

Sandwell Museum and Arts Service Access, Learning and Engagement Policy 2021 - 2026



Sandwell Museum Service Learning and engagement Policy – 2021-2026

1. Introduction

Sandwell Museum and Arts Service holds lifelong, formal and informal learning at the heart of its work. Delivery of educational programmes, new experiences, hands-on sessions, participation, learning and development opportunities and physical and intellectual access for all are a core function of the Museum Service in Sandwell and this document recognises that learning, engagement and access in its widest sense is the underlying purpose of Sandwell Museum Service within the scope of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council's priorities using the unique resources available to it.

1.1 The service is committed to:

- Promoting and advancing knowledge, understanding and an appreciation of the history and culture of Sandwell by supporting learning and enjoyment of the objects, buildings, archives, stories and knowledge in our care in a variety of creative ways
- Promoting skills development, new experiences, lifelong learning, personal development and skills for life and work
- Providing inspiring creative learning sessions across subject areas and topics which support formal learning for all ages both through schools and other learning means, networks or organisations.
- Using learning as a tool for audience development and contributing to the development of improved intellectual access to our collections, displays, buildings, stories, experiences and activities for all our visitors
- Ensure that local communities and users are central to our work and all users and potential users feel welcome and are treated fairly and able to enjoy our museums and activities freely. This policy sets out ways in which we can ensure that we are providing a welcoming, relevant service that attempts to address the access needs of users and potential users
- Ensuring that all of the above contribute to Sandwell being an attractive place to live and visit
- We will be mindful of the positive impact museums and the opportunities we can provide can have on wellbeing
- Basic access to our sites and resources is free to our communities and we commit so some of our activities being free and although there may be charges for some events and activities or services these will be affordable and accessible

1.2 Through the above commitments Sandwell Museums will make a positive contribution to Sandwell's vision 2030 '10 ambitions' using museum learning, engagement and access both physically and

intellectually to help make the borough an attractive and positive place to live and enjoy.

2. Aims

We aim to be a resource for learning and development; welcoming to all, making a positive contribution to the lives of our visitors, users and the communities in which they live. We aim to provide unique, inspiring and creative learning opportunities and experiences to motivate our audience (See Appendix 1)

3 Objectives

We will continue to develop learning and engagement opportunities for a wide variety of audiences as well as high quality museum education services, maximising educational use of all Sandwell's heritage resources providing inspiring, creative learning and development opportunities for our communities not just in history and art and crafts, but in literacy, and across STEM subjects and other subject areas. (See Appendix 2)

4. Audiences

Sandwell Museum Service is a people centred organisation putting users and potential users at the heart of what we do. With an imaginative, innovative, inspiring and creative approach the service aims to encourage active participation, inclusion and provide opportunities and experiences

4.1 Our key target audience are residents of Sandwell as well as users of community groups, educational organisations and other services based within or with connections to the borough. Specific groups within this are set out in Sandwell's key priorities and performance indicators

4.2 Secondary target audiences are residents of the Black Country as a whole, as well as users of community groups, educational organisations and other services based within or with connections to the Black Country or West Midlands region Specific groups within this are set out in Sandwell's key priorities and performance indicators

4.3 Our tertiary audiences would be audiences from across the West Midlands region.

5. Service Provision

5.1 We will continue to provide, expand and develop our well received and popular formal educational programmes depending on the needs of education providers and the national curriculum across subject areas

5.2 We will provide work experience, apprenticeships, placement and skills development opportunities through projects for young people, virtually and in person and we will ensure that opportunities are embedded in wider projects of all types where possible and appropriate

5.3 We will provide learning opportunities, volunteering opportunities, skills development, new experiences, engagement, creative and hands-on activities and active participation to our communities and users.

(See Appendix 3)

6. Resources

Museums offer a unique learning environment and Sandwell Museum Service has a unique set of resources within the borough to provide learning and creative opportunities. The Service will use these resources for maximum engagement opportunities.

(See Appendix 4)

7. Partnership Development

7.1 Sandwell Museums will maintain, establish and develop partnerships to ensure projects and programmes provided are to a continued high standard and meet the needs of audiences.

7.2 Sharing of best practice will be achieved through partnership with other professionals, organisations and partners.

8 This Policy is designed to provide a framework for the future development of both formal and informal learning activities and should be read in conjunction with other Sandwell Museum Service policies.

