

**Leicestershire County Council
Adults and Communities Department**

HERITAGE AND ARTS SERVICES

**LEARNING AND ACCESS
STRATEGY**

LEARNING AND ACCESS STRATEGY

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Service Vision

'From the past, now and for the future.

Together we shall preserve Leicestershire's heritage, care for our environment and encourage creativity, inspiration and delight.'

1.2 Vision for learning

'We will strive to recognise and realise the full potential of the objects, archives, expertise, knowledge and other resources within Heritage and Arts Services to create effective and inclusive learning opportunities for, and in partnership with, the people of Leicestershire and the wider region.'

1.3 Our values and definitions

Our commitment to learning

This policy and strategy together with the above vision for learning recognises learning as a primary function of museums, archives and records centres. Through its collections, sites, information sources and expertise, Leicestershire Heritage and Arts Services possess a unique and high quality resource that has significant potential to provide meaningful learning opportunities. The strength of this potential lies in the capacity to impact on a wide variety of individuals on many different levels.

In this context learning is not confined to the transmission of factual information but also includes the whole range of learning benefits museums and archives can deliver, such as: new skills, increased confidence, emotional and social development, inspiration for creativity and encouragement to take learning further and into other areas.

The policy and strategy acknowledges that individuals have different learning preferences, needs and learning styles. Through the aims and objectives contained within the policy and strategy Heritage and Arts Services will seek to address these individual requirements.

The challenge for Heritage and Arts Services is to provide an integrated, creative and effective response to the learning needs and expectations of individual service users. To achieve this the service will seek to embed learning into the structures, culture, activities and outlook of the entire organisation.

Through the use of its resources and partnerships Heritage and Arts Services will strive to consult and involve users, design appropriate learning programmes, create learning environments and opportunities and deliver these both in museums sites and within communities. Heritage and Arts Services will evaluate the success and outcomes of its activities and will act as a learning institution that develops and supports its own staff.

Our commitment to access and inclusion

In recognising learning as a central function of museums, archives and records services Leicestershire Heritage and Arts Services is also committed to providing equitable access to learning regardless of individual circumstance.

Through this policy Leicestershire Heritage and Arts Services will identify and remove those barriers that inhibit or prevent individuals using services or resources. As part of this process Leicestershire Heritage and Arts Services will endeavour to meet both the requirements and the spirit of current equalities legislation.

Leicestershire Heritage and Arts Services will also positively seek to develop collections, services, policies and other resources in a way that involves, reflects and celebrates the diverse range of communities and individuals who live in, or visit, Leicestershire.

The policy also specifies a number of target audience groups where museums and archives services can add value to the work and goals of other service providers in tackling exclusion.

1.4 The strategic framework

Leicestershire

In terms of Leicestershire County Council and the local Leicestershire Context the development of learning and access within Heritage and Arts Services dovetails within the wider policy framework of Leicestershire County Council and the Leicestershire Together Partnership.

In particular the Learning and Access Strategy supports the 'Leicestershire Sustainable Community Strategy 2008 – 2011' with reference to priority areas of:

- Improved life chances for vulnerable people
- Stronger more cohesive communities
- A prosperous, innovative and dynamic economy
- A healthier Leicestershire

The Learning and Access Strategy compliments and integrates with the 'Leicestershire Children and Young People's Plan 2008 -2011 with a strong emphasis on:

- Being Healthy
- Enjoying and Achieving
- Making a Positive Contribution

Lastly the Leicestershire County Council Heritage and Arts Services adheres to the commitments and aims of Leicestershire County Council's 'Single Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Strategy, 2010 -2013'.

The East Midlands

Regionally this Learning and Access Strategy supports the aims and delivery of 'Renaissance in the Regions' (REM) through the continuing cycle of East Midlands REM Business Plans. In addition this strategy also supports the wider learning aims of MLA East Midlands.

National context

Nationally this document recognises and supports a number of key policy drivers both within this document's rationale and content. Specifically this policy is informed by:

- The 'Every Child Matters' framework (DFES)
- The 'Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto' (DFES)
- The 'Kids in Museums Manifesto' (Kids in Museums)
- The Children Plan (DCSF)
- The 'Inspiring Learning for All' framework (MLA)

1.5 Rationale of policy

The rationale of the strategy is threefold in nature. Firstly the policy highlights the role of learning and inclusion within the activities of Heritage and Arts Services. Secondly the policy sets out a series of organisation wide, steps that embeds learning and access into the structure, planning and culture of Heritage and Arts Services. Lastly the document provides a coherent policy framework for a number of specific objectives that are currently in place or under development.

