

Public Access Policy

Please note that due to the Covid-19 situation, there are temporary changes to [access arrangements and guidance for users](#) which over-ride some of the rules below.

Introduction

This policy has been drawn up to comply with the Public Services Quality Group, A *Standard for Access for Archives, 2006*.

Scope

This policy applies to catalogued records held by Cumbria Archive Service.

Who we serve

Cumbria Archive Service serves all those individuals and communities interested in the archives of the County of Cumbria.

Our purpose

Cumbria Archive Service cares for the county's documentary heritage, providing facilities for the public use of original and printed documents dating from the twelfth century to the present day. We are committed to making access to our collections as easy as possible.

Making our collections available

Research rooms

Our research rooms contain extensive indexes and catalogues to help visitors identify which archives may help their research. Many of these finding aids can be accessed through [our website and online catalogue](#) (CASCAT) and a selection of older versions of these catalogues is also available at via [The National Archives](#).

Details of annual accessions are reported to The National Archives.

Access to the research rooms to view original archives is by the ARA (Archives and Records Association) [Archives Card](#) and is subject to specific forms of official identity. Original material is usually unique and irreplaceable and we ask all researchers to observe these handling guidelines.

- Please use a pencil for taking notes
- Do not smoke, drink or eat (including sweets and chewing gum)
- Make sure your hands are clean
- Avoid touching inks or pigments on the documents
- Handle photographs by the edge only
- Do not touch the surface of transparencies
- Do not write on or mark the items in any way
- Use the weights provided to hold rolled documents in place
- Use the book rests provided to support the bindings of large bound volumes
- Ask for polyester film if you want to trace maps
- Normally only two items may be consulted at one time

We also have a number of key security rules that help us safeguard our collections. A [quick glance guide](#) detailing the items that you can and cannot bring into the research

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rooms and our full [Searchroom Rules](#) are available on our website and in all our archive centres.

Archives can be viewed either in original format or through microfilm, digital or other surrogate formats. Computers are also available to provide internet access to local and family history websites. Members of staff are always available to help with enquiries about the finding aids and to help direct individual visitors to particular research material.

Access to the research rooms is free. There are, however charges for reprographic services, use of personal cameras and for publications. All our fees and charges are reviewed annually and published.

A variety of outreach events are held every year to attract new and potential users to the service and to promote collections. These events are advertised through the media and on our website.

Copying services

The service provides photocopies of archives at A4 and A3 sizes and has a [digitisation service](#) which can provide images by e-mail and on CD. A [price list](#), revised annually, is available in the research rooms or can be viewed on the website. Our [Collections Care Policy](#) explains the circumstances in which we place limitations on copying to avoid potential damage (such as to wax seals or fragile items). Alternatively, the use of [digital cameras](#) without flash is permitted in the research room, on payment of a licence fee, and subject to signing an agreement to respect copyright.

Copyright legislation may prevent the copying of records. This will be explained by staff when copies are requested. Information about arrangements for licensing of images or reproductions for public use is available in our [media licence](#) and standard conditions are stated on our [photocopy order/copyright declaration form](#). The cost is specified on the current list of fees and charges.

Enquiry service

Staff can provide basic information from our indexes and catalogues free-of-charge and can suggest possible avenues of research, and help with interpretation of documents. The turn around time for responding to telephone, written and e-mail enquiries received is 10 working days. However, visitors and remote enquirers should expect to undertake their own research. We are not able to provide legal advice on the content of archival documents.

Historical Research Service

We no longer operate a full Historical Research Service. Our staff are happy to perform specific look-ups and searches of records within our custody (10 minutes' duration per customer free-of-charge) and will advise if they can carry out longer search requests. This will vary on a case by case basis and we cannot guarantee to undertake extended research/family history enquiries, or enquiries on sources not held in our Archive Centres. For more extended research, enquirers may wish to contact a private records researcher to undertake work for a fee on their behalf. A list of individual [paid researchers](#) is available on our website.

Cumbria Archive Service neither guarantees the quality nor can be held responsible for any work undertaken by these private researchers.

Website

Information on the services provided by Cumbria Archive Service can be found on its website www.cumbria.gov/archives including:

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- Details for each Archive Centre ([Barrow](#), [Carlisle](#), [Kendal](#) and [Whitehaven](#)) including opening hours, a location map, postal address, e-mail and a contact telephone number
- Information about our [collections](#) including a searchable online catalogue, an image gallery and a section devoted to new collections, browseable guides to our collections and more detailed indexes for certain holdings.
- Information about our [copying and digitisation services](#) including charges
- An [online shop](#) where you can pay for copies, digitisation and publication fees
- Information about the Archive Service and its policies

The website is updated on an on-going basis.

Auditing our service

Service plan and activities

Each year Cumbria Archive Service produces a service plan that sets down specific work targets for the cataloguing and management of collections, digital service delivery, staff development, conservation and preservation work, educational and outreach activities, and volunteer activities. The performance of these targets is monitored by the Community Services Management Team within Cumbria County Council. Performance results and related statistics are returned on an annual basis to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) as part of its annual survey of non-metropolitan local authority archive services.

