



GALLERY

MakerWorld Gallery

Evaluation Report May 2026

one community



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**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Executive Summary

MakerWorld Gallery transformed an empty retail unit in Huddersfield town centre into a vibrant, free and welcoming cultural space for children, young people and families.

Across a year-long programme, the Gallery presented immersive exhibitions, artist residencies, youth activity, workshops and participatory installations that encouraged children and young people to create, experiment, perform and share their ideas publicly.

The programme combined contemporary art with playful participation, enabling children and young people not simply to visit cultural activity, but to actively shape it.

Throughout the year, families described the Gallery as:

- Calm and sensory-friendly
- Welcoming and non-judgemental
- Creative and inspiring
- Inclusive of neurodiverse children and young people
- A key reason for visiting Huddersfield town centre

At a time when free family provision is increasingly limited, MakerWorld demonstrated the value of accessible, community-rooted cultural activity in supporting creativity, wellbeing, inclusion and more child-friendly town centres.

The evaluation demonstrates that MakerWorld Gallery successfully:

- Increased access to free cultural activity
- Built confidence and creative independence
- Supported family relationships and wellbeing
- Created visible opportunities for children's creativity to be publicly celebrated
- Encouraged repeat visits into the town centre
- Developed a strong sense of belonging and community connection

The programme also demonstrated the wider civic value of child-centred cultural spaces within town centres, contributing to footfall, vibrancy and perceptions of Huddersfield as a more welcoming place for families.

1,378

participants at Gallery events, clubs and activities

FUN

word most often used to describe the MakerWorld Gallery experience

1 in 3

visitors were new to MakerWorld

Context

MakerWorld Gallery responded to a clear local need for free, accessible and creative spaces for children and young people in Huddersfield town centre.

Families involved in MakerWorld consistently described a lack of:

- Free creative activity
- Youth-focused cultural spaces
- Sensory-friendly environments
- Places where teenagers could gather safely and creatively
- Cultural opportunities for neurodiverse children and young people

At the same time, Huddersfield town centre was undergoing significant regeneration, creating opportunities to rethink how empty retail spaces could support community life, creativity and culture.

MakerWorld Gallery tested how a child-centred cultural space could contribute to a more vibrant, welcoming and inclusive town centre.



About MakerWorld Gallery

Located adjacent to MakerWorld, MakerWorld Gallery expanded the wider MakerWorld offer through a dedicated exhibition and participation space focused on contemporary art, immersive installations and youth-led creativity.

The Gallery programme combined artist commissions, interactive exhibitions and participatory experiences designed specifically for children, young people and families. Importantly, the Gallery blurred the boundaries between audience and artist. Children and young people were encouraged to experiment, contribute ideas, present their own work publicly and shape the programme itself.

Feedback from exhibiting artists also suggests that the Gallery created meaningful professional opportunities as well as public benefit. One artist described the experience as a valuable chance to test and develop work in dialogue with children and families, while also building confidence, profile and future creative ambition.

Across the year, the Gallery hosted:

- Eight exhibitions and installations
- Weekly youth-led creative activity
- MakerSkate skate park sessions alongside art making
- Teen takeover events
- Eight SEN school visits
- Artist residencies and workshops
- Family making sessions
- Performance and music activity

Exhibitions included:

- Soft Studio by Hold Art
- Toddler Takeover by Abi Horn
- Brutulast sound installation and synthesiser workshops
- Drift Tricks skateable sculptures
- Experiments in Biophilic Form by Isobel Denton

Evaluation Approach

The evaluation draws primarily on qualitative evidence gathered throughout the programme, including 25 case studies developed through:

- Participant conversations
- Interviews with families and young people
- Observation notes
- Volunteer reflections

These case studies were designed to capture the lived experiences of children, young people, families, volunteers and community participants, providing insight into the social, emotional and creative impact of the Gallery space.

Rather than focusing solely on attendance figures, the evaluation places particular emphasis on the quality of participants' experiences, including confidence, creativity, wellbeing, connection and engagement.

Additional feedback was gathered through visitor postcards (n=60) and a dedicated online survey for workshop participants (n=7). While response numbers for the workshop survey were low due to the informal and practical nature of the sessions, the feedback collected still provided valuable insight into participant experiences and outcomes.

