

Learning and Access Policy

1. Scope and Purpose

The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh (hereafter 'RCPE')'s **Mission Statement** is to serve as the institutional memory of the RCPE, the history of our Fellows and Members and a vital resource for the history of medicine in Scotland. Our mission is to preserve and interpret our collections, to make them accessible to all and to contribute to the objects of the RCPE, that is to promote the science of medicine and to order and improve the practice of that science.

In order to support this mission, RCPE aims to use its collections:

- To support the education, training and continuing professional development of physicians at every stage of their careers
- To enhance the RCPE's reputation by raising awareness of physicians and their work in society
- To enable access, appreciation and understanding of the RCPE's collections and of medical history more broadly
- To inspire enjoyable learning and facilitate the development of knowledge, skills, values and actions
- To facilitate and generate excellent medical, scientific, historical and other research

This policy sets out the principles and practice that will deliver learning and access to all users as core library, museum and archive functions. It does not cover access in relation to staff, volunteers or contractors.

This policy is guided by relevant ethical codes and legislation:

- International Council on Archives, Code of Ethics, 1996
- Copyright Act, 1998
- International Council of Museums, Code of Ethics for Museums, 2006
- Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, Ethical Principles for Library and Information Professionals, 2004
- Charities Act, 2006
- Equality Act, 2010
- Data Protection Act, 2018

2. Learning and Access Principles

- The RCPE aims to promote an understanding of the history and modern practice of medicine and its associated disciplines through learning opportunities that are accessible, inspiring,

thought-provoking and sustainable, presented in a comfortable and secure environment for all users

- Access to the collections will be considered within the context of a strategic, risk management approach to collections care and in accordance with the **Collections Care and Conservation Policy**
- Access is subject to statutory and legal requirements, as defined under data protection, copyright and other relevant legislation
- The RCPE will strive to provide a wide-ranging service to all users of the library, museum and archive, whether physical or virtual, within the physical constraints of the building, the RCPE's legal framework, the integrity of the collections and the availability of financial and other resources
- The RCPE will act in accordance with our **Diversity Statement**, to promote open and equitable access to all services and resources
- The RCPE will employ professionally qualified and experienced staff to implement this policy and provide appropriate training to paid and voluntary staff. Where skills are not available in-house, external expertise will be sought
- 'Access' is considered to be made possible when physical, sensory, intellectual, cultural, social, attitudinal, financial and technological barriers are removed, enabling visitors to engage with and respond to the collections
- 'Disability' is defined using the social model: that is, societal barriers that make people disabled, rather than particular medical conditions or impairment
- Learning and access needs, risks and activities will be communicated within the library, museum and archive team (fortnightly) and reported to the Library and Heritage Committee (bi-annually)
- Access to library, museum and archive collections and expertise for educational and research purposes will be provided free of charge where feasible, especially to Fellows, Members, associates and affiliates. However, charges may be necessary to apply to cover staff and space costs

3. Audience Research and Consultation

- Audience representatives will be involved in a continued process of consultation, research and evaluation in the development of learning and access provision and other RCPE projects
- The RCPE will work with core learning audiences when piloting new learning and access events and activities and will evaluate and make changes as necessary
- All participants in undergraduate and post-graduate medical training, professional development, formal and informal learning activities (both students and teachers/tutors) will have an opportunity to give feedback on their experiences, and the RCPE will be responsive to this feedback

- All visitors, including potential visitors, can provide feedback in the RCPE verbally, in writing or online through the RCPE web pages or social media accounts
- The RCPE will undertake research to identify new audiences and work with them to determine how their learning and access needs can be met

4. Access

4.1 Core Access Platforms

The RCPE is committed to trialling and developing new methods to access the collections. Where these are successful, they will be embedded in the long-term programme of the RCPE. The core platforms RCPE is committed to providing are:

- A wheelchair accessible exhibition space (the Physicians' Gallery) with rotating temporary exhibitions
- A reading room for access to non-display collections (all of which are held on site for quick production for users)
- Online access to: audio and video content, articles and blogs, collection catalogues and over 30,000 digitised collection items
- Social media platforms
- Copying and reproduction services and research assistance both in the reading room and for remote users via email and telephone
- Onsite engagement activities including events and tours
- School and youth engagement programmes (including events for school students considering studying medicine and school loan kits)

4.2 Physical/sensory Access

- The RCPE will provide a welcoming and friendly environment that is accessible to all visitors
- Public areas of the library, museum and archive will be made as accessible to visitors with physical or sensory disabilities as possible. There are some limitations due to the physical constraints of listed buildings but alternative access to collections in stores and working areas will be made where possible
- The RCPE provides information for potential visitors explaining our opening times, services and access to collections via our website, leaflets and via telephone and email
- Ways of accessing collections dedicated to users with particular needs will be provided when possible, and resources will be prioritised to this end
- The RCPE will ensure that video-based exhibits will have subtitles if they use spoken word
- The RCPE provides accessible seating throughout our buildings, including in all exhibition and engagement spaces

- Established sector guidelines and standards will be used in the production of text panels, gallery guides, catalogues, leaflets and other printed material
- The RCPE provides accessible toilets
- Handling opportunities will be provided where it is safe to do so and where resources are available, especially for family audiences and learning groups

4.3 Intellectual Access

- The RCPE will continue to work to improve the intellectual accessibility of the collections held by the RCPE, particularly with regards to labelling and text panels
- Temporary exhibitions and displays in public areas of the RCPE will be researched and developed to be of interest and accessible to non-specialist, as well as specialist audiences
- Where resources permit, the RCPE will provide live interpretation of the collections through tours

