

Learning and Public Engagement Policy

June 2020

Dorset History Centre
Bridport Road
Dorchester
DT1 1RP



The **Joint Archives Service (JAS)**, based at **Dorset History Centre (DHC)** is operated on behalf of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, and Dorset Council. Partnership between the two authorities as delivered through the joint service sits at the heart of JAS activities and underwrites the protocols and processes by which DHC preserves material.

Archives are documents (hand-written, printed items, maps, plans, slides, postcards, photographs, audio-visual material, digital records and comparable items in diverse physical formats) from all dates. They are items that have been selected through a process of appraisal as being worthy of permanent preservation.

DHC is the sole local authority archive within the county with Accredited status as conferred by The National Archives.

Vision and Mission

DHC is the physical and virtual hub for the archival heritage of Bournemouth, Christchurch, Dorset and Poole in both hard copy and digital formats. The JAS aims to acquire, preserve and make accessible the archives of Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole and so promote cultural, economic, educational and social well-being.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Learning and public engagement are the processes by which the JAS encourages the wider public to encounter the richness of the informational and cultural assets that it holds. A fundamental purpose in collecting archives is to see them widely consulted, re-purposed and enjoyed.
- 1.2. Since public engagement and learning are central to the purpose of the JAS, all staff participate in promotional and learning activities. This takes various forms as follows:
 - **Formal Learning**- a set programme of study with clearly defined learning objectives and outcomes for adults or children.
 - **Informal learning** when learning happens because of some other task or activity where learning is **not** a primary element of the activity.
 - **Outreach** the process by which the JAS promotes its services and activities to both new and existing audiences through exhibitions, talks and marketing.
 - **Community engagement** involves supporting and advising groups who are delivering projects as well as developing innovative and inspiring approaches to enable a wide range of people to interact with and contribute to archival materials.
 - **Social media** through the use of Twitter (@DorsetArchives) and other Web 2.0 tools (such as blogs, file-sharing websites or other Dorset Council Social media accounts) used in accordance with [Dorset Council's Social Media Acceptable Use Policy](#).
- 1.3. Through its Learning and Public Engagement Policy the JAS aims to:
 - Engage new and non-traditional audiences with archives.

- Encourage the appreciation and use of archives and local studies by groups and individuals (outside formal education) as aids to learning, leisure, community cohesion and resilience.
- Liaise with heritage-related projects and initiatives to facilitate positive collaboration so ensuring that archive and local studies content is represented within project outcomes as appropriate.
- To provide high quality learning opportunities based on the JAS collections to schools, further and higher education services linked to their learning outcomes.
- To liaise with colleagues in related sectors (museums, libraries, arts, adult learning and social care) to ensure that opportunities for partnership and joint commissioning are realised.
- To promote the JAS and its collections through outreach and marketing at events and to local groups and organisations.

2. Aim and Purpose

- 2.1. The purpose of this policy is to detail the types and range of learning and outreach offered by the JAS.

3. Scope

- 3.1. This policy should be read in conjunction with other JAS policies, particularly the service's Access Policy and Volunteer Policy.

4. Equality and Diversity

- 4.1. The JAS completed an Equalities Impact Assessment in 2019 which has been published online.
- 4.2. The DHC building is broadly compliant with the Equalities Act, 2010. It has ramped access from the car park at the rear, disabled parking spaces next to the ramp, wide level access doorways including through automatic doors at the main entrance, and audio loop systems at reception desks and in the Lecture Room, an accessible toilet and a lift to the first floor. DHC staff work individually with customers to improve their access through visual enhancement tools use of an accessible computer station and, where possible, audio materials. DHC staff receive training to help them work with customers affected by less visible disabilities such as Dementia and Autism.
- 4.3. The JAS is firmly committed to the principles of equality and diversity for learning and public engagement opportunities.

5. Principles of Learning and Public Engagement

- 5.1. The JAS will:
- Provide high quality opportunities for formal and informal learning for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities, ensuring that learning opportunities and methodologies are tailored to the requirements of the group or individual;
 - Research the learning needs and requirements of visitors and remote customers so as to base our activities upon clear evidence of need;
 - Create an informative and welcoming environment that encourages learning on-site at DHC;
 - Provide opportunities for self-directed learning for all visitors;
 - Demonstrate the value archives have in the personal, social, cultural, educational and economic wellbeing of people across Bournemouth, Christchurch, Dorset and Poole;
 - Maintain an up to date website with further on-line resources, provide access to our catalogue and offer both learning and entertainment;
 - Seek to increase the amount of material available digitally and thus the learning potential of these items for remote users;

- Promote the use of the cultural heritage and the wealth of documentary evidence relating to Bournemouth, Christchurch, Dorset and Poole and facilitate access for all thereby helping to deliver the corporate priorities of our funders;
- Through promoting its collections and encouraging their use, help to reinforce Dorset's unique identity;
- Ensure that all staff who come into contact with the public are well-informed and confident in answering queries or referring enquiries to an appropriate specialist;
- Ensure that we actively promote Equality and Diversity best practice and regularly review the Joint Archives Service's Equality Impact Assessment;
- Work with colleagues and partners, both across the three authorities and externally, in order to share good practice and offer learning and outreach in new venues and to new audiences;
- Evaluate our work and that of partnership projects to ensure that we meet targets and deliver quality outcomes;
- Make effective use of staff and customer feedback to improve our service delivery;

6. Delivery

- 6.1. In order to support the delivery of learning, and public engagement, the JAS will:
- Support and train JAS staff to ensure that learning and outreach in their many forms are at the centre of what we do, ensuring that all JAS based projects incorporate significant elements of learning and engagement;
 - Improve the virtual learning environment by increasing the quantity of digital data, both catalogue descriptions and content;
 - Develop new educational, training and activity opportunities in response to requests; to improve standards in local history project outcomes; in order to maximise the impact of specialist professionals on the staff and to showcase specific collections or themes; work collaboratively to contribute to the priority need for well-being and social connection
 - Encourage and support community groups to engage with collections, bid for grant aid and to deliver projects with positive outcomes;
 - Work in partnership to deliver collaborative outputs, so enhancing our capacity and our ability to reach wider audiences;
 - Engage with schools, colleges, adult learning services, community learning groups and universities to encourage access to the collections held at DHC;
 - Promote volunteering in all its forms whether on-site at DHC, or remotely;
 - Market our services as widely as possible;
 - Deliver high quality training in heritage skills;
 - Provide access for the media so as to widen knowledge about our collections and the role of archives in general;
 - Promote JAS activity, collections and acquisitions; and engage with the public through social media accounts or other Web 2.0 tools (including blogs, file-sharing websites, or through other DC social media accounts).

7. Review of the Policy

- 7.1. The policy will be reviewed in consultation with interested organisations, stakeholders and individuals every 3 years to take into account any new legislation, regulations, guidance, or business practices. The next review of this policy will take place in June 2023.

8. Further information or comment

- 8.1. Copies of this policy are available in large print.
- 8.2. To comment on this policy or for further information about it, contact the Service Manager for Archives at:

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