



## The Wilson Access Policy

**Name of museum:** *The Wilson Art Gallery and Museum (hereafter referred to as 'The Wilson')*

**Name of governing body:** *The Cheltenham Trust and Cheltenham Borough Council*

**Date policy approved by governing body:** *18 September 2019*

**Date policy adopted by managing body:** *18 September 2019*

**Policy review procedure:** *Policy to be reviewed by Visitor Experience staff and escalated to Senior Management for approval if updates are made*

**Date policy due for review:** *2024*

### 1. Introduction

Access is at the heart of everything we do at The Wilson: we exist for public benefit. Audience access and engagement is the main purpose of the collections, the exhibitions, the activities and the building that we manage.

It is built into our statement of purpose that we will be accessible for all, and this policy aims to help us achieve our purpose:

*The Wilson will be a regional centre for doing and making for all ages. We will be friendly and curious in everything that we do and provide a creative space for people to engage with Cheltenham's stories through art, crafts and events. We will do this by caring for and interpreting our outstanding collections to support discovery, enjoyment and learning for all.*

The Wilson recognises that there are many barriers to access at all levels of what we offer, from feeling welcome in the building to finding relevance in the exhibits to using our building comfortably. We believe that all people have a fundamental right to engage with, use and enjoy what The Wilson offers. We define access as something that is made possible when physical, cultural, social, financial, intellectual, psychological and emotional barriers are removed or reduced and we are committed to making all aspects of our activities as fully accessible as our resources allow.

Our policy has been written in line with Cheltenham Borough Council's Equal Opportunities Policy, in which the Equality of Opportunity Statement says:

*"It is a fundamental principle of our policies that all people are equally valued regardless of their gender, age, disabilities, race, ethnic origin, language, religion or sexual orientation".*

### 2. Aims and Objectives

The aim of this Policy is to ensure that The Wilson provides the widest possible access to its building, collections and activities to enable audiences from all sections of the community to enjoy the use of the museum and art gallery.

### 3. Overcoming Barriers to Access

To better improve access and as much as resources allow, The Wilson will aim to:

- Build accessibility into everything we do to develop and improve our activities
- Consult our visitors, staff and volunteers on an ongoing basis to better understand their access needs

- Provide ongoing training in access issues for staff and volunteers
- Make sure the wider community has a means of engaging with and accessing what we offer, which might involve taking work off site, working in new ways with community groups and opening ourselves up to new audiences in ways that work for them
- Facilitate independent use of our building and activities wherever possible without intervention
- Ensure all our exhibitions and events consider different access needs and can be enjoyed by the widest range of people
- Use accessible interpretation materials in a range of media

**3.1** To eliminate barriers and ensure equality of access we will consider the following forms of accessibility:

#### **Physical**

We will enable people with physical disabilities to reach and appreciate everything offered by the Wilson Art Gallery and Museum. We will take into account the physical access needs of the elderly and of people caring for young people for example by ensuring that all exhibitions, displays and retail configurations are wheelchair / pushchair friendly.

#### **Sensory**

We will enable visitors with impaired vision or hearing to enjoy the museum's buildings, collections, displays and activities. An example of this is the production of large print labels for our collection displays and temporary exhibitions.

#### **Intellectual**

We recognise that people have different learning styles and we will provide interpretation in a range of learning styles. We also aim to ensure people with learning difficulties can engage with and enjoy everything that The Wilson offers.

#### **Cultural**

We will consider the needs of people for whom English is not a first language, or whose knowledge of English history and culture may be limited. We will seek to provide information in other languages where resources allow.

#### **Attitudinal / Emotional**

We will ensure the museum environment and museum staff is welcoming to visitors from all sections of the community. We will also aim to ensure people of Gloucestershire feel the Wilson is of significance to them.

#### **Financial**

General admission to the Wilson is free but there is a charge for some exhibitions. When reviewing our admission charges we will take into account that ability to pay can be a barrier to access. Our commitment is long term and our policy is to make continuous improvements as much as our resources permit.

For related and more detailed information, see:

- Access Plan

#### **4. Physical Access and our Buildings, Galleries and Displays**

We aim to provide equal access to our buildings and facilities for all visitors. Our refurbished galleries, café and main circulation space enable those with physical access issues to visit the displays and activities easily. We are exploring, through a feasibility study, how to bring the rest of the building up to the same standard.

We consider the comfort of our visitors by providing gender neutral, accessible toilets, baby changing facilities, access for pushchairs, seating in galleries, portable stools and on-site wheelchairs. We provide a detailed floor plan that is illustrated, easy to follow and have brightly coloured large font signage to suit a range of audiences. This signage was updated in 2018 as part of a Resilience funded wayfinding programme. From a digital perspective our website which was updated in 2018 is taking us in the right direction providing visitors with access to our opening times, programme of events and online collection database.

#### **5. Intellectual Access and Ways of Engaging with the Collection**

Our museum is committed to public access to our collections and to increasing knowledge and understanding of Cheltenham's cultural heritage. We provide varied means of access to the collections, including displays, dyslexia friendly font, different font sizes, publications, online resources, collections access days and events at The Wilson and in the community.

We recognize that people learn and engage in different ways and through different methods. We will continue to provide a full range of activities that are user-led to ensure we meet people on their own terms.

We provide learning programmes for all of our temporary and permanent displays and provide appropriate interpretation for people from a range of backgrounds and abilities. We will identify and develop partnerships with a range of educational and community organisations to ensure that our activities continue to cater for the widest possible audience.

By continuing to co-produce interpretation with audiences we are building in relevance from a wide range of audiences

#### **6. A Warm Welcome**

Our Visitor Experience team assists and welcomes all visitors to support discovery, enjoyment and learning for all. The galleries are invigilated by Visitor Experience team and Volunteers who are available to help users to understand and enjoy the collections and displays.

#### **7. Communications**

We will promote the museum's activities and events using a range of formats with a focus on access, including print, verbal and digital communications. We provide a range of ways that people can communicate with us. We actively engage on social media channels. We evaluate all our services and projects to ensure they meet the provision of this policy and we will consult users and non-users on new developments whenever appropriate. We record all visitor feedback and where appropriate respond to visitors and change the way we work in response to the feedback.

#### **8. Reviewing this policy**

This policy will be reviewed on a five year basis to align with the Cheltenham Trust's five year plan. Therefore this policy is due for review by 2024.