



Summary

Co-producing an Inclusively Designed Exhibition with Partially Sighted, Blind and Elderly Participants

About the DRILL Programme

DRILL (Disability Research on Independent Living and Learning) was an innovative 5 year, UK wide programme led by disabled people, for disabled people and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

Launched in 2015, the programme was managed by a partnership of Disability Action Northern Ireland, Disability Rights UK, Disability Wales and Inclusion Scotland.

The aim of the programme was to build better evidence about approaches which enable disabled people to achieve independent living. The findings from the projects it funded can be used to inform future provision across a wide range of policy areas, and give a greater voice to disabled people in decisions which affect them.

This is one of a series of summaries of the projects supported by DRILL. Final reports, toolkits and summaries of all the projects are available from the DRILL website at www.drilluk.org.uk.

Overview of the project

This project investigated how to inclusively design and curate a non-permanent exhibition, focusing on access for blind and partially sighted visitors.

Summary of approach

This project used a range of qualitative research techniques, beginning with a working guidance document which was updated throughout the project.

Participant observation was used to increase the validity of the research along with semi-structured interviews with gallery assistants, an exhibition designer and four sight loss participants prior to the exhibition. Interviews were also conducted afterwards to discuss the visitor's experiences.

Three co-creation sessions were hosted with five participants, asking how a non-permanent exhibition can be designed and curated for blind and partially sighted visitors.

Findings

The research conducted helped form the components of the final exhibition. Black on white and black on yellow was the chosen colour scheme. This has been regarded this as the clearest combination for a well-defined contrast.

The exhibition included multi-sensory desks containing handling objects, (which are designed to replicate the exhibit), labels and a magnifier. This allowed visitors to relate the desk's contents to the exhibit.

A yellow way-finding path, similar to those which are currently in use at road crossings for blind people, was used. It contrasted the dark grey concrete floor to clearly show visitors the route.

Audio support was an essential element of the exhibition for those with sight loss. Audio descriptors for the key exhibits, written by the author in accordance with common practice, were played through adapted trim phones. These were designed so that eight could be in close proximity without the danger of interference.

The use of plinths meant that exhibits could be viewed at close range from at least three sides. The co-creation sessions highlighted the need for enlarged images of small and detailed exhibits to be placed on gallery walls for close up viewing.

Findings (continued)

The graphics throughout the exhibition were well-spaced, aligned left paragraphs, with a clear hierarchy of title and main message. They used Futura font at 36 point for the panels, and 16 point for the object labels.

Consistent lighting levels were used to illuminate objects and labels, and ensure that there were no shadows falling on exhibits and wall panels. Matt Perspex was also used to limit reflections.

Gallery assistants were given training to provide responsive tours. They were also available in the gallery, proving highly valuable for all visitors, especially those with sight loss.

Recommendations

The project outlined many recommendations, some of which are listed here. All recommendations are included in the full report, which is linked below.

- Use contrasting colours for text and background as well as for plinths to distinguish them from the floor
- The addition of multi-sensory desks allows a coherent explanation of the associated exhibit to all visitors. There was a demonstration desk at the entrance to the gallery so that it could be explained by a gallery assistant beforehand
- Further research into the use of handling objects on the desks is needed. Blind participants noted that some were cold, too plastic and too lightweight so did not truly represent the material in the exhibit
- Other solutions for route guidance must be explored in regard to alternative materials, tactile surfaces and colour contrasts. Some visitors experienced depth perception issues with the bright yellow path
- An appropriate sound level for audio descriptors must be identified to accommodate those with a hearing impairment whilst ensuring the level is safe for children
- There must be an increased understanding from exhibitors of the importance of visually impaired and blind participants being able to handle exhibits to enrich their experience
- Although light reflection is able to be minimized, ways to prevent this entirely must be identified.

Final report

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Please click on report name to read the full report.

Project partners

University of Lincoln



National Centre for Craft & Design



AgeUK



RNIB Regional Centre

