carers.



“Thank you for a fantastic experience. Every member of staff was approachable, incredibly helpful and friendly. Nothing was too much trouble for them.” (Parent/Carer)