



Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life Access Policy

Approved by the Trustees on: 11th November 2014

Due for review in: November 2018

1. Introduction

Museum Trust's Statement of Purpose as declared in the constitution declares:
'The Trust shall be and is instituted for the purpose of assisting the study of the history of Tiverton and district by providing and managing a Museum'.

This objective is further amplified by fourteen stated powers. In pursuing this, the Trust seeks to collect, preserve and display items connected to the history of Mid Devon in a way that can be appreciated by the whole community. The Trust seeks to meet the needs of existing and new audiences including local people and visitors to the area, as well a worldwide audience who use the museum for family history research. The Trust aims to inspire and involve our community at all ages, and to provide formal and informal learning opportunities.

This policy aims to reduce or remove physical, social, financial, intellectual, cultural, psychological and emotional barriers and thereby make the museum as accessible and inclusive as possible.

To ensure equality of access this policy considers the following forms of accessibility:

- Physical – to enable people with physical disabilities to reach and appreciate every part of the museum service. We also consider the needs of older people accessing the museum, and those of young people and their families/guardians.
- Sensory – to enable visitors with impaired vision or hearing to enjoy the museum's collections
- Intellectual – By recognizing different learning styles, we aspire to provide interpretation in a range of learning styles.
- Attitudinal– to ensure the museum environment and museum staff/volunteers are welcoming to visitors from all sections of the community. It is very important that local people feel a connection to the museum and recognise it as a significant local asset.
- Financial – although we have to charge an admission charge, we recognise that the ability to pay can be a barrier to access.

The Trust has reviewed its access provision with the assistance of a formal, external audit carried out in 2004. Six monthly Health and Safety reviews consider physical access issues. Intellectual, sensory, attitudinal and financial issues are all considered within every area of work that the museum undertakes, and are reflected in the museum's Forward Plan. The Trust has completed MLA's Access for All toolkit in August 2014 as a tool to review this policy and to shape the accompanying access plan (which in turn feeds into the Forward Plan).

2. Aims

2.1 To ensure that all public areas of the museum are physically accessible for all users.

2.2 To ensure that the museum is as welcoming as possible to a wide range of users, including visitors with disabilities, older people, and families with young children.

2.3 To constantly review the methods that are used to interpret the collection to ensure that different methods are used where possible (so that the museum is not just reliant on written interpretation, but also to provide visual imagery, sound and sensory interpretation), dependent upon resources.

2.4 To reflect the diversity of the local and wider community in collections, displays, exhibitions and other facilities.

2.5 To provide all staff and volunteers with adequate disability awareness information, guidelines and training to enable them to carry out their responsibilities effectively and confidently.

2.6 To maintain a dialogue between the museum and local community and respond effectively to its needs.

2.7 To promote the museum's services and activities to all of our target groups, using the most appropriate and affordable means, and to try to ensure that everyone has access to the information they need.

3. Buildings and Physical Access

The museum is housed in two buildings. The main museum building, a converted school, has two floors. There are two staircases and one lift providing access to the first floor. The rest of the museum is on the ground floor level. There is level access in the Authers Gallery following the refurbishment project of 2006. However, the Trust continues to review the access of the galleries and will continue to improve accessibility as funds allow.

There is a wheelchair for visitors to use, and there is a fully accessible toilet. There are seating areas around the museum. Baby change facilities are available in both the ladies and gentlemen's toilets. Although we don't have specific facilities for breast feeding at the moment, it is welcomed at the museum. If a visitor should ask for a private area, the meeting room or another empty room with chairs should be offered. Assistance dogs are welcome to the museum.

Sensory and Intellectual Access

4. Collections

4.1 Many items on display are not displayed behind glass thereby enabling visitors with sensory impairments to access them (balancing collections care and health and safety priorities). This also affects the atmosphere of the museum as visitors are not physically cut off from all of the collection by glass cases.

4.2 To develop the displays further, items from the collections should be made available for handling, where possible, to make them accessible to people who are visually impaired or those who would benefit from a sensory experience. The regular holiday object handling sessions are a way for families to access the collections in this way.

