Gloucestershire Archives @ The Hub

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy

1. Policy statement and purpose

This Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) policy sets out Gloucestershire Archives' commitment to embedding equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging in all aspects of our work. We treat staff, volunteers, customers and everyone else we come into contact with dignity and respect, and recognise, respect and value difference and diversity. We will consider EDIB from the outset when designing services, making decisions, developing collections, working with partners and supporting our workforce.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that anybody engaging with Gloucestershire Archives is not treated less favourably as a result of having protected characteristics, and that our activities and collections reflect the widest possible cross-section of society.

2. Scope

The policy applies to all aspects of our work, and includes anyone who interacts with our service, be it on-site, off-site or online. It applies to staff, volunteers, partners and contractors.

The Equality Act 2010 covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

In addition to the nine statutory protected characteristics, as part of Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) we consider the needs and experiences of care-experienced people, armed forces communities, carers, digitally excluded people, people affected by geographical or socio-economic disadvantage, and other groups experiencing vulnerability or inequality within the historic county of Gloucestershire.

3. Terminology

Archives are the record of everyday activities of governments, organisations, businesses and individuals. Archives may take many different forms – handwritten, typed, printed, photographic or electronic – and include audio-visual material such as video and sound recordings. As authentic and reliable records, they are preserved permanently because of their evidential and historical value.

Equality means ensuring fairness of access, treatment, opportunity and outcomes, recognising that different people may require different support to participate fully.

Diversity means recognising, respecting and valuing differences in people's identities, backgrounds, experiences, knowledge and perspectives.

Inclusion means identifying and removing barriers so that people can participate, contribute and access opportunities and services.

Belonging means creating an environment in which people feel welcomed, respected, valued, heard, able to contribute and confident that they can be themselves without fear of exclusion or discrimination.

4. Background

Gloucestershire Archives gathers archive collections and local and family history resources to ensure they are kept secure and made accessible.

We are an accredited archive service recognised by The National Archives as the place of deposit for public records relating to Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire.

We are a Gloucestershire County Council service. By agreement, we also provide an archive service for South Gloucestershire Council and are the appointed Record Office for the Diocese of Gloucester.

We are a lead partner in the Gloucestershire Heritage Hub, a network of local people and organisations with a common interest in our historic county's documented heritage.

As an archives service we support the International Council on Archives' Universal Declaration of Archives. This outlines the role that archives play in securing human rights,

establishing a collective memory and underpinning accountable and transparent governance.

5. Guiding principles

- Meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty by having due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and foster good relations between them. Using this Duty to inform our access and engagement activities and proactive collecting work.
- Removing or minimising barriers to inclusion and making reasonable adjustments so that our on-site, off-site and digital services, activities and communications are accessible and welcoming.
- Building equality considerations into policies, projects, services and decisions from the outset, using evidence and robust Equality Impact Assessments.
- Working alongside communities to co-design and co-produce solutions, improve customer experience and communication, and reduce barriers to participation.
- Working in partnership with community partners such as Voices Gloucester and Fresh Air Foundations, to encourage people from protected groups to take part in activities where participation or representation is disproportionately low.
- Developing and supporting a motivated, inclusive workforce.
- Recognising intersectionality: overlapping identities and circumstances can create distinct experiences and intensify barriers or disadvantage.
- Actively identifying and challenging racism, discriminatory language, behaviour, structures and practices, and learning from the experiences of diverse ethnic communities in line with GCC's anti-racism commitment.
- Using respectful, accurate and evolving language, developed where possible with the people and communities being described.
- Creating a sense of belonging for staff, volunteers, customers and communities by fostering trust, respect and openness, valuing different perspectives, encouraging participation and ensuring that people feel heard and able to influence our work.

Measures to implement these principles include:

- producing and reviewing accessible guides to collections relating to communities and experiences that have been underrepresented, including LGBTQ+ history and resources relating to Black, Asian and other diverse ethnic communities
- providing supported access, reasonable adjustments and accessible communication for people with different needs, levels of confidence, knowledge and digital skills
- co-creating activities with underrepresented communities and valuing lived experience when identifying gaps, interpreting collections and shaping priorities
- working with community organisations such as Voices Gloucester and supporting relevant community-led heritage resources where this advances shared objectives
- writing an annual equalities report analysing data from workforce information, customer surveys, accessions reports and engagement activities.
- completing Equality Impact Assessments for new or significantly revised policies, projects, services and decisions, and reviewing them when circumstances or evidence change
- reviewing physical, digital, cultural and organisational barriers that may prevent people from feeling that the service is for them, and communicating how feedback, community contributions and lived experience have influenced our decisions
- reviewing EDIB progress at management and staff meetings
- providing relevant training and opportunities for staff and volunteers to share learning, reflect on practice and challenge discrimination.

6. Roles and responsibilities

The Head of Archives Service owns this policy and is accountable for its development, implementation and review. The Archives Management Team is responsible for embedding it in service planning and decision-making and monitoring implementation.

All staff, volunteers, partners and contractors within the scope of this policy are expected to follow it, complete relevant training, raise concerns, challenge discriminatory or exclusionary behaviour appropriately, and help create an inclusive environment in which diversity is valued and everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

7. Raising a complaint, concern or suggested improvement

We welcome suggested improvements to the equality, accessibility, inclusion and sense of belonging created by our services, and will consider what feedback tells us about barriers, culture and participation.

Any complaint or concern will be taken seriously and dealt with in a timely and sensitive manner. Volunteers, customers, stakeholders, partners and contractors should contact the Head of Archives Service or County Archivist at archives@gloucestershire.gov.uk. If the matter is not resolved, it may be referred to Gloucestershire County Council's corporate complaints team: www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/complaints-and-feedback/complaints-about-corporate-issues/.

Staff should normally speak to their line manager in the first instance. If they are unable to do so, or the matter is not resolved, they should use GCC's current 'Respect in the Workplace', grievance or 'Speak Up' arrangements, or seek advice from HR, an employee network or a trade union representative. Concerns involving racism or other discrimination will be handled in accordance with GCC's current reporting and support arrangements.

8. References

This policy should be read alongside the related Gloucestershire Archives policies available at www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/policies, particularly the Access Policy, Collections Development Policy, Collecting Policy and Learning and Outreach Policy.

Our access statement is available here:
www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/visit-us/accessibility-on-site/

This policy supports GCC's Equality Objectives 2025–2029 and should be read alongside Gloucestershire County Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies and procedures, Respect in the Workplace, grievance and speaking up, and GCC's anti-racism commitment. It should also be read alongside South Gloucestershire Council's equality policy.

9. Review and revision

This policy will be reviewed at least every three years, or sooner if legislation, council policy, or service delivery changes. Please write to archives@gloucestershire.gov.uk if you wish to give feedback on this policy.

Document control

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Version history

Version	Version date	Summary of Changes
V1.0	October 2023	Comments from consultation on draft incorporated.
V2.0 draft	October 2026	Policy revised as an Equality, Diversity, Inclusion *and Belonging* Policy. Definitions, principles, responsibilities, implementation measures and monitoring arrangements expanded.

Date of next revision: 2029