

Access Consulting opportunity

[Colchester + Ipswich Museums \(CIMS\)](#) wish to commission a consultant and/or charity to deliver a full access audit and recommendations report of the museum sites and associated activity with a particular focus on disability.

CIMS is a multi-site local authority museum service and National Portfolio Organisation. In Colchester, our collections and interpretation tell the story of Roman and Norman conquest, Boudiccan revolt and Civil War at **Colchester Castle**; wildlife habitats, biodiversity and climate change at the **Natural History Museum**, which is housed inside a church; and Georgian family life at **Hollytrees Museum**, where the towns Visitor Information Centre is also based. In Ipswich, **Ipswich Art Gallery** features a diverse programme of temporary exhibitions, including touring shows and international artists; **Ipswich Museum** is home to displays ranging from Victorian Natural History to world cultures; while the Tudor, **Christchurch Mansion** combines period rooms with a varied exhibition programme.

Pre-Covid, we welcomed around 300,000 visitors a year, with audiences varying between venues e.g. the Natural History Museum is popular among families with young children, while the most popular age group at Christchurch Mansion are the over 65s. Across all the venues, the proportion of visitors identifying as D/deaf or disabled is below the national average.

Our Visitor Service teams have been trained in Autism Awareness (2018/2019) and recently undertaken a British Sign Language course. CIMS also plans to deliver inclusion training for staff involved in recruitment this year. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic we held monthly Relaxed Openings at [Colchester Castle](#) and [Ipswich Museum](#), both of which have visual story films available online. Further details of each venues access offer can be found on the [Colchester](#) and [Ipswich](#) websites. Despite these provisions, we know there are barriers to engagement that we are not currently addressing, and disabled visitors are currently under-represented.

The audit and report will be seen by CIMS staff, stakeholders within Colchester and Ipswich Borough Councils and funders.

Brief

We would like to commission access audits and a recommendations report for the six museum sites and our associated activity (e.g. online communications such as website and social media). For Ipswich Museum, that will involve reviewing redevelopment plans instead of the current building.

We would not like to limit the focus of the audit, but would like it to acknowledge access for:

- Visual impairment
- Deafness and hearing loss
- Profound Disabilities
- Neurodiversity
- Mobility e.g. wheelchair users

While addressing physical barriers will be an important part of the audit, we want to ensure the full range of barriers are explored – including emotional, environmental, sensory, intellectual, cultural, attitudinal, technological, financial. We are also interested in how we could develop our interpretation to better reflect disabled people and their stories to improve representation.

We will be led by the consultant/charity on recommended areas of focus for us, but the audit and recommendations could include:

- Marketing and communications (website, social media, YouTube)
- Mystery shopper, phone call, email enquiry, arrival and welcome
- Museum facilities (café, shops, toilets etc.)
- Circulation and route
- Interpretation and gallery experience
- Post-visit information
- Interviews with staff members
- Recommendations for developing interactive digital content to improve our online experience for disabled users
- Recommendations for staff training

Timeline: We anticipate an inception meeting taking place before the end of March 2021 and, depending on Covid-19, subsequent work being conducted between April and May. We recognise there may need to be flexibility within the schedule should restrictions return.

Budget: **Including all expenses and VAT is £7,000.** Payment schedule to be agreed with appointed consultant/charity.

How to apply

Please detail how you would fulfil this brief within the budget when submitting your expression of interest. Expressions of interest should be submitted **by 5pm on Wednesday 17 March 2021.**

The quoted fee should be inclusive of travel, administration and other related expenses, including VAT if relevant.

We will assess expressions of interest on the following criteria:

- value for money
- experience of working with similar sized local authority museums
- understanding of disability and associated barriers
- ability to deliver the project on time and to budget

Expressions of interest to be submitted to: museums@colchester.gov.uk