

Harlow Museum & Walled Gardens Access Policy

2023 - 2027

As a Council service, the museum is managed following Harlow Council's governance, policy / procedures and financial processes. The museum is managed operationally by the Museum Manager who reports up to the Council's Assistant Director - Community Resilience. Strategic decisions are referred up through the Council's Senior Management Team. Where appropriate decisions are referred to the Council's Portfolio Holder for Community and the wider Cabinet.

Signed



Simon Freeman

Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Finance

Harlow Museum and Walled Garden's Access Policy 2023-2025

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Introduction

We are committed to including, educating, and engaging all visitors and potential visitors. This access policy is a framework to support all volunteers and staff, it shows our commitment to giving public access to the collections, buildings and sites, and associated information which focusses on telling the story of Harlow through our collections or activities and events which educate and engage audiences in the local community and further.

1. Access Statement

We believe everyone has the right to access Harlow Museum & Walled Gardens regardless of ability, age, gender, cultural or social background, sexual orientation, faith, language, location or wealth. As Harlow's centre of heritage, learning and culture it is vital for our site to be a welcoming and inclusive space for visitors, volunteers, staff, researchers, and schools. We are committed to removing barriers, such as physical, intellectual or cultural, which might restrict access to our site, within the limitations of our buildings and other resources.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out Harlow Museum & Walled Garden's commitment to maximising access and to identify the ways in which we achieve this across our site.

3. Scope

This policy relates to the collection held by Harlow Museum, its Walled Gardens, as well as activities and services offered onsite, off-site and online.

4. Our commitment

Our policy is to ensure accessibility is included into everything we do to develop and improve the Museum. The barriers to access are defined as:

- Physical/sensory access: e.g., those with physical disabilities, limited mobility, or hearing or visual impairments may not be able to access the museum, our website, social media channels.
- Intellectual access: e.g. some may find the museum too specialist in its approach to subjects and how they are presented; some may have learning

disabilities which affect their ability to engage with the museum; and some may not be able to read or speak English.

- Emotional access: e.g., some may have a lack of interest in, or awareness of, the museum and the subjects and issues it deals with, or our programmes and services.
- Financial access: e.g., some may not be able to afford to visit the museum or take part in our programme.
- Cultural access: e.g., some may feel that the museum is not relevant to them and does not reflect their cultural or social heritage, or their interests.
- Geographic access: e.g., those who will live too far away to visit the museum.

5. Responsibilities

Harlow Council has a continuing commitment to promoting equality, diversity and inclusivity within Harlow. The council celebrates difference and believes that tackling inequality will provide a strong foundation for cohesive and confident communities.

The council will work to tackle inequalities throughout its core business within both the services that it provides to the community and in its role as an employee. S149 of the Equality Act 2010 [the Act] requires the council to have due regard to its public sector equality duty when making decisions, strategic planning and when implementing policies that may impact on those who have protected characteristics.

Further details can be found in Harlow Council's Equality, diversity, and inclusivity Policy.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that the work of their colleagues considers the need to maximise access by addressing the barriers outlined above.

Staff members and volunteers will be involved when developing, delivering, or maintaining spaces, activities, resources, and other services for the public and are responsible for making them as accessible as possible.

6. Policy

6.1. Physical/Sensory access

We aim to maintain the museum and gardens to be as physically accessible as possible, so every part of our site, collections and activities can be reached and appreciated. For example:

- upholding the statutory requirements of the Equality Act (2010) by taking reasonable steps to ensure that policies, practices, and procedures do not discriminate against disabled people; and by removing, altering, or circumventing physical barriers within our buildings.
- labelling spaces in the car park for blue badge holders.
- guaranteeing our gallery spaces, gardens and toilets are accessible for wheelchair users.
- ensuring staff and volunteers have the skills to successfully greet and communicate a good quality service to people with visual, sensory, or hearing impairments.
- providing information and interpretation in a range of formats, for example labels, large print and interactives, where appropriate.
- ensuring that our website meets the Web Accessibility Initiative AAA standard.
- providing information about access on our website:
<https://www.harlowmuseum.com/your-visit/>

6.2. Intellectual access

We aim to provide information in a range of formats appropriate to the needs of a wide range of visitors. For example:

- considering the needs of visitors when preparing and presenting collections information and interpretation in the galleries, exhibitions, offsite and online.
- committing to understanding who the Museum's visitors and non-users are, to better meet their needs to our collections and services in the future.
- committing to easily understood, cross generational appeal when creating and designing publicity material.
- keeping the public informed of our collection, temporary displays, events, opening times and services via a range of sources, such as website, social media, leaflets, and telephone.
- ensuring the content and delivery of our learning programmes are tailored to the learning needs of their audiences.
- offering educational materials for different audiences and abilities, as required and as resources allow.

6.3. Emotional access

We aim to provide a good standard of customer care to ensure all visitors feel welcome and valued. For example:

- ensuring people are made to feel welcome on arrival and during their visit by offering a space, both inside the museum and out in the gardens in which people can feel safe, respected, comfortable, and able to learn at their own pace at their own level.

6.4. Financial access

We aim to minimise any financial barriers to ensure as many people as possible can access our services. For example:

- maintaining free admission to the museum and gardens.
- offering a range of services that are free of charge for the community to access and enjoy.
- providing outreach programmes to schools who struggle with the cost of travelling to the museum.
- offering expenses to volunteers who feel they cannot afford the travel costs to volunteer.

6.5. Cultural access

We aim to acknowledge and recognise cultural differences and seek to represent the range of cultural and socially diverse experiences. For example:

- presenting labels, displays, online and marketing materials that respect a diversity of backgrounds to reflect its community.
- considering audiences with social and diverse demographics that do not normally form part of Museum audiences when planning temporary exhibitions.
- engaging with diverse local communities, through partnership with other community, cultural and educational organisations.
- providing volunteer opportunities for all.

6.6 Geographic access

We aim to offer alternative resources for those who have difficulty accessing our site and collections. For example:

- increasing access to collections by providing a space online for learning opportunities.
- maintaining outreach options for those who are unable to visit, particularly with Loan Boxes and audiences in schools.
- sending requested enquires to schools, universities, and personal researchers, as well as mailing publications for sale as a resource.

7. Related polices, legislation and guidance

The Equality Act (2010) bans unfair treatment and helps achieve equal opportunities in the workplace and in wider society. The Act prohibits unfair treatment when providing goods, facilities, and services, when holding public functions, in the management of premises, and in education.

For more information or reference:

Harlow Council's Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Policy see:

<https://www.harlow.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Equality%2C%20%20diversity%20and%20inclusivity%20policy%202020%20to%202021.pdf>

'Access for all' Toolkit - enabling inclusion for museums, libraries and archives from MLA see: https://www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/MLA-access_for_all_toolkit.pdf

Web Accessibility Initiative see: www.w3.org/WAI

The Museums Association see: www.museumsassociation.org/policy/guidelines