



**UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM**

Barber Institute of Fine Arts

University of Birmingham

Access Policy and Plan 2023 – 2025

Approved by University Executive Board (through Head of College of Arts and Law and Barber Steering Group): 26 October 2023

Approved by Henry Barber Trust: 26 October 2023

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Contents

1. Introduction and context	3
2. Purpose	4
3. Responsibilities	4
4. Our access policy and planning objectives:	4
4.1 Physical		
4.2 Digital		
4.3 Sensory		
4.4 Intellectual and Research		
4.5 Cultural, Social and Attitudinal		
4.6 Economic		
5. Delivering our policy and plan	10
6. Contributors and authorship	10

1. Introduction and context

The Barber Institute of Fine Arts (the Barber) is an art gallery and concert hall located on the University of Birmingham's (University) campus. Established in 1932 'for the study and encouragement of Art and Music' the Barber uses its collections to create inspirational opportunities for learning and enjoyment for University students, staff and the wider public. The Barber is housed in a Grade-I listed purpose-built building, which opened in 1939 and is now one of the UK's foremost university museums. The galleries display internationally significant fine-art and coin collections.

The Barber's collections were acquired by, and are owned by, the Henry Barber Trust (HBT). The HBT acquires works of art, funds the collections' care and conservation, and contributes to the museum's capital and running costs, including its exhibition and learning programmes. The Barber's building is owned and maintained by the University.

The Barber's building and galleries are free to access. They are open six days per week throughout the year.

The Barber is committed to providing equitable access to its building, collections, digital spaces, programmes, and activities for everyone. This commitment is reinforced within its Mission, Vision and Values. The Barber strives to provide inclusive, meaningful and engaging access for all users. It strives to maximise access for all, regardless of ability, age, gender, cultural or social background, sexual orientation, faith, language, location or economics, by minimising or removing barriers that can prevent people from engaging with the Barber's collections and programmes.

The Barber understands that access needs are broad and diverse and can include physical, sensory, emotional, intellectual, cultural, attitudinal, and economic needs. We recognise that access must be addressed throughout strategic planning and embedded within the actions of the whole organisation.

This Access Policy sits within the policy framework of the University's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Scheme 2021-2024](#). It is supported by the Barber's **Forward Plan 2023-2025 and Audience Development Plan 2023-2025**.

The policy covers access to the Barber's collections, building, programmes and activities which are delivered:

- at the Barber Institute of Fine Arts
- through our website and other digital activities
- in other venues where we deliver outreach programmes, e.g. community settings

The Barber Institute seeks to provide its visitors with access to our building and collection, making alternative provision and support where required, within the constraints of our Grade-1 listed building. Expert advice is sought when required.

Our commitment over the next two years, is detailed in the following document. It will be reviewed in October 2025, which marks the expected completion of building improvement works that will support better physical access to the building and provide an opportunity to review access work in other areas.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the Barber's commitment to maximising access to our collection, building and our wider programme and facilities.

3. Responsibilities

The Director is responsible for ensuring that the Barber meets its obligations under the Equality Act (2010) by doing everything reasonably possible to make the Barber accessible to the widest range of people. The Director is supported by the advice from the Barber Steering Group (University body) and the HBT. The Senior Management Team are responsible for ensuring that each team adheres and contributes to the Barber's Access Policy and Plan. Every member of the Barber team is responsible for supporting the implementation of actions relating to their work remit with regards to access, and they will be supported to action these wherever possible by the Senior Management Team.

4. Our Access Policy and Planning Objectives

4.1 Physical Access Policies/Commitments

- The Barber seeks to provide all visitors and building users with equitable access to the building, making alternative provision where necessary, within the constraints of a Grade-I listed building.
- We uphold the statutory requirements of the Equality Act (2010) by taking reasonable steps to ensure that policies, practices and procedures do not discriminate against disabled people.
- We ensure that within current and future building projects appropriate physical access for all visitors is considered and incorporated.

- We seek expert advice when required (a detailed access audit by Direct Access was last completed on 3 July 2023 and we commit to renewing this audit in two years' time. Another independent access audit by the Centre for Accessible Environments is planned for November 2023, prior to the commencement of building improvement works).

