Case Study

Bradford Museums & Galleries

Access for All Cohort 2025-26

Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Miroslava Zarkov, Early Years Assistant at **Bradford District Museums & Galleries** decided to join the Access for All Cohort to support her work to improve each of the 4 museum sites which faced different access issues, ranging from physical access problems and a lack of interpretation for different visitors to updating the website to provide up to date access information for visitors.

Miroslava and other team members attended the cohort's in-person and online sessions, finding out how to make short and longer term improvements for visitors with physical and learning disabilities and exploring how to support people with dementia. This knowledge was disseminated within the wider museum team to build skills across the whole team.

Impact of the cohort

Miroslava says, 'We were encouraged to keep working on some things that we had started but not completed in all museums, such as sensory bags for **Bolling Hall** and **Bradford Industrial Museum** and sensory baskets for **Cartwright Hall**.'

What was the Access Cohort?

The cohort brought together delegates from **14** museums across the North of England who shared the aim of improving their offer for disabled visitors. The programme included a range of in-person and online events, combining sessions led by access consultants with lived experience, a range of expert guest speakers and case studies from museums who are leading the way in access and inclusion in the region. A new group of museums are currently taking part in 2026-27.

A newly created sensory bag

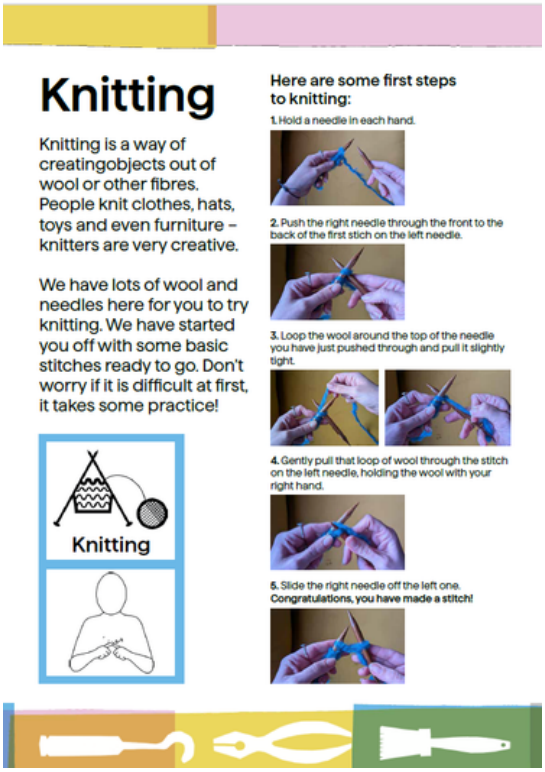
‘We have also **updated the website** to have a more informative access page and have a **Makaton license** which we use to create additional resources’.

The museums are running **conversation cafes** for older people and those with dementia and the wider staff team are enjoying supporting this programme.

What’s next for the museum?

Miroslava and the team have lots of plans including:

- **Clearer signage** in all museums to show what tools and programmes are available
- **Large print resources** for all museums and a **photo guide** for upper floor exhibitions without lift access
- A **chair lift** installed in Bolling Hall



Example of a Makaton label for the ‘Made by Many Hands’ exhibition

Learning for Others

1. **Be transparent and honest** with your audience about the access issues you have. People will find planning their visit much easier if they can find out what to expect. If your museum is only partially accessible, let them know

2. Whenever you plan any new purchase, programme or workshop for the museum, have these questions in mind: ‘What **obstacles** could some people have with this?’ ‘Can we do something to **reduce obstacles or remove them**?’

3. Some changes can take time. Don’t be discouraged; **take it step by step**

Find out more about how MD North can support you to make your museum more accessible on our website or contact Liz Denton liz.denton@museumdevelopmentnorth.org.uk