

STAFFORDSHIRE AND STOKE ON TRENT ARCHIVE SERVICE CULTURAL DIVERSITY POLICY AND STRATEGY

1 POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 The Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service welcomes cultural diversity in all aspects of archive service provision and delivery.
- 1.2 Diversity is understood to be ‘any and all of the elements of similarity or difference between people, whether these be visible or hidden’¹ and cultural diversity, particularly those differences arising from race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, belief, culture, language, nationality, or national origin.

2 POLICY AIMS

- 2.1 The Service aims to:
- support cultural diversity
 - be seen and appreciated by members of all communities as a service that can meet their needs
 - take active steps to promote diversity in its workforce
 - take active steps to promote diversity in its audience

3 STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Archive Service recognises that it is not sufficient to simply declare that these are our aims in relation to cultural diversity. Where changes are needed for these aspirations to be realised then it will need time and resources to implement programmes of development and further time for such programmes have their effect.
- 3.2 Identified areas for future strategic development are: collections, audiences and workforce.

4 COLLECTIONS

- 4.1 The Archive Service’s role is ‘to locate, collect and preserve archives relating to past and present life in Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent, and to make them available to the people of Staffordshire and its visitors’. The vision for the current three year Forward Service Plan, 2006-2009, is that the Archive Service become the first place that people think of for Staffordshire’s history. The Archive Service is therefore already committed to the preservation of the archives and heritage of black and minority ethnic and religious groups because such archives fall within the parameters set out above.

¹ Stoke on Trent City Council: Corporate Equality and Diversity Strategy

- 4.2 The Service recognises that the records and heritage of such groups are not well represented within its collections. This arises from some factors of which we are aware and perhaps others that we are not. However the overriding factor is that as yet there are no formal or informal links between organisations working in culturally diverse communities and the Archive Service.
- 4.3 Formal links between the Archive Service and the Church of England relating to the preservation of its records have existed for many years. The Methodist Church also implements a national policy of depositing its records locally. No such arrangements exist for the records of Muslim, Hindu, Sikh or other minority faiths and religions. It is important that the Service works to establish partnership arrangements for the preservation of records of all faiths and places of worship established within the City and the County. The Service recognises that in seeking to establish these arrangements a dialogue that establishes mutual trust and understanding is an essential precondition of success.
- 4.4 Institutions or groups which exist within black and minority ethnic (BME) and religious communities, - welfare organisations, charities, educational, social, arts and political groups - are important for the preservation of the history of these communities. The same process of dialogue and mutual understanding, which occurs equally in relation to many such organisations in the majority community, needs to be initiated and sustained.

5 AUDIENCES

- 5.1 Users of the Archive Service from BME communities form a tiny percentage of all users. The personal use of archives by individuals is not an activity which the Archive Service can easily directly influence. It is nevertheless the case, as noted above, that very few of our collections relate to BME community histories.
- 5.2 In the absence of such collections, outreach work which specifically aimed to target groups within the BME community would not be based on materials which reflected that community's history. It would run the clear risk of appearing undertaken for the archive service's own purposes and not for mutual benefit.
- 5.3 The success of the recent Heritage Lottery Funded project, 'Connecting Histories', in establishing a mutually beneficial relationship between individuals and organisations in communities and the City of Birmingham's Archive Service, offers a potential template for other archive services. One of that project's aims was to 'provide a model of working for the archives and heritage sectors which can be disseminated regionally and nationally.' The Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service will evaluate the project's report and outcomes and assess how its methods and activities can be replicated in or adapted for Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent.

6 WORKFORCE

- 6.1 Staffordshire County Council and Stoke on Trent City Council are both committed to employment policies that treat people from all communities fairly and equally. They are also committed to 'taking positive action to deal with imbalances' (Staffordshire) and to 'ensuring that our practices do not discriminate...indirectly on racial grounds' (Stoke on Trent). Both authorities provide its employees with training on dealing with the issues raised by cultural diversity.
- 6.2 The workforce of the Archive Service, currently 32.5 ftes at 2006/2007, contains no members of minority ethnic or religious groups. Within a workforce of this size a precise representation of the percentages of all groups within wider British society is not possible.
- 6.3 However the Archive Service can seek to learn from successful schemes to promote workforce diversity which have been established elsewhere in the archive and museum sector. These have typically sought applicants for traineeships or internships from non-traditional sources. The Archive Service does not currently have resources committed to training entrants to the profession and the introduction of a positive action traineeship would have budget implications for the Service. To take forward such a traineeship, the Archive Service needs to prepare an effective business case.

7 STRATEGIC AIMS

- 7.1 By the start of its next three-year planning cycle, Sept 2008, the Archive Service will have carried out the following actions:
- reviewed its policies, procedures and practices to ensure that they afford all communities an equal opportunity to engage with the Archive Service
 - evaluated the 'Connecting Histories' project which concluded in July 2007 and costed the implications of replicating/adapting where applicable, its methods and activities in Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent
 - sought to establish dialogue with the institutions of all faiths in the City and County with the intention that agreements be established with them that parallel the arrangements which the Archive Service has with the Church of England and the Methodist Church.
 - formulated a business proposal for a positive action traineeship that is sufficiently detailed to make the case for funding within the parent authorities and/or to external partners
 - identified specified areas of activity to develop work on the history of minorities in the County

This policy will be reviewed in March 2009.