

Bradford District Museums & Galleries

Access Policy 2019 - 2024

Bradford District Museums and Galleries' (BDMG) mission is to contribute to the District of Bradford by

- Providing a network of relevant, accessible, community focussed museums and galleries, buildings, digital content and services
- Sharing learning and reaching out to schools, Colleges, Universities, children and families across the district and beyond
- Using our collections, skills and passion to support and engage with people in discovering and sharing their stories
- Working collaboratively with our communities and with partners in all sectors to deliver a relevant, efficient and vibrant service
- By using our collections, skills and passion to support CBMDC priority outcomes as outlined in the council plan 2021-2025 <https://www.bradford.gov.uk/council-plan/council-plan/> and Culture is Our Plan cultural strategy <https://www.cultureisourplan.co.uk/>

BDMG believes that it is the fundamental right of all people and communities to access our collections, buildings and services. BDMG recognises that physical, intellectual, cultural, digital, financial and sensory barriers can exist to this access. It commits to reducing barriers across our service.

It acknowledges that to achieve this, collections, digital content and buildings need to be better cared for, more accessible and used more effectively with learning and skills embedded into the visitor experience and with exhibitions, digital and in person activities that are of a high standard and seek to inspire, educate and challenge. In doing so, it strives for people to perceive museums as a place for the community which are welcoming, socially inclusive, recreational and safe spaces.

BDMG is also guided by the strategic objectives of its managing organisation, the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council (CBMDC) and recognises that through providing an accessible service it can contribute to delivering the council priorities of supporting: better skills; more good jobs and a growing economy; a great start and good schools; better health and better lives; and safe, clean and active communities; a sustainable district; decent homes; an enabling council.

This policy is influenced by key legislation including the Equality Act 2010, Freedom of Information Act 2000, Data Protection Act 1998, GDPR 2018 and the Disability

Discrimination Act 2005.

The policy is intended to cover access by visitors, staff and volunteers to all museum sites, digital content and services, including collections, physically, digitally and intellectually through all appropriate formats that respects and takes into account their physical, intellectual and sensory requirements.

Access Plan 2019 – 2024

This Access Plan outlines how BDMG plans to maintain and improve access to the collections, information about the collections and access to the buildings housing BDMG's collections.

During 2019 – 2024 the Service will focus on the following areas:

1. Staff, volunteers and Training
2. Users and Stakeholders
3. Buildings and Services
4. Access to Collections
5. Social and Financial Access
6. Intellectual and cultural Access
7. Impact of the Covid Pandemic and ongoing access needs.

1. Staff, Volunteers and Training to support access

Staff and volunteers are integral to the work of BDMG in facilitating and promoting a high quality, inclusive, accessible and community focused service. People with disabilities and other 'protected characteristics' as detailed in the Equalities Act 2010 will receive equal opportunities in recruitment, employment, volunteering opportunities and training.

All BDMG staff and volunteers are responsible for:

- Contributing towards providing a welcoming and accessible service;
- Participating in relevant training and development;
- Accessing and implementing BDMG and CBMDC policies and procedures including Child protection, online safeguarding, diversity and equality, and access;
- Treating visitors fairly and in a courteous and convivial manner.

As part of the staff and volunteer induction process, all new staff and volunteers will receive disability, equality and access awareness training. This will include addressing the needs of visitors with specific requirements, the use of appropriate language and assisting those with disabilities throughout their visit, staff will also be provided with training to assist those with disabilities throughout an evacuation procedure. Staff should be familiar in supporting people with audio or visual impairment, have additional needs in respect of autism, learning disabilities or living with dementia as well as practical physical access needs.

Staff and Volunteers will undertake visitor services and specialist training on a regular basis to refresh visitor services skills or to develop specialist skills or gain specialist knowledge. Training can be in-house or provided by external trainers. Advice on staff training will be regularly sought from regulatory national organisations such as the National Tourist Boards' Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme (VAQAS).

An ongoing programme of service wide training based on a needs assessment will be

developed to support this ambition, working with our partners at Arts Council England and Museum Development Yorkshire.

2. Users and Stakeholders access

BDMG seeks to uphold CBMDC Equal Rights and Diversity statement to work with partners and the district's many communities to understand and meet the needs of individuals and communities, and improve their opportunities, wellbeing and ability to live together productively.

BDMG recognises that in addition to general visitors, museum users and stakeholders also include museum staff, local community groups, volunteers, Friends of the Museum groups, local businesses and hotels, donors, educational bodies and all others that may be affected by the museum's actions directly or indirectly.

BDMG supports consultation with stakeholders including volunteers which deepens relationships with users; sharing collections, expertise and decision making. BDMG will collect and analyse data and information on users, visitors and stakeholders by all appropriate means including visitor books, daily visitor sheets, comment cards, visitor surveys and reports, evaluations and regular consultation with user and non-user groups.

BDMG will analyse user data and consultation findings, such as VAQAS reports, and use the resultant information to evaluate current operations and how effectively they meet users' access needs. These will be used to inform and improve future areas of work.

