

## RECORD OFFICE FOR LEICESTERSHIRE, LEICESTER AND RUTLAND ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH POLICY

### PROVISION OF THE SERVICE

*The Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland is provided by Leicestershire County Council in partnership with the City of Leicester and County of Rutland. This service is the means by which all three local authorities meet their legal responsibilities to collect, care for and provide access to records.*

### Engagement and Outreach Policy Statement

The Record Office **looks after and makes available to all** the **written and digital heritage** of the counties of Leicestershire and Rutland and the City of Leicester. It aims to ensure that these resources may be **understood, used and enjoyed** by the **widest possible audience**.

### Explanation:

#### 1. Engagement and Outreach

**Engagement:** in this context we mean the act of involvement, taking part or participation in the archive service for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland. Our aim is to enable the engagement of as many people, communities, groups and organisations in the provision of the service as possible.

**Outreach:** this term relates to the provision of services that extend access to and understanding of the information held by the Record Office. It is linked closely to engagement because lack of knowledge of the existence and scope of the Record Office is the biggest barrier to engagement. Outreach is one of the ways in which we address lack of engagement.

The term 'outreach' includes ongoing work such as the publication of finding aids and development of digital resources as well as events and publicity including talks, exhibitions, open days, workshops and through social media.

Both are closely linked to **Collections Development** as it is through Engagement and Outreach that we make our collections more representative.

## 2. Looks after and makes available

The Record Office is the repository for the written and digital heritage of the counties of Leicestershire and Rutland and the city of Leicester. See our **Collections and Access Policies** for more information on how we obtain material and make it accessible to the community we serve.

Information is made available in a variety of ways: for example, through research in person at the Record Office, by replying to a request or the production of a finding aid.

This policy is about how we ensure maximum participation in the service and is part of the way in which we make our resources available to all.

## 3. Written and digital heritage

Information is held in many forms and formats from parchment and paper to vinyl records, compact discs and digitally stored data. Other formats are likely to emerge in the future and we aim to collect, preserve and make available such information relating to our heritage regardless of format.

## 4. Understood, used and enjoyed

**Understood:** The written word is not necessarily always accessible: unfamiliarity with handwriting, language and its historical context can put much of our heritage out of reach for most people. It is therefore essential to provide guidance tailored to individual needs. The Record Office will ensure access to records by providing finding aids which explain, interpret and, where possible, translate the material in a way which enables more people to use and understand it.

We may also receive material from different communities in different languages and formats. We will ensure that such material is welcomed and every effort made to ensure that it is made accessible as soon as possible.

Outreach activities will aim to explain and contextualise the information and meet the needs of all, including groups or individuals who may face specific barriers.

**Used:** It may not be possible for everyone who wishes to use the information held by the Record Office to make a personal visit. We aim to bring material to those who cannot or do not wish to visit the Record Office, such as remote users.

An inherent part of use of records is the understanding of their potential. The physical appearance of the Magna Carta is that of a piece of worn parchment with faded Latin writing but it reveals the cornerstone of our democracy. A few lines from a soldier in the trenches can move us to tears and a photograph of village shops can awaken long-dead memories. Our outreach events will seek to bring the records to life so that the information they contain may be understood more deeply by present and future generations.

**Enjoyed:** Heritage should be enjoyed by all and we support the use of our collections for leisure activities such as family history. We encourage the use of archives for enjoyment and our **access policy** enshrines the principle of equality of access regardless of purpose.

We will challenge unhelpful stereotypes of dusty records kept behind a locked door by bureaucrats, out of touch with the modern world through our customer focussed staff, imaginative use of technology and the delivery of an innovative outreach programme which seeks to engage everyone with the past.

## **5. Widest possible audience:**

The Record Office will promote its activities to all sections of the population including formal and informal learners of all ages. It will also seek to understand and meet the needs of diverse audiences and publicise heritage resources directly and through productive partnerships.

We will make use of available technologies to reach those who cannot visit in person to ensure that all can gain understanding and enjoyment of the archival resources relating to Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.

We will seek to understand the communities we serve, including non-users of the service, through participation in appropriate surveys, monitoring and data-gathering exercises and the careful consideration of information gathered. Our outreach and engagement plans will take account of the needs of our communities and seek to address them appropriately and intelligently.

## **6. Review of this policy**

No policy can cover every eventuality in perpetuity. The statements in this policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure that they remain relevant and appropriate. This may be undertaken annually or in response to a specific event such as new legislation.

All managers and staff are expected to act with integrity and in a professional manner at all times, seeking to find solutions where the policy fails to give guidance and highlighting any shortcomings or useful additions as soon as possible.

In these ways the Record Office aims to maintain policies which are current and living documents, supporting our approach to service provision rather than dictating it and enshrining our values to provide clarity for all in what we will do and how we will act.

**Established February 2009**

**Reviewed February 2018**

**Review February 2019**