2. SUMMARY OF KEY POLICY AREAS

2.1 Key development aims

The policy identifies five key area for development these being as follows:

- Understanding the learning needs of our users and potential users
- Developing and broadening our programmes and learning opportunities
- Developing inspiring and accessible learning environments
- Developing learning partnerships
- Developing Heritage and Arts Services as a learning institution

2.2 Strategic principles

As part of the delivery of the Learning and Access policy and strategy Leicestershire Heritage and Arts Services will adhere to a set of key principles that will underpin all of the proposed objectives and activities. These principles are:

- Working with others we will maintain and review profiles of our visitors in terms of gender, age, cultural affiliation, disability, economic background, home location and personal interests.
- We will monitor our visitor profiles against existing community profiles for Leicestershire and develop targets on the basis of this comparison.
- Using existing networks and working in partnership, we will consult a wide range of specific users and potential users in order to inform the development of future services. Examples include contacting groups representing disability issues and service providers working with families at risk of social exclusion.
- We will integrate outreach and site based work to provide coherent and seamless services.
- We will make full use of Corporate level resources.
- We will evaluate services, projects and new developments at appropriate regular intervals and incorporate the resulting findings into the planning of future initiatives.

2.3 Key assumptions

The successful realisation of this policy and strategy, in its entirety, will rely on continued effective local and regional working partnerships and the establishment of several key new relationships. Significant additional external funding will also be required to achieve all of the outcomes.

3. AIM - UNDERSTANDING THE LEARNING NEEDS OF OUR USERS AND POTENTIAL USERS

3.1 Explanation

Under this aim Leicestershire Heritage and Arts Services will use and commission data to identify users and non users and will consult users and potential users in regard to current provision and in terms of new developments. Barriers, obstacles and other factors inhibiting the use of museums collections and services will also be identified as will the specific needs of key audiences. Heritage Service will develop and use profiles of Leicestershire's communities to monitor and prioritise access initiatives.

3.2 What we will do

General objectives

- Review access and inclusion provision at all sites and where appropriate undertake Equalities Impact Assessments (EIAs) of services operated within Heritage and Arts Services.
- On the basis of the above develop and implement Equalities Action Plans for appropriate Heritage and Arts Services developments and services.
- Develop general focus groups at each museum site drawn from a diverse mix of users and potential users.
- Where appropriate develop specific focus groups for relevant sites and in relation to key services. Examples could be teachers' groups or groups representing the interests of visitors with disabilities.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of learning programmes, exhibitions and other services such as the Open Museum using the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council's framework of Generic Learning Outcomes and undertake where appropriate more detailed evaluation

Specific objectives

- Improve the collection, processing and analysis of data on our school visitors.
- Work to understand the requirements of school children with special needs in relation to the services we provide and identify potential development opportunities.
- Consult and work with partners in Adults and Communities to seek ways to improve provision for users with learning difficulties.
- Consult and work with partners in Children and Young People Services to seek ways to improve provision for looked after children.

4. AIM - DEVELOP AND BROADEN OUR PROGRAMMES AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

4.1 Explanation

Leicestershire Heritage and Arts Services will provide learning activities that meet peoples needs, will develop and enhance formal curriculum-based learning and will develop a sustained demand for learning. The Service will develop learning opportunities for new audiences and promote initiatives that serve people in their own communities and local environments. Learning opportunities and services will reflect the diversity of the people of Leicestershire. Heritage and Arts Services will develop programmes that address the needs and interests of Leicestershire learners, and will support research and self guided learning. Evaluation will be incorporated into the planning and monitoring of new and existing provision.

4.2 What we will do

General objectives

Museum based initiatives

- Dependant upon the results of consultation develop current provision for schools to include greater variety of curriculum targeted workshops at each museum, led by a wide range of in-house staff and external providers.
- Develop an increased volume and variety of handling collections and self help resources at each museum for use by both schools and families in line with the Collections Management Policy.
- Actively maintain substantial contact with key schools within the local catchments of all museum sites and the Record Office for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.
- Develop increased support across all appropriate sites for the core school subjects of numeracy, literacy and science.
- Develop increased provision for Keystage 1 school users with a particular emphasis on provision at Snibston.
- Using resources such as the Fashion Gallery at Snibston develop support for vocational and university level programmes based on themes of textiles, fashion and design.
- Maintain current provision for under fives at all appropriate sites. In particular develop existing under fives days at Snibston with a view of involving other agencies in providing information on their available services and on health, parenting and other issues.
- Maintain and, where appropriate, expand the current level of holiday activities and weekend events.
- Develop Children's Museum clubs at museums and the Record Office for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

Community based initiatives

- Extend and broaden the user base for Resource Box. As part of this process review and update associated notes and interpretative materials.
- Research the potential for extending the community user base for Artworks by developing a loan scheme for businesses and developing an increased number exhibitions in community venues.
- Maintain, develop and broaden the range of talks and presentations offered to specialist interest adult groups to include a diverse range of community groups. Links forged through the Moving Objects community projects scheme will inform these developments.

