



Access Policy Statement

Mission

To be a regional centre for excellence and enjoyment of arts, culture and heritage, where residents, visitors and communities can be entertained, develop inspiration, learning and wellbeing.

To safeguard the borough's art and heritage collections and to provide an engaging programme of permanent displays, temporary exhibitions and related activities and events.

Our commitment to access

This Policy supports our mission by providing a framework that strives to include all our visitors, potential visitors, volunteers and staff. We will make our collections and buildings accessible, by removing as many physical, intellectual or cultural barriers to access as practicable, within the limits of budgetary, legal and planning considerations.

We are committed to developing a programme of activities and events that are designed to involve, educate and engage groups from a wide range of backgrounds and all sectors of Sefton's communities.

Areas of access covered in this policy include:

- Physical access: we aim to maintain facilities so that The Atkinson is as physically accessible as possible.
- Intellectual access: we aim to provide information in a range of formats appropriate to the needs of a wide range of visitors.
- Emotional access: we aim to provide a good standard of customer care to ensure that all visitors feel welcome and comfortable in The Atkinson.

Policy background

This policy has been written in line with Sefton MBC's Equality and Diversity Policy. Sefton MBC has a public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010. The Act brought together existing equality laws and made them stronger. It also strengthened existing duties and places new duties on public bodies. This policy also incorporates a Public Circulation and Legibility Strategy that was created by Levitt Berstein for the refurbishment of The Atkinson.

The premises

- The main entrance is a paved flat surface with a slight uphill gradient. There are automatic doors at the entrance and approximately 5 metres into the foyer. There is a lift to all floors which is located near the library entrance and is accessible via a ramp. Lifts have tactile buttons and doors are held open by visual sensors.
- Where possible, ramps have been used in preference to lifts. Ramps have clear widths and good handrails.
- The junior library is accessible via the lift in the main library.
- Doors have been removed where possible or adapted to be held open on electromagnetic holdback devices.
- There are accessible toilets available on all floors, including a Changing Places accredited <http://www.changing-places.org/>

facility, including adjustable height changing bed and sink with H track hoist. The room has two emergency chords at, a shower and privacy screen.

- The Theatre and the Studio are located on level 1 of the building, and there are 32 steps up from the foyer.
- An induction loop is set up on our Box Office counter and full infra-red emitters in all our performance spaces.
- Assistance dogs are welcome.
- Information for potential visitors explaining our opening times, services and access to collections is available on leaflets, by telephone, via e-mail, social media and on our website.

Consultation and audiences

- We will regularly consult and evaluate our services with users and use this information to ensure our service meet their needs.
- We will consult with non-users to identify barriers to participation.
- We are committed to developing and widening our audiences through our Audience Development Plan.

Community links and outreach

- We are committed to developing links to new and existing audiences, especially through partnership with other community and educational organisations.
- We will maintain outreach options for those who are unable to visit, particularly the Loan and Memory Box schemes for audiences in schools care homes and hospitals.
- We are committed to providing volunteer opportunities and we seek to recruit volunteers from diverse backgrounds.

Performances

- We are committed to providing accessible performances:
 - Wheelchair spaces are available in all performance spaces.
 - Visually impaired seating is reserved for audience members in performance spaces.
 - **Hearing devices are available for audience members with hearing loss, this links to an infra-red system in our theatre, row E and above.**
 - Assistance dogs are welcome in performance spaces.

Collections

- We are committed to increasing public access to the collections and information and to increasing knowledge and understanding of the collections and heritage.
- We will provide varied means of access to the collections including displays, temporary exhibitions, loans, object handling, events and activities.
- To increase access to collections not on display we offer research facilities and access to staff.
- Stored collections are available to view by appointment with the curatorial team.
- Collections are continually being updated and developed to better reflect the diversity of Sefton Borough.

Information

- The needs of visitors are taken into account when preparing and presenting collections information and interpretation in the galleries and online.
- We will ensure that all information and communications (including leaflets, labels and website) follow good practice and the Ekarv system for text and style.

- We aim to keep the public informed of the collections, temporary displays and events through appropriate publicity including social media.
- We will provide levels of information and interpretation to suit a range of audiences and abilities.
- Information on displays will be provided in a range of formats, for example labels, large print, film, interactives and audio, as resources allow.
- We aim to present labels, displays, online and marketing materials that respect the diversity of backgrounds. Images and/or descriptions of The Atkinson will reflect the diversity of the community.

Learning and programming

- We will provide a range of suitable handling materials drawn from the collections for different audiences and levels of ability.
- We will provide learning programmes that are tailored to the needs and requirements of specific groups and audiences.
- Educational materials will be made available for different audiences and abilities, as required and as resources allow.
- Temporary exhibitions, events and activities will be programmed throughout the year for people with a wide range of abilities.

Customer Care

- All staff members engage in implementing this policy, assisting and welcoming our visitors.
- We will always have a trained First Aider on site during opening hours and have an automated external defibrillator (AED) on site.
- The Atkinson will work within the framework set out by Sefton MBC Service Standards and The Atkinson's Customer Care Standards.

- All users will be treated with equal respect within an inclusive atmosphere and welcomed according to their individual needs.
- We will continue to provide baby changing facilities, access for pushchairs and seating for the ease of visitors.
- We will provide adequate signage and navigation to suit a range of needs and will respond to requests made by the public regarding information required in alternative formats, as resources allow.
- We provide visitor facilities to meet our customers' needs including a shop and a café.
- We are committed to providing a safe environment for all. We have procedures for the safe evacuation of all users and staff in an emergency. There is a policy and procedure for Child Protection.
- We are committed to retaining our VAQAS award and we will set annual improvement targets for visitor access.

Staff and training

- Sefton MBC is an equal opportunities employer. All people will receive equal opportunities in recruitment, employment and training. We are committed to increasing the diversity of its workforce.
- As part of the staff induction process, new staff will receive disability awareness training, including addressing the needs of visitors with specific requirements, appropriate use of language and assisting those with disabilities during the evacuation procedure.
- Staff will receive training in the areas of awareness and equality legislation appropriate to their roles and needs. This will be identified during induction and the annual appraisal process.
- 'Dementia Friends' Information sessions are available to all staff, The Atkinson has trained Dementia Champions who facilitate an ongoing programme of Dementia Awareness

training for staff, volunteers, partners and other stakeholders to attend.

- 'Autism Friendly Library' training is available to all staff working in the library as recommended by ASCEL – the Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians.

Financial

- The Atkinson galleries and the library have free admission.
- We will provide some activities free of charge so that all parts of the community can enjoy our services.

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