Engagement

MakerWorld Gallery events and activities, including those highlighted above, engaged 1,378 participants, alongside many additional visitors to the wider exhibitions and gallery space.

While feedback postcards represent only a sample of overall visitors, they provide useful insight into the audience profile and demonstrate the project's broad and inclusive reach:

32% were first-time visitors to MakerWorld

33% identified as being from an ethnic minority background

20% said that someone in their group was disabled or neurodivergent

Postcode analysis from surveys and feedback postcards also demonstrated strong local and regional engagement. The highest representation came from HD5, HD2, HD4 and HD9 postcode districts, while visitors also travelled from Halifax, Dewsbury, Wakefield, Bradford and Hull.

The postcode profile suggests that MakerWorld Gallery successfully engaged audiences from several neighbourhoods associated with higher levels of socioeconomic deprivation within West Yorkshire, including communities that are often underrepresented in cultural participation. Combined with the high proportion of first-time visitors, this indicates that the accessible, free and family-friendly nature of the Gallery space helped reduce barriers to engagement and broaden MakerWorld's reach beyond its existing audiences.



"Watching the creativity develop in a safe space has been magnificent, and we love having art to bring home"

Impact

The following section summarises the key findings from the case study interviews, observations and wider visitor feedback gathered within the MakerWorld Gallery space, highlighting shared themes and commonly observed impacts across the project.

Creativity & Confidence

Families consistently described how MakerWorld Gallery helped children feel more confident expressing ideas, experimenting creatively and gaining pride in their work. Open-ended activity encouraged children to explore without fear of getting things "wrong", helping many participants become more independent, curious and self-assured over time.

- Parents frequently described children:
- Trying unfamiliar materials
- Becoming more socially confident
- Concentrating for longer periods
- Continuing creative activity at home
- Feeling proud when work was displayed publicly

Calm, Welcoming & Neuroinclusive

One of the strongest themes across the evaluation was the importance of the Gallery's atmosphere. Families repeatedly described the space as calm, welcoming and sensory-friendly, particularly compared with louder or more commercial family environments.

Parents of neurodiverse children spoke positively about:

- Flexible participation
- Reduced sensory overwhelm
- Friendly staff relationships
- Freedom to explore at their own pace
- The absence of pressure or judgement

Several families described MakerWorld Gallery as one of the only local spaces where they felt fully comfortable attending together.

Disability
One in Five families said someone in their group was disabled neurodivergent, highlighting the accessible nature of the space

The accessibility and welcoming nature of the Gallery space appears to have helped broaden MakerWorld's reach. Alongside engaging many existing participants, the evaluation found that the space was also successfully attracting new audiences, with 32% of feedback postcard respondents saying they had never previously visited MakerWorld or MakerWorld Gallery.

The Gallery also hosted small-group visits from local SEN schools. Teachers highlighted the lack of local cultural and play spaces where they could comfortably bring these young people, and particularly valued the calm, flexible environment.

Sessions were bespoke, with artists taking time to get to know the young people and prepare suitable creative activity, enabling them to engage with exhibitions in their own way and making the experience meaningful. This helped facilitate more inclusive access to arts and culture.

"Thank you for everything you've done!
Charlie finds it such a safe haven"

Family Relationships & Shared Experience

The Gallery created opportunities for children, parents, grandparents and carers to spend meaningful time together. Rather than separating adults and children, activities encouraged shared creativity, conversation and collaboration. Many families described the Gallery as becoming part of their regular routine, with visits extending into wider days out in Huddersfield town centre.

"It's the most creative space we know of – both parents and kids can get involved and share in the enjoyment and we come away with something fun every time"



Community & Belonging

Across the evaluation, participants consistently described MakerWorld Gallery as welcoming, inclusive and community-focused. Families spoke about:

- Recognising familiar faces
- Returning weekly
- Building friendships
- Feeling accepted
- Becoming part of a wider creative community

For some volunteers and young people, the Gallery also created pathways into leadership, paid work and creative opportunities.

