

Collections Care Policy

1. Policy statement and purpose

The Collections Conservation Policy sets out St Helens Archive Service's 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.

St Helens Archive Service subscribes to both Harwell Restoration Service and the National Conservation Service.

The following British Standards underpin this policy:

BS 4971:2017 Conservation and care of archive and library collections.

PAS 197:2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management.

BS EN 16893:2018 Conservation of Cultural Heritage – Specifications for location, construction and modification of buildings or rooms intended for the storage or use of heritage collections.

2. Preservation principles

- Archives will be preserved in perpetuity.
- Archive original format will be preserved wherever possible.
- Risks will be assessed, and measures put in place to control them.
- Passive environmental control measures will be used where possible to increase sustainability.
- Conservation activities will be carried out when suitable and necessary either in-house or by external professionals.
- Original material or a digital surrogate copy may be made accessible.

3. Archive strong rooms

- St Helens Archive Service collections are kept in secure strong rooms that comply with nationally recognised standards.
- Humidity and temperature are monitored regularly.
- Insect blunder traps are checked monthly, and findings are logged.
- Access to the strong rooms is restricted to staff or to permitted individuals, contractors, or groups only under supervision (for example, when there are tours of the Archive).

4. Monitoring collections

- Any condition findings are logged, and appropriate action taken either in-house or via professionals through the National Conservation Society.
- St Helens Archive Service aims to package all material in acid free, archival quality materials to protect and preserve the collections. Items identified for repackaging during collection assessments will be dealt with appropriately.
- Access to material may be limited as it may not be possible to copy or handle a very fragile item. Digital surrogates may be created as access copies.

5. Handling records

- Staff and volunteers receive appropriate training in handling archive material.
- The search room displays guidelines to make the public aware of preservation issues. Staff ensure that all researchers are supervised whilst using archive materials, to assist as well as maintain the security of the items in use.
- Lockers are provided for researchers to store their belongings whilst they are viewing archive materials.

6. Disaster recovery

- A full emergency plan is in place.
- Fire and flood alarms are monitored remotely.
- A disaster preparedness kit is kept in Strong Room 1.
- St Helens Archive Service has a Business Impact Assessment, part of the Council Business Continuity Management arrangements, which describes how events will be dealt with. This is reviewed every 6 months.

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