

## **Tameside Museums and Galleries Service**

### **Access Policy**

#### **Service Mission**

Over the next 5 years the Museum Service aims to be:

*A dynamic, engaging and responsive Museum Service that celebrates the people and places of Tameside, ensuring a meaningful and enjoyable experience for all.*

#### **2019 Access Policy Statement**

Tameside Museums and Galleries Service aims to provide access to our collections, buildings and associated information for all to learn from, engage with and enjoy. In this we seek to overcome physical, intellectual, financial and cultural barriers that may prevent visitors from accessing the museums' collections, expertise, facilities and services.

#### **1. Access to sites and services**

The Service is working to make sure our sites are accessible to all. We work within the Disability Discrimination Act and where access is not possible strive to provide an alternative way of engaging with our museums and galleries.

- Portland Basin Museum:
  - The museum is open Tuesday to Sunday 10am-4pm.
  - The building is fully accessible for buggies and wheelchair users.
  - A wheelchair is available on request.
  - The wharf side areas are accessible to all visitors.
  - There is a public lift on site to assist users between floors. In the event of the lift being out of order, the site remains fully accessible due to the lower ground floor access on the wharf.
  - An Access Audit is published on our website and is reviewed annually.
- Astley Cheetham Art Gallery:
  - The gallery is open Mondays and Tuesdays 9am-1pm; Wednesdays 1pm-5pm and Saturdays 10am-3pm, in line with the staffed opening hours of Stalybridge Library. These opening hours were established in February 2019; prior to this the gallery was open for 26 days per year.
  - The gallery is situated upstairs in Stalybridge Library and is only accessible via stairs. The building is Grade II listed and the cost and practicalities of installing a lift are not currently feasible. These accessibility restrictions are highlighted in our promotional material where possible.
  - There is an accessible toilet on-site in the library.
  - A redevelopment of the gallery, with the aim of increasing the amount of artworks on display, is being planned.
  - An Access Audit is published on our website and is reviewed annually.
- Museum of the Manchester Regiment:
  - The museum is currently closed for redevelopment.
  - New plans have been drawn up for the museum in the ground floor space within Ashton Town Hall. The plans ensure that the space is fully accessible and would provide the museum with level access from Ashton Market Square.

- When the museum is open, an Access Audit will be created, published on our website and reviewed annually.

## 2. Signage and labelling

Signage is designed in appropriate font and size and displayed at a suitable height around all our sites.

- Portland Basin Museum:
  - A large sign over the entrance welcomes visitors to the venue.
  - Signage at the back of the museum welcomes visitors coming from the direction of the canals.
  - Text labels are written in a sans-serif font using a minimum font size of 16.
  - There is orientation signage around the museum.
  - A free orientation map is available at the reception desk.
- Astley Cheetham Art Gallery:
  - Outside signage is currently being investigated to promote the gallery's new opening hours.
  - A sign inside the building points the visitor up the stairs to the gallery and a pull up banner with a bright and welcoming design is situated on stairs' first landing, visible from the library entrance.
  - Displays are located on both landings encouraging visitors to continue upwards to the gallery.
  - Posters detailing exhibitions across the borough are located at the bottom of the stairs together with information regarding the current exhibition in the gallery space.
  - External signage will be reviewed as part of the redevelopment of the gallery.
- Museum of the Manchester Regiment:
  - Accessible and clear signage, both internally and externally, will be built into the museum redevelopment plans.

## 3. Financial access

We aim to provide a service that is either free or low cost in order for everyone to be able to take part.

- All sites offer free access to visitors.
- Tours of the museum sites are free. However, in some cases a fee may be levied to cover special requirements or if a more in-depth talk is given.
- The regular craft groups that meet at our sites, *Quilting Bee* and *Stitch in Time* are free to attend.
- Our weekly *Little Hands* session for pre-schoolers at Portland Basin Museum is charged at £2 per child and £1 for siblings, to contribute to the costs of the facilitator.
- Our *Make, Do and Play* school holiday craft workshops carry a £1 charge to contribute to facilitator fees.