4.4 Social/attitudinal/cultural Access

- The RCPE will consider the access needs of visitors from different social and cultural backgrounds across its work
- Collections will be made available to improve visitors' understanding of disease, injury and medicinal treatment through exhibitions and events
- Visitors will be encouraged to become better informed about their health and to be more involved in making decisions about their medical treatment
- Opportunities will be provided for dialogue between the public and medical professionals through events and exhibitions

4.5 Geographical and Technological Access

- It is recognised that some users may be unable to visit the RCPE in person. IT and digital technology will be utilised to develop online outreach resources and to increase digital access to collections
- The RCPE is committed to providing physical outreach options for those who are unable to visit in person, including school loan kits, touring exhibitions and attending events in target communities
- Established sector guidelines and standards will be followed to ensure that the library, museum and archive webpages and on-site terminals are accessible to as many visitors as possible

4.6 Financial Access

- All Physicians' Gallery exhibitions have free admission
- All school resources, including events and loans, are provided free of charge

- Online resources, including high resolution digitised collections, can be viewed and downloaded free of charge
- Reading room and enquiry services are free of charge, including photocopying and digital copying requests and research support
- Self-photography is permitted with no charge associated

5. Learning

The RCPE seeks to provide visitors with access to learning opportunities that are appropriate to their individual learning needs, while working within the limits of its financial and staff resources.

5.1 Formal Learning Organisations

For students and teachers/tutors in formal learning organisations from secondary school to postgraduate level from a range of disciplines including biomedical and forensic science, medical art and history the RCPE will:

- Provide a regular programme of facilitated workshops using the library, museum and archive collections
- Support school and Higher Education/Further Education visits by providing guided tours of the RCPE and its collections
- Create resources that are relevant to the current curriculum for schools to support self-guided visits for a range of subject areas
- Encourage Higher Education groups to use the collections for teaching and research

5.2 Informal Learning Groups

For adults involved in informal learning through groups such as local history groups, medical history societies and local community and social groups, as well as local adult education providers, the RCPE will:

- Promote guided tours for groups and where possible tailor these to suit the background knowledge or interest of the visitor/s
- Maintain a varied public programme of events, including lectures, exhibition tours, hands-on workshops and evening experiences drawing widely on the collections held within the library, museum and archive for inspiration
- Support family history research by providing access to library, museum and archive collections onsite and information about online resources

5.3 Medical Training

For medical students, Fellows, Members, associates and affiliates, other qualified professionals in training posts, and consultants engaged in continuing professional development (from the UK or overseas) the RCPE will:

- Raise the profile of the collections, resources and facilities it can offer to medical trainees, Fellows, Members, associates and affiliates of the RCPE, especially by supporting education courses and other postgraduate training programmes
- Integrate the RCPE's library, museum and archive with other medical information resources to develop an integrated training offer

5.4 Learning for Life Audience

The 'learning for life' audience is diverse and includes individuals, families with children, tourists, and groups of friends/colleagues visiting the library, museum and archive, engaging with the collections and participating in public programmes. To support and develop this audience the RCPE will:

- Offer guided tours and interpret the displays for visitors
- Maintain a varied public programme of events including lectures, exhibitions, gallery talks, hands-on workshops and evening experiences, drawing widely on the collections held by the RCPE for inspiration

6. Exhibitions

A programme of temporary exhibitions will be staged, maintaining high standards of design and interpretation:

- To showcase the stored collections
- To reflect current and past practice in medicine
- To mark significant historical anniversaries
- To complement programming and events
- To attract members of RCPE's core audiences who might not otherwise visit
- To display outputs of proactive strategic partnership projects. Potential external partners' proposals for temporary exhibitions will be considered within the RCPE's stated objectives and business planning, and will only be embarked upon with appropriate resourcing

7. Marketing and Commercial Access

- The public profile of the library, museum and archive will be maintained through appropriate use of media coverage, direct advertising and the production of print materials, as resources allow. Accurate and up to date information for visitors will be provided through liaising with relevant RCPE departments and via the web and social media
- Training will be provided for staff and stakeholders to undertake media activities when required
- Where possible, learning and engagement activities will be cost neutral, and/or funding will be raised from external sources
- Access to the collections and expertise may be granted for commercial purposes – including venue hire, image use, filming or licensing – where there is minimal risk to the integrity of

the collections, the reputation of the RCPE or its intellectual property rights. Charges will be levied

8. Safeguarding

The RCPE works to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults. While the primary responsibility for the welfare of children and vulnerable adults rests with the supervising adult(s), the RCPE recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and vulnerable adults by a commitment to practice which supports protecting them from harm.

The RCPE has a duty of care and is committed to the protection and safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults involved as visitors and participants in all our activities both on and off site.

The RCPE believes that:

- The welfare of children and vulnerable adults is paramount
- All children and vulnerable adults have the right to protection from abuse
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse must be properly investigated by the RCPE and/or external authorities where relevant and dealt with swiftly and appropriately
- Staff, contractors and volunteers must be clear on appropriate behaviour and responses. Where appropriate, failure by staff to maintain standards may be dealt with using the RCPE's **Disciplinary Policy and Procedure** which can be found in the **Staff Handbook**
- Contractors and volunteers may be asked to leave the RCPE's premises and be dealt with according to the relevant procedures if they have been found to be acting inappropriately

A guide to safeguarding at the RCPE can be found in the **Safeguarding Procedure**.

Documentation

This policy should be viewed in conjunction with:

Safeguarding Procedure

Conservation and Preservation Policy

Library, Museum and Archive Mission Statement

Library, Museum and Archive Diversity Statement

Collections Care and Conservation Policy

Staff Handbook

Policy review



ROYAL
COLLEGE *of*
PHYSICIANS *of*
EDINBURGH

This policy will be reviewed every four years.

Date approved by Council: 16 June 2023

Date Approved by Library & Heritage Committee: 29 June 2023