

Access Policy

Our vision

Working with partners to be the physical and virtual heart of Suffolk's past, present and future archives and to encourage all those interested in the county's history in their journeys of discovery.

Our mission

Suffolk Archives helps residents and visitors engage with our county's rich heritage. It collects, conserves and communicates the recorded history of Suffolk from the 12th century to the present day, empowering people in exploring their roots, remembering their past, and planning their future.

1. Purpose of policy

This policy helps to ensure Suffolk Archives (SA) provides the best possible onsite and remote access within available resources to our rich collections for users from all backgrounds. SA will comply with all necessary legal responsibilities including General Data Protection Regulations, Copyright and Freedom of Information. This includes:

- Developing an audience focused approach to foster the retention of existing users and encourage new users
- Enabling access for all by breaking down barriers to access, providing an open, safe and secure environment for all, that inspires trust in the authenticity and reliability of our collections
- Consulting, working with, supporting and being responsive to the needs of staff, local organisations, communities, individuals and stakeholders e.g. University of Suffolk, to help them find and navigate collections and use them in new and creative ways
- Exploring the use of technology to continually improve and enhance remote and onsite access
- Raising awareness of the relevance and value of collections encouraging discovery and creativity to enrich lives and enhance wellbeing
- Creating and providing a range of interactive, fun, and inspiring activities and new learning and development opportunities for people of all ages, including curriculum-linked resources for schools
- Working with other individuals and organisations to showcase, link and reunite collections relating to Suffolk that are not held by SA, through exhibitions, outreach activities, digitisation etc

2. The collections

SA collects and holds material that is relevant to the history of Suffolk. This includes the records of:

- local authorities and bodies in Suffolk
- businesses, societies, institutions, and individuals in Suffolk
- published material related to Suffolk

More information about the collections can be found in the Collecting, Collections Development, and Collections Information Policies.

SA is legally responsible for many different types of records from across Suffolk, including:

- parish, district, borough and county council records
- probate records
- magistrate court records
- coroner's and health authority's records
- manorial and tithe records
- church records

SA significant collections include:

- Oral history recordings
- Cullum Gentleman's Library
- Iveagh Manuscripts: a rich source for medieval history
- Richard Garrett and Sons Ltd engineering records
- Suffolk Photographic Survey and other photographic collections
- Local studies materials including newspapers
- Family and estate papers

3. Principal of universal access

SA is committed to providing the widest possible access to its collections through both physical and digital services. The SA searchroom, John Blatchly Local Studies Library (JBL) and website are free to use and open to everyone and we welcome visitors with a diverse range of interests and research needs.

Staff have received training on sources, customer care, equality and diversity training. We seek to identify and eliminate all forms of discrimination and are committed to promoting equality of opportunity in all aspects of the service. SA will explain holdings, services and conditions of access clearly and as simply as possible, avoiding jargon. However, it is important to note that some original archival documents may contain historical jargon or language that can be difficult to interpret.

Following the successful completion of the Activity Plan which was part of the major National Lottery Heritage Fund project, the following target audiences have been agreed, reflecting the gaps in existing audiences:

- families
- Young adults 11-24 years
- diverse audiences and underrepresented groups
- Audiences with interests in Culture, Heritage and the Arts
- Under engaged areas of the county
- school children / FE / HE
- Corporate audiences

The 3 year Service Plan lays out the activities that are specifically aimed at these 'gap' audiences, using the most significant collections as inspiration. SA is also committed to continuing to nurture and grow its existing audiences.

4. Accessing Suffolk Archives' onsite services

See our website for our opening hours at The Hold, in Ipswich.

We recommend booking a searchroom desk to view archives, however visitors can walk in to access the archives and request original documents in the 4 timed production runs through the day. Visitors can pre-order documents/desk to view original archives in branch via our online appointment system via our website.

Our microfiche and microfilm machines are available to walk ins through the day but customers may want to book one to ensure one is available upon arrival.

Although visitors do not need a reader's account to use microfiche or film in the JBL, they will need one if they want to look at original archival material and some local studies books and maps. SA has its own system of Reader Tickets. To obtain a Reader's ticket visitors must provide some form of official identification, see www.suffolkarchives.co.uk for more details of suitable identification.

Visitors can register for a Reader's Ticket at www.suffolkarchives.co.uk or at The Hold.