"It is the most friendly, inviting community-based thing we have in Huddersfield and the staff and volunteers go above and beyond for all the families"

Youth Voice & Creative Progression

The Gallery successfully extended MakerWorld's offer to older children and teenagers through youth-led programming, MakerSkate skatepark and takeover events.

Teenagers were supported not only as participants, but as artists, organisers, volunteers and performers. The Young producer programme supported a cohort of 3 young people aged 16-22 to develop skills through designing and producing a music and spoken word event. This progression pathway was especially important for young people who had grown up attending MakerWorld activity and wanted to remain connected to creative spaces as they got older.

Placemaking & Town Centre Impact

MakerWorld Gallery played an important role in changing how families experienced Huddersfield town centre.

Many participants described the Gallery as a primary reason for visiting town, often combining visits with shopping, cafés and other activities. The transformation of an empty retail unit into an active cultural space created a visible sense of creativity, energy and welcome within the town centre. Families frequently reflected that the Gallery helped Huddersfield feel more vibrant, imaginative, welcoming (to children/families), safe, friendly and community-focused

“There should always be a place for MakerWorld in the town for children and adults to have some great experience in arts and making”

Town Centre Impact
Around 2/3 of families visiting MakerWorld Gallery told us they were also doing other things in town during their trip, like shopping, eating out & other family-friendly activities demonstrating the Gallery's wider contribution to the town-centre



Overall Reflections

MakerWorld Gallery demonstrated the value of free, welcoming and child-centred cultural spaces within Huddersfield town centre.

Across the year, the Gallery became more than an exhibition space. For many families, it became part of their routine: somewhere creative, calming and inclusive where children and young people felt genuinely welcomed.

The programme successfully combined contemporary art, play and participation in ways that encouraged children and young people to create, experiment and see their ideas publicly celebrated. Families repeatedly described the importance of children being treated not simply as audiences, but as artists, makers and contributors.

One of the strongest themes throughout the evaluation was the atmosphere of the space. Participants consistently described the Gallery as calm, sensory- friendly and non-judgemental, particularly for neurodiverse children and families who often struggled to access other cultural or leisure environments comfortably.

The Gallery also played an important role within the wider town centre. Many families described it as a key reason for visiting Huddersfield, often combining trips with shopping, cafés and other activities. The transformation of an empty retail unit into a vibrant cultural destination helped create a stronger sense of welcome, creativity and community within the town.

The programme additionally highlighted the importance of long-term creative opportunities for older children and teenagers. Through youth activity, volunteering and MakerSkate, the Gallery created progression routes that helped young people remain connected to creativity, culture and community as they grew older.

Overall, the evaluation suggests that MakerWorld Gallery filled a genuine gap in local cultural provision. It demonstrated how creative spaces designed around children and young people can support confidence, belonging, wellbeing and community connection, while also contributing positively to the life and vibrancy of the town centre.

Most importantly, MakerWorld Gallery showed that children and young people are not simply audiences for culture, but active contributors to the cultural life of towns and cities.

Appendix: Case Studies

The following case studies have been developed from participant conversations, evaluation interviews and feedback postcards gathered through MakerWorld Gallery activities and exhibitions during 2025–26. They are intended to provide a varied but consistent set of short stories illustrating the impact of the programme on children, young people, families, volunteers and the wider Huddersfield community.

The case studies focus mainly on experiences of MakerWorld Gallery and its exhibitions, installations and participatory spaces, while also drawing on wider MakerWorld involvement where this helps explain longer-term impact. Together, they reflect recurring themes of imagination, self-belief, sensory play, family relationships, social connection, wellbeing and connection to place.

Featured Artist Case Study: Abigail Horn

Abigail Horn described exhibiting at MakerWorld Gallery as a valuable opportunity to develop her practice within a gallery setting. Working in installation and mixed media, she said the experience helped strengthen her confidence and ambition, while also supporting her professional profile through documentation, feedback and new connections.

A particularly important part of the experience was seeing how children and adults engaged with the work together. Abigail reflected that adults often stepped back and allowed children to take the lead, creating shared moments of curiosity and exploration. For her, this reinforced the value of cultural spaces that take children's creativity seriously while remaining artistically ambitious.

