

NORTHEAST MUSEUMS

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belonging Policy

Name of Governing Body: NEM Strategic Board

Date of Last Review: 25.03.2026

Date for review: March 2029

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 North East Museums is committed to ensuring, where practicable, that all aspects of its museum and archive activities are fully accessible to every sector of the community. This will be achieved where possible, by removing or reducing any physical, sensory, or intellectual barriers to access, and ensuring that no employee, volunteer, user, or other stakeholder is discriminated against for any reason. We will work to ensure that our collections, interpretations, and activities are representative, inclusive of and relevant to the communities we serve.

1.2 North East Museums defines diversity as the complex mix of individuals and groups who together make up society. A variety of traditions, values, attitudes, and beliefs influence everyone's identity and the identity of society around them. These influences may relate to ethnicity, faith, gender, sexual orientation, and intellectual and physical ability, but might equally include health status, locality, educational, economic, and social background.

1.3 Whilst North East Museums recognises the broadest definition of diversity, it will particularly prioritise improving its engagement with some of the groups referred to as having the "protected characteristics" detailed in the Equality Act 2010 (see appendix 1 point 15). These are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- (in addition to the statutory protected characteristics) socio-economic status - people who could experience discrimination due to their financial background. This is in line with Arts Council England's approach to equality and diversity.

We are guided by five principles that shape how we treat people and how we design our museums: Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, and Belonging. These principles underpin every interaction, service, and space we create so that everyone feels welcome, valued, and able to take part.

Equality – treating everyone fairly and ensuring equal access to buildings, collections, activities and opportunities.

Diversity – celebrating the many backgrounds, cultures and experiences of people and communities living, working and visiting the North East.

Inclusion – creating respectful, supportive spaces where everyone can participate fully.

Equity – recognising different needs and providing the support or adjustments required so everyone can take part on equal terms.

Belonging – ensuring people feel welcome, comfortable, connected and confident to return—and to shape our museums.

1.4 Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belonging are central to our mission and commitments: is to welcome and connect people to the past, present, and future of the North East through stories, shared spaces, and experiences. We will help people understand and act on local and global challenges:

- Equality – we will provide a warm welcome to everyone; break down barriers caused by inequality and discrimination and share diverse stories.
- Wellbeing – we will use our spaces and services to support people’s physical and mental health.
- Social mobility – we will deliver learning experiences, volunteering opportunities and pathways for personal development for people of all ages and backgrounds.
- Climate – we will raise awareness about the environment and encourage people to act for a sustainable future.
- Place – we will celebrate North East England, inspire local pride, and use our resources to support research, innovation, and economic regeneration.

2. STATEMENTS FOR VISITORS, SERVICE USERS, STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

2.1 We aim to create environments where everyone feels welcome, respected, and able to participate fully. We want our museums to be places where people feel they belong and can see themselves reflected in the stories we share.

2.2 Statement for Visitors and Service Users

2.2.1 North East Museums exists for all people to visit, use, and enjoy its museums, galleries and archives, in-person or online. We provide appropriate

provision and assistance to make sure that our activities, services, and opportunities are made available to everyone, wherever possible.

2.2.2 We seek to provide a visitor experience where everyone feels welcomed, safe and able to take part on equal terms. We recognise and celebrate different needs, experiences and identities and work proactively to remove barriers to participation across our venues and digital spaces.

2.2.3 We will work to ensure that our collections, interpretations, and activities are representative, inclusive of and relevant to the communities we serve.

2.2.4 We provide training for staff and volunteers to make sure we offer appropriate support and provision for all visitors. There are comments and complaints procedures which you can use to help us maintain and improve our services.

2.3 Statement for Staff, Volunteers and People/Organisations we work with

2.3.1 All staff working within North East Museums are retained by Newcastle City Council (NCC) and as such are required to comply with and support the NCC Equality Policy.

2.3.2 We aim to ensure our processes and procedures do not reduce opportunity for anyone and that equity of opportunity is embedded across the organisation. Everyone working with North East Museums, paid or voluntary, shares responsibility for putting these principles into practice.