Evaluation and CIPFA archive user survey

Customer comment cards are available in all archive centres, and visitors are welcome to provide feedback.

Cumbria Archive Service participates in the national CIPFA *Survey of Visitors to UK Archives* (previously the Public Services Quality Group *Survey of Visitors to British Archives*) that is held every two years. The survey asks visitors to record their comments on a wide range of services and facilities. The survey provides an insight into the level and quality of service provision, enables a comparison with other archive services in the UK and provides an opportunity for us to consider and improve our service delivery.

Access to original archives

We do not usually allow access to uncatalogued collections. We have an active cataloguing programme, and make documents accessible as quickly as possible within available resources.

Most records are available for research without restrictions. However, some restrictions on access are determined by legislation or arise from the physical condition of the material and the risk of further damage. Access to records containing personal information of living, identifiable individuals is restricted under the Data Protection Act, 2018. By signing our visitor's book on entry to our searchroom, the user agrees to abide by our [searchroom rules](#) in the access and use of records in our custody. Researchers are responsible under the Data Protection Act 2018 for any processing of data accessed by them relating to living identifiable individuals including copying, re-use, transmission abroad and publication (whether online or in print).

Some records about individual people are particularly sensitive, including the records of magistrate courts, county courts, coroners, hospitals, workhouses and schools. Rights of access to such records can be complex. The Archive Service usually cannot undertake to provide electoral register data less than 10 years old. The Archive Service will usually require that requests for access to sensitive records are made in writing, to enable the Service to assess the situation accurately. We try to be as responsive and helpful as

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possible, and will always provide an explanation if access is restricted. Users who want to find information held by the Cumbria County Council relating to themselves or to relatives, particularly if this is likely to be sensitive, should submit a [Subject Access Request](#) to the Council's Information Governance Team.

Individuals who want to study documents for historical or statistical purposes containing sensitive categories of personal information (for instance relating to health, sexuality, race, political or religious beliefs) of identifiable individuals still living may be able to access such records provided they sign our [Privileged Access Agreement](#). The researcher, by signing the agreement, agrees not to disclose names and any identifying information of the individuals mentioned in such records, and reference to such individuals must be. Evidence of research purposes is required before access can be permitted (such as a letter from the research funding authority or from an academic supervisor) along with evidence of the identity of the researcher.

The Freedom of Information Act, 2000 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 submitted through the Council's Information Governance Team.

Records which are identified as fragile and at immediate risk of deterioration will not be made available in the research rooms and will be designated unfit for production. We make this information available in our catalogues as quickly as possible after we have identified the risk to the records. We try to arrange treatment of unfit records in our Conservation Studio as resources permit.

Very occasionally, the owner of an archive collection will request special conditions for access to their documents. Both online and research room catalogues will reflect this and staff will be able to guide researchers and help put arrangements in place.

Public service standards

Customer charter

Cumbria County Council's [Customer Service Charter](#) and the Archive Service's [Standards of Service](#) document sets out style and level of customer service you can expect. We aim to develop services that are user friendly, accessible, meaningful and that are delivered to a high standard. This includes offering our customers the right advice, prompt response times to enquiries and requests for copy documents and an efficient document retrieval process.

Compliments, Complaints and Comments

There is a set procedure for dealing with customer complaints. If you feel that you have not received a good service you can log a complaint with Cumbria County Council [online, in writing, by telephone or email](#). The complaint will be logged and passed to the relevant archive centre for an appropriate response and remedial action. The response will be sent within 10 working days. All complaints are monitored on an annual basis and we seek to improve our service delivery through the comments that are received. You can also log compliments or comments in the same way. Alternatively if you wish to send us your comments directly to us in a less formal way, you can use our [feedback form](#).

Meeting the needs of our stakeholders

Our stakeholders are those individuals or organisations with a direct interest in Cumbria Archive Service. They include Cumbria County Council, our users (both visitors and remote) and the depositors of archives. The needs of these stakeholders are monitored and evaluated through the biennial CIPFA user survey. The Community Services

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Management Team is responsible for running archives and libraries within the local authority. We are looking to develop an Archives User Group in succession to the previous Archives Advisory Group. This will provide a formal opportunity for groups and individuals from the stakeholder community to meet with us and discuss issues relating to the development and performance of the Archive Service. We are looking to hold the first meeting of the Cumbria Archives User Group in 2020.

The media

Cumbria Archive Service welcomes interest from the media in its work. Requests for publication of archives are subject to copyright and may incur publication fees. Requests for broadcast are regulated through a Media Licence Agreement.

Access, equality and social inclusion

The Archive Service is committed to the development of positive policies and activities to promote equal opportunities in employment and in the delivery of services regardless of race, disability, gender, religion, sexual orientation or age. It is also committed to identifying and removing barriers of social exclusion that may prevent access to its services and facilities.

Access for people with disabilities

All Archive Centres are fully DDA compliant. Archive staff can provide additional assistance for people with physical disabilities. This includes reading (short) documents on request, providing magnifiers, making use of the hearing loop and permitting the entry of assistance dogs into the research rooms.

V5.0. 15 October 2020, © Cumbria County Council