Through community engagement, audience development and providing a variety of exhibitions, events, digital content and activities, BDMG will try to attract and engage with new audiences, previously not participating in the museum and engage with new users from under-represented groups.

The service will work with key stakeholders and specialist groups and agencies to enhance access to services and provide training and advice such as the NHS, Snoop, culture fusion, Local Area Committees, Dementia Friendly Bradford and Keighley.

3. Access to Buildings, Digital Content and Services

In support of the service's Forward Plan, Audience Development Plan and CBMDC's Strategic Plans, BDMG will utilise all relevant information about users and non-users, including barriers to their participation, to inform and develop strategies to broaden the range of users and increase visitor and user numbers.

The service will seek to meet the communication and other access needs of its visitors to encourage the widest possible participation in its programmes and use of its facilities, taking in to consideration health needs as a result of pandemics and/or health crises.

It will ensure that BDMG meets all of its obligations under relevant Diversity, Equality and Access legislation.

BDMG will publish information, in appropriate formats, relating to the locations of its museum sites, the opening hours, and services and facilities at each site, alongside health guidance as required by CBMDC policy, UK Government legislation and in the interests of public safety.

Information about facilities and services will be made available in a variety of formats on

our website and social media channels, at the reception desks and can also be requested in advance of a visit.

All buildings will be maintained so that they continue to be as fully accessible as possible. All entrances, public areas and facilities including toilets and circulation routes at each site will be as fully accessible as possible within the constraints imposed by Listed Building status placed on some venues, and as required by CBMDC policy, UK Government legislation and in the interests of public safety.

Signage and effective orientation details will be provided in appropriate formats for the benefit of museum visitors and user groups. Guidance on signage is regularly sought from organisations such as RNIB in addition to following the Collections Trust and Museums Association guidelines and CBMDC and UK Government policy.

All our sites have made reasonable adjustments to be as compliant as possible with the Equality Act 2010, and where access to upper floors is limited BDMG will endeavour to provide interactive displays with BSL, written and audio commentary of objects and collections displayed in the upper galleries.

BDMG aims for inclusive access to buildings, services and collections both on display and in storage for enjoyment, education and cultural understanding and thus BDMG will aim to fulfil all reasonable requests for guided tours and handling sessions, subject to staffing resources, in liaison with relevant staff and public safety guidance. Services will be tailored where possible to users access needs.

A programme of access audits will be carried out across all sites to identify areas for development and continuous improvement, this work has begun with an access audit and report at Cliffe Castle Museum in November 2019.

Digital content will be created and maintained to be as fully accessible as possible. BDMG will implement and follow online safe guarding policies to ensure our users are protected. Content will be provided in appropriate formats for the benefit of museum visitors and user groups.

BDMG will continue on-going evaluation and consultation of the museum sites and digital content and, in response to feedback, endeavour to enhance the user experience by improving accessibility when and where possible.

4. Access to Collections

Public intellectual, physical and digital access to the collections and resources of BDMG will be facilitated through the display of collections, exhibitions, curator talks, online content and learning programmes (see learning plan). BDMG is committed to allowing access to collections both on display and in storage for enjoyment, education and cultural understanding.

Access to the collections will be provided wherever possible in a safe and sustainable way. Where necessary, collections risk assessments will be used to balance demand with preservation.

Interpretive methods used include, but are not limited to, audio, graphics, text-based, tactile, digital and interactive methods as well as living history, tours, talks, workshops,

videos and audio content. BDMG will endeavour to ensure that collections are made as sensorially accessible as possible. Changing displays, temporary exhibitions and exciting online content provide access to areas and collections not on permanent display.

Where possible, BDMG accommodates requests from visitors and researchers to access objects that are not on current public display but in storage. Access to the collections has to be approved by a member of the Collections Team and/or the Collections Manager. Access to the handling collection must be approved by a member of the Learning and Outreach Team. The level of access to each object is based on the following criteria:

- Status (e.g. legal or ethical issues);
- Health & Safety;
- Object condition, conservation and security;
- Location;
- Resources;
- Documentary history;
- Sensitivity (e.g. potentially offensive material or human remains).
- Copyright, image rights and permissions

Under such circumstances all objects in the collections should be evaluated and placed into one of four categories to clarify their accessibility

Category A. *Open access*; collections items in this category require careful handling but can be used freely as education tools by any officer of the museum. Objects in this category do not require supervision by a member of the curatorial team .e.g. Learning handling collection. Images of the object can be freely used for digital content.

Category B. *Supervisory Access*; collections items require curatorial permission and supervision by a museum member of staff, not necessarily a member of the Collections team, while being accessed. There may be some image use issue which need to be check with the Collections team.

Category C. *Curatorial Access*; collections items require curatorial permission and supervision by a member of the collections team while being accessed. There may be some image use issue which need to be check with the Collections team.

Category D. *Special Access*; objects that are very sensitive may be restricted to curatorial supervised access for researchers only. No permissions in place for use of images and rights need to be agreed.