We commit to maintaining the following physical access:

- Tuesday to Friday 08:30 to 17:00 & Saturday to Sunday 10:00 to 17:00 (standard opening hours). From 2 October 2023, the galleries will be closed to the public to enable us to carry out essential building work and will reopen in spring 2024. The remainder of the building – reception, shop, foyer, toilets, libraries, lecture theatre, teaching spaces, and our administrative and academic offices (Department of History of Art, Curating and Visual Studies; Music) remain open during this time, Monday to Friday, 08:30 to 17:00.
- Providing pre-visit access information via website, email or phone.
- Providing designated parking spaces adjacent to the building for blue badge holders.
- An assisted access route into the building is available with dedicated Visitor Assistant support.
- Ensuring that lift access is provided to all public spaces.
- Ensuring that all our galleries, exhibitions and public spaces are all accessible to wheelchair users.
- Providing wheelchairs for use when visiting.
- Providing fixed and mobile seating throughout our building.
- Accessible toilet and baby change.
- Breastfeeding welcome.
- Assistance dogs welcome.
- Ensuring the needs of all visitors are included in all safety procedures – General Emergency Evacuation Plan ([GEEP](#)) available via website.
- Public Engagement Team trained in first aid and the evacuation of all visitors.

Physical Access Plans 2023-2025

We commit to improving our physical access in the following ways over the next two years:

- We will audit and improve our auxiliary aids and services
- We will audit the wayfinding provision across all of our physical spaces

- We will engage with the UoB Estates and Design team to proactively advocate for physical access upgrades
- We will review and prioritise the implementation of the recommendations from our Access Review 2023 (Direct Access)

4.2 Digital Access Policies/ Commitments

We commit to maintaining the following digital access:

- We will continue to offer a free to access website which provides collection and engagement resources.
- We will continue to share our collection, research and programme across digital channels.
- We will maintain our access information on third party sites such as [AccessAble Barber Institute of Fine Art | AccessAble](#).
- We will continue to provide in-gallery digital access for visitors through the provision of VST iPads.
- We will keep our website updated with current staff information.

Digital Access Plans 2023-2025

We commit to improving our digital access in the following ways over the next two years:

- We will audit our website to benchmark against industry access standards.
 - We will research and support ways in which we can link our digital resources to our physical collection.
 - We will explore how digital platforms such as Bloomberg Connects could support our work.
 - We will build upon existing digital resource strengths such as Barber Home.
- We will carry out actions from our collections plans that relate to improving our digital collections cataloguing resources.

4.3 Sensory Access Policies/Commitments

We commit to maintaining the following sensory access:

- Learning and Engagement team staff receive specific training in working with people with visual or hearing impairments and SEND.
- Contacta IL-A11 hearing induction loop installed on the main reception desk.
- **DeafWatch™** pager fire alarm notification system installed.
- Large print labels to RNIB specification available in all collection and exhibition spaces.

- Hand-held magnifiers available for use when visiting.
- Bespoke visits for SEND, blind and partially sighted, and d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing people available via the Learning and Engagement Team.
- Ensuring that all video outputs have subtitles.
- Incorporating a good range of multi-sensory resources within Learning & Engagement activities.

Sensory Access Plans 2023-2025

We commit to improving our sensory access in the following ways over the next two years:

- We will ensure there are regularly programmed accessible events that are free.
- We will enhance our provision for SEND and supportive sensory events that are accessible to children and young people.
- We will research and produce new gallery interpretation that will support those who have a visual impairment – including Audio Descriptive talks on key works and Braille maps and resources. This will be piloted in 2024, with developments in 2025.

4.4 Intellectual and Research Access Policies/Commitments

We commit to maintaining the following intellectual and research access:

- The Barber aims to encourage and enable the widest possible access to experience, engage with and study the collection and our exhibitions.
- We seek ways to improve and extend access to information and scholarly research and to supporting the open access research agenda.
- Ensuring that the text used in our galleries, exhibitions, learning resources, publications, website and social media channels is carefully tailored to the needs of the intended audiences.
- Providing effective wayfinding signage and information.
- ensuring that the content and delivery of our learning and engagement programmes are tailored to the learning needs of their audiences.
- We proactively undertake research and programming to reinterpret our collection, for example [colonial histories](#) and [gender narratives](#) in our collection, sharing this on dedicated webpages.
- We catalogue our collections sharing this information free via our website and connected University databases e.g. Mimsy.
- We facilitate free supported access to our research spaces to enable further research into our collections e.g. Prints and Drawings Study Room; Coin Study Room.