Appendix 1 – Learning Aims

We will achieve this by:

1. ensuring physical and intellectual access by
 - paying full regard to learning requirements and diversity including invisible disabilities in the design of all exhibitions, displays, projects and programmes
 - providing a friendly welcoming environment conducive to learning in all its forms to all users
 - communicating with our customers and non-users in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons - to ascertain what they are enjoying and would like to be doing more of at our sites, and to collect and tell the borough's stories.
2. supporting the National Curriculum and the needs of schools, educational organisation, and home learners with appropriate programmes, projects and partnerships for all age groups and abilities across subject areas and topics depending on need
3. supporting lifelong learning and family learning as well as participating in initiatives across the Borough by developing new partnerships
4. offering a high quality innovative and exciting programme of events and activities contributing to life long learning opportunities appropriate to a range of audiences. This may sometimes simply be giving families an opportunity to have fun together, spend time together away from screen and engage with each other as well as being educational
5. developing new projects to encourage new audiences
6. developing a range of projects and programmes which offer skills development, skills for work or workplace training, encourage enhanced self esteem and a sense of pride
7. supporting culture and heritage based outreach activities which encourage individual and community based projects and events
8. applying rigorous intellectual standards to all our programmes and activities
9. improving access to the built heritage and the Borough Council's collections and access to cultural, creative and artistic experiences through the development of partnerships
10. raising the profile of the museums and arts service through working with sponsors, developing new partnerships, applying for awards, writing for professional publications and speaking at seminars and conferences

Appendix 2 – Learning Objectives

To continue to develop a high quality formal museum learning service we will:

- continue to be aware of current educational thinking and changes
- collect information and views from users through questionnaires, focus groups and continually evaluate
- work with other council employees, educational specialists and identified partners to ensure educational input in to the planning of exhibitions, events and projects
- identify and target groups who use and will use our properties and resources
- aim to secure additional funding to provide extra resources for the education service, e.g. staff, equipment
- offer activity sessions for schools which link directly to the National Curriculum or meet the specific needs of educators or organisations and which appeal directly to learners' sense of curiosity and imagination
- To offer learning and creative experiences across subject and topic areas

To focus on people and access as the heart of what we do, inspiring learning for all

- continue to deliver and enhance an exciting programme of events during the school holidays and key times of year, targeting all age groups and abilities
- put our museum buildings at the heart of our community and use them for a variety of learning opportunities and functions to attract a 'non-traditional' museum audience
- To consider users and potential users needs so they are treated fairly and respectfully.

Appendix 3 – Formal learning service provision

We currently provide the following and will continue to develop and expand our service provision.

1. Ongoing Formal Education Programmes:

- Tudor and Victorian Living History sessions for KS1 and KS2
- Oak House living history sessions based on the Turtons – local history
- Sessions around Home Front in World War II
- ‘Then and Now’ sessions - looking at houses and homes
- ‘How we used to play’ – looking at comparing old toys and games also giving an opportunity to look at materials, forces etc
- SPOOCS & Gothic Literacy – sessions aimed at improving literacy skills for KS2 and KS3
- Guided Tours
- Fairy Tales – an immersive session looking at stories -KS1
- The Mummy’s Head – Egyptian Outreach Session. All ages
- The Tale of Gideon Groves - a literacy and history session based around the gunpowder plot – KS1
- A session around William Morris and patterns in nature incorporating arts and maths. All ages
- A session around the Great Fire of London. KS1
- Handling collections for hire for educators All ages
- Our Bromwich Hall – a local history programme
- Online educational resources and sessions

2. We have also undertaken special projects and bespoke sessions for children at all key stages and are happy to work with teachers and educators:

- photographic projects culminating in exhibitions
- art projects using our paintings, collection, wallpaper or inspiration from our buildings
- gothic horror tours
- citizenship projects
- video art projects
- storytelling using our paintings, objects and buildings
- geography projects
- drama projects
- young curator programmes

- 3 We provide and will continue to provide exciting programmes and projects for community groups and families and look for partnership working and funding opportunities to enhance these programmes- These have included
 - video art projects as part of a Tate exhibition
 - 'New Ways of Curating', which facilitated heritage based community art.
 - community archaeology
 - facilitating working with artists and practitioners
 - Our adult painting groups etc
- 4 We will continue to provide, work experience, work placements, apprenticeships and work placed skills development and look for initiatives, schemes and funding to develop this further
- 5 We will continue to provide and develop our programme of community and school holiday events and activities and encourage active participation and engagement
- 6 We will develop a programme of activities which feed into the STEM initiative of Science, Technology, Economics and Mathematics for KS1 and KS2.

Appendix 4 – Resources

Sandwell Museums has a unique set of resources within the borough which can be used for innovative creative learning activities.

1. Our most significant resource is the unique collection of historic buildings from which we operate. Sandwell is lucky enough to have some of the most important historic buildings in the region. These can help to tell our story and inspire imagination and curiosity in many subjects
2. Our dedicated and knowledgeable team of museum staff and volunteers facilitate learning and are a wealth of ideas and creativity with a flare for innovation and flexibility
3. Our collection of around 20,000 objects which we look after are a fantastic learning resource. Our world is full of objects, they are all around us. Therefore, using visual, three dimensional objects gives museums a unique learning resource which connects us directly to other humans and their lives.