

Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service Access Policy

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1.0 **Introduction**

- 1.1 Promoting access to museum buildings, collections, resources and staff is 'usually seen in terms of identifying barriers that prevent participation and developing strategies to dismantle them. Barriers come in many forms, and may be physical, sensory, intellectual, attitudinal, social, cultural or financial' ('Code of Ethics for Museums', Museums Association, 6th Edition 2015).
- 1.2 This document details Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service's Access Policy. It replaces the previous Disability Access Policy written in 2007 and revised in 2010.
- 1.3 The Policy takes account of The Museum Association's 'Code of Ethics for Museums' which advocates the principle of treating everyone equally, with honesty and respect, and states (in section 1.1) that, 'All those who work in and with museums should provide public access to, and meaningful engagement with, museums, collections, and information about collections without discrimination' ('Code of Ethics for Museums', Museums Association, 6th Edition 2015).
- 1.4 This Policy upholds the statutory requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the associated Public Sector Equality Duty 2011. The latter ensures that public bodies have to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. It also requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination
 - advance equality of opportunity
 - foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

2.0 **Action Plan and Policy Development**

- 2.1 An Action Plan has been developed from the policy statements in Section 1.0 and forms part of this Policy (Appendix A).
- 2.2 Responsibility for the future development of the Policy resides in the Museum Service's Wider Management Team.

3.0 **Standards and Definitions**

- 3.1 This Policy commits Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service to uphold equal opportunities, and encompasses current and potential employees and visitors to the museums and associated buildings and services. It

recognises the right of all people to participate fully in the work of the museum service and to the provision of an inclusive service for visitors.

- 3.2 The Public Sector Equality Duty provides additional guidance on the relevant 'protected characteristics' in terms of the Equality Act 2010. These are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation (section 149.7).
- 3.3 Under the Equality Act 2010 a person is regarded as having a disability if they have: 'a physical or mental impairment that has a "substantial" and "long-term" negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities'. In this context 'substantial' is more than minor or trivial and 'long-term' means 12 months or more.
- 3.4 The Policy is also constructed using the social definition of disability: that society disables people by putting barriers in their way. These range from physical and communication barriers to those of attitude, which result in discrimination.

4.0 **Employment and Training**

- 4.1 Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service's employment practices operate within the framework of the Borough Council's policies on employment and recruitment established to ensure a consistent and fair approach to all employees, based on objective criteria and standardised procedures. The Council complies with legislative requirements.
- 4.2 Within this framework the Museum Service will undertake periodic reviews of the staffing profile of the service, and assess work patterns and procedures to ensure that job specifications do not exclude people with protected characteristics.
- 4.3 Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service recognises that appropriate training is an essential element in fulfilling equal opportunities commitments and enhancing visitor services for people with protected characteristics. Regular training, starting with induction procedures, will be provided to ensure all staff are familiar with access issues and the services provided by the museum for people with protected characteristics. Access training for staff responsible for recruitment and personnel issues will also be provided. These training programmes will be subject to regular reviews and will be outlined in the Action Plan.

5.0 **Physical Environment**

- 5.1 Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service will continue to improve physical access to the buildings and facilities in its care. This includes consideration

of the approaches to buildings, interiors and building facilities. These procedures will be subject to consultation with user groups, where appropriate. Segregated provision will be avoided where possible.

- 5.2 If, after due process, it is found that reasonable alterations to extend physical access are not practical the Museum Service will develop methods to enable visitors who are unable to access the particular area to gain some meaningful experience of that offer or facility.
- 5.3 Action will be taken to make provision for staff with disabilities so that they are not precluded from fulfilling the necessary requirements of their post.
- 5.4 Methods of public transport and details of parking facilities for the museum venues and associated buildings will be the subject of review by the Museum Service to ensure that, where possible, transport and parking arrangements are available for visitors with disabilities. Where provisions are not available the museum service will advocate the initiation or installation of appropriate facilities. This information will be made available as part of the marketing materials detailing the services facilities (see Section 8.0).
- 5.5 Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service has developed, and will continuously monitor, a Pricing Policy relating to concessionary rates, which is consistent and easy to apply. The Pricing Policy will function within the Council's overall guidelines. Information on pricing will be made available through marketing information and on site in the museums.
- 5.6 All aspects of the Policy relating to the physical environment will be subject to regular review by the Museums Wider Management Team.

