

# **ACCESS POLICY STATEMENT**

**The Charles Dickens Museum Limited acting as the sole trustee of The Dickens House and the Dickens House Fund.**

**This Policy was approved by the Board on 28 May 2015, and reviewed on 15 March 2018, and 14 March 2019.**

# Charles Dickens Museum

## Our Charitable Object

The charitable object of the Charles Dickens Museum is to promote, encourage, maintain, improve and advance education of the public in the life and works of Charles Dickens and to establish and maintain the property at 48 Doughty Street in the London Borough of Camden as a Museum to house and preserve all articles having connection with Charles Dickens.

## Our Definition of Access

We are committed to ensuring that all staff, volunteers, interns, students and researchers, visitors and other users are treated fairly, not discriminated against and enjoy their experience at the Charles Dickens Museum. It is therefore our policy to facilitate access to the Museum, its collections and related information for both visitors and those who work for or provide services on behalf of the Museum whether paid or unpaid - physically, intellectually and digitally.

## Our Commitment to Access

We will make our collections and buildings accessible, by removing as many physical, intellectual or cultural barriers to access as practicable, within constraints necessarily imposed by available resources and facilities, as well as considerations for the conservation and security of the collection and our Grade I listed building.

- **Physical:** helping people with physical disabilities, the elderly and those caring for young people to reach and appreciate the majority of the Museum and its collections. Where physical access is not possible for all, we will seek to make alternative arrangements that provide some experience of that part of the collection or service.
- **Sensory:** assisting those with impaired vision or hearing to enjoy and appreciate the Museum's building, collections and exhibitions.
- **Intellectual:** helping people with learning difficulties to engage with and enjoy the Museum by providing appropriate forms of interpretation that take account of different learning styles.

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- **Cultural:** we acknowledge and recognise cultural differences and seek to enable those for whom English is not a first language, or whose knowledge of English history or culture may be limited.
- **Financial:** acknowledging that ability to pay may be a barrier to access, we undertake to keep admission charges under review and as reasonable as possible, consistent with maintaining the financial viability of the Museum.

## How we deliver the policy

### Building and services

- Mindful of the constraints of the Grade 1 and Grade 2 listing of its buildings, the Museum is committed to complying with legislation concerning physical access and strives to surpass the basic requirements of such legislation at all times.
- Level access is available throughout most of the Museum (excluding the top floor) via a lift. Entrances, public areas and facilities and circulation routes are fully accessible and appropriate evacuation procedures are in place.
- There are wheelchair accessible toilets and nappy change facilities on site.
- There is restricted access to office areas although alternate provisions can be made for use of office facilities.
- Signage and orientation are provided for the benefit of all.
- Large print guides and audio guides are available for visually impaired visitors.
- Induction loops are available for hearing impaired visitors.

### Access to Collections

- Our staff are committed to increasing public access to the collections and information and to increasing knowledge and understanding of the cultural heritage of Charles Dickens.
- We will provide varied means of access to the collections, including displays, temporary exhibitions, loans, outreach sessions, publications, educational activities and events.
- Access to the research library is available, wherever possible, by appointment with the Curator.
- Stored collections are available to view, wherever possible, by appointment with the Curator. Where there are reasonable constraints, such as fragility, sensitivity or cost of transport of the material, access to objects in the collection may need to be restricted.
- We will aim to increase access to the collection through a digitisation process where resources permit.

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- We will provide levels of information and interpretation to suit a range of audiences and abilities. We will ensure that the presentation and labelling of displays respects a diversity of background.
- We will continue to develop our handling collections and loans.

## Access to Learning and Education

- We aim to provide educational materials for different audiences and levels of ability, as resources allow.
- We endeavour to provide education programmes to interpret the collections for people from a range of backgrounds and abilities.
- We aim to make educational events as accessible as possible to people with a wide range of abilities and needs.
- 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 audiences.
- We aim to provide educational programmes and visits tailored to specific groups and audiences from time to time.
- We will continue to improve and refine our Education Programme through regular review of feedback from teachers and other Education Programme participants.

## Access to Visitor Services

- Front of house staff and volunteer room stewards will assist and welcome all visitors according to their needs.
- We consider the comfort of our visitors by providing accessible toilets, baby changing facilities and access for pushchairs.
- We provide refreshments and other commercial facilities appropriate to a range of ages and pockets in the Museum shop and café.
- We provide appropriate signage and navigation tools to suit a range of audiences, including a range of sensory formats and languages.

## Access to Communication

- We will promote our activities and events using accessible means of communication
- We aim to keep the general public, including a wide range of audience groups, informed of permanent and temporary displays & events through appropriate publicity.
- We aim to provide publicity material on request in alternative formats for a range of needs, as resources allow.
- We will provide a range of ways that people can communicate with us, including various forms of social media.

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- We will evaluate all our services and projects to ensure they meet the provision of this policy and we will consult users and non-users on all new developments.
- We strive to improve understanding of our users and non-users' needs through consultation and other methods of communication including, but not limited to: visitor comments book, collection and analysis of visitor data from EPOS system, scrutiny of and management response to TripAdvisor reviews, blog posts and other social media platforms.

## Management of the Policy

- The Charles Dickens Museum Senior Management Team will be responsible for the implementation of the Policy.
- This Policy will be reviewed annually by the Board.