Case Study

Lancaster City Museums

Access for All Cohort 2025-26

museum development md north

Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

After being awarded an **Open Grant** to improve accessibility across their sites, **Lancaster City Museums** applied to take part in our 2025-26 **Access for All Cohort**.

Museum Assistant **Cara Kennedy** said, 'The Access for All cohort couldn't have come at a more suitable time. Following a site audit completed as part of the grant project, it was evident that the City Museum needed to improve its offer for neurodivergent visitors.

Being part of the cohort allowed me to gain a robust understanding of various lived experiences whilst simultaneously pointing me in the direction of important resources. I was subsequently able to weave my learning from the cohort sessions into the development of new and interesting access features for the City Museum.

The cohort also made me aware of the areas where we were lacking provision- specifically in the development of sensory materials for our visitors. Through mentorship I was able to consult with a museum professional with extensive experience in developing sensory activities and resources for a range of audiences. This has been invaluable in the development of sensory resources for our visitors.'

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 range of sensory resources created by the team

The Impact of Taking Part in the Cohort

The museum has made a number of important and impactful changes in a short space of time and have been able to engage with the disabled community in a meaningful way to ensure that the resources they are developing serve people well.

Their access offer is more prominent and clearer to both visitors and staff. The team has had positive feedback in person and online regarding the new **Access Hub**, with visitors making use of the resources available there.

Cara said, 'Staff have also gained confidence when it comes to accessibility. Specific training has helped many of them connect with different visitors, and there is an increased awareness of what we can do as a service to make everyone's experience in our museums a positive one.

I have personally gained a lot of confidence in championing new initiatives through support from the cohort and my mentor.'

The new Access Hub at the City Museum

What's next for the museum?

- The creation of two new sensory boxes which link to the paintings in the collection
- The development of a range of sensory storytelling sessions relating to local Roman history.
- The development of a tactile tour which will include a series of wall-mounted 3D printed replic objects with accompanying audio.

Learning for Others

1. Not all access improvements have to be costly. In many cases, **thinking differently** about what you offer is key!
2. Being informed about different access needs is vital. Having an understanding of **how other people experience your museum** is the only way you can make changes.
3. Being clear about what you **don't offer** is just as important as advertising what you do.

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