Specific Objectives

Museum based initiatives

- Increase workshop provision for schools at Snibston, Donington le Heath Manor House and Charnwood Museum as part of Renaissance East Midlands funding agreement.
- Increase handling and self help resources for schools at Donington le Heath Manor House and Charnwood Museum as part of the Renaissance East Midlands funding agreement.
- Increase contacts and liaison with local schools at Snibston, Donington le Heath Manor House and Charnwood Museum as part of the Renaissance East Midlands funding agreement.
- Explore and consider a range of initiatives to promote and support science learning at Snibston.
- Develop targeted provision to support and encourage visits by SEN schools and units.
- Establish tailored support and provision for those Loughborough, Coalville and Melton schools that fall within the areas identified as containing a high proportion of children at risk of social exclusion.
- Recognise and research the particular characteristics of the formal education market and produce dedicated schools marketing initiatives and materials
- Develop Museum Clubs specifically for children with SEN.
- Support the aims and delivery of the Leicestershire and Leicester Find Your Talent Pathfinder Programme.

Community based initiatives

- Continue the emphasis on Moving Objects community projects to target groups that are unlikely to access the Museum in traditional ways by engaging other service providers and by working in close partnership with these bodies. Target groups to include young people, the elderly and people with learning difficulties.
- Maintain and support specialist children's clubs such as Science Club, Young Archaeologists and Wildlife Watch.

- With support from Renaissance East Midlands develop learning opportunities for disaffected young people
- Explore the potential for supporting in-school workshops delivered independently by freelance workers using Heritage Service's artefacts and resources.
- Explore working with other service providers to promote all family and children's activities (and where necessary adapt or provide dedicated provision), to disability groups, looked after children and children/families at risk of social exclusion. This could include working within other local community venues.
- In partnership with others maintain and develop touring community arts initiatives such as Centre Stage and Centre Screen and evaluate the outcome of these projects in terms of both learning and promoting access.

5. AIM - DEVELOP INSPIRING AND ACCESSIBLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

5.1 Explanation

Leicestershire Heritage and Arts Services will seek to develop welcoming and accessible learning environments, including virtual environments, to support a wide range of different learning styles. Key staff will be trained to welcome, inspire, and support users and deal effectively with their individual learning and access requirements. Exhibitions, collections and resources will be developed to reflect and celebrate the diversity of communities within Leicestershire. Evaluation will be employed to assess the effectiveness of existing and new learning environments

5.2 What we will do

General objectives

- Ensure, through consultation and appropriate research, that major gallery and museum refurbishments incorporate approaches and content that both meets the differing learning and access needs of visitors and which promote inclusion.
- Build on the reputation and experience of interactivity at Snibston Discovery Park and extend this experience to a wider range of exhibitions across Heritage and Arts Services.
- Develop Snibston to become a recognised local and regional centre for formal and informal science learning.
- Wherever appropriate ensure a high level of Curriculum support and content in all new gallery and web based provision.
- As far as possible implement findings arising from EIAs and access audits in terms of enhancements and alterations.
- Continue to develop a programme of popular themed temporary exhibitions that recognises and incorporates the needs and expectations of a diverse range of users. Work undertaken as part of the Moving Objects Community Projects will assist in the fulfilment of this objective.
- Maintain the current level of Moving Objects touring exhibitions to community venues.
- Regularly review provision within permanent exhibition spaces in consultation with user focus groups and other appropriate networks.

- Maintain free entry to Snibston Discovery Park for looked after children and their carers and their carers families. In addition explore the potential of offering similar incentives to other target groups such children identified as at risk of social exclusion.
- Explore and build on the opportunities presented by the Collections Resources Centre at Barrow to provide timely access to artefact collections and expertise. In addition provide and develop appropriate study facilities for individuals and small groups.
- Review and update all publicity materials to ensure the appropriate level of accessibility. In addition review the distribution and format of materials to recognise the wide range of information channels used by potential visitors, especially visitors with disabilities.
- Work toward the aim of providing public online access to collections and associated learning opportunities in all Heritage and Arts Services sites.
- Develop Heritage and Arts Services website projects to progress toward a comprehensive and integrated website that provides access to collections information, information for visitors, information and resources for schools, study support resources, support for the specialist groups working with Heritage and Arts Services and a high quality e-learning facility. Website development should as a matter of course adhere to recognised access standards.