3. AIMS & OBJECTIVES OF THIS POLICY

3.1 Aims

In fulfilling our mission and in taking forward our work with audiences and communities, we seek to reflect the diversity of our communities and users through:

- collection and interpretation of objects, archives, and associated information
- diversity in displays and exhibitions
- events, learning, outreach, and volunteering programmes
- online activities and digital opportunities
- diversity in our workforce, volunteers and board members
- creating spaces, programmes and relationships that foster a sense of belonging, connection and confidence among all communities we work with
- maintaining an active dialogue with diverse communities to inform the above

3.2 Objectives

- strive for excellence in the delivery of service to users from under-represented backgrounds and to become an exemplar of best practice
- ensure that North East Museums meets all its obligations under relevant Diversity, Equality & Access legislation
- create and strengthen an anti-racist culture across the organisation
- actively encourage participation in the activities of North East Museums by people from under-represented backgrounds as service users, staff, and volunteers
- meet, where possible, the communication needs of residents whose first language is not English or who require alternatively formatted materials, to ensure maximum participation in our programmes and use of our facilities
- ensure that all contractors, consultants and outside agencies working with, or within, North East Museums meet the same standards as we would expect to meet ourselves.
- apply an equity-based approach that recognises people's different needs and provides tailored support and reasonable adjustments so everyone can participate.
- embed co-production and shared decision-making with communities in the development of exhibitions, programmes and services, wherever possible

4. HOW WILL NORTH EAST MUSEUMS IMPLEMENT THIS POLICY?

- implementing inclusive policies, practices, procedures, and guidelines which are regularly monitored, reviewed, and updated
- ensuring our recruitment processes are truly inclusive
- provision of accessible formats and languages for the presentation and delivery of key information within our venues, and in our published and promotional material
- ensuring that all North East Museums contractors, consultants and outside agencies working for or with the organisation, or on our premises, observe the provisions of Newcastle City Council's Equality Policy and this Policy
- ensuring North East Museums' venues are as physically, sensorial, and intellectually accessible as possible

- establishing and maintaining robust consultation networks with its visitors, service users, community organisations, cultural partners, and stakeholders
- facilitation of staff Equalities Working Groups
- embedding in our organisation the fact that the delivery of this policy is a responsibility of every individual, team, department, service, and venue
- providing training for staff and volunteers to make sure we offer appropriate support to all staff, volunteers and visitors
- providing mechanisms to receive comments and complaints to help us maintain and improve our services
- embedding co-production with communities across exhibitions, learning and engagement, and digital development
- ensuring our approaches nurture a sense of belonging for staff, volunteers, visitors, and partners
- updating and applying our Accessible Information Guidelines to reflect current standards and local provision

5. RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Effective engagement with people with protected characteristics is the responsibility of every employee, volunteer, and member of governing bodies.

Every member of staff and every volunteer will have responsibility for:

- contributing towards providing a world-class, inclusive service
- familiarising, implementing, and promoting the Equal Opportunities policies and procedures of Newcastle City Council and North East Museums' Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belonging Policy (EDIEB)
- implementing and promoting inclusive programmes not tolerating and seeking to eradicate racism, bullying, harassment, victimisation, microaggressions, direct/indirect discrimination and discrimination by association against individuals on any grounds
- participating in relevant training and development to maintain a commitment to inclusion and to increase skills and knowledge in the fields of cultural Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belonging

- identifying personal and organisational skills and knowledge gaps in relevant issues
- understanding the duties and responsibilities appropriate for their role
- creating welcoming environments and practices that actively support inclusion and belonging
- challenging behaviours or systems that undermine inclusion and belonging, and escalating concerns in line with policy

6. VENUE AND TEAM EQUALITY RESPONSIBILITIES

There are key work areas that are the responsibility of all North East Museums venues and teams. These assist in the delivery of our Mission and Vision and support Business Planning:

- the undertaking of an Equality Impact Needs Assessment (EINA) process when there are significant changes in our policies, processes, or service delivery
- ensuring that staff receive relevant training and are aware of and understand this Policy/NCC Equality Policy
- dealing with concerns or complaints by colleagues in line with NCC's Dignity at Work Policy
- conducting regular access and inclusion audits that consider physical, cognitive, sensory, social and cultural barriers
- evidencing how the five principles (Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belonging) are embedded in planning and decision-making
- involving community voices as appropriate, across exhibitions, learning and engagement, and digital development and other relevant activities including reviewing significant changes and major programmes

7. AREAS OF PARTICULAR RESPONSIBILITY FOR STAFF GROUPS

Some groups of staff will have responsibility for the delivery of specific areas of this EDIEB Policy. These areas are NOT exclusive to specific groups identified, and DO NOT exclude any staff, either from their responsibilities for delivering an inclusive service, or from identifying opportunities to improve and develop this service. As part of North East Museums' planning process guidance will be issued to all staff on the responsibility of their teams/venues.