She also spoke positively about the supportive environment created by the MakerWorld team and the opportunity to connect with like-minded creatives. Aside from suggesting clearer information about available tools and technical equipment, Abigail described the experience very positively and emphasised the importance of working in a welcoming, child-centred cultural space.

Case Study 1

Shaneela and her extended family regularly travel into Huddersfield with children ranging from toddlers to pre-teens, and MakerWorld Gallery has become part of their weekly routine. For them, it is a dependable place to spend time together, return to often, and build family rituals around creativity.

The family describe MakerWorld Gallery as a child-friendly space where changing exhibitions, materials and displays keep everyone engaged. Younger children enjoy painting, drawing and sensory play, while the older ones are drawn to the imaginative installations and open-ended activities. One child became especially absorbed after making a lion sculpture and proudly performing with it afterwards.

Shaneela values the freedom the Gallery offers, especially for a large family group. The children can experiment, make a mess and explore materials in ways that are not always possible at home, and the visits have become their main reason for coming into Huddersfield town centre. For this family, MakerWorld Gallery has made creativity part of everyday life and strengthened their connection to the town.

Case Study 2

One parent described MakerWorld as one of the few places where their child feels settled and able to concentrate. The family return because the space suits a child who can find busy or overstimulating environments hard to manage.

The parent said there is enough structure within activities at MakerWorld and MakerWorld Gallery that their child feels secure, yet enough openness for them to become fully absorbed in making. That balance helps them stay focused, enjoy the activity and return to ideas later at home using cardboard, recycled materials and craft supplies.

The parent linked these visits to growing self-belief, problem-solving and a stronger sense of independence. They also saw the MakerWorld and MakerWorld Gallery spaces as essential local resources because they are free, sensory-friendly and dependable.

Case Study 3

A family visiting MakerWorld Gallery for the first time attended a filmmaking workshop with two children aged eight and ten. Although they had taken part in occasional cultural activities elsewhere, experiences like this were not a regular part of family life, so the visit felt new and memorable from the outset.

Inside MakerWorld Gallery, the children experimented with lighting, sound recording and camera equipment while also trying out performance and acting. The parent said the session felt lively, imaginative and easy to join, and both children quickly settled into the

space. The family also described the Gallery itself as colourful and inspiring, with a sense of discovery that encouraged them to stay longer.

The children left feeling “very happy”, “excited” and proud of what they had made, and the visit became the main reason the family spent time in Huddersfield town centre that day. They extended the trip by exploring nearby cafés and cultural spaces, turning one workshop into a fuller day out together. It showed how MakerWorld Gallery can turn a first visit into a lasting connection with the town.

Case Study 4

Leah regularly visits MakerWorld with her young daughter Luna, and the space has become an important part of their time together. Through family sessions, youth activity and community projects linked to exhibitions, they have built an ongoing relationship with both the Gallery and the wider MakerWorld offer.

Leah described MakerWorld Gallery as a much-needed creative outlet in a town with limited free arts activity for children. Luna has explored recycled materials, sensory play and exhibition-linked making, while also becoming more comfortable around other children. Leah values the child- friendly atmosphere and the way MakerWorld and MakerWorld Gallery invite families to explore, make and spend time together without pressure.

These visits have made family life feel more imaginative and connected, giving Leah and Luna shared experiences that continue beyond the session itself. Even with the practical challenge of travelling into town, Leah sees MakerWorld and MakerWorld Gallery as a valuable part of Huddersfield because it brings energy, family activity and culture into the centre.

Case Study 5

Beth visits MakerWorld every Friday with her children, Rupert and Poppy, and the family now see it as a regular part of their week. Their ongoing visits have given the children a familiar place to return to and have helped make creative activity part of family routine.

Beth explained that Rupert can be cautious in unfamiliar settings, but MakerWorld’s hands-on activities and relaxed atmosphere have gradually helped him try new things and share more of himself. The family value the chance to encounter different kinds of making and exhibition activity that are hard to find elsewhere locally, and they appreciate that the Gallery is free, so they are able to visit often.

