Birmingham Museums

Access and Inclusion Policy 2024 - 2029

Version: 15th November 2024

1. INTRODUCTION

This Access and Inclusion Policy sets out how Birmingham Museums Trust (BMT) aims to provide access to its collections, venues, programmes and services for the widest possible audience regardless of age, background or ability.

This policy was approved by Birmingham Museums Trust's Board of Trustees on 15th November 2024.

Our Charity Objects are to advance education by the operation, maintenance, development and promotion of museums, galleries and libraries in Birmingham together with associated facilities and related programmes of outreach and research, fostering knowledge, understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the arts, history, science and technology by residents and visitors to the City of Birmingham.

Our Vision is that we will boost Birmingham's place in the national story by shining a light on people's stories, collection and creativity. Trust, joy and belonging is what we do.

Our Guiding Principles are democracy, creativity, representation, cultural diversity, place-making and climate engagement.

Our Strategic Aims are

1. **Experience** – we aim to create fun, meaningful, involving experiences for the full diversity of our communities and their uses of our collection and services.
2. **Infrastructure** – we aim to place our sites and collections at the heart of Birmingham's communities and ensure inclusive access to all of these, including digital access.
3. **People** – we aim to be a boldly progressive organisation, increasingly rooted in and porous to Birmingham's communities, with the skills and culture to engage with its audiences.
4. **Financial** – we aim to be a sustainable, more independent organisation that provides affordable, surplus-generating paid services and experiences that add value to Birmingham, and will have secured funding to support its priority capital projects

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, by 'Access and Inclusion', we mean:

- We will make BMT's collections, sites and services more accessible by recognising and working to remove or reduce barriers to people engaging with us. Barriers may include physical and sensory barriers, intellectual barriers, cultural and attitudinal barriers, or financial barriers, and our audiences may be impacted by one or more of these at any time.
- We will work to ensure our sites are welcoming and engaging to all visitors, staff and volunteers; that our collections, displays and programmes are representative; and that everyone can feel their stories and lives are valued and included in the museums' work.

2. POLICY AIMS

- To highlight to all visitors, staff and volunteers Birmingham Museums' commitment to access and inclusivity through our Access Statement.
- To outline our understanding of barriers to access.
- To identify areas of activity and key actions including:
    - maximising access to our collection and the associated information we hold on it, to our sites, programmes and services.
    - actively creating experiences accessible to diverse communities through consultation and co-production.
    - increasing access by working in partnership with organisations that provide public health and

social services or which support those facing barriers to access or inclusion.
    - increasing access through the actions of the whole organisation by embedding an inclusive approach.
    - welcoming and including visitors from all backgrounds, and providing safe spaces where people from differing backgrounds can come to share experiences and explore new relationships.
    - extending our reach and impact through digital, touring, lending and outreach.
    - reflecting and representing a broad range of audiences and experiences in our collections, exhibitions and programming
    - proactively acquiring and displaying new collections that tell inclusive and representative stories of the city

3. RELATED POLICIES, LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

Birmingham Museums will comply with all relevant legislation relating to this policy, including but not limited to the following legislation:

- Equality Act, 2010
- Disability Discrimination Act, 2005
- Freedom of Information Act, 2000
- Data Protection, Act 2018, and the General Data Protection Regulation 2018.

Birmingham Museums is also committed to working within the Museums Association's Code of Ethics for Museums and its related guidance.

BMT's Access and Inclusion Policy 2024-29 also supports and relates to the more specific Collections Access Policy 2025-30.

4. ACCESS STATEMENT

We want everyone who connects with us, physically or digitally, to feel included and to be enabled to enjoy our collections, exhibitions, programmes and venues.

We recognise that there are many barriers that currently prevent people from being able to do so, and which limit access to the full range of BMT's work. We aim to identify, challenge, and reduce these as far as possible through consulting with users, non-users, and specialists to identify barriers to access and inclusion, and put in place plans to mitigate or remove these.

At BMT, ensuring equity of access and inclusion is a part of everyone's role, and we encourage everyone to think about how they can ensure their work will meet the needs of as many people as possible. BMT also has specific working groups whose remit includes an oversight of this work.

5. BARRIERS TO ACCESS

We recognise that there are a number of factors that may prevent people from accessing our collection; the information we hold on it; and our venues, products, services and programmes. We will seek to ensure equitable access by addressing the following potential barriers:

- **Physical** – we will provide the best possible access to our sites, making alternative provision where necessary.
- **Sensory** - we will build a wide range of sensory experiences into aspects of all our programmes and

services.

- **Intellectual** – we will provide a range of experiences and interpretation in response to people's different learning styles.
- **Cultural** – we will welcome and value visitors from differing backgrounds, and actively engage with people to collect and display objects in ways that tell stories about the changing city, its communities and the wider world.
- **Attitudinal** – we will foster mutual respect for people from differing backgrounds, and provide safe spaces where people can come to share experiences and explore new relationships.
- **Language** – we will work towards providing introductory information on all our sites in languages other than English.
- **Economic** – we will minimise financial barriers to access while ensuring the sustainability of Birmingham Museums.

