

# **Rotherham Heritage Services**

## **Collections Care and Conservation Policy**

**2018 - 2022**

<b>Document title:</b>	Rotherham Heritage Services Collections Care and Conservation Policy, 2018-2022
<b>Version &amp; status:</b>	Version 3 (July 2018)
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<b>Approved by &amp; date:</b>	
<b>Review date:</b>	Jan 2022
<b>Further information:</b>	

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**CONTENTS**

1. Introduction
2. Definitions
3. Collections Care and Conservation Principles
4. Ethics, Legislation and Standards
5. Premises and Storage
6. Conservation Assessment and Treatment
7. Environmental Monitoring and Control
8. Housekeeping and Pest Management
9. Access and Handling
10. Reprography
11. Education and Training
12. Security
13. Emergency Planning
14. Environmental Awareness
15. Review

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This policy is part of a suite of policies relating to the management, preservation, documentation and access of Rotherham Heritage Service's collections (museums and archives and local studies) to ensure their long-term survival and usability.
- 1.2 It covers all aspects of collections care and conservation undertaken by or on behalf of Rotherham Heritage Services. It also applies to all buildings and venues in which the Service stores and makes its collections available.
- 1.3 The policy supports the delivery of Rotherham Heritage Service's Forward Plan, 2018-2022. The overall vision for the Service is about 'Revealing Rotherham's small wonders and big stories', with a clear statement of purpose, which 'will bring people together to build connections, spark imaginations and create positive and renowned Rotherham stories'.
- 1.4 In summary, the policy covers the Service's strategic approach to conservation including the principles of collections care; ethics, legislation and standards; premises and storage; conservation assessment and treatment; environmental monitoring and control; housekeeping; access; training; security; emergency planning; and environmental awareness. It is supported by the Collections Care and Conservation Plan and is in proportion to resources available.
- 1.5 All staff and freelancers are given this document as part of their induction and are asked to read and abide by the policy.

## **2. Definitions**

For the purposes of this policy the following definitions have been adopted:

- 2.1 Collections care (also known as preventive conservation) is the passive protection of material where no direct chemical treatment occurs. It aims to avoid, slow or minimise deterioration or loss of collections.
- 2.2 Conservation (also known as remedial or interventive conservation) is the active protection using a physical or chemical treatment to prevent further deterioration and protect cultural or scientific value. It may include restoration where appropriate.

## **3. Collections Care and Conservation Principles**

- 3.1 The collections and their stories are central to the work of Rotherham Heritage Services. The Service is, therefore, committed to caring for and using these collections in a sustainable way striking a balance between their long-term preservation and their accessibility for engagement and research, through the careful management of risk.
- 3.2 The Service strives to achieve best practice, which is guided and informed by a range of standards and legislation outlined in section 4.
- 3.3 Collections and conservation staff oversee the efficient and effective management of the care and conservation of all Heritage Service's collections. Where required, advice is sought externally, along with any treatments that do not fall within the current skill set of conservation staff. This includes conservation work for archives and local studies material.
- 3.4 Treatments are only undertaken if necessary and sympathetic to the object in question. All treatments are fully documented.

#### **4. Ethics, Legislation and Standards**

- 4.1 In caring for its collections, Heritage Services adhere to the following legislation and ethical guidelines:
  - Museums Association Code of Ethics (2015)
  - Archives and Records Association UK & Ireland Code of Ethics (2018)
  - ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums (2013)
  - Museums and Galleries Act (1992)
  - Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)
  - COSHH regulations (2002)
  - Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (2004)
  
  - Additionally, conservation practice is guided by the UK Institute of Conservation Code of Conduct (2014)
- 4.2 This policy and the work of the Service is also guided and informed by the following standards:
  - SPECTRUM 5.0: UK Collection Management Standard (2017)
  - Benchmarks in Collections Care for Museums, Archives and Libraries 2.1 (2018)
  - PAS 197:2009 Code of Practice for Cultural Collections Management
  - BS 4971:2017 Conservation and Care of Archive and Library Collections

- BS EN16893:2017 Conservation of Cultural Heritage. Specifications for location, construction and modification of buildings or rooms intended for the storage or use of heritage collections
- Standard for Record Repositories (2004)

**5. Premises and Storage**

5.1 Rotherham Heritage Services understands that the maintenance of its premises is fundamental to the preservation of both its buildings and collections. Its building assets are managed through the Council’s Corporate Landlord Scheme and both parties will continue to improve the physical condition of its buildings and the storage within them.