Over time, Beth has seen Rupert become more patient, more independent and more willing to engage with new people and ideas. For the family, MakerWorld has become a positive and dependable presence in Huddersfield town centre, helping a child grow while making the town feel more lively for families. It is a place they trust to keep opening

Case Study 6

Cassie and her son Charlie attend MakerWorld every week, and the visits have become an important part of Charlie’s creative life. He especially values the chance to explore ideas in his own way rather than follow a fixed outcome.

At MakerWorld and MakerWorld Gallery, Charlie has learned to use recycled and everyday materials imaginatively, and Cassie said the activities encourage children to think for themselves. He enjoys the freedom to experiment, make choices and see different approaches to art and display within the Gallery environment, which has helped him take real ownership of what he makes.

Cassie has seen Charlie take more pride in finishing projects and become more willing to share his ideas with others. The family also value the sense of community that comes with returning each week. Their experience shows how MakerWorld Gallery helps children grow through freedom, encouragement and the simple joy of making something that feels like their own.

Case Study 7

A family from the HD1 area first discovered MakerWorld during the Covid-19 period through Facebook and later became regular visitors to MakerWorld and MakerWorld Gallery. Over time, it became a meaningful part of family life and somewhere the children looked forward to returning to.

The parent described MakerWorld Gallery as community-focused and engaging, with plenty for children to explore. They enjoyed moving between hands-on making and immersive exhibitions, including light, technology and interactive installations. The mix of activity, display and social contact meant the children could try things out, meet others and feel part of something bigger than a single session.

One of the most powerful moments was seeing the children’s artwork displayed publicly in the Gallery and around the town centre, which gave them a strong sense of pride and visibility. For this family, MakerWorld Gallery does more than offer activities; it shows children that what they make has value in public life. That recognition leaves a lasting mark.

Case Study 8

Neek, aged seven, has taken part in MakerWorld-linked activity for several years, and MakerWorld Gallery is now an important part of her life. Her family see it as one of the places where she feels most settled and able to be herself.

Family members described Neek as naturally quiet and reserved, especially after experiences of personal loss, and said MakerWorld gives her a reliable environment where she feels socially at ease. The sensory-friendly atmosphere, familiar routines and room for self-directed making have helped her engage at her own pace without pressure.

Returning to MakerWorld has helped Neek feel steadier in unfamiliar situations and given her a strong sense of belonging. One family member described the space as feeling “sunny” and dependable, and that feeling has stayed with her.

Case Study 9

A parent attending MakerWorld Gallery with her daughters described the space as transformational for their family. Before discovering it, they rarely took part in creative activity outside school and had little reason to spend time together in cultural spaces.

The children now attend regularly and enjoy exploring new materials, group activities and ideas within MakerWorld and MakerWorld Gallery. Their parent said the sessions help them unwind, build social skills and express themselves more freely. What stands out to her is the lack of pressure: families can join in at their own pace while still feeling part of a wider community.

MakerWorld has also changed the parent’s own relationship with Huddersfield town centre. After years of avoiding town because of anxiety in public spaces, she now feels able to visit because the space gives the family both a reason to come in and somewhere to feel comfortable. Their experience shows how one child-focused cultural space can reopen a whole town to a family.

Case Study 10

A grandmother who visits regularly with her seven-year-old granddaughter sees the MakerWorld space as an important place for them to return to together. They value it not just as an activity, but as part of their shared routine and relationship.

They especially enjoy discussing exhibitions, exploring installations and trying out new ideas side by side. While they like making together, the grandmother also values MakerWorld Gallery as a place where children’s work is displayed publicly alongside immersive artworks and changing exhibitions, giving the visit a sense of occasion as well as play.

She feels these visits support her granddaughter’s learning and self-belief, while also giving older family members new ideas to continue creative play at home. The family said they would rarely visit Huddersfield town centre without visiting MakerWorld or MakerWorld Gallery.

Case Study 11

Two mothers who attend MakerWorld with four young children described it as one of the few places where children can be “creative and loud and themselves.” For both families, the space has become a trusted setting where children are not expected to fit into a narrow idea of how they should behave.

