

BRENT MUSEUM & BRENT ARCHIVES JOINT ACCESS POLICY

VERSION 1.0

1. Introduction

The overall aim of the Heritage Service is:

“To collect and record the history of the people of Brent through advancing an understanding of our collective past and shared future and providing opportunities for Brent residents to participate in learning and cultural activities.”

In order to achieve this, Brent Museum and Brent Archives aim to provide the widest possible access to their collections to all users, irrespective of their background, the subject of the enquiry, and the use to which the information may be put. We accept that in a democracy public access to information and to cultural heritage is of the greatest importance and in any question of access the general presumption will be in favour of access rather than of closure.

We will also work to actively encourage users who have traditionally made low use of heritage services due to cultural, physical or sensory factors, and to provide equal opportunities for all users. The purpose of this policy, which has been drawn up in compliance with the PSQG *Standard for Access to Archives*, is to outline how and why we will undertake this.

2. Access

2.1. Physical access

In order to facilitate public use, both services maintain opening hours outside normal office hours in the evenings and at weekends. There is no requirement for items from Museum collections which are not in the permanent display to be made available on the day: a prior appointment will need to be made by researchers for this purpose. We recommend that Archives users order items in advance where possible, and before 5pm on Thursdays.

Users wishing to access original archival records will be required to complete a registration form and adhere to the guidelines for use and handling available in the Archives searchroom. Original archival records will always be provided where it is appropriate to do so, but some restrictions on access are inevitable because of the nature, contents or physical condition of the records. Where original items are not suitable for handling, the Archives will endeavour to make surrogate copies available. We also ask our users to report any damage they may observe to Museum and Archives collections. Systems are in place to enable users to request access to uncatalogued collections or unfit items.

Finding aids for our collections in the form of subject and name indexes, as well as most of our local history library collection and subject-themed clippings files and pamphlet boxes, are publically accessible in the archive searchroom, and archive staff are always available to offer advice and guidance to users.

2.1.1. Loans

Items may be loaned to other archives and museums for exhibition purposes subject to conditions of transport, storage and satisfactory environmental conditions. Completion of

a formal loan agreement with a specified length of loan is required. Objects and archives will not be loaned to private individuals.

2.2. Remote access and enquiries

Recognising that not all our users wish or will be able to visit Brent Archives in person, we offer a postal research service for enquirers, and offer clear guidelines on what enquiries we are able to answer and on what terms. Requests for information about its holdings and how to access them, advice on research and short research enquiries will be dealt with free of charge; longer research enquiries, and reprographics services are chargeable, as advertised in the searchroom and on our website. We aim to respond to all enquiries within council-wide target response times and in compliance with Freedom of Information and Data Protection legislation.

Users can also access the archive and museum catalogues remotely through our website. We undertake to add objects and documents to our catalogue lists, to enable them to be accessed remotely, as soon as is possible, in line with our cataloguing and documentation strategies.

Brent Museum and Brent Archives will ensure that all the publicity material produced and distributed in print and on the Brent Heritage websites, as well as via our mailing lists, will be findable, retrievable, accurate, timely and relevant.

2.3. Reprographics

Copying of items in Brent Archives' collections by photocopy and photographic copy is available for a small charge, and users may use their own photographic equipment subject to completion of a copyright declaration. All copying, by users or the Archives service, is subject to copyright law, the service's terms for commercial reproduction and the consideration the service gives to physical condition of the document.

2.4. Restrictions

Both the Museum and Archive Collections will be made available to all those with a relevant interest. However, access to some archival records containing sensitive personal information may be restricted for a set time period as required under the Data Protection Act (1998). Some information in Brent Archives' collections may be subject to the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and the Environmental Information Regulations (2004), which permit access to certain pieces of closed information under certain relevant guidelines. Where possible, restrictions are noted in the catalogue: archives staff are available to give further guidance on which records may be subject to restrictions. Applications made under the FoIA for information from any restricted records must be addressed in writing to the Archivist. Where restrictions are applicable, closure periods are calculated from the end of the latest year of the record.

Restrictions may be waived for depositors consulting their own records, subject to adequate identification and preferably with advance notice, and for researchers authorised (normally in writing) by the depositor, preferably with advance notice. Where access is restricted due to sensitive personal information, restrictions may be waived for members of the public seeking information about a person or persons in whom they have a legitimate personal (usually family) interest. In these cases, information will be obtained by staff search and the normal fee will be payable.

2.5. Learning and outreach

Brent Museum and Brent Archives are committed to identifying and removing barriers of social exclusion that may prevent access to our services and facilities. We aim to develop methods of broadening our user base and attracting diverse audiences representative of the population of Brent, through the introduction of an Audience Development Plan and a publically available Learning and Outreach Policy.

2.6. Access by the media

Brent Museum and Brent Archives welcomes interest from the media in our projects and collections. Contacts with the media are reported to and regulated through Brent Council's Communications unit.

3. Responsibility and review

Responsibility for the overseeing of access procedures in Brent Museum lies with the Curator, and in Brent Archives with the Archivist. Regular consultation on policy and service quality will be undertaken through participation in PSQG surveys, user feedback and the complaints process. We aim to meet the highest possible standards of service in line with Brent Council's Customer Care Standards, and pledge to respond to any comments or complaints made by users within five days. Forms are available in the archive searchroom, or customers may write or email the Archivist directly.

This policy has been approved by the Head of Libraries, Arts and Heritage on behalf of London Borough of Brent, and will be made publicly available. The date when the policy is next due for review is noted below.

Brent Museum and Brent Archives

Governing body: London Borough of Brent

Date approved by governing body:

Date at which policy due for review: 2013