5.2 The table below identifies the use of each building, the owner and who has responsibility.

<b>Building</b>	<b>Used for</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Responsibility for upkeep and improvements</b>
Clifton Park Museum	Museum display and storage Archive and local studies searchroom, display and storage	Rotherham Council	Facilities Management overseen by Service’s Collections and Visitor Experience Manager
Outstore 1	Museum storage Archive and Local Studies storage	Rotherham Council	Facilities Management overseen by Service’s Collections and Visitor Experience Manager
Outstore 2	Museum storage	Rotherham Council	Facilities Management overseen by Service’s Collections and Visitor Experience Manager
Riverside House (Council’s Main Office)	Museum display Archive display	Rotherham Council	Facilities Management

5.3 All collections are stored securely and where possible are stored in areas which adhere to the standards listed in section 4. Where this is not possible, all reasonable steps are taken to minimise deterioration and degradation.

5.4 As far as feasible, collections are stored in a way that allows access for the purpose of supporting engagement and research.

- 5.5 All new collections are quarantined when appropriate and their condition is taken into account when presented to the Acquisition and Disposal Panel. Where damage is extensive and is beyond intrinsic value, the Panel may choose not to retain it.
- 5.6 All storage areas are kept tidy.
- 5.7 New collections, where feasible (size may be a hindrance) are packaged as soon as possible after receipt. Minimum protection is provided by simple boxing or wrapping, using archival quality materials.
- 5.8 Retrospective packaging is undertaken as part of projects; during exhibition change-overs; on retrieval for research; or when tackling historical backlogs.
- 5.9 The retrieval of any items from the collections is recorded.
- 5.10 Plans are being progressed over the next 5 years to exit from both collections outstores and this policy will guide the specification developed as part of this project.

## **6. Conservation Assessment and Treatment**

- 6.1 Rotherham Heritage Services are committed to achieving the highest standards of remedial conservation and restoration (where appropriate) within the scope of resources.
- 6.2 Items will be selected for treatment according to the priorities set out in the Service's Forward Plan and in the Collections Care and Conservation Plan. The Service continues to assess and monitor the physical condition of the collections in order to inform future planning.
- 6.3 The Service's Conservator (within their current skill set) undertakes all remedial conservation on the Service's collections except for the Archives and Local Studies collections. This work is undertaken externally, where resources allow.
- 6.4 Condition assessments are carried out by all collections staff and trained volunteers, while treatments are only carried out by or under the supervision of the Conservator. Tasks such as cleaning or packing is delegated to other staff.
- 6.5 Where an external conservator is used, a written brief and specification will be provided. All external work will be supervised by the Conservator or the Collections Officer. External conservators are generally selected from the

ICON Conservation Register to ensure professional accreditation. In occasional circumstances a non-accredited professional or a Conservator not on the register may be selected.

6.6 All conservation treatments are fully documented and stored electronically in the museum's collection management database.

**7. Environmental Monitoring and Control**

7.1 Rotherham Heritage Services continues its commitment to maintain and, where necessary, improve environmental conditions in order to preserve the physical condition of its collections. This is done using a combination of automated (telemetric) and manual measurements.

7.2 Data collected is assessed and disseminated to relevant staff in order to inform and facilitate decisions about preservation and to ensure that remedial action can be taken promptly in the event of malfunction or breakdown of equipment.

7.3 Environmental monitoring is predominantly through the Eltek system installed in 2018. Relative humidity (RH) and temperature are recorded in selected museum galleries, display cases, and museum and archives and local studies stores. Spot-checking of light levels are done using a handheld manual device for UV and visible light level monitoring. Two telemetric loggers also record light level data.

7.4 All environmental recordings are collected, evaluated and retained in line with the Service's retention schedule.

7.5 Equipment is stored and calibrated in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

7.6 Heating controls, humidifiers, and dehumidifiers are in place where required.

7.7 The following limits have been set as a guideline for the Service's museum collections:

<b>Value</b>	<b>Normal range</b>	<b>Maximum range</b>	<b>Rate of change</b>
<b>Temperature</b>	15-20°C	5-30°C	+/-3°C in 24 hours
<b>Relative humidity</b>	40-60%	20-75%	+/-5% in 24 hours
<b>Visible light</b>	under 100lux	under 300lux	n/a

<b>Ultraviolet light</b>	under 50µW/Lumen	under 75µW/Lumen	n/a
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BS 4971: 2017 sets out specific limits for archives:

<b>Temperature</b>	13-20°C
<b>Relative humidity</b>	35-60%

*(With a maximum of 23°C in the hottest weather)*

- 7.8 Every effort will be made to avoid displaying objects which emit gaseous pollutants in sealed environments.
- 7.9 Materials used to construct enclosures and cases will be evaluated before use and only acid free or conservation grade materials will be used whenever possible.