They value the flexibility of the MakerWorld Gallery experience, knowing they can stay for half an hour or several hours depending on what the children need. The children enjoy arriving and finding new installations, displays and activities each time, and the sense of surprise keeps them curious. The parents also appreciate the relaxed atmosphere and the feeling that families are trusted to take part in their own way.

Both mothers said familiar staff relationships make a real difference, helping children feel listened to and respected. Over time, that has encouraged them to join in more fully and share more of their ideas. Their experience shows that MakerWorld Gallery creates room for children to participate on their own terms and still feel they belong.

Case Study 12

One mother described MakerWorld as an essential part of her seven-year-old daughter’s routine. Her daughter is neurodiverse, and the family return because it is an environment where she feels able to explore without becoming overwhelmed.

The parent said MakerWorld Gallery supports her daughter’s independence while still feeling steady and manageable. Through regular visits she has formed friendships, developed practical making skills and become more willing to try unfamiliar experiences. The space works because it is both sensory-friendly and open-ended, allowing her to engage in her own way.

The impact has reached beyond the child alone. Her mother said she has also grown more comfortable speaking with others and joining in through regular visits to MakerWorld and MakerWorld Gallery. For this family, MakerWorld offers a rare kind of public space: one that supports neurodiverse children while strengthening connection for everyone around them.

Case Study 13

A parent who has been involved in MakerWorld activity since her daughter was three described MakerWorld as a formative part of her childhood. Over the years, the family have returned again and again; it has become one of the places her daughter most strongly associates with making and being seen.

What mattered most to the family was seeing children’s artwork celebrated publicly

through exhibitions and installations at MakerWorld Gallery. The parent said this gave her daughter a sense of achievement and helped her imagine what life as an artist might look like. The friendly and welcoming atmosphere also encouraged friendships and inspired her to keep making at home between visits.

The child now often brings friends along and continues creating independently, showing how the effect lasts beyond the session itself. For this parent, MakerWorld Gallery offers visible encouragement, creative ambition and a valuable off-screen alternative when families need it most.

Case Study 14

Sylvia, aged sixteen, has been involved in The Children's Art School since early childhood and now supports sessions as a young helper at MakerWorld and MakerWorld Gallery. Her relationship with the organisation stretches across many years, giving her a rare long-term view of what the space has meant as she has grown up.

She described MakerWorld Gallery as "an imaginary world come true for kids" and spoke about the importance of its sensory experience, immersive exhibitions and creative freedom. As she has got older, she has also valued how the Gallery connects with youth activity such as MakerSkate, creating ways for teenagers to stay involved rather than feeling they have aged out.

For Sylvia, that continuity has shaped her sense of identity, belonging and possibility. She sees MakerWorld and MakerWorld Gallery as unusual because it brings children and young people from many backgrounds into one shared creative space and gives them reasons to keep returning.

Case Study 15

One family came across MakerWorld Gallery by chance while walking through Huddersfield town centre and decided to step inside. What began as a spontaneous visit quickly felt like something they wanted to build into family life.

The parent immediately recognised how well the Gallery suited her ten-year-old son, who enjoys drawing and making. She described it as a memorable off-screen experience where children could learn through tactile play, imagination and trying things out for themselves. The environment felt open, positive and easy to enter, even on a first visit.

The family were keen to come back so their son could keep developing his skills and confidence through future visits. Reflecting on its wider importance, the parent said MakerWorld and MakerWorld Gallery are exactly the kind of creative, child-friendly spaces that town centres need at weekends and in school holidays.

Case Study 16

Laura and her seven-year-old son Charlie have taken part in MakerWorld activity since 2021 and became regular visitors to MakerWorld Gallery once the exhibition space opened. Over time, the Gallery has become a familiar place where Charlie can focus, make and feel recognised.

Laura said Charlie finds MakerWorld absorbing and easy to settle into, often staying with a project for long periods. Through regular visits the family have also built friendships and become part of a community of familiar faces. One especially meaningful moment was seeing Charlie's work included in the "Intergalactic Space Jungle" exhibition, which friends and relatives came to see.

That public display gave Charlie a strong sense of pride and showed the family opportunities they felt he would not otherwise encounter locally. For Laura, MakerWorld Gallery opens children up to art, exhibition experience and recognition in ways that genuinely widen their horizons.

