

Heritage Access Policy

Mission Statement for Heritage Services

The mission statement which covers archives and local studies is captured in Inspire's heritage policy as follows:

We will engage and inspire the people of Nottinghamshire and beyond with the county's heritage, by preserving, protecting and stimulating research, learning, creative and entrepreneurial endeavours, and cultural experience through access to its archives and related resources.

General Approach

Inspire takes a co-ordinated approach to the creation, preservation and the provision of access to the heritage resources entrusted to its care. This strategy applies to all aspects of Inspire's heritage output, whether it be delivered by colleagues specialising in learning, reading, arts, music, local studies or archives. By working across specialisms we deliver innovative and appropriate methods of access which are suited to all members of the community.

We endeavour to comply with all relevant legislation and ethical codes in relation to access. Our approach to customer care is described in Inspire's Customer Service Standard.

Our Community

Nottinghamshire Archives, along with the local studies offer delivered through libraries, serves all individuals and communities who are interested in the history and heritage of the geographical county of Nottinghamshire and those areas where interests, such as mining, cross into neighbouring counties. Members of the community may access our collections on-site or remotely or add to the collections by depositing their own archives with us.

Providing Access to Our Collections

Digital Access

Over the next two years the aim of the service will be a shift away from a primary emphasis on physical, onsite access, to online and remote access. This innovation will increase access to the collections and Nottinghamshire's story, making heritage assets available in all Inspire sites, and also worldwide. This will create a significant improvement in customer delivery and satisfaction.

Onsite Access

The recently refurbished and extended searchroom contains extensive indexes and catalogues to help visitors identify those archives which may assist with their research. Many catalogues can be accessed through our online catalogue with a small percentage available via The National Archives' Discovery catalogue.

The majority of archives are viewed in original format with some frequently used sources being produced via microfilm or other surrogate formats. Computers are also available to provide internet access to local and family history websites. Inspire maintains a subscription to at least one of the major online genealogical subscription websites each year.

Access to the secure area of the searchroom where original archives can be viewed is via an Inspire card and is subject to specific forms of official identity. A Code of Conduct is available that

is applicable to both visitors and Archives staff.

Members of staff are always on-hand to help with enquiries about the finding aids and to help direct individual visitors to particular research material. We will respond promptly and efficiently to enquiries by telephone, by letter and email. Inspire's response times for telephone and written enquiries are noted in our Customer Service Standard. Enquiry responses are monitored with a requirement to meet standards which are identified in the Customer Service Standard. This standard defines Inspire's commitment to promoting a culture of customer care and ensures that efficient and courteous care is delivered to all customers. Performance standards are reported on a regular basis and are discussed at quarterly contract meetings between the Chief Executive Officer and Nottinghamshire County Council's contract manager.

Access to the searchroom is free. There are, however, charges for reproduction services, for priced publications and for the use of our in-house research service.

All our fees and charges are reviewed annually, approved by Nottinghamshire County Council and published in both hard-copy and internet formats.

Outreach Events

A variety of outreach events are held every year to help users and potential users and to promote collections. The events are delivered through a variety of venues, including the archives building itself. These events are advertised to Inspire's community members through a subscription-based mailing list, and to the wider population via the media, promotional leaflets and our website.

Throughout the year we monitor stakeholder response to our events and every four months evaluate their appropriateness with the aim of providing outreach activities which meet the needs of our entire community. This ensures that our activities develop in conjunction with the changing and developing needs of our communities.

Reprographics Services

The Service provides hard-copy reproductions of archives at A4 and A3 sizes and has a digital copying service which includes images via email, CD, or download. The Preservation & Conservation strategy states where limitations on copying may need to be exercised in the event of potential damage by the copying process such as to wax seals or fragile items.

Enquiry Service

Archives staff can provide basic information from our indexes and catalogues free-of-charge and can suggest possible avenues of research.

Commercial Research Service

We will continue to operate a commercial in-house research service where customers are unable to or prefer not to conduct the research themselves. Prior to acceptance of a research project we will offer a free advice service to ensure the customer receives the best possible value for money. Details of the service can be received by post, email or can be viewed on the Archives website.

Our Website

User information can all be accessed through our website:

- Details of our opening times
- Location map
- Details of our enquiry service
- Policies and strategies appropriate for the service, access and performance standards
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- Information on our events
- Information to enable remote users to access our services and facilities

1. Auditing Our Service Business

Plan

We produce an annual Business Plan that sets down specific work targets for acquisitions of written and visual archives, the preservation of archives and conservation facilities, cataloguing and indexing of collections, public searchroom standards and learning and outreach activities. The performance of these targets is monitored through meetings of the Heritage Management Team with a high-level review at the Inspire Leadership Team meetings.

Evaluation and PSQG Survey

The service undertakes evaluations of many aspects of its activities, including talks, workshops and project work.

The Archives Service is regularly subject to a national PSQG (Public Services Quality Group) Survey of Visitors to British Archives that is held every one and a half to two years. The survey asks visitors to record their comments on a wide range of services and facilities in order to improve the service. The survey provides an insight into the level and quality of service given by Nottinghamshire Archives and enables a comparison with other public services in the UK.

2. Restricted Access

While most archives are available under the normal production system provided by the Archives service, some documents are subject to closure restrictions. These restrictions apply to some classes of Public Records including the records of magistrates courts, county courts, coroners' records and there are limitations on some hospital records (including patient records under 100 years), some parish records, social services material and some school records. Most restrictions are highlighted in the searchroom catalogues.

The service follows restricted access procedures as required under the Data Protection Act, 2018 and the Freedom of Information Act, 2000 which permits access to certain pieces of closed information under certain relevant guidelines.

Applications under the Freedom of Information Act, 2000 for information from any restricted records must be addressed in writing.

3 Complaints & Comments

Inspire has adopted its own complaints procedure which aims to see initial complaints resolved at a local service level. Where the customer remains unsatisfied with the response the complaint will be escalated to our central system where the complaint is reviewed by the Inspire Leadership Team, then if necessary, by Inspire's Board of Directors.

Complaints may be submitted in person, over the telephone or in writing; with escalated complaints requiring a written request from the user concerned.

4 Meeting the Needs of Our Stakeholders

Our stakeholders are those individuals or organisations with a direct interest in the Archives service. They include Nottinghamshire County Council, Nottingham City Council, our users (both visitors and 'remote' users) and the depositors of archives. The needs of these stakeholders are monitored and evaluated through PSQG, as above and individual evaluations and other surveys.

The Friends of Nottinghamshire Archives act as a representative body for the services users. The committee is comprised of individuals who give their time freely to support our service.

5 Code of Conduct

A Code of Conduct is provided to all users who access original archives on site. It is displayed prominently on the Archives premises. A copy can also be downloaded from our website.

6 The Media

Nottinghamshire Archives welcomes interest from the media in its work. We liaise with Inspire's Communications Manager who maintains our press office and is the first point of contact for all types of media.

7 Social Media

Inspire is committed to promoting our services in ways which are commonly used by modern audiences. We use social media where appropriate, enabling customers to co-create a dialogue regarding their heritage.

Inspire's approach to social media is described in our Social Media Policy and our Social Media Guidelines for Managers and Employees.

8. Access, Equality & Social Inclusion

Inspire is committed to delivering excellent and appropriate services all irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. We will strive to identify and remove barriers of social exclusion that may prevent access to our services and facilities.

Date approved: 7th September 2022

Date amended: 17th March 2026