Knowsley Council
Customer Services
Knowsley Archives Service:
The ARK (Archive Resource for Knowsley)

Access Policy

May 2020
Revision date: May 2022

1. Purpose of the Policy

1.1 This policy is one of a set of policies which provide a strategic framework for Knowsley Archives, known as The ARK (Archive Resource for Knowsley). It expands upon the Access statement made in the over-arching Knowsley Archives Service: The ARK (Archive Resource for Knowsley) Archives Policy (2014, revised and expanded 2017) and feeds into the Conservation, Research Service, Remote Enquiry and Collections Management policies.

1.2 The Access Policy sets out Knowsley Archives' approach to the provision of access to the archive collections, its education and outreach work and the provision of suitably qualified and experienced staff. The policy is underpinned by Archives for the 21st Century, 2009, the Government's policy document relating to archives, and the requirements of The National Archives Accreditation Standard, 2014. It also provides a guide to inform decision making and service delivery plans.

2. Accessing the Building

2.1 The ARK repository is situated in Kirkby Library on the 1st floor of the Kirkby Centre and is accessible by stair and lift. The building houses several co-located Council services and benefits from 24 hour security and fire monitoring systems and is a safe and welcoming place to visit. It is conveniently placed adjacent to the main bus station in Kirkby and is near the local rail station and local taxi ranks. There is a short stay car park next to the Centre and various long stay parking options in the town centre.

2.2 Access to the collections will be provided during Library opening hours and by appointment when the Library is closed, during the ARK's normal operating hours as advertised in our leaflets, social media platforms and web pages.

2.3 Information about archive services, including operating hours and search room procedures, will be disseminated through a variety of means, including social media platforms, the ARK web pages, leaflets, guides and posters and through community engagement.

2.4 As detailed in the Archive Services User Guide, secure storage lockers will be available for researchers to stow their personal belongings in whilst they are visiting the ARK. The Guide includes information about ARK services, details of the opening times and search room usage information.

3. Access to the Collections

3.1 ARK staff will manage the use of the collections. Researchers are asked to sign in using an ARK Visitor Record form and to provide an item of identification. Items can then be ordered using an Archive Request slip and the items requested will be delivered to the counter. No more than 3 items per customer will be issued at any one time.

3.2 Guidance and information on how to access the collections will be offered through leaflets and web pages. Search room visitors can expect to be supported by experienced and knowledgeable staff.

3.2 The ARK is committed to creating effective finding aids so that researchers can access materials. The Service is engaged in creating an online catalogue using Axiell Calm, utilising the Calmview public interface. Additional listings and indices will be made available to researches both in house and online.

3.3 The finding aids and the metadata created to describe digital assets will comply with ISAD(g) and current digital standards to ensure accuracy, consistency and relevance.

3.4 In order to ensure the best possible care of the collections, The ARK reserves the right to restrict public access to items which are very fragile.

3.5 Access to items in the collections which contain personal or confidential information may be restricted under the Data Protection Act. Subject access requests under the Data Protection Act and enquiries under the Freedom of Information Act will be dealt with in line with current legislation and Knowsley MBC procedures.

3.6 Items will be made available online to remote researchers through a selective digitisation programme as described in the Collections Management and Digital policies.

3.7 An enquiry and advice service for people who are unable to visit the ARK in person will be made available, in line with the Remote Enquiry and Research Service policies.

4. Learning and Development Opportunities

4.1 The ARK will provide opportunities for people to engage with heritage collections and services including family history, e.g. the Family History Help Desk, ARK events and activities.

4.2 The ARK will work in partnership with other agencies and community groups to deliver focused, interpretative heritage sessions to schools and the wider community, either in the ARK, Knowsley branch libraries or out in the community.

4.3   Provision for schools will be developed in consultation with Knowsley Library Services' School Library Service as part of the Council's Traded Services Agreement.

4.4   The ARK Team will raise the profile of the ARK by participating in regional and national networks such as MALG (Merseyside Archives Liaison Group) and projects.

4.5   The ARK welcomes visits from individuals, groups, adult learners, schools, colleges and universities and staff will endeavour to support groups with tailored session content and materials and appropriate staff input.

5.   Staff and Training

5.1   Appropriately qualified and experienced staff will be available to supervise and facilitate visits and deal with customer enquiries.

5.2   Staff training and development needs will be identified and acted upon through the Council's Performance and Development Review process.

5.3   Regular team meetings will be held to discuss service development.

5.4   The Service will utilise the knowledge of outside contractors when necessary to assist in the delivery of services to a high standard. For example, conservation specialists will be engaged to assess the condition of the collections and to carry out remedial works.

5.5   The ARK will support members of the community to develop capacity by offering meaningful opportunities for people to volunteer with the ARK in a variety of roles, either supporting community engagement work or providing opportunities within the organisation and cataloguing function of the ARK.

5.6   ARK staff will be bound by the Council's Managing Conduct, Performance and Information Policy and the Officer Code of Conduct to ensure that all customers are dealt with appropriately, equally and respectfully.

6.   Policy Review

6.1   This policy will be reviewed every 2 years to make sure that it remains relevant and supports the Archive Service.

This policy was approved on 09.10.17 by the Cabinet Member for Public Health, Wellbeing and Customer Services and the Assistant Executive Director (Public Health and Wellbeing) and thereby are adopted by KMBC. Revised May 2020.