

BOLTON LIBRARY AND MUSEUM SERVICES - ACCESS POLICY STATEMENT

1. MISSION STATEMENT

Bolton's Library and Museum Services sit at the heart of communities in the Borough, providing access to information, collections and promoting reading for pleasure and learning.

These services support the Council's main aims of economic prosperity and narrowing the gap, providing an important contribution to raising aspirations through the cultural offer.

2. OUR DEFINITION OF ACCESS

Bolton Library and Museum Services recognises there are many barriers to access at all levels of the service. However we believe that all people have a fundamental right to engage with, use and enjoy the service.

We define access as something that is made possible when physical, cultural, social, financial, intellectual, psychological and emotional barriers are removed or reduced.

3. OUR COMMITMENT TO ACCESSIBILITY

Bolton Library and Museum Services aims to provide the widest possible access to its libraries, museums and collections to enable audiences from all sections of the community to enjoy use of the service. We will provide access to the wider community and within the service we will aim to provide independent use wherever possible.

This policy has been written in line with Bolton Council's Equality Policy Statement (2012), the aim of which is:

'Bolton is a diverse borough, where people from many different backgrounds and cultures live, work and play. The Council and its partners have a longstanding commitment to celebrating this diversity, promoting good relations between our diverse communities, and ensuring that its services are appropriate and accessible for everyone in the Bolton Family.'

Our policy is to build accessibility into everything we do to develop and improve the service. Our commitment is long term and our policy is to make continuous improvements as our resources permit.

Our commitment to accessibility extends to our staff, volunteers and work placements as well as visitors.

We are committed to ongoing training in access issues for staff and volunteers.

To eliminate barriers and ensure equality of access we will consider the following forms of accessibility:

- **Physical** – to enable people with physical disabilities to reach and appreciate every part of the service. To take into account the needs of the elderly and of people caring for young people.
- **Sensory** – to enable visitors with impaired vision or hearing to enjoy our building and collections.
- **Intellectual** – we recognise that people have different learning styles and we will provide interpretation in a range of learning styles. We also aim to ensure people with learning difficulties can engage with and enjoy the service and the collections.
- **Cultural** – to consider the needs of people for whom English is not a first language, or whose knowledge of English history and culture may be limited.
- **Attitudinal / Emotional** – to ensure our environment and staff are welcoming to visitors from all sections of the community. We will also aim to ensure people of Bolton feel the service is of significance to them.
- **Financial** – we will take into account that ability to pay can be a barrier to access and offer opportunities for those on lower incomes to access the service.

4. BUILDINGS

We aim to provide equal access to our buildings and our facilities for all visitors. It must be appreciated that some of our buildings are listed buildings therefore some physical adaptations are impossible or very difficult to undertake. Nevertheless we are constantly working towards improving the facilities available to visitors with disabilities and will actively try to make our collections accessible even when our buildings are not through a policy of bringing the collections to people who have physical disabilities.

5. ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS

Our staff are committed to increasing public access to the collections and information and to increasing knowledge and understanding of Bolton's cultural heritage.

We will provide varied means of access to the collections, including displays, handling sessions, outreach sessions, publications and events.

To increase access to the collections not on display we offer behind the scenes tours, web-based resources and access to staff.

We will provide levels of information and interpretation to suit a range of audiences and abilities. We will ensure that the presentation and labelling of displays respects a diversity of background.

We will develop our handling collections and loans.

6. ACCESS TO LEARNING

Bolton Library and Museum Services will provide learning opportunities for different audiences and levels of ability and tailor our programme to the needs of specific groups. We will provide education programmes for all our temporary and permanent displays to interpret the collections for people from a range of backgrounds and abilities. We will identify and develop partnerships with a range of educational and community organisations to ensure that our activities continue to cater for the widest possible audiences.

7. ACCESS TO VISITOR SERVICES

Our staff will assist and welcome all visitors. They will be available in the galleries to help people understand and enjoy the collections.

We will consider the comfort of our visitors by providing accessible toilets, baby changing facilities, access for pushchairs, seating in galleries.

We will develop appropriate signage and navigation tools to suit a range of audiences.

8. ACCESS TO COMMUNICATION

We will promote our activities and events using accessible means of communication.

We will provide a range of ways that people can communicate with us.

We will evaluate all our services and projects to ensure they meet the provision of this policy and we will consult users and non-users on all new developments.

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