All BDMG staff are responsible for the overall security of the museum buildings and the safety of the collections both in storage on display and digital content.

When physical access is not possible or appropriate, BDMG will employ other ways of providing access. These include digital/electronic access through the website (including online photo archive and digitising the fine art collection) and outreach, where possible, using a selection of objects, representative of the collections.

BDMG regularly loans collection items to other services and organisations, regionally, nationally and internationally.

5. Social and Financial Access

Engagement is central to achieving the BDMG mission and so the service will seek to improve engagement and to support groups referred to as having statutory “protected characteristics” (Equality Act 2010) and lower socioeconomic status to access its services.

As set out in its Forward Plan, BDMG endeavours to ensure that its museums are seen as welcoming, socially inclusive, recreational and safe spaces that are perceived as a place for the community and that more people experience and are inspired by museums.

BDMG will seek to develop exhibitions, activities, displays and digital content that are representative and appeal to the communities of Bradford District, providing spaces that support community access and free admission for general visitors. This will be done through consultation and by providing opportunities for communities to work with museum staff in co-curating and co-planning and delivery of events, workshops and digital content.

The service endeavours to provide safe community spaces that are welcoming for all and support Health and Wellbeing both in person and online.

BDMG is committed to providing free admission for all general visitors during normal opening hours. Only in exceptional circumstances will temporary exhibitions incur a compulsory admission charge.

6. Intellectual & Cultural Access

BDMG plans and delivers services that ensure access for all to visit, use and enjoy its museums and galleries.

BDMG aims to provide access to the collections through its varied exhibition programme, events programme, learning programmes, digital content and community engagement, audience development and volunteer plan. BDMG is also keen to provide physical, digital and intellectual access to under-used and under-accessed collections and objects.

BDMG will, as part of on-going improvements, assess the physical, digital, intellectual and sensory access methods and implement, enhance and address the different access methods as and when appropriate to do so. For example, BDMG will make use of social media and its website to promote the collections.

Resources, including learning workshops and electronic resources offered within the galleries and online, will be regularly revised and updated in accordance with current best practice. The needs of users will be taken into account when preparing and presenting information both in print and electronically, including interpretation (see interpretation policy). This will include where possible standard clear font size, considering of appropriate reading levels, awareness of the districts digital divide and ability to access digital content and may also include providing information in different languages if appropriate and catering for different learning styles.

The service will seek to provide exhibitions, displays and digital content that appeal to communities in Bradford and will support co-curation of content with user groups. It will also, through activities, networks and collection displays, encourage dialogue between people of different ethnic, cultural and social backgrounds for example, the ‘linking schools’ work across the service and the collections linked to people of South Asian and Black heritage on display across our 4 sites.

BDMG is committed to enhancing user experience by providing a wide variety of

accessible informal learning experiences and activities developed and supported by curatorial, collections, learning and visitor services teams. Our Learning Team also provides a range of accessible educational opportunities and cultural experiences to support those in formal learning groups such as schools.

Statement on the Impact of the Covid Pandemic on access needs.

BDMG is committed to allowing access to collections both on display and in storage for enjoyment, education and cultural understanding.

Access to the collections will be provided wherever possible in a safe and sustainable way. Where necessary, risk assessments will be used to balance demand with preservation and staff and public safety.

Between 2020 and 2022 physical access to the sites and collections was greatly reduced due to the Covid 19 pandemic. During the pandemic BDMG worked hard to ensure a level of access to the sites and collections could continue. To do this BDMG has drawn on existing community, council and sector links to support district wide activity and develop new activity and exhibitions when the sites reopened to the public.

Digital activity, focused on the collections and buildings, was a key way to reach some of our users and encourage new users to access BDMG. Teams across the service developed video content for general users and school users to ensure a level of engagement with the collections could continue.

To ensure some level of physical access to the buildings and our collections stories, outdoor activities were developed to engage community groups and family audiences with the sites. Take away activity packs, inspired by our buildings and collections, were also developed and distributed at our sites and through the CBMDC neighbourhoods and children's services teams to support health and wellbeing and access to BDMG sites and collections.

Supporting Documents

This policy is supported by other BDMG plans including the learning plan and the audience development plan which set out in more detail the implementation of this policy through services offered.

This policy also links to the Forward Plan, Interpretation Policy, Spectrum Standards, BDMG's Research Policy, Human Remains Policy, Destructive Analysis Policy, CBMDC equal rights and diversity statement and national legislative requirements.

Review of Policy

Information on this policy will be made available online from BDMG's website and from BDMG's Registry upon application.

BDMG will endeavour to maintain and update the Access Policy in line with national guidelines and standards and in response to feedback and evaluation. **This policy will be reviewed in 2022 in light of the future direction of the service and with the results of the further research being currently undertaken on users and non-users of BDMG.**

This policy was reviewed in 2021 in light of the Covid 19 pandemic and CBMDC, UK

government and NHS responses to access to public spaces and public interaction.