

Access Policy

Kingston History Centre



1. Introduction

- 1.1. Kingston History Centre, along with Kingston Museum forms the Kingston Heritage Service. The Heritage Service exists to identify and celebrate what is uniquely special about our borough and its people, locales, traditions and institutions and to

build on this history while striving to discover, record and share the new stories occurring all around us.

1.2. The Heritage Service has the following objectives:

- To collect, care for, interpret and promote the borough's heritage in order to inspire a sense of pride and a greater understanding of Kingston's rich and diverse history.
- To work with other local cultural organisations to make connections between the aspects of culture in the borough which define Kingston as a unique place, such as its riverside location, its royal connections and its innovation, creativity and developments in arts and science.
- To contribute to the growth, regeneration, health and wellbeing of our borough through a variety of partnerships, projects and learning opportunities.

1.3. Kingston History Centre (referred to as the "History Centre") collects, manages and provides access and understanding to historical archives and local studies materials relating primarily to the area of the present day borough, with some items contributing to a wider local, national and international understanding of its past.

1.4. The purpose of this policy is to ensure the History Centre:

- Provides access to its collections
- Removes perceived barriers to access and encourage engagement through new and exciting experiences
- Increases understanding of the history of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
- Plays a key role in helping residents develop a sense of identity and a sense of place, for individuals and within local communities
- Uses its collections to support people through health and wellbeing
- Supports research at all levels, particularly in a local context
- Supports the operation of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
- Encourages tourism and support business and economic regeneration in the area

1.5. This policy relates to and is supported by the following documents:

- Kingston Heritage Service Forward Plan 2016-2020
- Heritage Community Strategy 2017-2020
- Kingston History Centre Access Plan
- Kingston Heritage Service Fees and Charges
- Kingston History Centre Collections Development Policy
- Kingston History Centre Collections Information Policy
- Kingston History Centre Collections Care and Conservation Policy
- Kingston History Centre Collections Improvement Plan

1.6. This policy is also supported by relevant procedural documents which will be regularly reviewed and updated.

1.7. The policy has been created in consultation with Kingston Heritage Service staff and senior colleagues to align with the strategy for the entire Heritage Service and Culture Team. It has been informed by the results of the Survey of Visitors to UK Archives 2016 in which Kingston History Centre participated.

2. Definition and scope

2.1. Access is defined by any means by which individuals or groups interact with the collections, whether it is related to:

- Physical Access
- Intellectual access
- Disability access
- Cultural access
- Financial access

This policy applies to any person, group, organisation or business who wish to access Kingston History Centre and its collections in any way as defined in the above list.

3. Access Provision

3.1. Physical Access

- 3.1.1 Kingston History Centre is open to the public 30 hours a week, Wednesday to Saturday, with a late opening on a Thursday evening. It operates an open door policy, with free access to collections onsite. Information on how to access the History Centre is widely published online and on the service leaflet.
- 3.1.3 The History Centre will make special arrangements during closed hours to accommodate groups who wish to visit and access the collections. It will also deliver a programme of events, such as workshops, to encourage new visitors in to the History Centre and experience and use collections.
- 3.1.4 Where possible, the History Centre will partake in exhibitions and events which involve the display of collections or off-site access to collections (e.g. through workshops).
- 3.1.5 It is understood that remote access to our collections and resources are sought from those not able to visit the History Centre in Kingston for any reason.
- 3.1.6 The History Centre receives requests for remote access by phone, letter, email and social media. A response will be issued within 10 working days.
- 3.1.7 The History Centre will provide a reasonable volume of research and access to collections free of charge to remote enquirers, as set out in Kingston Heritage Service's Fees and Charges.

3.2. Intellectual Access

- 3.2.1 The History Centre will provide intellectual access to as wide a range of visitors as possible through staff support with using resources, reference material, indexes and catalogues, and interpretation.
- 3.2.2 In line with the Collections Information Policy, the History Centre will work to constantly improve information about our collections, and access to it, which will provide intellectual context and understanding of the collections held.
- 3.2.3 The History Centre will take all reasonable opportunities to publish and interpret its collections, through publications, exhibitions and community projects for example, and where possible co-curate with audiences and donors to better understand the collections and more widely engage people with them.
- 3.2.4 Digital tools will be used to enhance understanding of the service and the collections, as well as maximise its reach of the service, whether this be through online access to our catalogues, or the use of digital platforms such as e-newsletters, sharing platforms and social media, to distribute content and engage virtual visitors.
- 3.2.5 Facilitated workshops, talks and other events will be delivered and tailored accordingly to ensure that audiences are engaged at a suitable level and get the maximum benefit from their experience.

