

Sandwell Museum and Arts Service Collection Management Policy 2021 – 2026



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Collections Management Policy Sandwell Museum Service

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(Attached as separate Document)

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Collections Management Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 The Collection Management Policy defines the purpose of Sandwell Museum Service's collection, as well as the processes by which that collection is maintained and managed. This includes the acquisition and disposal of objects and defining the functions of the collection to support the work of Sandwell Museum Service and Sandwell MBC key priorities as well as setting out how we ensure that our collection is relevant to and meets the needs of the local community.

1.2 This policy is supported by a range of procedures and plans to ensure that Sandwell Museum Service's collection is cared for and managed appropriately and according to industry standards and guidelines.

1.3 The adoption and implementation of such a policy by Sandwell MBC is a requirement of the national accreditation scheme for museums.

1.4 This policy statement supersedes all existing practices and policies, formal and informal, relating to the same matter.

2. Using the Collection

2.1 The Museum collections are held by Sandwell MBC for the use and enjoyment of the people of the borough today and in the future. The function of the collection is to be central to and used for community engagement and lifelong learning activities undertaken by Sandwell Museum Service to support Sandwell MBC's key priorities. Sandwell Museums is a visitor/user orientated organisation led by visitor services, community engagement and lifelong learning aims and objectives.

2.2 Therefore access to these collections is essential to enable them to support the lifelong learning and community engagement activities of Sandwell Museum Service (refer to Sandwell Museum Service's Learning and Access Policy 2018 and Sandwell Museum Service's statement of purpose)

2.3 Every object in Sandwell Museum's collection will potentially be available for display or handling use. Each object or group of objects will be risk assessed to establish appropriate usage, care or protection requirements, levels of handling and display conditions for each new activity. This scrutiny will be applied to both accessioned objects and non-accessioned objects documented on an inventory.

Sandwell Museums will hold a proportion of its collection as full accessioned items subject to accreditation standards. The remainder of the collection will be cared for appropriately as per Sandwell Museums policies and procedures.

2.4 The principle aim of this collection management policy is to provide a framework within which the collections can be most effectively and efficiently used and developed. The existing historical collections managed by Sandwell Museum Service should be managed in such a way so as to maximise their usefulness. The objects, and their accompanying records, documents and information are a storehouse for the stories of Sandwell's past. The use of these objects should be encouraged to illuminate aspects of Sandwell's past by deepening our understanding of and widening the range of ways into these stories. Museum objects can and should be used to inspire, motivate and encourage creativity and imagination outside of their use as a historical resource.

3. Summary of Sandwell Museum Service's Collection

A summary of the collection managed by Sandwell Museum service is set out in *appendix 1*.

4. Acquisitions & Disposals - What Sandwell Museums Collect

4.1 A detailed policy around Collection development and acquisition and disposal of objects are set out in the Sandwell Museums Collection Development Policy (*Appendix 2*)

5 Collections Care and Documentation

5.1 Sandwell Museums will care for and maintain its accessioned collection meeting at least minimum industry standards and guidelines. This will be achieved through adherence to a series of plans and procedures which ensure relevant and appropriate standards are maintained and monitored. These plans and procedures are listed at (*Appendix 3*)

5.2 In order to maintain a high standard of care of the collections held by Sandwell Museum Service a qualified museum professional will be employed by the service and a designated member of staff will be employed to ensure collections management policies are in place, maintained and procedures are monitored. All staff and volunteers dealing with collections care will be suitably trained and monitored in the implementation of collections management procedures.

5.3 Sandwell Museums is committed to; documenting its collections, meeting at least minimum industry standards and guidelines,

recording sufficient information about each accessioned object in its care so that it can be identified, located and that information is backed up and stored appropriately. Also that non-accessioned items are documented appropriately and placed on an inventory (See appendix 3)

5.4 Conservation advice and work should be carried out by professional conservators who are registered on the National Conservation Register. All conservation treatment should be recorded to meet the minimum standard for conservation treatment records.

