**Inclusion and Accessibility Policy**

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# **Introduction**

In line with Gwent Archives [Access Policy](https://www.gwentarchives.gov.uk/en/about-us/policies/), we are committed to providing both equality of service and a welcoming, accessible environment for all staff, visitors and service users.

To achieve this Gwent Archives will aim to remove any physical, sensory and intellectual barriers to access. This policy offers a framework of measures to support this commitment.

# **The Equality Act 2010**

Gwent Archives accepts the service obligations as established by the [Equality Act 2010.](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents) The Equality Act is a piece of legislation designed to ‘protect people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society’. The Equality Act defines a person as being disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities. The Act obliges employers and public goods and service providers to make ‘reasonable adjustment’ in order to accommodate the needs of those who identify with this criterion.

# **The ‘Social Model’ of Disability**

Gwent Archives upholds the ‘Social Model’ of disability which adopts the position that people are not disabled by their impairment (the ‘Medical Model’), but by the social structures and barriers that prevent or hinder equality of access and/or engagement. These include attitudes to disability, physical barriers and organisational barriers.

**The National Archives, Archives Unlocked**

Gwent Archives aims to follow the vision outlined in The National Archives strategic priorities, [Archives Unlocked 2023-2025](https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/our-archives-sector-role/strategic-vision-for-archives/strategic-priorities), to

* remove barriers to access
* support rights of groups and individuals, nationally and locally
* benefit and enhance our user’s experience.

# **Policy Objectives**

* To ensure that Gwent Archives complies with the aforementioned legislation.
* To demonstrate Gwent Archives’ commitment to the equality statements and to align with the objectives of our governing authorities Strategic Equality Plans:

* [Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028](https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/media/csri3cjy/2-strategic-equality-plan-2428.pdf)
* [Caerphilly County Borough Council Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028](https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/caerphillydocs/equalities/strategic-equality-plan-2024-2028.aspx)
* [Newport City Council Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028](https://www.newport.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/media-documents/Strategic%20Equality%20Plan%202024%20-28_0.pdf)
* [Monmouthshire County Council Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028](https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2024/04/Strategic-Equality-Plan-2024-28_English-1.pdf)
* [Torfaen County Borough Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028](https://www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/Related-Documents/Equalities-and-Diversity/Strategic-Equality-Plan.pdf%22%20/l%20%22%3A~%3Atext%3DThis%20Strategic%20Equality%20Plan%202020-2024%20has%20been%20produced%2CEquality%20Act%202010%20%28Statutory%20Duties%29%20%28Wales%29%20Regulations%202011.)
* To positively demonstrate and promote Gwent Archives’ commitment to making ‘reasonable adjustments’ as required by the Equality Act 2010.
* To provide a working equality framework for all staff members and volunteers.
* To actively encourage and inform staff, volunteers and service users.

# **The Policy**

## **Staff and Volunteers**

Understanding, addressing and promoting awareness of inclusive accessibility are the responsibilities of all staff members. To ensure continued progress and improvement a lead member of staff will focus on accessibility and will report back to the team with any further developments.

All staff members have a responsibility to act in a professional manner to ensure that an accessible service is provided. Gwent Archives staff and volunteers will be encouraged to engage with this policy and raise any issues or ideas they have to improve the service’s accessibility for all users.

All members of staff will be offered disability awareness training. New starters will be briefed on disability access provision during their induction.

No direct or indirect discrimination by a member of staff towards a service user, other member of staff, volunteer or visitor will be tolerated. This policy also extends to discrimination on grounds of gender, race, colour, nationality, religion, age and sexual orientation.

Any complaints will be dealt with in line with the [complaints procedure.](https://www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/AboutTheCouncil/Complaints/Service-Complaints/How-to-Complain.aspx)

Gwent Archives will make reasonable adjustments and offer positive support for newly recruited staff members and those who’s circumstances may have changed whilst in post.

## **Service Users**

We proactively encourage all service users to contact us in advance if any reasonable adjustments are required, to ensure that we can make the user experience as comfortable as possible.

Guide dogs will be permitted access to all public areas.

A private, quiet workspace can be provided for search room users on request. This facility will be advertised onsite and on our website. Pre-bookings can be made by emailing us at enquiries@gwentarchives.gov.uk

Dedicated quiet hours will be provided in the Research Room and will be advertised onsite and on our website

Accessible language and clear print will be used at all times. It is the responsibility of all staff members to continue to seek guidance provided by RNIB for creating accessible information (see [Creating accessible resources for health and social care | RNIB](https://www.rnib.org.uk/living-with-sight-loss/independent-living/accessible-nhs-and-social-care-information/accessible-health-and-social-care-resources/)).[Creating accessible resources for health and social care | RNIB](https://www.rnib.org.uk/living-with-sight-loss/independent-living/accessible-nhs-and-social-care-information/accessible-health-and-social-care-resources/))

Written and digital communication, such as our social media and information leaflets, will use accessible text and outline any services and/or provision for all users. Large print and audio copies will also be made available upon request.

Video content, including a tour of our facilities and public spaces can be found on our YouTube channel and visiting information can be found on our website to help visualise and prepare users before visiting Gwent Archives.

Gwent Archives will consult with local disability organisations and disabled service users to determine what access improvements can be made. This will be reviewed in line with current and future government legislation.

Any new technology and equipment will be purchased with all users in mind. Gwent Archives will obtain appropriate software and adaptive technology to improve and maintain accessibility to our electronic and paper-based resources. We encourage service users to bring their own assistive equipment where possible.

All equipment, technology and services provided will be clearly advertised onsite and on our website. Future website will include an improved area on accessibility.

This document, the Gwent Archives’ Inclusion and Accessibility Policy, will be published on our website and made available for staff, volunteers, service users and visitors to view onsite.

## **Wider Audience**

Participants in any outreach activities organised by, or in partnership with, Gwent Archives will be routinely asked if they have any specific access requirements. Necessary support will be consistently provided.

Gwent Archives will seek to ensure representation of disability culture in our collections, talks, exhibitions and general service output.

Sign language interpreters will be provided upon request.

Carers and/or helpers accompanying service users will be made welcome at all times. There will be no extra charge for these people (up to two) at ticketed events.

Access issues will be taken into account when considering the use of rooms and venues, both internally and externally, for planned events, talks and exhibitions.

Gwent Archives website will meet the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

To develop and share professional practice, Gwent Archives will commit to sharing any future experiences of organising and hosting events on improving accessibility.

## **Building Management**

Gwent Archives will work with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, as our Landlords, to both raise awareness of, and seek a resolution to, any building access issues.

Any new equipment or technology purchase that might benefit access for staff or service users will be advertised.

## **Policy Monitoring**

This policy will be reviewed by the designated staff representative every two years and, if required, will be amended to reflect any new professional guidelines or equality legislation.

Any pressing issues or suggestions for implementation will be discussed at staff meetings.

Feedback forms will be available in public areas for comments and suggestions.

# **Review**

This policy was approved by Gwent Archives Joint Committee in June 2025. It will be reviewed in June 2027 or sooner if circumstances dictate.