# Case Study

## Elizabeth Gaskell's House

## Access for All Cohort 2025-26

museum development md north

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**Katy Ellis**, Visitor Services Manager at **Elizabeth Gaskell's House** in Manchester applied to join the 2025-26 **Access for All Cohort** as she wanted to further her own knowledge about access in the museum sector. Elizabeth Gaskell's House had previously taken part in an **Access Audit** funded by MD North and was already making changes, so Katy realised that taking part in this cohort would help her to support that work.

Katy said, 'Being part of the cohort confirmed that we were already carrying out good practice with accessibility in a lot of areas and has allowed us to focus our attention on areas more in need of improvement as a result.

I will be able to use the resources from the cohort for our major website overhaul later this year, where we want to improve our accessibility page. It will also feed into capital developments over the next two to three years.'

**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 volunteer talking to a visitor about the collection

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

## Mentor Opportunity

As part of the cohort, Katy was able to apply for the mentorship programme which involved an in-person site visit, a follow-up meeting and a comprehensive written report with suggestions for improvements and next steps.

Katy said, 'I benefitted greatly from this activity as it expanded my knowledge of accessibility and has made me more confident in making decisions to change and improve our practice in our museum. I have also been able to feed back what I have learnt to my colleagues and to our volunteer team.'

### What's next for the museum?

The team have lots of exciting plans to improve accessibility throughout the museum, including:

- Research into the creation of sensory resources
- Installation of hearing loops and provision of training on working with d/Deaf visitors for volunteers
- Adaptation of already accessible toilets to make them stoma-friendly
- Purchase of new chairs with arm rests for the café and creation of additional seating for visitors throughout the museum

A new sensory drawer in the museum

### Learning for Others

1. Accessibility is **never a complete task** – there is always space to improve but implementing some accessible features whilst you're making larger improvements is worthwhile
2. Listen and learn from the other members of the cohort – they're the **biggest asset** and will have practical solutions
3. Do take part in the **free mentorship** if offered – having this 1-to-1 support from a mentor was really valuable and their report has been really useful for us planning our future accessibility