

The Rifles Collection

Learning and Access Policy

Adopted – 10 November 2015

Date of Review – October 2018

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Introduction

This policy has been prepared by The Rifles Collection to guide its learning and access programme, ensuring that it is fit for purpose and compatible with Museum Standards.

This policy informs of all activities across the organisation and is not restricted to formal education events. This policy should be read in conjunction with the *Safeguarding Children Policy*, *Volunteer Policy* and *MOD Equality and Diversity Policy*.

The aim of The Rifles Collection is to tell the story of The Rifles Regiment through our growing collection, and to use this collection to educate the public, and soldiers, of the history of The Rifles, from formation through to present day. Implementing best practice in learning within the museum is essential to achieving this.

The Museum centres itself on the stories of the Battalions, and of individual soldiers, and uses these stories to introduce the visitor to the wider context of the Regiment and the British Army. Being a Regimental Museum, we naturally have exciting, challenging and memorable aspects to the exhibition, but this is emphasised because of the modern context of the Regiment; forming in 2007 and seeing substantial service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Defining learning and access

The Rifles Collection recognises learning and access are inherently interconnected. Access obstacles must be overcome or minimised in order to cater for and avoid discriminating against all audiences regardless of ability, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age, race, religion, beliefs, ethnicity or social background. It is accepted that this needs to be done within the limitations of the site and available resources.

The Rifles Collection recognises barriers to access can be physical, sensory, psychological, intellectual, emotional, attitudinal, financial, educational, cultural or geographical. These barriers could prevent people engaging with the Museum, its collections, interpretation and displays, public programmes, the website, staff or public services. Therefore, as a Museum, we must strive to find ways to overcome any barriers to make The Rifles Collection accessible to all who wish to visit.

Aims and Objectives

The museum aims to achieve the following:

1. Develop a successful learning programme for formal educational visits (schools).

2. Continue to engage the public with the story of The Rifles.
3. Develop a work experience programme.

Current learning and access policy

The Rifles Collection, currently does not have an individual, formal learning programme. We would like to develop a learning programme, although this is something that will follow on from the timeline of tasks listed in the *Documentation Plan* and *Forward Plan*. Realistically, this is an ongoing task that will be adapted and developed as our target audience demands it. We do actively engage in themed days/ holidays throughout the year, such as Halloween. We develop activities for children to engage with, to encourage younger visitors. This is a growing feature of the museum's calendar, but one that we are really trying to invest our time into, in the hope that encourage family audiences.

The Rifles Collection is keen to develop an unpaid internship programme for 2016. As it will be the first year of a formal internship programme, we hope to develop an unpaid, eight week internship programme, targeted at university students, preferably those studying the MA in Museum Studies. We think that as a growing organisation, we will be able to offer plenty of opportunities to learn about museums, how they are run, but also be involved in building a strong foundation for the Museum's future. Being a small organisation, we would be able to offer one-to-one mentoring, opportunities in exhibition display, archival work, Modes training and substantial time working with the collection.

Policy statements

The Rifles Collection's policy for supporting learning and access covers five areas:

1. Access and inclusion
2. Audiences
3. Learning and interpretation
4. Communication
5. Quality

1. Access and inclusion

- The Museum works towards overcoming barriers to access and inclusion through user testing and referring to best practice guidelines and current legislation.
- The Curator and Assistant Curator act as audience advocates on all interpretation projects, ensuring the needs of visitors with different access needs are met.
- The Curator and Assistant Curator advise on and monitor access-related initiatives across the Museum.
- Good practice guidelines are used to ensure the needs of all visitors are met in the design and display of new graphics, signs and labels to meet the requirements of the Equality Act (2010).

Physical barriers to access are reduced by:

- providing accessible routes for wheelchairs and appropriate seating throughout.
- continuing maintenance of entrances and exits which enable all parts of the Museum to be accessible
- providing accessible toilets within the building.

Attitudinal and psychological barriers to access are reduced by:

- ensuring marketing materials are appropriate and appealing to target audiences
- as we develop our learning programme, we will aim to ensure that it is appealing for target audiences, will support their learning and be appropriate for their needs
- ensuring visitor information and signage (both before and during visits) is clear and easy to locate
- providing and promoting family friendly services in line with the 'Kids in Museums Manifesto' (e.g. social media updates, activity trails and activity days for the family)
- We plan to reach out and support people who are not confident learners or may not enjoy visiting museums, but who want to learn by developing an object blog. This blog would be updated on a regular basis with a feature on different objects or story relating to the museum, allowing people to interact with and enjoy The Rifles Collection, from wherever they are comfortable, or able to do so.

