

LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM HERITAGE SECTOR PARTNERSHIP

Guidance Notes

CREATING AND IMPLEMENTING EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICIES

INTRODUCTION

Responding to the equality, diversity and inclusion needs of visitors and users need not be a daunting task and these guidance notes have been designed to make the process less of a minefield. The steps and examples used here illustrate what can be achieved and how improvements will impact positively on your organisation and the people you come into contact with.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION?

Equality is an approach that ensures opportunities, access, participation and contributions are fair and inclusive.

Diversity is the acknowledgement of and respect for differences within and between groups of people.

Exclusion means 'being shut out from any of the political, social, cultural or economic systems which determine the social integration of a person in society' (John Vincent, 'Libraries and Community Cohesion' SEMLAC 2005). **Inclusion** is the active process of working with others to break down the barriers, both real and perceived, in order to create workable solutions for excluded people to access your services.

Fairness is the guiding principle throughout. It is only right in a democratic society that all of us are treated equally and have the same opportunities to live and participate in community life without the fear of discrimination.

Did you know....?

About half the UK population does not make use of the historic environment. According to DCMS figures (August 2009), 57% of adults had visited at least two historic environment sites in the past 12 months and 44.5% of adults had attended a museum, gallery or archive at least once in the past 12 months.

WHY DEVELOP YOUR PRACTICE IN THIS AREA?

It will help you achieve the Quality Badge

In order to be awarded the LOtC Quality Badge, there is a need to 'take into account any equality, diversity and inclusion issues and needs' of your users (Indicator 1d). Having an Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy and Action Plan will also allow you to improve in areas of staff development (Indicators 3e & 3f), meeting the needs of different learners (Indicator 5) and in safety management (Indicator 6).

It's the law...

There are nine major pieces of legislation and around 100 other laws dealing with discrimination by background, race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or beliefs. The Disability Discrimination Act, for example, makes it unlawful to discriminate against people because of their disability and requires organisations to make reasonable adjustments to their premises, services and employment practices to ensure that disabled people are treated equally.

The heritage sector has a duty to be inclusive and accessible

Professionally the heritage sector has a duty to make its collections, sites, services and resources accessible to the broadest range of people. The Museums Association, for instance, states that 'museums belong to everybody. All members of society have a right to visit and use them. Museums have a duty to share knowledge and to give delight, to be approachable at every point of contact, to reach out to audiences, to offer reasonable access to their collections'.

Working to be more inclusive and representative will significantly strengthen your organisation

Amongst other benefits, this is likely to mean that:

- visitor numbers will increase and the visitor profile will be more diverse
- barriers to accessing your services will be addressed
- the organisation will raise its profile locally and perceptions of your organisation will change for the better
- new partnership initiatives will emerge
- new collecting and project opportunities will appear
- heritage interpretation will improve
- you will be able to access new sources of funding and income
- there will be an increase in volunteering opportunities
- the process will be intellectually challenging for staff and volunteers
- the organisation will bring people together as never before and will help create a sense of place for new and established community groups
- local people will be ambassadors for your organisation.

GETTING STARTED...

Appoint a 'Champion'

Choose someone (or a small group) who is committed and give them responsibility for drawing up the policy and action plan. Bear in mind they will need management support, time and probably training to do this well. Their first task is to familiarise themselves with the relevant equality, diversity and inclusion legislation, statistics and policies that impact on you. It is useful to look at policies from other sites but remember this should be your policy and therefore should reflect the needs, aspirations and context of your organisation. It also needs to be achievable within the resources, time and skills you have available, so be realistic.

Talk about the issues

The next step will be to discuss what equality, inclusion and diversity mean to staff, volunteers, funders and supporters. There will undoubtedly be mixed views, hidden feelings and anxieties about what can be done, but this dialogue is essential to ensure you are able to agree a way forward, a set of objectives and a vision for the organisation. The journey will be bumpy and it may well take some commitment to allow everyone to see a role for themselves in the process.

Assess your current practice

There are a number of excellent 'toolkits' to help you assess your current practice (see *Where to get help and further information*). One useful method is the Equality Impact Assessments process. This approach is standard now across the public sector and you should be able to get advice from your local authority on carrying out this kind of assessment. Carrying out a SWOT analysis is also very useful - this looks at Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Whichever tool you choose, the main aim is to evaluate what you do, why you do it and who you work with, and also to compare your practice with others ('benchmarking'). In addition, look out for opportunities for training in community participation, disability issues and social inclusion. You could visit another venue to see what they do and ask their advice.

Did you know....?

Only 17% of disabled people were born with their disability. The most recent Government figure for people with disabilities in the UK is 10.6 million: this figure does not include the millions of older people who may need assistance but are not classified as disabled.

Consult widely

Your policy and action plan are being created to remove, minimize or manage identified barriers. So you can better understand what barriers people face in accessing your services, resources and buildings, speak to community groups and gain their feedback, ideas and support. This can be done by talking to individuals and groups directly or by setting up a focus group made up of representatives from a range of organisations. Explain what you are trying to achieve and talk about the assessment of current practice you have already carried out. A very revealing way of getting views on your service is to ask people to be mystery shoppers – this means they come incognito and report to you on a set of pre-agreed topics, such as physical access issues.

