Case Study

Grundy Art Gallery

Access for All Cohort 2025-26

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Holly Kilner, Learning and Engagement Officer at **Grundy Art Gallery** in Blackpool joined the Access for All cohort to build on the work already in place within the gallery. She said, 'We wanted to strengthen our approach to accessibility and inclusion and ensure that access was considered across the whole visitor experience, rather than as something added at the end of an exhibition or activity.

As a gallery working with a diverse local community, including SEND schools and community groups, we recognised the need to develop more flexible ways for people to engage with our exhibitions. We also wanted to think more broadly about access: not only physical access, but sensory, communication and learning access, and how we could support people with different needs to feel welcomed and able to participate.

There was also a need to build staff confidence and embed accessibility more consistently across our planning and programming. Being part of the cohort helped us develop and strengthen resources including **easy read information**, **accessibility information**, **sensory toolkits** and alternative ways of engaging with artworks, as well as expanding our programme of **accessible tours and talks**, including **BSL and Audio Description**.'

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 visitor using headphones to listen to a sound description of a painting © Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool Council

The Impact of Taking Part in the Cohort

The activity has helped the gallery move towards a more proactive and embedded approach to accessibility. Rather than viewing access as a separate strand of work, they have become more conscious of considering it throughout exhibition planning, engagement and delivery.

It has also helped them to develop a wider range of ways for visitors to experience and understand artwork. Sensory kits, for example, provide physical and sensory ways into artworks and have been particularly useful when working with young visitors and SEND schools.

The work has increased the team's confidence in identifying barriers and considering practical solutions. It has also encouraged wider conversations within the team about how they can make their work more inclusive.

What's next for the gallery?

- Continuing to **embed accessibility** into every stage of exhibition and engagement programming
- Developing additional resources including **easy read guides**, **BSL** and **Audio Description resources**
- Identifying ways to adopt a more **care-centred approach** to visitors and staff

Accessibility aids in the foyer © Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool Council

Learning for Others

1. **Don't wait** until an exhibition is finished to think about accessibility. Build access into the planning, development, installation, interpretation and engagement stages from the outset
2. There isn't one version of accessibility. Providing **multiple ways** to experience an artwork – visual, auditory, sensory, physical and through different forms of interpretation – can open up an exhibition to a much wider range of people
3. Think about the experience of **the people working in your museum** as well as your visitors. A more accessible and inclusive organisation needs to create space for staff to reflect, learn and look after themselves, alongside providing meaningful access for audiences

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