



# Access Collective

Illustrations & Design by Jess Balla



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# Introduction

The Access Collective formed in Autumn 2024 when staff from Conwy Culture Centre, disabled Amdani! Conwy volunteers and artist Jess Balla, were supported to collaborate over two days. Together, they toured the library, museum displays, archive, community space and café to identify access barriers. They then participated in a workshop which drew on lived experiences to imagine ways one of Conwy's essential culture spaces could become more accessible and inclusive.

Capturing the Access Collective's experience of Conwy Culture Centre, the purpose of this publication is to be a useful document that supports disabled visitors to access Conwy Culture Centre. It also proposes ways of transforming the space which remove barriers, allowing more people to use its cultural resources.

This project found inspiration in the Social Model of Disability. This is a way of understanding disability that was created by disabled people in the 1980's. It tells us that people are disabled by the barriers in society, and not their impairments or health conditions.

The Access Collective would also not be possible without the generous support of Amdani! Conwy volunteers, particularly our Amdani! Champion Nigel Morgan, whose dream for better accessibility in cultural and civic spaces in Conwy was the catalyst for the Access Collective.

**"Over the years, I've supported many family members and some friends who had a variety of health conditions and disabilities.**

**These experiences have taught me that regardless of our health conditions or protected characteristics, we all share a thirst for knowledge and deserve the opportunity to follow our passions. Sadly, getting involved in activities are out of reach for many people, with accessibility into our theatres, museums and library buildings not being fit for purpose for the many diverse and different people in our society.**

**In this modern world we live in, with the technology at our fingertips, along with the drive and determination of our community, I believe we can make the world a more equal place for all, especially people with health conditions and disabilities who've faced exclusion from getting involved or taking part in any activity they wish to.**

**Our little project around accessibility hopefully plays a part in a bigger movement to make sure this happens! Huge thanks to David, Rachel, Jess and the members of the Access Collective for supporting this project, and listening to each other."**

Nigel Morgan - Amdani! Champion



# Exploring Conwy Culture Centre

## Principles of Engagement

### 1. Vulnerability

Disabled experiences often expose feelings of vulnerability. We respect those who share their vulnerabilities in this space.

### 2. Listening

We actively listen to each other. Have patience and give each other space and time to share their thoughts in full.

### 3. Reciprocity

We are here to learn from each other and work collaboratively to imagine a more accessible world. We are all in this space as equals.

### 4. Free of judgement

We all can make mistakes without meaning to. We take accountability, but we are not here to judge or be judged.

### 5. Self-Care

Care for yourself in this space, and ask for help if needed.

### 6. Confidentiality

We can speak only about our own experiences and not anyone else's. We don't share without permission.

### 7. Right of refusal

Silence can be a contribution. You don't have to say anything if you don't want to.





**Calm - I can focus on the event completely - no mental space needed for anything else so I can look forward to it and not feel anxious.**



# Outside

## Sensory Garden

I love this space!  
It's so calming.

I didn't notice it before  
around the back of the  
building.

I can't get to certain areas  
because the overgrowth is  
blocking my path. There are  
some tripping hazards with  
narrow paths.

The gate is manual and I can't  
open it and get my wheelchair  
through by myself.

## Parking

There are only 3 accessible parking  
bays. What do I do if these are taken?

Some people park here when they're not  
supposed to. Bodlondob Car Park is the  
nearest but this is too far for me to walk.

There are some pillars on the  
path near the parking bays which  
make it hard for me to get past.

## Finding Your Way Around

Is there a map that helps you  
find your way around?  
I can't see it.

I saw a map at the entrance! I couldn't  
see it clearly because it's barely visible on  
the glass. I think some of the information  
was out of date too.



# Main Entrance



# Foyer

It's overwhelming for me here. The loud noise from the cafe, and something is causing the doors to open and close all the time. I didn't even notice the museum displays.

The floor is smooth and slippery. It's quite dark and one colour tone.

Do you think this area could feel a little less busy?

Yes I think so.

# Cafe

The Cafe is dreadful to get to the toilets. Everything is so narrow and the disabled toilet door opens straight into the route to the other toilets.

I have to get someone to move a table near the toilet for me to get past in my wheelchair. Everything is so tight and even the disabled toilet is not big enough. Whoever designed the layout didn't consider that some people need a carer to go to the toilet with them.

There can be a lot of prams blocking the path here too.

How do you get to the emergency exits? Those doors over there.. the ones through the cafe and into the community space and outside. They're manual and heavy. I can't open them by myself if it's a fire door?



# Conwy Library



This space is fine for me as a Deaf person, but I need a view of the flashing signals when an alarm goes off.

**I never considered what people do if they can't hear the alarms!**

I don't see many signs to help me find my way around.

I can't reach the tall top shelf books on my own in my wheelchair. If I get a book, I can read pretty independently though.

We have a large print and audio book section. There isn't currently a way to listen to these in the library. We have Daisy Players which we loan through our home library service. It would be easy to set these up in the library.

**Is there a disabled section in the library?**

There's a reading well / health and wellbeing section.

**I meant more like authors who talk about disabled experiences or books about different disability movements and history. That would bring more diversity to the books available!**

It would be good to also have a cosy separate space with warmer or softer lighting.

**I agree, the white LED lights pointing down from the ceiling can give me migraines if I'm in it for too long.**



# Museum Display

Has anyone noticed the museum displays?

