Case Study

National Coal Mining Museum

Access for All Cohort 2025-26

Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

After having completed an Access Audit previously, **Sharon Healy**, Learning Manager and **Imogen Walsh**, Community Engagement Coordinator at the **National Coal Mining Museum** in Wakefield decided to join the Access for All Cohort.

Sharon said, 'The museum had identified access and inclusion as something that needed to be worked on, so taking part in the cohort was good timing for us. We have quite a lot of groups with people with additional needs who visit so we wanted to improve access for them.

The museum installed a **Space to Change toilet** with an **Unlimited Micro Capital Grant** thanks to funding by **West Yorkshire Combined Authority**. A mural was designed by a community group of people with additional needs to make the space more inviting.'

Impact

Learning from the training has informed team practice and allowed space for **staff upskilling**. The museum has set up a **staff and volunteer access group** and the information from the course is being used within this. All departments are being encouraged to **embed access** within their teams and planning, such as in exhibitions.

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.

Chair of Trustees in front of the mural in the Space to Change toilet

Who has benefited from this work?

- **Staff** benefited by being upskilled in their understanding of needs of the different groups that the training covered

- They have developed four sensory story boxes, working with **community groups** of people with additional needs funded by the **UK Government** through the **UK Shared Prosperity Fund**. The training helped to enhance the work on these and this can now be delivered in the museum. Community groups and care homes can also borrow a box to use in their setting

- The **Visitor Welcome team** have been taken through how the storytelling works and they will be able to encourage groups who come in so that this is available to them

- The **Marketing team** are using feedback from groups who have come on site to enhance the website to highlight accessibility information to visitors

What's next for the museum?

- The Collections team are going to build in access needs at the start of the exhibition process which will improve the visitor experience
- Development of an **Access Statement** to go on the website
- Continued work on the **Access Audit suggestions**

The creation of sensory story boxes with local community groups

Learning for Others

1.Change can be small and **doesn't have to be expensive**

2. **Everyone** working and volunteering at the museum can contribute to making our museum accessible and inclusive

3. **Perfection is the enemy of progress!** Any improvements are better than none

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