Intellectual Policies and Plans 2023-2025

We commit to improving our intellectual and research access in the following ways over the next two years:

- Expanding on the current amount of collections information on our website, to include better access to our Works of Paper collection by auditing and adding information relating to our drawing and watercolour collections (in line with our collection plans).
- Expand our online audio podcasts and associated resources.
- Increasing the use of our Prints and Drawings Study Room to enable greater access to this resource beyond the University within the wider HE sectors and to the public.
- Review our Mimsy database system in collaboration with wider UoB collections colleagues.

4.5 Cultural, Social and Attitudinal Access Policies/Commitments

We commit to maintaining the following cultural, social and attitudinal access:

- Collaborating with a diverse range of community and artist partners across our Learning and Engagement programmes.
- All staff complete UoB Equality and Diversity training every three years.
- All staff can access additional UoB and external training opportunities including Equality, Diversity and Inclusion micro sessions and sector-specific courses such as 'Welcoming All' through West Midlands Museum Development.
- Visitor Services and Learning and Engagement staff receive Mental Health First Aid training (MHFA).
- Ensuring that all visitors and building users are made to feel welcome on arrival.
- Creating environments in which people feel comfortable, valued and able to engage at their own pace and level.
- Ensuring that our communications present the Barber as a welcoming and inclusive organisation.

Cultural, Social and Attitudinal Plans 2023-2025

We commit to improving our cultural, social and attitudinal access in the following ways over the next two years:

- Expand further on our commitment to providing a warm welcome for families, by undertaking specific training on 'Lifting the Lid on what it means to the little' led by the Parakeet Studio/Amy Campbell.
- Rolling out Mental Health First Aid Training opportunities to the wider team and new starters.
- Expanding our Dementia Friends staff training, including it in new starter induction programmes.
- Ensuring that signage and information panels within our building support our in-person warm welcome.

4.6 Economic Access Policies/Commitments

We commit to maintaining the following economic access:

- The Barber is committed to the policy of free entry to our collection galleries, temporary exhibitions and displays, ensuring we are open six days a week throughout the year (excluding Bank Holidays).
- We are committed to providing an accessible pricing structure for public programme events and Learning and Engagement events, comprised of free and subsidised price points.
- Barber Schools and Barber Health programmes are free to access.
- We support UoB teaching and research at no cost to the University by collaborating with UoB academic and Professional Services colleagues.
- Our online collection information and supporting resources are all free to access.
- We offer free parking at weekends and free Blue Badge parking at all times.

Economic Access Plans 2023-2025

We commit to improving our economic access in the following ways over the next two years:

- Ensuring all programmed activities as part of our Family Programme offer free refreshments, acknowledging the effects on families during the cost-of-living crisis.

- We will proactively seek funding to support existing or developing free programmes.
- Offering outreach sessions where possible as part of our Learning & Engagement programme (e.g. Barber Health, community outreach etc) where we acknowledge the cost of visiting a gallery may be beyond scope.
- Seeking opportunities to collaborate with University collections colleagues to share costs and increase impact of joint programmes (for example, family festivals on campus / programming at The Exchange).

5. Delivery of our Policies and Plans

To ensure that our forward planning objectives (set out under each access category above) remain on track, responsive and relevant, we commit to a monitoring cycle. This will enable us to monitor progress, update and adapt the plan as required and report on our objectives in a timely and effective way. The plan will be monitored and reviewed in the following ways:

- Senior Management Team: will report on and measure progress against the plan at SMT meetings. This will take place termly.
- All-staff meetings: we will report on and discuss the Access Plan at all-staff meetings twice a year.
- HBT and Steering Group - an Access Plan update will be included meetings on an annual basis.

We will conduct a mid-point review of the Access Plan in September 2024, followed by an end of period review in September 2025.

6. Contributors and authorship:

In summer 2023 the following Barber staff collaborated to develop the content for this plan: Andy Davies, Communications and Marketing Manager; Dave Lowe, Visitor Services and Operations Manager; Flora Kay, Head of Learning and Engagement; Jennifer Powell, Director; Jen Ridding, (former) Deputy Director: Engagement and Operations.