No! I didn't even see these objects in display boxes among the bookshelves until you pointed them out. They're really interesting! They get lost a bit. Is there anything to help you find them?

It would be useful if there was a map or handouts with more information at the front desk.

I agree, the information text is currently stuck on glass with no background so it is difficult to see.

It would be good to use some kind of colour or colour coding system which separates the museum bits and the library more.

I also think lighting the inside of the box would make the objects stand out and be more noticeable.

It would be good to rotate the displays or change them around different themes.



# Childrens Area



The open plan is great, but sometimes it's noisy with children playing and group activities.

Yeah... our toddler sessions are really popular. Sometimes there are lots of prams blocking routes.

It's not like a traditional library when everyone has to be quiet, but sometimes that's what people need.



# Conwy Archive Searchroom



This space is used by the public, staff and volunteers to research. The historical records and objects are kept in the basement in the Strongroom.

I use this space all the time and I have a really great experience here.

There's also the Clip Corner where you can access the National Library of Wales Broadcast Archive.

It's good that people can look in through the glass, but it does need something on it to make it more clear this space has a different use to the rest of the building which functions more as a community space.

Maybe that's where the colour coding can be used again. Different colours associated with the library, museum and archive.

Since the Searchroom is separated by glass partitions, we have the same problem with noise filling the room from other areas in the library. There's nothing to dampen the sound. It can be distracting.

Maybe there's a way to put a lid over the search room area. Not in a way that you lose its openness and visibility.



# Conwy Archive & Museum Strongroom



I noticed on the way here there are two wheelchair accessible toilets.

These are the staff toilets. The corridor area is monitored and only for staff. You'd be accompanied by one of the team if you come down here. They would open the doors and help you around.

I would need someone to help me around and retrieve things from the shelves.

The lift into the underground floor also works when the emergency alarm goes off.

I must admit, being in here is a bit like a bunker. I don't feel like I can breathe properly because there is no fresh air. Very claustrophobic.

It's because of the controlled temperatures and air flow. You wouldn't typically be down here for a long period of time.

I got locked in here before. There's no phone signal either, which was quite frightening. It would be good if there was an emergency button or call system to get help.



# Community Room

How do you open the door by yourself in a wheelchair or have mobility issues?

Has anyone noticed the ledge on the emergency exits which take us outside from this room? They need a small ramp on the door for wheelchair users and reduce trip hazards.

The lighting here is really bright and intense. It's giving me a migraine.

Can they not be adjustable or diffused with shades?

A few staff members have recently been introduced to the app which allows us to control the lighting. We're still figuring it out.

This is track lighting which some galleries use. You should be able to move, adjust or install new lights if you want, maybe some could have shades to take the edge off that harsh directional light.

It's so spacious here compared to the cafe. Could you imagine rotating the layout, there would be way more space for the Cafe.

A lot of different community groups regularly use this space. If this went, where would they go?



# Poetic Reflections

Inspirational building  
Closer collections  
Story spaces  
Floating sound

**Incredible foundations**  
Safe space far away  
Historical items

Less  
Intimidating

**Inspiring**  
public visits advertise

Garden walk

**Remove noise**

Map paths

**Money were no object! Robot drone**

Important change

**Acoustic signage**  
Colour leaflet  
**Tinted glasses tranquil space**  
More communal







# Recommendations + Learnings

## What if there was...

1. an entrance to the building which wasn't noisy or overstimulating, with a more welcoming threshold and easy to clean coloured carpet.

2. an eye catching map and new signage at the entrance and exterior of the building to help the public find their way around the site.

3. a clear schedule was visible in the building and online telling you who the space is prioritising at different times. You could have toddler / family times, low sensory quiet periods and even masked hours to include those with health conditions. It would make the centre feel more inclusive and safe.

4. a way to make the Museum's collection more visible, such as rotating displays, visible interpretation in different readable formats, lighting systems, and colours to make them stand out within the busy library.

5. adjustable and diffused warm lighting which didn't use LED's that cause migraines in the community space.

6. less obstructions in and around the narrow cafe space to allow wheelchair users and people with limited mobility to get around without assistance.

7. was public access to the two disabled toilets currently available only to staff.

8. one accessible toilet was an Adult Changing Space.

9. motion sensors or large push buttons to open the doors throughout the entire building.



10. a colour coding system to define the different facilities in the building, and clearly define the different areas and their function.

11. a comfortable space where you could go if you're overwhelmed, listen to an audio-book on headphones or simply find some quiet.

12. ear-defenders and tinted glasses available to reduce loud noises and bright lights.

13. a button in the Strongroom which you can press in an emergency to notify staff or emergency services that you're trapped.

14. flashing lights connected to the emergency alarm systems to let d/Deaf people know they need to evacuate.

15. a disability section in the library which has accessible learning resources, books by disabled authors and writers, and books which tell people about disability history and activist movements.

16. a non-intimidating way people could share their needs with the team so changes can be made.

17. Sound panels suspended from the ceiling to dampen the echoes and noises traveling through the building.

18. more information online on how to access the building and access the collections digitally from home.

19. clear and safe areas where people can be dropped off and picked up near the building and able bodied people didn't use the accessible parking spaces.

# Credits

This project would not be possible without the support of dedicated volunteers and staff:

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**Amdani!  
Conwy**

**Cymorth  
Cymunedol  
Gwirfoddol  
Conwy**



**Community  
Voluntary  
Support  
Conwy**

**Disability Arts Cymru**  
Creu Celf



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COMMUNITIES IN PRACTICE