## **8. Housekeeping and Pest Management**

- 8.1 Rotherham Heritage Services recognises that housekeeping plays an important part in the care and protection of the collections within its care. The Service continues to raise its housekeeping standards by implementing the Collections Care and Conservation Plan.
- 8.2 Pest levels are monitored and recorded according to the guidelines laid out in the Collections Care and Conservation Plan and the Integrated Pest Management Procedure. Pest traps are inspected three times per year and new traps laid out when necessary. Records of pests found are retained in line with the Service's retention schedule.
- 8.3 Dust levels will be kept as low as possible and dusting will only be done by trained staff and volunteers following the relevant procedures.

## **9. Access and handling**

- 9.1 All collections staff and volunteers are trained in handling objects, and any additional staff who are asked to move objects are given best practice advice before doing so.
- 9.2 All access and handling risk assessments are undertaken for each task and reviewed every two years.
- 9.3 All Archives and Local Studies staff are trained in the safe and correct handling of items, along with manual handling.

- 9.4 Handling of any of the collections is carefully planned to minimise the risk of physical damage. Contractors, researchers, and volunteers are made aware of their responsibility and are given appropriate handling training, when required.
- 9.5 Handling guidelines are provided to users of the Archives and Local Studies searchroom. Staff supervising the searchroom recognise their role in ensuring the guidelines are adhered to. Further guidance is found in the procedures; 'Searchroom Guide for Users' and in 'Storing and Caring for Archives and Local Studies Material'.
- 9.6 Heavy and cumbersome objects are not moved unless those moving the object have undertaken the relevant manual handling training, and an appropriate risk assessment has been carried out and approved.
- 9.7 Appropriate equipment is provided for use, including trollies, foam supports, weights, gloves and polyester sleeves.
- 9.8 Items which have surrogates are not normally made available in their original format except in the case of a specialist request.
- 9.9 Routine preservation microfilm is undertaken of local newspapers. Where microfilms are available, use of the original papers will not be made unless the microfilm is illegible.
- 9.10 Where appropriate, digitisation will be used as means of providing surrogates. This has proved successful for the school log books and admission registers. For further information see Rotherham Heritage Service's Digitisation Policy, 2018-2022.

## **10. Reprography**

- 10.1 For further information see Rotherham Heritage Service's Reprographics Policy, 2018-2022.

## **11. Education and Training**

- 11.1 It is the responsibility of the Conservator and the Collections Team to oversee all staff and volunteers receive appropriate training in safe handling of objects and archives and local studies material. Staff and volunteers are encouraged to undertake additional training in collections care whenever possible.

- 11.2 Education and training is carried out in-house, by experts such as the Sheffield Conservation Unit, or by other external providers.
- 11.3 Training needs are identified through the Council's annual Performance and Development Reviews.

## **12. Security**

- 12.1 Access to all collections is restricted to Rotherham Heritage Services staff.
- 12.2 Strongrooms are protected from unlawful intrusion and have fire detection systems.
- 12.3 An electronic key tracking system has been implemented at Clifton Park Museum, which covers access to display cases, galleries and storage areas. All other buildings have manual key tracking systems and code-restricted doors.
- 12.4 CCTV is utilised in a variety of locations.
- 12.5 Items removed from storage areas are logged and recorded.
- 12.6 The Service regularly assesses and reviews all risks to the collections and aims to manage and mitigate these to a level that is acceptable and balanced against the need for access.
- 12.7 For further information see Rotherham Heritage Service's Security Policy, 2018-2022.

## **13. Emergency planning**

- 13.1 Rotherham Heritage Services has two plans as follows:
  - Emergency Plan detailing the process of dealing with an emergency
  - Incident Control Plan (Terrorism, Fire and Contractors) providing guidance on dealing with a specific incident
- 13.2 Key information is available in both plans relating to the collections and buildings, along with key contacts.
- 13.3 All staff within Rotherham Heritage Services have been issued with a control copy. Copies are also located in key locations across the buildings. Regular training is undertaken to familiarise staff with these plans.

13.4 Rotherham Heritage Services is also part of the Rapid Response Network which can provide assistance during emergencies.

13.5 Both plans are subject to annual review, undertaken by the Visitor Experience Officer and members of the Collections team and the Conservator where necessary.

#### **14. Environmental Awareness**

14.1 Rotherham Heritage Services is aware of its responsibilities relating to the environment and climate change. It will take account of the expected collection lifetime and the energy demand arising from the conditions needed to achieve this. Wherever possible, the Service will reduce the amount of energy used for the collections, so long as this is appropriate and safe.

#### **15. Review**

15.1 This policy will be reviewed as required to take into account changes in circumstances and will be reviewed in 4 years in line with the Service's Forward Plan.