6.0 **Collections and Displays**

- 6.1 Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service recognises that intellectual access to the collections and activities is as important a principle as physical access. The Museum Service will ensure that practices are adopted that enable the widest possible audience to have access to the collections and the information provided through the medium of displays and activities.
- 6.2 In accordance with equal opportunities principles, collecting policies will, where appropriate, take account of the experiences of people with disabilities. Where the historical treatment of people with disabilities is addressed, stereotypes and generalisations should be avoided and be balanced by recognition of the positive contribution of people with disabilities to society.

6.3 Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service acknowledges that any individual method chosen to provide information on the collections cannot be accessed by all visitors. It will accordingly interpret collections on display using a variety of methods designed to make the collections accessible to a wide range of audiences. The Museum Service will also undertake research into the provision of alternative communication methods where a particular additional need has been identified.

7.0 **Learning**

7.1 The Museum Service seeks to support schools in line with the National Curriculum, to encourage life long learning and to generate public understanding and enjoyment of the museum collections.

7.2 Learning programmes will be developed which will be to the benefit of people with disabilities. These projects will be developed with regard to the broad objectives outlined in the Action Plan (Appendix A).

8.0 **Communications**

8.1 Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service recognises the importance of marketing the service and events programme to the widest possible audience. Research will be undertaken to develop a strategy that seeks to communicate and promote the facilities available to people with disabilities. This strategy will aim to encourage their visits to the museums and to promote events designed to meet their needs.

9.0 **Programming**

9.1 Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service will develop projects that are aimed at raising its profile amongst people with disabilities, encouraging both a more inclusive and representative service and a wider visitor profile.

9.2 In programming temporary exhibitions the Museum Service acknowledges the importance of facilitating access to objects not normally on display and, additionally, the opportunity to explore topics that can include the history and involvement of people with disabilities.

9.3 Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service works, and will continue to work, in partnership with people with disabilities, community groups, arts and heritage agencies in order to share expertise and develop facilities and services.

10.0 **Evaluation and Monitoring**

- 10.1 Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service is committed to assessing, identifying and addressing access issues by means of internal checklists, access audits, or working with local advocacy groups.
- 10.2 Monitoring and evaluation of the Access Policy will be undertaken by the Museum Wider Management Team to ensure that all aspects of the Museum Service are fulfilling the requirements agreed in the Policy.
- 10.3 Projects that are undertaken to develop access within the Museum Service will be monitored through a range of methods of evaluation.
- 10.4 Comments that are received, whether they are suggestions or complaints, will be responded to by a member of the Museum Management Team in accordance with Council procedures and any necessary amendments made to service provision.

11.0 **Dissemination of Information**

- 11.1 A copy of the Access Policy will be given to all members of staff currently employed by the service. All new members of staff will receive a copy when they commence employment.
- 11.2 Companies and individuals who undertake work for the Museums Service will be required to uphold the principles of the Policy.
- 11.3 The Policy will be made available to any member of the public who requests a copy.

Appendix A

Action Plan

Barrier	Museums Service Aim
Organisational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff to be trained in customer care, equalities and disability awareness.
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to develop physical access to all museum venues, including their approaches, interiors and facilities. All information to follow best-practice guidelines in terms of colour contrasts, typefaces, font sizes etc.
Sensory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan interpretation to broaden access for people with sensory impairments in both temporary exhibitions and when refreshing or redeveloping permanent displays, e.g. audio interpretation, sign language and braille, objects to touch and handle, smells boxes. Ensure publicity information is accessible to a broad audience.
Intellectual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure information can be conveyed at different levels by layering interpretation and including open display objects, hands-on activities and trails, thereby suiting different learning styles and interests. Use plain English in all written interpretation and communications. Use lively and engaging interpretation wherever appropriate to share our stories with the widest possible range of audiences.
Social and Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure a range of subjects in the temporary exhibitions and events programmes to appeal to a broad spectrum of visitors. Develop and sustain community links Reflect people from different communities and disabled people in the collections, interpretation and publicity material.
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain free entrance to all museum venues with the exception of Colchester Castle where regular free 'days' will be offered. Continue policy of affordable events with concessions. Maintain affordable shop products and refreshments.