- We offer *I Made It* adult craft masterclasses and *We Made It* family craft workshops to encourage lifelong learning and charge £35 / £30 concessions to cover costs.
- The charge for family theatre events at Astley Cheetham Art Gallery is kept low, at around £2-5 per child.
- A programme of free events is offered across our sites throughout the year.
- The shop at Portland Basin Museum carries a wide range of gifts, souvenirs and pocket money toys suitable for our audience and at a variety of price points.
- Object loan boxes cost £30 per week. For community groups there is a £5 per day fee.
- Formal educational visits are charged as follows:

<b>Workshop Sessions</b>	<b>Half Day (1.5 Hours)</b>	<b>Full Day (2 x 1.5 Hours)</b>
Tameside Schools	£60	£120
Outside Borough	£70	£140
<b>Outreach sessions</b>	<b>Half Day (3 Hours)</b>	<b>Full Day (6 Hours)</b>
All schools	£150	£300
<b>Teacher Inset days</b>	<b>Half Day (3 Hours)</b>	<b>Full Day (5 Hours)</b>
All schools	£150	£250
<b>Loan Boxes</b>		
All Schools	£30 per week	

- There is no charge for parking at Portland Basin Museum (there is a free public car park directly outside the museum). There are parking bays with free one hour parking outside Astley Cheetham Art Gallery.
- A small charge for photocopying is levied at each site.

#### **4. Intellectual access**

Tameside Museums and Galleries Services aims to provide an engaging, creative and positive learning and leisure experience for all visitors. We do this by:

- Creating permanent displays and a programme of changing exhibitions across all sites, which seek to interest a wide variety of visitors. The interpretation of our collection embraces different learning styles and abilities with accessible graphic panels, the use of audio-visual interactives, low-tech interactives and other hands-on activities including museum trails.
- Offering a 'Hands-On' learning programme based around the needs of the learners, for all ages and abilities.
- Maintaining a family friendly approach to our sites and family learning events and activities.
- Offering research opportunities and partnership working with Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre, particularly in relation to the Manchester Regiment collection.

## 5. Sensory access

Where possible we will cater for the different sensory requirements of our audiences.

- Audio loops are fitted at the reception desks at Portland Basin Museum and Astley Cheetham Art Gallery.
- Free public Wi-Fi is available at Portland Basin Museum.
- An extensive object handling collection is available via our loan box service to enable a tactile and, where possible, olfactory experience of our collection.
- Large print versions of labels at Astley Cheetham Art Gallery are available.
- All staff are supported to become Dementia Friends and the Service is committed to sites being Dementia Friendly.
- The Service is committed in our Forward Plan (2019-2024) to reviewing and improving resources for autistic visitors, including pre-visit information available on our website, resources at our sites and training for staff.

## 6. Access to collections

For those items held in the collection, whether they be in stores or on display, we try and use various channels to make the collections accessible to people.

- On-going programme of digitisation of collections, using various on-line platforms including the following:
  - <http://www.tameside.gov.uk/museumsgalleries> The Museums and Galleries Service Homepage is our primary means of placing material available on-line.
  - [www.themenbehindthemedals.org.uk/](http://www.themenbehindthemedals.org.uk/) The Museum of the Manchester Regiment displays over 2,000 medals awarded to almost 800 men that served in the Regiment. This website makes their stories easily available for the first time.
  - [www.artuk.com](http://www.artuk.com) Many paintings from the Astley Cheetham Art Collection are available to view on this website. Sculpture from the collection has been photographed by the Public Catalogue Foundation in 2019 to enable similar public online access to our sculpture collection.
  - [www.vads.ac.uk/](http://www.vads.ac.uk/)The National Inventory Research Project aims to create a searchable illustrated inventory of all 22,000 pre-1900 Continental European oil paintings in the UK's public collections. NICE Paintings (The National Inventory of Continental European Paintings). A selection of artworks from the Astley Cheetham collection is available to view on this website.
  - [www.gmmg.org.uk/](http://www.gmmg.org.uk/) The Greater Manchester Museums Group enables us to promote the key objects within our collections through the *Our Connected Histories* project.

- Use of social media to engage users in our collections on display and in stores. Our Twitter account @tmbc\_culture is kept up to date with exhibitions and objects of interest, as is our Pinterest account. Tameside Council shares details of our sites, exhibitions and collections on its Facebook page.
- Appointment system to view collections in reserve collection and for the Manchester Regiment collection while it remains off public display.
- Enquiry service for collections, via email, telephone, in person and via our website's 'Contact Us' facility. Enquiries also come via the *Men Behind the Medals* website.
- Commercial access of the collections can be granted by request. Commercial access to the art collection is handled through Bridgeman Images.
- While the Museum of the Manchester Regiment remains closed, displays of objects will be created at Portland Basin Museum, such as new acquisitions and commemorations of key anniversaries. The Service will continue to accept new objects into the Manchester Regiment collection.

## 7. Inclusion

We aim to engage with our communities, encourage social cohesion, build capacity in communities, embrace and reflect diversity and encourage learning and creativity for all. Different audiences have different needs and this is reflected in our offer.