6. IDENTIFYING NEEDS OF USERS AND NON-USERS

Birmingham Museums Trust has a commitment to working with the people of Birmingham to identify their needs and barriers to engagement, and to work together to mitigate those barriers as far as possible.

We have been working in this way through a range of means, including:

- Building on past consultation programmes including 'mystery shoppers', focus groups, Community Action Panel, and Access Forum, and scaling these up through BMT's first Citizens' Jury, neighbourhood consultation as part of Birmingham: City of Ideas, extensive Market Research through Laying the Foundations, and ongoing evaluation of our exhibitions and programmes.
- Working in partnership with community groups and organisations who support those who are marginalised or face barriers to engaging with us, including through the ongoing Community Welcome Pass scheme.
- Piloting projects, resources and programmes with user groups with specific needs (including inclusive volunteering for young people with SEN, and partnerships with mental health charities).
- Partnership working, linking with external organisations to understand best practice, engage with marginalised audiences and reach communities who are currently unable to access our services.
- Working with external consultants to carry out site audits related to physical health and access for those with mental health needs.

7. HOW WE PROVIDE ACCESS

Birmingham Museums Trust works to ensure all its services and activities are accessible. By ensuring potential barriers to access are considered throughout the development of programmes, site works and collections displays, we can ensure the provision of equitable access remains central to ongoing activity.

Teams across the organisation work to improve access and inclusion in different ways:

Curatorial and Participation

- Ensuring robust access initiatives and access guidelines are considered throughout exhibition development and installation.
- Providing dynamic and inspiring displays in a variety of formats designed to engage audiences through multi sensory exploration.
- Working in collaboration with partners and community groups in the development of relevant display content and events.
- Actively addressing under-representation in our collections through our Collections Development Policy and re-interpretation, to ensure we can tell more inclusive stories.

Learning and Research

- Developing vibrant learning programmes for lifelong learners that connect people to collection content.
- Providing physical access through Research open days and opportunities to access collections.
- Working in collaboration with partners to develop learnng resources and materials to ensure access needs are considered.
- Building a research strategy that will inform our understanding of audiences.

Collections

- The full breadth of Collection access procedures are outlined BMT's **Collections Access Policy**.

Digital Access

- Ensuring relevant standards and guidelines are considered in the development of online content.

Facilities and Estate

- Maintaining physical access standards across the organisation.
- Ensuring access requirements and improvements are considered in ongoing site transformation.

8. RESTRICTIONS

In some cases, access to particular objects or specimens in the collection will be restricted if they are fragile, hazardous, present a security risk, or are otherwise of a sensitive nature. For example, BMT operates controlled access to its firearms collection.

Online access to BMT's digital image resources is restricted to out-of-copyright data according to the conditions detailed in BMT's Public Task Statement. For example, images for which the intellectual property is owned by a third party are not available to access online. For further details see: https://www.birminghammuseums.org.uk/about/policies-plans-and-reports/public-task-statement

9. RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACCESS

Every member of Birmingham Museums Trust staff and every volunteer supporting our activity has a responsibility to ensure our services to visitors, customers and communities are delivered in accordance with this Access and Inclusion Policy. Every member of staff and volunteer will:

- Eradicate, and hold as unacceptable, direct and indirect discrimination against individuals on any grounds.
- Participate in relevant training to maintain a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, and to increase skills and knowledge in this area.
- Be familiar and confident in the Birmingham Museums Access and Inclusion Policy.
- Identify barriers to access and opportunities for inclusion in their area of work.
- Understand and be proficient in the particular access responsibilities of their role.

10. PARTICULAR ACCESS RESPONSIBILITIES

Trustees

- Review and approve this Access and Inclusion Policy at least every five years.
- Ensure Birmingham Museums Trust works in compliance with the relevant legislation (see above).

Senior Leadership Team

- The Director of Engagement has overall responsibility for access and inclusion policies and plans. The

Director of Collections and Estate is responsible for the physical and intellectual integrity of the collection. Together these Directors ensure a balance of the care and management of the collection with the provision of access.

- Provide resource to ensure Birmingham Museums Trust complies with relevant legislation with regards to access, and seek funding for access developments.

Staff Circles

- Access is embedded across our activities, and to ensure robust practice and compliance our staff Working Circles (People, Infrastructure, Experience and Access & Inclusion) also work to ensure delivery.
- Access and Inclusion staff Working Circle will be established to monitor and advocate for access across organisational activity,
- The table below outlines which Circle is responsible for each potential barrier to access

	PEOPLE	INFRASTRUCTURE	EXPERIENCE	ACCESS & INCLUSION
MONITORING + ADVOCACY				✓
PHYSICAL		✓		✓
SENSORY		✓	✓	✓
INTELLECTUAL	✓		✓	✓
CULTURAL	✓		✓	✓
ATTITUDINAL	✓		✓	✓
LANGUAGE	✓		✓	✓
ECONOMIC		✓	✓	✓

11. POLICY REVIEW

Date approved by BMT's board of trustees: 15th November 2024

Date for next review no later than October 2029.