

St. Helens Archive Service

Archive Access Policy

1. Policy statement and purpose

This policy illustrates St Helens Archive Service's commitment to providing appropriate access to information about the collections through accessible services and facilities. It sets out the approach of the Archive Service to the provision of access to Archive collections, education and outreach work as well as the provision of suitably qualified and experienced staff. This policy provides a guide to inform decision making and service delivery plans.

2. Community

The community includes the people living in the St Helens Borough and researchers from the UK and abroad. They include local and family historians, community groups, academics, students, business users, researchers, the media, internal users and those using Archives for legal reasons. St Helens Archive Service has two staff including a qualified Archivist and is supported by a team of volunteers.

3. The guiding principles

- 3.1. Identify, collect and preserve Archive materials relating to the people, places and historic developments across the borough of St Helens
- 3.2. Use the Archive to create better connected communities, inform local decision making and strengthen local communities and their cultural identity.
- 3.3. Widen access to the collection by digitising collections, encouraging school classes to visit and ensuring that people can access materials through their local library and through outreach visits.
- 3.4. Provide free access for all to Archive records and engage with local communities to promote the borough's rich heritage.
- 3.5. Provide an environment which encourages life-long learning, contributes to a feeling of well-being and sense of place, and raises aspiration and appreciation for the preservation of historic collections.

- 3.6. Support and enhance the overall strategic objectives of the Council including sustainable healthcare, economic growth, raising aspirations and being better connected

4. On site arrangements

- 4.1. St Helens Archive Service aims to provide a safe, secure and friendly environment for on-site users with equality of opportunity for all, responding to the needs of users, stakeholders, staff and volunteers. The service aims to safeguard the collections for current and future users through preservation and conservation in line with the Collections Care and Conservation Policy.
- 4.2. The Archive Service is located on the mezzanine floor of The Gamble Building and is accessible by stair and lift (staff are happy to assist with the operation of the lift). The building houses several co-located Council services and benefits from 24-hour security and fire monitoring systems. It is conveniently placed, close to disabled parking bays, long and short stay car parks, St Helens Bus Station and St Helens Central Train Station.
- 4.3. Users are asked to make an appointment and order documents in advance, which allows the Archive team to deliver an efficient service. Access to the collections will be provided during opening hours by appointment as advertised in the leaflets, social media platforms and web pages. Out of hours appointments can be accommodated on request.
- 4.4. Information about Archive services, including operating hours and Search Room procedures, is disseminated through a variety of means, including social media platforms, Council web pages, leaflets, guides, posters, community engagement and on The National Archives Discovery pages.
- 4.5. As detailed in the Visitor Information Guide, secure storage lockers are available for users to stow their personal belongings whilst visiting the Archive Service. The Guide includes information about the services, opening times and Search Room usage information.
- 4.6. In some circumstances, special access arrangements may be put into place on a case by case basis. This includes people with disabilities, depositors of records and police officers.

5. Access to the Collections

- 5.1. Users are asked to show a form of identification and sign in to view Archive documents. Items can be ordered using an Archive Request slip, although as appointments are pre-booked, documents have already been delivered to the Search Room. No more than three items per customer will be issued at any one time.
- 5.2. Guidance and information on how to access the collections is offered through the Visitor Information Guide and web pages. Users can expect to be supported by experienced and knowledgeable staff.
- 5.3. St Helens Archive Service is committed to providing suitable finding aids for users to access the records required. The online CALM catalogue can be searched via the Calmview website (www.sthelens.gov.uk/history). Hard copy PDF listings of the catalogue can be made available to researchers both in house and online.
- 5.4. The finding aids and any metadata created to describe digital assets will comply with ISAD(g) to ensure accuracy, consistency and relevance.
- 5.5. Access to catalogued born-digital and some digitised collections is provided by a computer in the Search Room.
- 5.6. In order to ensure the best possible care of the collections, St Helens Archive Service reserves the right to restrict public access to items which are deemed too fragile to handle. Digital surrogates may be accessible if these are available.
- 5.7. Access to items in the collections which contain personal or confidential information may be restricted according to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Subject access requests and enquiries under the Freedom of Information Act will be dealt with in line with current legislation and St Helens Council procedures.
- 5.8. A remote enquiry for people who are unable to visit the Archive Service in person is available.
- 5.9. The Archive Service welcomes comments and complaints from users via Feedback Forms available in the Search Room or by email on request. The service aims to respond to all correspondence within 10 working days.

6. Learning and Development Opportunities

- 6.1. St Helens Archive Service will provide opportunities for people to engage with heritage collections and services through events and activities.

- 6.2. Local studies and family history resources are made available at two locations within the borough, Eccleston and Newton-le-Willows libraries. Eccleston Library hosts the St Helens Townships Family History Society, every Tuesday 3.45pm until 6.45pm.
- 6.3. St Helens Archive Service will work in partnership with other agencies and community groups (such as St Helens Arts Service) to deliver focused, interpretative heritage activities, either in the Archive Service, St Helens Libraries or in the community.
- 6.4. Provision for schools is developed in consultation with St Helens Schools Library Service.
- 6.5. The Archive Service team will raise the profile of the service by participating in regional and national networks (such as MALG: Merseyside Archives Liaison Group) and heritage projects or activities (such as Heritage Open Days).
- 6.6. St Helens Archive Service welcomes visits from individuals, groups, adult learners, schools, colleges and universities and Archive Service staff will endeavour to support groups with tailored session content, materials and appropriate staff input.

7. Copying and Licensing

- 7.1. St Helens Archive Service allows users to bring their own cameras to copy documents for private research. A list of Fees and Charges can be provided. All users will be asked to sign a Copyright disclaimer form.
- 7.2. Documents can also be photocopied (if suitable) or scanned / digitised. A list of Fees and Charges can be provided.
- 7.3. The Archive Service regularly host displays and exhibitions in libraries, facsimile copies of Archive documents are normally used at these events.
- 7.4. For those wishing to publish images from St Helens Archive Service or to use them for official purposes, a licence must be obtained. Permission may not always be given as copyright restrictions may apply or depositors may withhold permission.

8. Staff and Training

- 8.1. Appropriately qualified and experienced staff will be available to supervise and facilitate visits and deal with customer enquiries.

8.2. Staff training and development needs will be identified and acted upon through the Council's Performance and Development Review process.

8.3. Regular team meetings will be held to discuss service development.

8.4. The Service will utilise the knowledge of outside contractors when necessary to assist in the delivery of services to a high standard. For example, conservation specialists will be engaged to assess the condition of collections and to carry out remedial works.

8.5. The Archive Service supports members of the community to develop capacity by offering meaningful opportunities for people to volunteer in the service. Roles may involve indexing or digitisation to support accessibility of documents as well as supporting community engagement activities.

8.6. St Helens Archive Service staff are bound by the Council's Managing Conduct, Performance and Information Policy and the Officer Code of Conduct to ensure that all customers are dealt with appropriately, equally and respectfully.

9. Review

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