The issues you are looking to consult on are likely to be around:

- the convenience of opening times
- the welcome people receive
- your visibility in the community and your marketing techniques
- peoples' perceptions of you and the heritage sector generally
- collection and interpretation (Do some people feel they are ignored or misrepresented?)
- physical access issues (ramps, lift, toilets, printed materials, etc)
- cost considerations (Are concessions available? Can you do outreach? Can you offer free introductory visits for new groups? Can you subsidise transport?)
- facilities generally (toilets, parking, shop merchandise, refreshments, etc)
- how children are treated when families visit
- what steps you can take, working with community groups and other partners, to address their concerns, improve your service, and become more accessible and inclusive
- discuss how community groups and local people can help you develop your policy.

Draft your policy and action plan for comment

Your policy need not be lengthy. Normally it will contain a vision and a description of the purpose of the policy. You can include a summary of the process you have been through and the SWOT Analysis if you want to give some background. Its main purpose, however, is to set out your organisation's duties towards equality, diversity and inclusion through a set of objectives or principles. It should have a section on delivering and monitoring progress towards meeting the objectives (who is responsible overall) and a policy review date.

The action plan should take each of the objectives and:

- describe how it will be achieved (the changes you plan to make)
- who will do each task (this can be through partnerships to spread the workload)

- any resource implications (additional fundraising may be required)
- a timetable (start, review and end dates)
- the outcomes or outputs that will show you are meeting the objective.

Draw up a provisional set of objectives and a draft Action Plan. Circulate these to colleagues, trustees, funders, partners and community groups to ask for feedback. Many changes will be possible (without spending large sums of money) by modifying priorities and changing the way you do things.

Once you have reviewed your Policy and Action Plan and have a final version, agree a meeting with the appropriate person to discuss the new documents and the process for adopting and implementing the Policy and Action Plan.

Teignmouth & Shaldon Museum Equal Opportunities Policy

‘Vision: Teignmouth & Shaldon Museum is committed to equality of opportunity, and just and fair outcomes in every sphere of its activities. It will promote equality of opportunity in all its various capacities as an information and service provider, visitor destination and employer.’

Implementing your policy

The most common hurdle in implementing any policy is the lack of ownership. If you are open to debate, have been realistic and followed an inclusive approach to drawing it up (as described above), your policy should have wide support and, therefore, a whole team of people, within and outside the organisation, keen to make it a reality.

In order to ensure that the objectives of the policy are successfully delivered, you may find it helpful to:

- put the Policy up for people to read.
- invite the people you consulted in to thank them and to celebrate the beginning of a new chapter for your organization.
- arrange a briefing session for staff, volunteers and trustees to discuss the implications of the new Policy and Action Plan – offer people several means of giving feedback (some may want to do so anonymously)
- send the Policy to key partner organisations so they are aware of your new direction.
- test ideas within the Action Plan with audiences before making any major changes.
- seek advice from heritage colleagues on professional development opportunities for staff so they have the skills to implement the proposed changes.
- talk to your community groups to see if they want to continue advising you and helping you implement changes. You can use this group to review progress or someone internally can do it or simply put the item on an appropriate meeting agenda.

RESOURCES

1. There are dozens of examples of equality, diversity, access and inclusion policies and action plans from the heritage sector on the web. A few good ones are:

- Anglesey Archives Access Policy: www.anglesey.gov.uk – search ‘Archives Access Policy’
- Northumberland National Park Access Policy: www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk – search ‘Accessibility for All’
- Jersey Heritage Archives Access Policy : www.jerseyheritage.org/research-centre/archive-policies
- Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Library Service Diversity Policy: www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/libraries_policies.htm
- Scottish Natural Heritage Gender Equality Scheme: www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/about/GenderEqualityScheme.pdf
- Historic Royal Palaces – click on ‘About Us’ and then ‘Diversity’

- The ABC of Working with Schools (Renaissance South East) – Developing Services to Include Everyone: www.museumse.org.uk/ABC_working_with_schools/designing_resources_everyone
2. The Heritage Link website www.heritagelink.org.uk/diversity is a great source of information and guidance on all aspects of diversity, inclusion and access.
 3. The Network was set up to help the heritage and arts sectors tackle social exclusion - www.seapn.org.uk. Lots of useful reference material, training information and latest news.
 4. English Heritage - www.english-heritage.org.uk - has useful information for all heritage bodies on projects, policies, case studies and more - click on 'Heritage for All'.
 5. The Inspiring Learning for All site (www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk), is an excellent resource to help make your organisation more 'people-focused'. To find their Access for All Toolkit and Cultural Diversity Checklist go to www.mla.gov.uk – see under 'What we do', then 'Funding & Support', then 'Toolkits'.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information about LOtC, the Quality Badge and learning through heritage, visit the following websites:

www.lotc.org.uk

www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk

www.gem.org.uk

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