Case Study 17

Chloe began volunteering at MakerWorld Gallery after a period of isolation and anxiety following difficulties at college. At first, simply turning up felt daunting, but she kept coming back and gradually built a relationship with the space and the people in it.

She said MakerWorld felt non-judgemental from the beginning, and the support of staff and volunteers helped her become more comfortable in social situations. Over time she moved from volunteering into a paid helper role across workshops and Gallery events, while also taking part in youth activity linked to MakerWorld Gallery.

Through this experience, Chloe learned how to communicate with different age groups, made important friendships and found routes into wider cultural work, including a Young Producer role with Chol Theatre. For her, MakerWorld turned isolation into belonging and opened up a future she could picture herself in.

Case Study 18

A parent who visits MakerWorld Gallery with a toddler described it as a gentler alternative to traditional indoor play centres. The family return because the space feels manageable for both child and adult, rather than noisy or overwhelming.

The child enjoys exploring sensory activities, recycled materials and interactive installations at their own pace, while the parent appreciates being able to relax nearby. The slower rhythm of MakerWorld Gallery makes it easier to follow the child's lead, and the environment feels much more supportive than many spaces aimed at very young children.

For this family, the value lies in having a free place where sensory exploration and early imaginative play can happen without stress. The parent felt opportunities like this matter for children's development and are still too rare in public settings.

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Case Study 20

A parent visiting with a four-year-old daughter described moving between MakerWorld workshops and MakerWorld Gallery installations during their time in town. The family enjoyed MakerWorld, but it was MakerWorld Gallery that stood out as the place where they could linger, explore and connect with others.

They spent several hours exploring together and found themselves talking with other families through shared activities and informal encounters. The parent said MakerWorld Gallery felt inspiring and open-ended, encouraging adults as well as children to take part rather than stand back and observe. That shared exploration gave the visit a strong sense of warmth and ease.

For this parent, the Gallery's value lies not only in what children make, but in the conversations and connections that happen around it. It creates space for families to feel part of a wider community while doing something enjoyable together. Their visit shows how cultural participation can also be social glue.

Case Study 21

A family visiting MakerWorld Gallery with a six-year-old and a baby valued having somewhere both children could enjoy together. The difference in age might easily have made a shared outing difficult, but the Gallery gave them a space that worked for the whole family.

The parent described the exhibitions as interactive and accessible, with plenty of opportunities for children to touch, move, build and experiment independently. Unlike more formal gallery settings, MakerWorld Gallery encouraged participation and curiosity, and both children stayed engaged despite being at very different stages of development.

The family came away wanting to see more exhibitions like this for children in Huddersfield, because the visit felt both enjoyable and unusually well thought through. For them, MakerWorld Gallery showed that cultural spaces can welcome very young children without losing quality or ambition.

Case Study 22

Several parents compared MakerWorld and MakerWorld Gallery favourably with commercial play centres, often after trying both kinds of spaces with their children. For them, MakerWorld offers a more thoughtful and affordable way to spend time together. One family said the MakerWorld Gallery felt "better than playgyms" because it encouraged imagination rather than overstimulation.

Another parent appreciated that the atmosphere was gentle enough for adults to settle while children explored. Families repeatedly valued the slower pace, the open-ended materials and the chance for children to shape their own experience instead of moving through fixed activities.

At a time when many family activities feel financially out of reach, parents saw MakerWorld and its Gallery as an important free alternative that still feels rich and worthwhile. Its value lies in combining imagination, ease and accessibility in one public space.

Case Study 23

One parent described how regular visits to MakerWorld had gradually helped her children become more at ease around others. What began as a tentative family outing developed into an activity they returned to because it consistently brought out the best in them.

Through workshops, shared making and informal conversations, the children had regular chances to communicate, collaborate and join in with unfamiliar children and adults. Their parent felt that MakerWorld's supportive atmosphere made this easier, because families

were encouraged to take part without fear of getting things wrong.

Over time, the children became more willing to join group activity, share ideas and try unfamiliar challenges, and their parent linked this directly to the steady rhythm of coming back. She felt the encouragement of staff and volunteers played a central role in that change.

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