3.3. Disability Access

- 3.3.1 Provisions are made so that any person wishing to access the History Centre can do so, irrespective of additional physical access requirements.
- 3.3.2 The staff at the History Centre will ensure that the right support is available so that collections can be accessed and used by any visitor, irrespective of any physical, sensory or learning disability which may impact on their use and understanding of the material.

3.4. Cultural Access

- 3.3.1 The History Centre will work to remove cultural barriers to access. This could include targeted work with specific communities and exploring ways to remove barriers such as language or traditions in recording information.
- 3.3.2 Through targeted work, the building of relationships across the diverse borough, and proactive collecting, it is the aim of the service to make the collections more representative of this diversity and build a sense of shared identity through heritage.
- 3.3.3 The History Centre will work to remove cultural barriers to access. This could include targeted work with specific communities and exploring ways to remove barriers, such as language.
- 3.3.4 Through the Community Heritage Strategy, support will be given to local organisations and groups to help them develop and lead on heritage projects which will record and celebrate heritage important to them.

3.5. Financial Access

- 3.4.1 The collections and resources at Kingston History Centre is free to any person, group, organisation or business at the point of access.
- 3.4.2 The History Centre will provide a reasonable volume of research and access to collections free of charge to remote enquirers, as set out in Kingston Heritage Service's Fees and Charges.
- 3.4.3 Outreach, reproductions, filming and publication of collection may be charged for as set out in Kingston Heritage Service's Fees and Charges. The service strives to keep fees and charges at a reasonable rate, based on the audience, use, purpose and distribution of the finished product. Fees and charges are benchmarked against similar services.
- 3.4.4 All financial income generated through access will be used to offset the cost of the service to the Royal Borough of Kingston and support the work of the History Centre.

4. Legal Requirements and Standards

- 4.1. Under the requirements of the following legislation, Kingston History Centre will manage access to collections or the information within them.
- Local Government (Records) Act 1962 and 1972
 - Public Records Act, 1958
 - Freedom of Information Act, 2001
 - Data Protection Act, 1998
 - Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988
 - Representation of the People Regulations, 2001
 - Equality Act 2010
- 4.2. The History Centre acknowledges that other legislation may influence access to collections and will follow all legal requirements to the best of the best of our ability
- 4.3. Any requests for information made under either the above or other legislation, or that form part of legal proceedings or criminal investigations, will be answered in a timely manner, in line with the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames' relevant policies.
- 4.4. The following professional guidance will be taken in to consideration when reviewing the access policy and procedures
- Code of Ethics of the Archives and Records Association, 2016
 - CILIP's Code of Professional Conduct, 2012 in particular the sections on responsibilities to information and its users, and responsibilities to society
 - ISAD(G): in ensuring that collections information is of sufficient quality so as to enable access through adequate catalogue search.
- 4.5. Review and improvement to access will be continual and carried out through stakeholder liaison, such as through the Researchers Group, visitor feedback, the CIPFA visitor survey and other appropriate channels.

5. Roles and responsibilities

- 5.1. All staff and volunteers are responsible for following and implementing this policy.
- 5.2. The Borough Archivist, Assistant Archivist and Local History Officer are responsible for decision making in relation to this policy. Final decisions are at their discretion.

6. Communicating this policy

- 6.1. The History Centre will ensure that this policy is promoted, publicised and understood by staff, volunteers, public, management and stakeholders through:
 - Production of this policy on the Heritage Service's website
 - Training for staff, volunteers and where appropriate other stakeholders such as project partners
 - Integration of this policy in to professional activities.

7. Implementation, Monitoring & Review

- 7.1. The Heritage Service acknowledges that a policy is a time bound document and that the priorities and objectives of any organisation change over time due to a range of impacts. The policy must be flexible and able to respond to change – both to local impacts and wider economic and political contexts.
- 7.2. The policy will be reviewed in October 2020, with all necessary consultation being undertaken as part of this process.