Case Study

University of Leeds

Access for All Cohort 2025-26

museum development md north

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After having already established an **Accessibility Working Group** and installing an **ACCESSories Hub** in The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery, the **University of Leeds** applied to take part in our 2025-26 **Access for All Cohort** to continue their work.

Events & Engagement Assistant **Cat Lane**, said, 'We applied to the cohort to improve our access offer across all our spaces. In particular; developing our existing Hub and installing a new Hub in Treasures of the Brotherton, understanding how to improve access and inclusion through our Visitor Services team, and identifying areas to prioritise for improvement.'

Cat attended the cohort sessions and took useful advice from them, 'In the first session at **Wakefield Museum**, the presenter recommended focusing on small, incremental change.' They shared how it is better to make a change and learn from feedback, than to never do anything for fear of doing it wrong. 'This really impacted the ethos of the group and how we work; it reassured us to try things out and learn from our mistakes.'

Since taking part in the cohort Cat and the team have held **Access Focus Groups** to gain feedback from participants, which they have embedded into their work.

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.

ACCESSories Hub in the Treasures of the Brotherton gallery © University of Leeds Cultural Collections & Galleries

The Impact of Taking Part in the Cohort

Cat said, 'All our visitors have benefitted from the changes made. Our ACCESSories Hubs make our galleries more inviting for all, encouraging visitors to slow down, interact deeply, and have more fun. The increased visibility of our access offer, both online and in-person, has also helped staff with identifying and advocating for their own access requirements, making our workplace more accessible too.'

What's next for the museum?

Following advice from their mentor, the team are working on a lot of projects including:

- Updating website information to include sensory stories and key access information about the galleries
- Adding a welcome sign in Makaton to both Hubs
- Reviewing the possibility of providing interpretation at dual heights in some galleries
- Adding a contrasting colour/raised line around artworks that need them
- Replacing safety markings on the glass doors with ones that are more visible
- Framing The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery door with a painted strip in contrasting colour

ACCESSories Hub in The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery © University of Leeds Cultural Collections & Galleries

Learning for Others

1. Start making changes. Do not let fear of failure stop you from starting. **Access is an ongoing journey**; you will never be finished. Keep learning from feedback and adapting to gradually improve your offer
2. Improving accessibility helps **everyone**. For example, providing handling objects for visually impaired visitors makes the space more tactile and interactive for other visitors too
3. Disabled kids become disabled adults. Access resources need to be **designed for all ages.** Everyone deserves to have their needs met, and everyone deserves to have fun!

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