

Layers of Vision

**Enhancing Accessibility Policy for
Blind and Partially Sighted (BPS)
Audiences in UK Museums**



What is Layers of Vision?

Layers of Vision is a collaborative research impact project. The purpose of this project is to improve access and inclusion for blind and partially sighted (BPS) audiences in UK museums. In 2022, researchers from King's College London, Royal Holloway Business School and Lancaster University Management School partnered with Shape Arts, Zoe Partington, King's Culture and nine professional artists with lived experience of sight loss to co-design the Layers of Vision art exhibition.

This exhibition highlights the experiences of BPS artists in a world designed for the sighted. It challenges everyday barriers through creative explorations of accessibility, celebrating diverse forms of vision. Featuring multisensory elements, it invites engagement, sparks dialogue, and rethinks access and disability inclusion in the arts, museums and beyond.



Scan the QR code to read more about the project

Shortcomings of Current Accessibility Policies

The UK Equality Act 2010 requires museums to make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled visitors. However, the lack of defined minimum standards means access for blind and partially sighted people remains inconsistent, with many access initiatives focussed on physical, not sensory access. Arts Council England's Accreditation Scheme mandates access plans and policies, but enforcement is limited. Government support is largely indirect, and tax relief schemes, including Museums and Galleries Exhibition Tax Relief, aim to broaden public access by supporting new exhibitions, but do not specifically target accessibility improvements. While these mechanisms can be used to enhance access, there is no explicit national policy or incentive structure to ensure consistent, inclusive design. Such standards would also require equally robust financial support or incentivisation.

Layers of Vision's Call to Action

On the 3rd of July 2025, the Layers of Vision team, in collaboration with the APPG for Eye Health and Visual Impairment, hosted a workshop at the House of Commons, UK Parliament. Based on their learnings from co-designing an exhibition, and in dialogue with members of the APPG, museum professionals, sector support organisations and sight loss organisations, they developed a set of recommendations on how current accessibility policy and practice in museums can be improved:

1. Set National Minimum Access Standards

Replace vague “reasonable adjustments” with clear, enforceable standards co-designed with blind and partially sighted people. These should ensure accessible formats, inclusive exhibition design, and accessible procurement practices.

2. Create a National Access Board

Establish an independent body to oversee standards, provide expert guidance, and reward best practices. The board should include disabled people and industry experts.

3. Ringfence Accessibility Funding in Public Grants

Require all publicly funded projects to allocate a fixed percentage of their budget to accessibility and inclusion from the outset.

4. Embed Accessibility Throughout the Visitor Journey

Ensure sensory and physical accessibility is integrated across exhibitions, interpretation, and the overall environment – not added later.

5. Require Paid Inclusion Panels

Mandate advisory panels with blind and partially sighted members in all publicly funded institutions, with fair compensation for their input on access and inclusion decisions.

6. Mandatory Disability and Sensory Awareness Training

Introduce regular, compulsory training for all staff, developed in collaboration with blind and partially sighted individuals.

Want to get involved, and help Layers of Vision champion accessibility in UK museums, or want to learn more?

Contact us: katharina.husemann@kcl.ac.uk

or check out our website:

layersofvision.org/exhibition/

Testimonials

Zoe Partington – Consultant / Contemporary Artist

I'm proud of how forward thinking the Layers of Vision team have been in championing blind artists through this initiative. As a partially blind creator and visitor, I hope museum spaces will bloom into multisensory experiences – hands tracing raised reliefs, models, voices weaving vivid insights through sensory and artist led audio descriptions. From the first sketch to the last installation bolt, every detail spoke of representation of blind artists and blind visitors with accessibility at the heart of the process. In celebrating diversity and nurturing belonging, Layers of Vision ensured that blind artists and audiences alike could explore, engage, and imagine without limits. I finally felt blind people were part of the process.

Jeff Rowlings – Head of Programme at Shape Arts

Innovators in the museum sector are pivoting rapidly to promote themselves as providers of high quality, inclusive experiences. While welcome, this is precisely the time to include disabled people in programming to ensure there is previously unconsidered depth and dimension to these experiences. Disabled people are much more than a passive customer base who benefit from access adjustments; their agency is an untapped resource with great potential to enhance the visitor experience for all.

Credits

Co-Investigators

Dr Katharina C. Husemann,
King's College London;
Prof. Anica Zeyen,
Royal Holloway
Business School;
Dr Leighanne Higgins,
Lancaster University
Management School

Partners

King's Culture, Shape Arts,
Zoe Partington and the
APPG for Eye Health and
Visual Impairment

Exhibiting Artists

Alice Christina-Corrigan,
Bianca Raffaella,
Aaron McPeake,
Clarke Reynolds,
Fae Kilburn, Natalie Doig,
David Johnson,
Sally Booth, Mickel aka
Ebony Rose Dark and
Zoe Partington.

Design

Praline