6. Security & Insurance

6.1 Sandwell Museum's collections are insured under the policies held through Sandwell MBC. Loans from other museums are also covered under these policies when in our buildings.

6.2 A disaster plan/ emergency plan is in place for each museum site which will be followed in the event of an emergency is listed in *appendix 3*

7. Review of Collections Management policies and procedures

7.1 The collection management policies and procedures will be reviewed and updated every five years to ensure that they remain relevant and reflect current industry guidelines.

7.2 The collection management policies should be approved by the governing body and implemented under the management of the museums management team

Appendix 1 – Summary of Sandwell Museum Service’s Collection

A1.1 The collection managed by Sandwell Museums on behalf of Sandwell MBC has developed since the 1890s. Traditionally, the acquisition of objects has been upon an ad-hoc basis and there has been a lack of vision or planning concerning the development of object collections: therefore, the collections are diverse and vary in quality, size and significance. Also historically the sites and collections now part of Sandwell Museums were administered by different local authorities with varying collecting priorities.

Some of the collections have come into existence through the collecting activities of philanthropic personalities during the nineteenth century, through local archaeological excavations, as objects commissioned and acquired by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council and as donations from private individuals. The total number of objects held by Sandwell Museum Service is approximately 19 500. The primary collections held by the service are as follows:

Subject Category & approximate number of specimens

Social History - 8 000

Archaeology - 5 600

Geology - 3 000

Numismatics - 500

There are other distinct object collections that whilst not being primary collections in terms of object size are nonetheless important collections due to their cultural and historical significance. These collections are as follows:

A1.2 Ruskin Pottery (approximately 350 individual objects)

The Ruskin pottery collection is believed to be the largest public collection of its type within the United Kingdom. It has a strong local provenance to Sandwell as it was produced in the borough town of Smethwick. The collection has been created through a mixture of donations, purchases by Sandwell Museum Service and fixed term/renewable loans from private collectors.

A1.3 Helen Caddick Ethnographical Collection (approximately 460 objects) plus other Victorian traveller's collections.

The nineteenth century pioneering female explorer and anthropologist, Helen Caddick (who resided in West Bromwich) created this collection. The collection contains culturally significant objects from the Indian Sub Continent, China, Japan, Australasia, Africa, Indonesia, North America and the Middle East. The Collection was removed from permanent display in 2001 and is currently in storage at Wednesbury Museum & Art Gallery.

A1.4 Fine Art Collection (approximately 310 pieces)

The major proportion of this collection was bequeathed by the philanthropic Richards' family during the latter half of the nineteenth century. As such the collection reflects the personal tastes of this and political attitudes of the Richards family and is indicative of late nineteenth century bourgeois attitudes towards the use of art for didactic purposes. The collection contains work by artists such as Sir John Everett Millias, James Webb, Eugene Verboeckhoven, Benjamin William Leader, Marcus Stone and Hermanus Koekicoek. The collection also contains a small amount of sculpture, including a commission by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council of a bronze bust of the first female speaker to The House Of Commons and former borough M.P. Baroness Boothroyd.

A1.5 17th Century Furniture Collection – Oak House Museum

A regionally significant collection of 17th century furniture is displayed at Oak House Museum. West Bromwich Corporation purchased the collection in 1951 from Queen Mary's furniture advisor. The collection has manual documentation records and items in the collection were formerly part of notable furniture collections.

Appendix 6 – Collections Management Plans and procedures

Procedures and Plans supporting this policy

1. Collection Development Policy - Acquisition and disposal
2. Documentation plan
3. Collection Care procedure – Appendix 5
3. Pest management procedure
4. Environmental Monitoring
- 5 Storage and housekeeping procedures
- 5 Guidance for handling objects for museum staff/ volunteers procedure
- 6 Temporary exhibition and long term loans in and out procedures
- 8 Risk management and disaster plan (held at the relevant site).