

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

Collections Conservation Policy

May 2023

Revision date: May 2025

1. Purpose of the Policy

- 1.1 This policy is one of a set of policies which provide a strategic framework for Knowsley Archives, based in The ARK (Archive Resource for Knowsley). It expands upon the Conservation and Storage statements made in the overarching Knowsley Archives Service: The ARK (Archive Resource for Knowsley) Archives Policy (2014, revised and expanded 2017, further revised 2020, 2023) feeds into the Collections Management, Digital and Access policies.
- 1.2 The Collections Conservation Policy sets out Knowsley Archives' approach to collections care and conservation, ensuring the safe custody of the collections for future generations to explore. It also provides a guide to inform decision making and service delivery plans.

2. Collection Care

- 2.1 The collections are housed in secure, temperature and humidity-controlled conditions, where they are preserved and organised in line with PD5454:2012 (Guide for the Storage and Exhibition of Archival Materials).
- 2.2 The collections are cared for with regard to the relevant standards and good practice guidelines.
- 2.3 The condition of the collections is assessed in a number of ways:
 - A programme of stock checks, where each item is examined for condition, location, catalogue record and packaging: a database of the findings is then used to direct remedial works and conservation priorities;
 - Individual item check on accessing collections;
 - Condition surveys by qualified conservation professionals.
- 2.4 Appropriate action on the findings will be taken to conserve, protect and preserve the collections.
- 2.5 The ARK aims to package all material in acid free, archival quality materials to protect and preserve the collections in the archive. Items identified for repackaging during collection assessments will be dealt with appropriately.

2.6 Access to the collections is given to researchers, although the condition of items requested will inform the level of access permitted, e.g., it may not be possible to copy or handle a very fragile item.

2.7 The digitisation of materials to create surrogates in order to protect and preserve the original items will be considered as a means of preserving the original material.

3. Conservation

3.1 Items for remedial conservation work will be identified at acquisition, via annual stock take, condition surveys and individual inspection [2.3].

3.2 Condition of all collections will be noted on the acquisition record and on the catalogue record, where priority will be assigned.

3.3 The Archive Service will identify a budget to allow for conservation supplies and services to be procured.

3.4 Items prioritised for conservation work will be referred to a professional conservator.

4. Archive Accommodation

4.1 The secure store is situated on the 1st floor of the Kirkby Centre which was refurbished in 2014 to provide accommodation for a full range of local authority services, including an archive, library and art gallery. The repository was designed to comply with PD5454:2012 Guide for the Storage and Exhibition of Archival Materials, which superseded the previous standard, BS5454.

4.2 Shelving in the secure store is provided by both static and rolling stack arranged to accommodate a range of collections and items; maps and plans are stored in plan cabinets, pigeon holes and boxes.

4.3 The environmental conditions in the secure store are controlled by a dedicated air conditioning system and this will be monitored and conditions recorded at regular intervals using a data logger to ensure that conditions remain stable within the permitted range of temperature and humidity.

4.4 The work room and search room environmental conditions are also controllable and the air conditioning system will be used to create a buffer zone for items being brought out for viewing by researchers.

4.5 The effects of light on the collections will be considered. In order to protect the collections from ultra violet light damage, there are no windows in the secure store, which is lit by artificial, energy efficient lighting, or the workroom which is also lit entirely artificially; the search room is partially lit by diffused natural light and artificial lighting and if necessary, the light levels can be adjusted by utilising the blinds that are fitted to all of the windows.

4.6 The fabric of the building will be maintained. The repository, as part of the Kirkby Centre, is managed by the Council's Asset Management Team and a service level agreement for the maintenance of the environmental control system is in place.

5. Security

5.1 The safety of the archive collections housed in the ARK is a priority. The ARK facility is located on the 1st floor of the Kirkby Centre and occupies a designated area within the library space which can be made secure in its entirety. There are no external windows to any part of the repository and all areas of the repository are locked and secured when staff are not present, maximising security for the collections. The building has a comprehensive intruder alarm which is monitored 24/7 by the Council's security service and CCTV covering both internal and external areas, also monitored by the Council's security service at all times. There are also CCTV monitors situated on the main Library counter.

5.2 The collections will be safeguarded against the risk of fire. The building has a comprehensive fire alarm system in place, with a combination of heat and smoke sensors in all areas. This system is also externally monitored by the Council's security service at all times, complying with the latest policy from Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service.

5.3 All repository doors are fitted with appropriate locks and are fire resistant. When not in use, all doors, including the search room, which is the only point of entry to the repository, are locked securely.

5.4 The collections will be safeguarded against the ingress of water. The repository is located on the first floor of the building and there are no water pipes running through the secure store. Maintenance of the roof and drainage systems is undertaken by the Council's Asset Management Team and a reporting procedure for any building faults is in place.

5.5 The collections will be safeguarded against infestation by pests that could damage the materials in the collections. Regular pest management inspections of all areas of the repository will be made for evidence of pests which could pose a threat to the collections. Approved insect traps are strategically set, which are monitored and their condition recorded on a regular basis. These traps are replaced as appropriate to ensure their effectiveness.

5.6 The staff work room is accessible by security swipe card. Swipe cards are issued to designated staff and also serve as identification cards, specific to the holder. Volunteers are provided with swipe ID cards with limited access.

5.7 Access to the secure store is restricted to authorised staff or to permitted individuals and groups under strict supervision (for example, as part of a tour of the archive). The store is locked at all times when unsupervised. There are no services running through the secure store, other than lighting and power specific to its operation.

- 5.8 Materials are made available to the public for research and consultation in the ARK search room which is adjacent to the secure store. When presenting material to researchers, the items requested by the researcher are brought through into the ARK work room and issued over the counter. The work room is secured from the search room when unstaffed with a security shutter which locks automatically when closed.
- 5.9 Researchers are asked to sign in and to show identification before items are issued. Staff will ensure that all researchers are supervised whilst using archive materials so that staff can both offer assistance and maintain the security of the items in use.
- 5.10 The ARK will provide secure lockers for researchers to stow their belongings in whilst they are viewing archive materials.
- 5.11 The ARK maintains its own specific Emergency Plan and is included in the Library Service's Business Continuity Plan, which describes how events will be dealt with. This is reviewed every 6 months. A fully equipped disaster preparedness kit is kept in the archive work room and a reserve kit is kept remotely at Halewood Library. All archive staff are trained in its application.
- 5.12 In case of emergency, the Archive holdings are listed in its catalogues and indices, including externally hosted Calm records and the original, paper-based catalogue which is stored in Word documents on the Council's SharePoint site.
- 6 Digital**
- 6.1 Digital accessions, including both born digital and digital surrogate files, will be assessed and acquired in accordance with Knowsley Archives Service's Collections Management Policy and Digital Policy.
- 6.2 Digital records for permanent preservation will be stored and managed appropriately, with reference to the Digital Policy.
- 7. Policy Review**
- 7.1 This policy will be reviewed every 2 years to make sure that it remains relevant and supports the Archive Service.

This policy was originally 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, May 2023