# Mother's experience at Sainsbury's highlights need for autism awareness



Carlie Middlesbrough, a 39-year-old mother, experienced a distressing incident at Sainsbury's in Morecambe on Sunday, April 13, after her four-year-old daughter Jessica, who has autism, had a meltdown in the supermarket. The event has sparked discussions about autism awareness and the need for greater public understanding of autism-related behaviours.

Middlesbrough recounted her shopping trip to the Lancaster Road store, where she intended to purchase tea cakes, one of the few foods her daughter will eat. During the visit, Jessica, who is non-verbal and uses a special pram, expressed a desire to play with toys in the store. When Carlie denied her request, her daughter became upset, leading to a scene involving screaming and kicking on the floor.

The situation escalated when a passer-by reacted negatively. Carlie reported that the man shook his head disapprovingly as he walked past. In response, she identified her daughter’s condition, stating, "what are you looking at, she's autistic," to which the man retorted, "who do you think you're talking to?" This confrontation left Carlie visibly shaken, although other shoppers in the vicinity expressed concern for her.

Despite being accustomed to visiting Sainsbury's, where staff are familiar with Jessica’s needs, this incident is not the first time Carlie has encountered unkind reactions from other customers. "It's happened loads of times," she remarked, indicating her frustration with the lack of understanding towards her daughter.

Another shopper, Lynne Harrison Faraday, expressed her support for Carlie on a local Facebook group, stating, "Take no notice of the disapproving stares, the tutting, the remarks." Lynne, who has worked with students with autism and has a grandson who is non-verbal, empathised with Carlie's experience, highlighting the importance of understanding and kindness toward families dealing with similar challenges.

While most responses have been supportive, one comment noted a contrasting viewpoint, suggesting that there are “too many excuses made for unruly and badly behaved children these days.” This comment reflects the complexity of public sentiment regarding behaviour in public spaces.

Middlesbrough, who is also a mother to a son with both autism and ADHD, emphasised the need for increased tolerance and education regarding autism’s traits. She shared that Jessica displayed early signs of autism similar to those of her older brother, including arranging toys in specific ways and missing developmental milestones. Carlie stated, "You shouldn’t have to walk around with a sign on your forehead saying ‘I’m autistic’," advocating for a kinder and more understanding public environment for families with autistic children.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://lancastercvs.org.uk/information-and-advice-for-the-lancaster-districts-third-sector-14-march-2025/> - This URL provides context about community support and mental health initiatives in the Lancaster district, which could relate to discussions about public understanding of autism and other conditions.
2. <https://www.aspennational.org/resources/autism-awareness-and-acceptance/> - This resource could support discussions about autism awareness and the need for greater public understanding of autism-related behaviors.
3. <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice/families/public/behaviour> - This website offers insights into the behaviors associated with autism and strategies for managing them, which aligns with the article's theme of understanding autistic behaviors.
4. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4934930/> - This study explores the challenges faced by families with autistic children in public settings, highlighting the need for greater understanding and support.
5. <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/early-signs-of-autism> - This resource lists early signs of autism, such as arranging toys in specific ways and developmental delays, which are mentioned in the article.
6. <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice/families/public/autism-awareness> - This webpage provides information about promoting autism awareness and acceptance, which is central to the article's message.
7. <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/mum-really-shook-up-after-35049561> - Please view link - unable to able to access data