4.3 The museum's Reminiscence Therapy collection is heavily used with older people at a number of off site venues (care and residential homes, as well as memory cafes and other daytime events). This collection is used to reach an audience who are unable to physically visit the museum.

4.4 The museum's school handling collection is also heavily used, and reaches an audience who may not physically visit the museum.

4.5 Access to items in store is facilitated through museum staff in response to user requests, either by physically accessing the item, or sharing information or photographs electronically.

4.6 The Research Library provides access to information for people in person and remotely.

4.7 The weekly page in the Tiverton Gazette provides a forum in which the museum features items from the collection to an audience outside of the museum building.

5. Permanent Displays

5.1 The presentation of the displays should be continuously reviewed in accordance with DDA audits/reviews and in consultation with user groups, as resources allow.

5.2 The museum intends to provide more audio information as resources allow.

5.3 The museum must improve upon the provision of large print text.

6. Temporary Exhibitions

6.1 Temporary exhibitions provide a flexible medium for targeting specific groups in a way that permanent displays cannot.

6.2 The Trust seeks to work with under-represented groups to produce exhibitions about their own community or of issues concerning them with both the temporary exhibition programme and in the community display area in the Dicken Gallery (which is available to local groups to curate their own displays).

6.3 All temporary exhibitions should have large print text available.

6.4 The temporary exhibitions are a vehicle in which items held in store can be displayed.

7. Interpretation

7.1 Communication methods should include a range of media, such as print, Braille, audio and videotape, in appropriate languages and at various intellectual levels, as budgets allow. The position and use of different forms of interpretation should be regularly reviewed.

7.2 Clear guidelines on print standards should be followed so that all print-based material, including exhibition panels, publicity leaflets and internal memos meet the agreed standards. (Using sans serif font, Arial or Gill in object labels; Arial in exhibition panels; Arial in all letters and internal memos; our promotional material uses VAG Round or similar).

7.3 The museum provides museum plans in French and German, and has plans for a Spanish one. The museum is not based in an area of wide cultural diversity, but should consider a Polish plan as well.

8. Outreach

8.1 The museum is committed to connecting with the local community and the number of partnerships and networks that the museum is involved with in the local community is a real strength.

8.2 The museum is also committed to connecting with the local community at other locations, away from the museum site. This has been achieved recently with the Pop Up Museum in empty shop windows and with the display at the Exe Valley Leisure Centre which is changed regularly. The museum is committed to supporting and having a presence at local community events such as the Mid Devon Show, TivvyFest and a number of other local events.

8.3 The school handling and reminiscence therapy collections are used off site.

8.4 The museum staff regularly give talks to a wide variety of community groups (local history groups, WI, U3A, Rotary, church groups etc).

9. Customer Care, Attitudinal Access

9.1 Good communications are a priority in customer care and it is important that all volunteers have appropriate skills and training as part of their induction.

9.2 An audio loop has been provided in the reception area as part of our compliance with the DDA audit.

9.3 The Trust will implement further training as resources allow (eg further sighted guiding training, and source external disability awareness and deaf awareness training).

9.4 All volunteers are advised of the access policy as part of the induction process.

9.5 Disability awareness is the minimum requirement for all volunteers and is included as part of their induction training.

9.6 Training should be supported by guidelines and other information to enable volunteers to maintain their skills and to continue to work to agreed standards.

10. Financial Accessibility

10.1 The admission charge has remained at the same level since 2010, and the Trust is keen to keep it as affordable as possible. Concessionary rates are offered to over 60s, job seekers and students. Separate (cheaper) tickets for the transport gallery and temporary exhibitions are available. Carers have free entry.

10.2 The museum always takes part in Heritage Open Weekend and offers free entry for two days each year. Other free entry days may occasionally be offered.

10.3 Discount vouchers are widely offered. The parent/guardian of every school child visiting the museum is given a voucher for free entry. Other £1 off vouchers distributed in conjunction with town events (eg Mid Devon Show).

11. Responsibility for Access

Access considerations are primarily the responsibility of the Director, Education & Outreach Officer, and Trustees, but all museum staff (including volunteers) are involved in maintaining and improving access.