Intellectual and educational barriers to access are reduced by:

- ensuring the content of interpretation, and any future learning programmes, does not assume specialist knowledge and is tailored to suit the learning needs of target audiences
- ensuring all text is concise in length, written in plain English (i.e. non-academic language) and appropriate for the target audience, with translations into other languages available where possible.
- including multiple levels of interpretation are provided so that visitors can choose the level at which they wish to engage in the exhibition. We include object labels, case labels that introduce the content and relevance of the case to the museum and area labels that describe the area within the wider context.
- Ensuring that we follow recommended guidelines for labels and panels.

Cultural barriers to access will be reduced by:

- ensuring interpretation and programmes are relevant to and reflect the interests of the diverse local and global community.
- Explaining different cultures and traditions to visitors who may not know about that culture and the traditions of that culture.

Financial barriers to access will be reduced by:

- We do not charge entrance fees.
- Any activity days we host are also free of charge.

Geographical barriers to access will be overcome by:

- We aim to be able to provide ways to engage with the Museum digitally and online and, where possible, outreach services for those unable to visit. This is something that will require development.
- Hosting a travelling exhibition in 2017. This exhibition is to mark the Regiment's 10th anniversary and aims to travel to all battalion bases, located all over the UK. This will enable us to tell the story of The Rifles nationwide.

2. Audiences

- Ongoing market research and visitor profiling, is carried out by volunteers, Front of House staff, Curator, and Assistant Curator to fully understand and provide for audience needs.
- Learning programmes and interpretation will be informed by consultation to ensure they are relevant to learners' needs and interests and they reflect the diversity of the local and global community.
- The Museum aims to work with local community groups, particularly those who are less likely to visit the Museum, to encourage participation and engagement.
- The Curator and Assistant Curator will advise on visitor experience and customer care, particularly in relation to family audiences, schools, and other formal or informal learning groups.

3. Learning and Interpretation

- The Museum is committed to the promotion of The Rifles Regiment and to contribute to promoting Britain's rich military heritage and, through interpretation and learning provision, raising awareness of how the regiment has shaped history and continues to do so.
- The Curator and Assistant Curator will act as audience advocates on all interpretation projects or upgrades, ensuring the needs of visitors with different preferred learning styles, ages and interests are met.
- Where possible, interpretation methods, content and learning programmes are informed by audience consultation and participation projects.
- Interpretation and learning provision is designed to enable individual learning as well as encouraging conversations within groups or between generations.
- Interpretation and learning provision is designed to promote hands-on experiential learning that allows people to discover and construct their own meanings and about how they learn as well as new gaining new knowledge, skills and understanding.
- The Curator and Assistant Curator refer to best practice, learning theories and government guidelines (e.g. the National Curriculum and Early Years Foundation Stage Principles) when developing learning programmes or advising on interpretation.
- Learning provision will be targeted and tailored for particular audiences so that it is appropriate to their needs, interests, experiences and prior knowledge.

4. Communication

- The Museum's staff and trustees fully support and champion practices which promote learning, access, inclusion and audience needs both internally and externally.
- The Museum encourages an open dialogue with audiences, partners and stakeholders in relation to learning and access provision through questionnaires, feedback forms and online e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Museum website etc
- Communicating effectively with users depends on good internal communications; therefore the Curator will regularly update all relevant staff on events, programming and activities.
- The Museum aims to build relationships with learning organisations, (including schools, children's centres and universities), community groups, the Local Authority and museums and heritage organisations, especially those in the South West / South East of England.

5. Quality

- Planning for learning programmes and access requirements is informed by research into best practice, visitor feedback and keeping up to date with changes in legislation.

- Training and skills development inform all organisational practices, including learning and access.
- The Curator and Assistant Curator aim to attend training seminars and networks to acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding related to learning in museums.
- All data, particularly any personal data that is used for evaluation purposes will be collected and stored ethically and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).
- Contributions from audiences and experts collected during evaluation and consultation is valued and, where possible, will be incorporated into interpretation and programme development.
- Policies and practice will be reviewed on a regular basis and updated in light of legislative changes and audience feedback.