7.1 Challenging and reporting inappropriate behaviour

We are committed to promoting Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belonging and will take steps to challenge discrimination, harassment, victimisation and behaviours that undermine people's dignity or sense of belonging in everything we do.

All staff are responsible for challenging and reporting inappropriate behaviour in line with North East Museums' Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belonging Policy.

If a member of staff wants to challenge inappropriate behaviour, they can in the first instance discuss it with:

- their line manager
- Senior Manager/Director
- HR adviser/Trade Union Representative

Individuals and teams will be supported to challenge and report inappropriate behaviour and we recognise the emotional impact this has.

Individuals and teams will be supported to develop their skills and knowledge relevant to EDIEB to prevent harm and improve outcomes for colleagues, volunteers, and visitors.

Glossary of terms

Equality – is the state of being equal in status, rights, or opportunities

Diversity – diversity is about recognising, valuing, and taking account of people's different backgrounds, knowledge, skills, and experiences, and encouraging and using those differences to create a productive and effective workforce.

Inclusion – is the practice of including people in a way that is fair for all, values everyone and empowers each person to be themselves

Equity – recognises that each person has different circumstances and resources, and allocates resources in a way which ensures an equal outcome

Belonging – a feeling of comfort, connection and acceptance that enables people to participate confidently and see themselves represented and valued

What do I do if I am worried about discrimination or harassment in my organisation?

In the first instance please refer to the policies and procedures referenced in Appendix 1. The following information can offer help about other steps you can take: The following information can offer help about other steps you can take: If you think you have been unfairly discriminated against, you can read what the government advise here [Discrimination: your rights: What you can do - GOV.UK](#) .

If you think you might have been treated unfairly or want assistance on issues relating to equality and human rights, you can contact the Equality Advisory and Support Service [Advice and Support - Equality Advisory and Support Service](#). Their website offers BSL (British Sign Language) interpretation, web chat services and a contact us form. You can call them on 0808 800 0082 or textphone: 0808 800 0084.

Citizens Advice have separate guides to what you can do if you have experienced unlawful discrimination outside of employment and if you are being discriminated against in the workplace [Taking action about discrimination - Citizens Advice](#) . This service can also be used by volunteers.

Crimes committed against someone because of their disability, transgender-identity, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation are hate crimes and should be reported to the police. Learn more and get links on how to report on the True Vision website. [Report a hate crime - True Vision](#)

Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) has a guide for what employees and employers of all sizes must and should do when discrimination happens or is alleged within the workplace [Discrimination and bullying | Acas](#) You have rights to speak up about harm in your organisation, commonly known as 'whistleblowing'. See <http://protect-advice.org.uk/> - .

Read the Acas guidance on dealing with discrimination at work [Discrimination and the Equality Act 2010 - Discrimination at work - Acas](#).

Appendix 1

North East Museums, NCC & Arts Council Policies, Procedures, Guidelines & Documents

Newcastle City Council (See Newcastle City Council Intranet for Links)

1. NCC Equality Policy
2. Dignity at Work Policy
3. Maternity/Paternity Policy
4. Disability Related Leave Process
5. Grievance & Complaints Policy

North East Museums

6. Access Information (Internal link only)
7. Accessible Information Guidelines (draft) (Internal link only)
8. Collections Development Policy for Museums and Galleries
9. Customer Service Standards (Internal link only)
10. Ethics Policy
11. Research Code of Practice
12. Volunteer policy 2020
13. Safeguarding Policy & Procedure
14. Confidential Reporting Policy

Arts Council England (ACE)

15. ACE - Lets Create

Other

16. Equality Act 2010

A large print version of this policy is available from North East Museums.

Telephone: 0191 2326789

Email: info@northeastmuseums.org.uk