

Access and Research Policy

Kingston Heritage Service

Revised October 2016



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KINGSTON UPON THAMES

Access Policy

Governing Body: Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames

The governing body within the Council is the Place Directorate.

Policies are approved by the Director of Place and were approved on:

Roy Thompson

Director of Place

Date at which policy due for review: October 202

Our definition of access

We recognise access as something which is made possible when physical, cultural, social, financial, intellectual, psychological and emotional barriers to learning from and enjoyment of the Museum and Heritage Service are removed, reduced, or overcome.

Our commitment to accessibility

Our commitment is long term and our aim is to achieve the optimum level of access to the Heritage Service's collections, and to enable the widest possible spectrum of people from all sections of the community to enjoy independent use of the museum's public facilities. Our policy is one of continuous incremental improvement as our resources permit.

Our policy is to build accessibility into everything that we do to develop and improve the Heritage Service. We undertake specific projects to eliminate barriers to access which we identify in our building and in relation to our exhibitions.

Factors to consider	Current situation
<p>Physical accessibility The ability of people with physical disabilities to reach and appreciate every part of the Museum and Kingston History Centre. The needs of the elderly and of people caring for young children are considered as physical access issues.</p>	<p>There is a lift to the Art Gallery and a wheelchair lift to enable wheelchair users to ascend from entrance level to the Muybridge Gallery. There is a toilet which includes disabled access.</p> <p>Kingston History Centre has a platform lift to provide access to the search room, lift access to the rest of the Guildhall building, a disabled toilet and low level PCs and microfilm readers to enable full access to resources. There is a portable hearing loop available in the building as required.</p> <p>The KHS web pages on the council website are fully accessible to people with disabilities including those who may be using them with the help of special equipment.</p>
<p>Sensory accessibility The ability of those with impaired vision or hearing to enjoy and appreciate KHS buildings, exhibitions and collections.</p>	<p>The Learning and Engagement Officer offers sensory workshops for visually impaired people. There is a free audio tour of the Museum available from the front desk. The Museum has large print copies of the case captions available.</p>

<p>Intellectual access The ability of people with learning disabilities and other intellectual disabilities to engage with and enjoy the museum and its exhibitions.</p>	<p>The Learning and Engagement Officer offers sensory, history and creative workshops for people with learning difficulties and runs dementia cafes for older people.</p>
<p>Cultural access The needs of people for whom English is not a first language, or whose background knowledge of English history and culture may be limited, to engage with and enjoy the museum and its exhibitions.</p>	<p>The Learning and Engagement Officer encourages ESOL groups to come to the Museum. She works with the Italian British Association and with an Italian artist who attracts Italian families to the Museum. She ran two workshops during the summer in partnership with Refugee Action Kingston, aimed at refugee children and their families. Art Gallery exhibitions regularly focus on groups with members who do not have English as a first language such as a 2016 display on Kingston's South Asian community and a 2017 display on Korean artists. Kingston History Centre ran a recent project to collect testimonies from as many individuals as possible about how they came to Kingston from elsewhere in the UK and the world.</p>
<p>Emotional and attitudinal access The Museum and Kingston History Centre environment and KHS staff welcome visitors from all sections of the community.</p>	<p>Staff and volunteers are trained in how to welcome visitors. We offer a wide range of activities and displays across both sites.</p>
<p>Financial access The opportunity for everyone, regardless of their financial status, to access the Museum and Kingston History Centre.</p>	<p>Entry to the Museum and Kingston History Centre is free and events, talks and workshops are free or low cost. The Museum shop always stocks a range of inexpensive souvenirs.</p>
<p>Other</p>	<p>We regularly work with volunteers with mental health issues or learning difficulties. Many of the team have had Dementia Awareness training and Mental Health Awareness training. The Museum and Kingston History Centre have showcases in the front entrance where local groups can create displays about their organisations or stories that they want to share with visitors.</p>

We pay due regard to intergenerational equality. The rights of future generations to enjoy access to our present collection are safeguarded by high standards of collection care and where necessary by restrictions on handling, or exposure to light, moisture or other harmful environmental conditions.

We regularly review our achievements and make plans for future progress.

Research Policy

Purpose of Research

Museums and archives hold collections in trust on behalf of society. Making KHS collections available and accessible for research is a vital part of our service to the public and supports lifelong learning and personal improvement.

Research on the collections may be undertaken for a number of reasons, including academic purposes, individual interest, personal development and cultural enrichment.

Staff Assistance

KHS staff will seek to give as much access to the collections as possible while giving consideration to the fragility and stability of items in the collection. They will also seek to balance research requests with other demands on their time.

Queries

Staff cannot undertake detailed research on behalf of enquirers, but can assist with basic queries, and point enquirers to resources including other organisations or experts who may be able to help with their research. Staff will respond to enquiries in person or within 14 days to enquiries by e-mail, telephone, or mail. Kingston History Centre offers additional research services for up to 3 hours work, at a half-hourly rate, as detailed in our online charges. Fees and charges are reviewed annually.

Appointments

Researchers wishing to make appointments to see Museum items stored offsite should request this service two months in advance. Owing to security on site, researchers can only visit accompanied by a member of KHS staff. Advance planning of the visit is also necessary in order for Restore, who manage the site, to retrieve the items required.

Researchers wishing to access archives and local history material which is stored offsite will have to wait a maximum of 2 weeks for the records to be retrieved and access provided at Kingston History Centre.

Prior to working with items in the collection, researchers will be informed of research regulations, legal restrictions and instructed in the proper handling of items, as is necessary.

Preserving and disseminating research

KHS staff will request researchers to provide them with copies of any published work based on items in the collection, in order to be able to build up knowledge of the collection and to share this knowledge as widely as possible, and to preserve it for the future.

Following ethical guidelines

Where available, the service expects researchers to observe standards of research practice set out in guidelines, (including ethical guidelines) published by scientific and learned societies and other relevant professional bodies. The service expects researchers to conduct research in accordance with the relevant code of conduct that may exist for any professional bodies which staff are members of.