Colchester + Ipswich Museums Access Policy

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Colchester+Ipswich Museums

Colchester City Council

IPSWICH BOROUGH COUNCIL

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

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1. Our Mission

1.1 Colchester + Ipswich Museums (CIMS) preserves, interprets and makes accessible the material culture and cultural heritage of both Colchester and Ipswich for the benefit of residents and visitors to both towns. It is a museum service with regional and national reach contributing to the cultural regeneration and wellbeing of both towns and the wider region.

CIMS will inspire creativity and learning through the innovative use of venues, collections and activities that appeal to and connect with audiences locally, regionally and nationally.

We want our Museum Service to enrich the lives of all our residents, increase their knowledge and understanding and feed their aspirations and imaginations. Visitors will have access to all that the Museums have to offer and will enjoy and value what they experience during their visits, resulting in a significant and positive impact upon their lives.

2. Legislation and Guiding Principles

2.1 This Policy upholds the statutory requirements of the Equality Act 2010, which legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. It covers all the protected characteristics, including disability.

2.2 As a local authority museum service, we also follow the Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force across the UK in April 2011. The Duty requires public bodies to consider the needs of all individuals in shaping policies, delivering services and supporting the workforce. The Duty also requires CIMS to pay due regard for the need to:

- eliminate discrimination
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations between different people when carrying out our activities.

2.4 This Policy is intended to compliment CIMS wider Equality and Diversity Policy.

2.5 As part of Colchester City Council and Ipswich Borough Council, CIMS also takes into account the commitments of their respective Equality and Diversity Policies, as well as Colchester City Council's Disability Confident Employer status.

2.5 CIMS adheres to the Museums Association Code of Ethics, which expects museums to: '*Provide public access to, and meaningful engagement with, museums, collections, and information about collections without discrimination*.'

2.6 As a National Portfolio Organisation, CIMS is committed to Arts Council England's Inclusivity and Relevance investment principle. We aim to be '*building trust and a sense of belonging for under served communities through removing barriers and increasing access, opportunity, participation, and involvement*.'

3. Our Commitment

3.1 We are committed to:

- Following the Social Model of Disability, which recognises disability in terms of societal barriers, including physical and attitudinal.

- Working with charities, community organisations and networks to better understand the needs of D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people.
- Offering a programme of activity that appeals to and is accessible to D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent audiences. Where possible, D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent staff and freelancers will help develop this programme.
- Using inclusive language and symbols, which can be easily understood by audiences and staff.
- Developing engaging alternatives for inaccessible collections and spaces.
- Growing the museum collections and researching existing collections to better represent D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent stories.
- Reviewing our digital activity, from websites and social media to online talks and meetings, to ensure they can be enjoyed by as wide an audience as possible.
- Producing accessible marketing material and working with partners to highlight our activity among target audiences.
- Seeking and acting on feedback from D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent visitors and non-visitors on our venues, programme and communications.
- Gathering and monitoring demographic data to better understand if our museum visitors and workforce are representative of D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent communities.
- Offering carers free entry to our paid venues and giving prospective visitors with additional needs the opportunity to come on a free familiarisation visit.
- Listening to and supporting the needs of our workforce by providing reasonable adjustments that allow people to be their best selves, from prospective employees to existing staff.
- Ensuring staff and volunteers have the appropriate training to welcome and support D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent visitors and colleagues.
- Regularly reviewing our policies, procedures and programmes, identifying barriers and solutions, as well as ways to offer D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent visitors a more enjoyable, engaging and memorable experience.

4. Responsibility

4.1 CIMS Access Champions are responsible for regularly monitoring CIMS activity, identifying barriers and advocating for more inclusive programming. The team oversee funding earmarked for access and support wider staff to ensure CIMS displays and events are as accessible and engaging as possible.

4.2 CIMS Access Champions are supported by wider staff with more specialised training e.g. SEND awareness, Dementia Friends and Sensory Champions.

4.3 From volunteers to the Joint Museums Committee, anyone representing CIMS has a part to play in improving access and should consider the Public Sector Equality Duty as they carry out their role. Staff engaging third parties are expected to ensure they are aware of CIMS Access Policy and their shared responsibility.

4.4 Challenges and successes will be regularly shared with CIMS Wider Management Team, who are ultimately responsible for ensuring all CIMS policies are upheld and up to date. If necessary, issues will be escalated to the Joint Museums Committee and/or the Colchester City Council Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group.

5. Dissemination of Information

5.1 The updated Access Policy will be shared with all existing CIMS staff and all new employees as part of their induction.

5.2 Companies and individuals who undertake work for CIMS will be required to uphold the principles of the Policy.

5.3 The updated Access Policy will be shared publicly via CIMS website.

Appendix A

Action Plan

Barrier	Actions
Organisational	• All staff will have undergone Safeguarding, and Equality and Diversity training. Front line staff will be trained in customer care. • Prospective audiences will be empowered to self-serve, by sharing collections information online, detailed pre-visit information and the option to book online, whilst continuing to offer in-person, email and telephone support.
Physical	• Continue to develop physical access to all our venues, including their approaches, interiors and facilities. • All future building projects will consider ways to enhance physical access within the relevant historical constraints e.g. Grade 1 listed building status. • A variety of seating will be available throughout our spaces.
Sensory	• Interpretation will be planned to broaden access for people with sensory impairments in both temporary exhibitions and when refreshing permanent displays, e.g. audio, captioning, sign language, braille, tactile 2D imagery, 3D replicas, smells. • Microphones and portable hearing loops to be used by speakers at public events. • Sensory stories for all major exhibitions to be available within 2 weeks of the opening. • All information to follow best-practice guidelines in terms of colour contrasts, typefaces, font sizes etc.
Intellectual	• Information will be conveyed at different levels by layering interpretation and including open display objects, hands-on activities and trails, thereby suiting different learning styles and interests. • Plain English will be used in all interpretation and communications. • Lively and engaging interpretation will be used wherever appropriate to share our stories with the widest possible range of audiences.
Social and Cultural	• Temporary exhibitions and events to cover a range of subjects so as to appeal to a broad spectrum of visitors. • Community links with D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent organisations and networks will be developed and sustained. • D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people are reflected in the collections, interpretation and publicity material.