Specific Objectives

- Enhance online booking facilities for schools and group visitors to Snibston Discovery Park
- Explore and work toward providing new visitor facilities and workspace accommodation at Donington le Heath Manor House.
- Support Melton Carnegie Museum in fully utilising the recently added dedicated community space.
- Develop links with local Children's Centres.
- Through MLA East Midlands actively contribute to regional museum and archives learning initiatives.
- Implement ongoing access enhancements to existing public spaces and services within Heritage and Arts Services.
- Develop a comprehensive Access Guide to Heritage and Arts Services.
- Promote the use of museum sites, and in particular Snibston, as safe non threatening venues for meetings between looked after children and their case workers.
- Maintain the current thematic approach to collecting ensure collections are developed to reflect the diversity and interests of Leicestershire communities.

6. **AIM - DEVELOP LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS**

6.1 Explanation

Leicestershire Heritage and Arts Services will identify potential partners internally and externally and will work with partners to shape and develop learning opportunities. The effectiveness and merit of all partnerships will be reviewed on a regular basis.

6.2 What we will do

Develop new partnerships

- Establish a priority list of potential partners to target and develop.
- Establish a database and directory of all existing and potential partners and make this available as a general staff resource.
- Host a working together conference or seminar inviting a wide range of guest organisations to explore potential ideas for joint working.
- Maintain and develop partnership working within Leicestershire County Council (e.g. Library and Information Services, Children and Young People Services, Adults and Communities Department).
- Establish contacts with the Leicestershire Children's Trust.
- Maintain and develop partnerships with all the Specialist SEN schools in Leicestershire
- Maintain and develop Heritage Service's contribution to Corporate working groups such as the Corporate Parenting Group.
- Develop links with appropriate multi-agency bodies that support learning

Sustain effective local and regional partnerships

- Work closely with other East Midlands Museums and Renaissance East Midlands to support regional programmes of inclusion and learning initiatives and to identify and respond to emerging regional and national agendas
- Strengthen and develop links with Leicester City Museums.
- Continue working closely with the District Arts Development Officers networks and regional Arts organisations to develop inclusive access to arts provision.
- Maintain and develop partnerships with Local Universities and develop links with local and regional teacher training institutions
- Maintain the successful partnership arrangements with NEXT Plc.

- Maintain and develop working relationships through the Leicestershire Museums Forum of Independent Museums
- Sustain strategic and working relationships with major funding bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Review Partnerships

Develop criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of partnerships on a regular basis and take appropriate action in relation to ineffective relationships

7. AIM - DEVELOP HERITAGE AND ARTS SERVICES AS A LEARNING INSTITUTION

7.1 Explanation

Leicestershire Heritage and Arts Services will, through training, act as a learning institution that develops the potential of its staff, including volunteers, and maximises the effectiveness of the organisation. Heritage and Arts Services will also seek to broaden and increase the range of people involved in both its service delivery and its wider activities. Heritage and Arts Services will work to increase opportunities for work placement students.

7.2 What we will do

Internal Staff

- Train Heritage and Arts Services staff in equalities and inclusion issues and ensure compliance with Leicestershire County Council Corporate Equalities plans, guidelines and initiatives.
- Implement and develop targeted and detailed training that supports individual members of staff in their areas of operations in relation to disability and inclusion, including training on specific impairment issues.
- Develop the expertise of key personnel within Heritage and Arts Services to act as advocates on issues of equalities, inclusion and disability.
- Provide training for key staff in managing and developing consultation and evaluation.
- Develop increased use of internal staff to deliver educational activities including curatorial and front of house staff.
- Through Professional and Personal Development Plans Identify key skills gaps among staff and provide appropriate training and development resources.
- Develop and deliver training programmes for regular volunteers and freelance workers working for Heritage and Arts Services on a regular or extended basis.

External partnership training

- As members of regional and national professional bodies support appropriate involvement in training other museum professionals and sharing best practice.
- Develop training opportunities for other agencies and practitioners promoting awareness of the work and activities of Heritage and Arts Services. (e.g. the Write Muse and Creative Thought initiatives offered through the Open Museum).

Developing volunteers, friends groups and specialist user groups

- Develop and increase the active participation of volunteers and friends groups in the work of the Heritage and Arts Services. A substantial part of this action plan should include proposals for attracting a more diverse and representative membership of these groups.
- Offer free places, as appropriate, on training session for Heritage and Arts Services staff to volunteers and members of Friends organisations.
- Maintain and support training for Heritage Watch, the Fieldwalkers Group and the Archaeological Wardens scheme.
- As part of the Community Heritage Initiative train volunteers in recording local biodiversity and landscape heritage features.

Developing work placements

- Actively work with other agencies to offer work placements to a substantially broader and more inclusive range of participants (e.g. to looked after teenagers approaching the transition out of care, Positive Action traineeships, Future Jobs appointments).