- All visitors can expect a warm welcome to our sites and be made to feel comfortable during their visit.
- The service offers an outreach programme with a range of reminiscence sessions: [www.tameside.gov.uk/museumsgalleries/education/remiscence](http://www.tameside.gov.uk/museumsgalleries/education/remiscence)
- School workshops are offered both on and off site: [www.tameside.gov.uk/museumsgalleries/workshops](http://www.tameside.gov.uk/museumsgalleries/workshops)
- A loan box service *Museum in a Box* is available to all schools, community groups and individuals: [www.tameside.gov.uk/museumsgalleries/loan](http://www.tameside.gov.uk/museumsgalleries/loan)
- Multi agency links and partnership working across Tameside and the region such as in the delivery of *Arts Mark / Arts Award* and *Health and Wellbeing*.
- Use of social media to promote, engage and communicate with new audiences.
- Project work in different areas of Tameside and the region and with different groups – focused particularly on hard to reach groups, non-users and areas of deprivation.
- Commitment to engaging users from across Tameside, as well as regional and national audiences.
- A *Survey Monkey* survey is in place to respond to users' needs, to identify non users and collect and analyse feedback. The service is committed to an on-going process of consultation and evaluation in relation to its services and facilities. Public consultation with users and non-users of the Manchester Regiment Museum was carried out to inform the

redevelopment plans. Public consultation was also carried out with users and non-users to inform the content of the Museums Forward Plan in July 2019.

- Tameside has an increasingly diverse population and the museum service encourages visitors from all ethnic backgrounds. We aim to increase our collecting from ethnic minority communities within the borough to make our collection better representative of our visitors.
- Use of other languages besides English in our interpretation and marketing has been considered but is not currently considered a priority.

## **8. Work force development**

An engaged, enthusiastic, knowledgeable and trained workforce is essential in providing access for all our visitors, and for our participants in the community.

- The service abides by Tameside Council's policies for recruitment and selection, and in general working practices.
- Induction procedures are in place for new staff/volunteers, with particular regard to new Front of House staff. These include how to keep our visitors safe and make sure they have an enjoyable and engaging visit. Information is provided on the collections and the history of the sites, as well as information on facilities in the local area for visitors.
- Staff are encouraged to access training, where appropriate, and to support work in other teams to get a full understanding of the service. All staff are given time to visit Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre to familiarise themselves with the archive collection. Work shadowing is available across the council.
- Staff undertake regular on-line Council-wide training on subjects such as Fire Awareness, Health and Safety in the Workplace and Information Management, and many staff have undertaken practical training in First Aid.
- Staff are encouraged to attend free courses, such as those offered by Museum Development North West, where appropriate to their job role, and also to participate in peer review exercises with other GM museums, such as acting as mystery shoppers.
- All staff have an Annual Development Review with their line manager.
- All staff are encouraged to feedback on the service via regular meetings. Staff are kept up to date with council-wide information via weekly email newsletters, a monthly online staff magazine and a staff portal.

## **9. Keeping our visitors safe**

Our sites are safe, enjoyable and clean venues for visitors and staff alike.

- All visitors can expect a safe visit with all activities having been risk assessed and strict reporting procedures in place for any new hazards.
- Strict cleaning and hygiene procedures in place across all sites.
- Emergency plans are kept up to date for each site.

- Evacuation procedures in place and regularly reviewed.
- Regular site assessments from the Fire Brigade.
- Fire alarms are tested weekly.

## **10. Limitations**

The Museum Service works with some limitations.

- Access to the collections is balanced against the need for security and a duty of care for the collections. Our approach to collections care is set out in our Collections Care and Conservation Policy 2019.
- The Service is committed to managing the collections within the parameters set out in the Museums Association Code of Ethics.
- Off-site stores are not accessible for wheelchair users.
- Access is sometimes constrained by the necessity to work within available resources and financial limitations.
- Astley Cheetham Art Gallery is housed in a Grade II listed building meaning there are limitations regarding changes to the fabric of the building.
- The Manchester Regiment collection is currently not accessible, but arrangements can be made to view specific objects on request where feasible.
- The charges for services and events are subject to annual review and may increase.

## **11. Review procedure**

This policy will be published on the Museum Service's website and will be made available for visitors to the museum to view on request. It will be reviewed from time to time and at least every 5 years.

**Governing body:** Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council

**Date approved by governing body:**

**Date written:** June 2019

**Date at which policy is due for review:** June 2024