On arrival at the JBL and searchroom, visitors are expected to place all their bags in the lockers provided.

Free viewing of local studies books and other published works, catalogues, indexes and guides on open display, access to the Internet including Ancestry.com, Findmypast.com, British Newspaper Archives, Genealogist and digitised archives on www.suffolkarchives.co.uk is provided in the JBL at the Hold. Staff and volunteers are available to provide helpful, informed advice on research.

Within the JBL and searchroom, adjustable tables, a magnifier machine and additional lighting is available. On site we have two disabled parking spaces, accessible toilets and a changing place. The site has level access throughout.

A café is onsite for visitors to the building and there is additional outside seating in our garden area. Water fountains are available on site.

Visitors can expect to see displays using original archives, local studies materials and surrogates from SA collections and those of partner organisations. These include displays on local, national and international events.

5. Cataloguing and intellectual access

SA aspires to have all its collections documented and accessible. SA directs cataloguing through its Documentation Plan and yearly Cataloguing priorities to achieve a strategic and flexible approach to creating new and improved information about its collections. SA in common with many other Archives has a cataloguing backlog. New material is sorted and the contents summarised in our annual accessions lists, which are published on the website. Larger accessions and backlog collections are prioritised for more detailed cataloguing based on demand and the availability and skill levels of staff and volunteers. SA aims to catalogue smaller accessions (up to the size of a small archive box) using a combination of staff and volunteers. External funding is also sought to support cataloguing work. See Collection Information Policy for more details.

All new cataloguing and indexing conforms to current national and international professional standards and is carried out using CALM software. Before 1996 some standardisation of approach

was informed by an in-house manual, but in the early years cataloguing was undertaken following a variety of individual styles resulting in great variation in the quality and level of detail. Many older catalogues have been updated and can now be searched using www.suffolkarchives.co.uk. Others are still only available on paper though a portion of these are now available as PDFs on our website.

6. Remote access to SA collections

SA is committed to ensuring it maximises remote access to its collections to ensure the widest possible availability given the resources available to the service. SA website provides information on our collections and services, projects, future plans, news, events and activities, guides, helpful tips and hints that is well organised, and in plain English. Access is key to opening up our collections, but SA recognises that not all current and potential users can visit in person.

The online catalogue for some of our collections can be accessed remotely via our website www.suffolkarchives.co.uk and also The National Archives Discovery website, enabling users to identify and order documents before they visit. New catalogues are continually being added, but there are many collections which are not yet online. Users are encouraged to contact SA by e-mail or telephone or visit in person if they cannot find what they are looking for. In order to increase access to some documents SA produces digital surrogates - See Digital Surrogates Policy. Online forms are used for customers to order copies.

SA will constantly seek out new technologies and develop its remote services to exploit those technologies and meet users' expectations.

7. Access to original documents

SA provides free access to original documents, local studies materials, microfilm and microfiche etc within the JBL and searchroom. Some restrictions are however inevitable due to the nature, contents, or physical condition of the unique and irreplaceable archives SA cares for. Original documents/archives and some local studies are only available in the searchroom with a Reader's Ticket. No documents can be removed from the searchroom.

7.1 Archive production procedure

SA will always ensure that its production procedures follow professional standards and will regularly review those procedures to ensure they are fit for purpose.

Suffolk Archives operates both a walk-in and pre-order system for accessing archival materials. Customers are welcome to visit and view archives throughout the day. There are four production runs daily, and up to four items can be ordered per run.

We recommend that customers reserve a desk in advance, as there are only 15 desks available in the searchroom. If all desks are in use, visitors may need to wait until a space becomes available. Full details about our appointment system and how to pre-order documents can be found on our website: <https://www.suffolkarchives.co.uk/how-to-get-started-at-suffolk-archives/plan-your-visit/book-an-appointment-at-suffolk-archives/>

Documents may not be produced if they are uncatalogued, fragile, closed as a result of legislation e.g. GDPR, at the request of the owner or the discretion of the Suffolk Archives Management Team.

Requests to view this material should be submitted in writing to the Collection Team. SA will seek to find a solution which allows access to the required information, this may involve redaction of confidential content.

Heavily used material may only be available in the form of surrogate copies e.g. microfilm to minimize the wear and tear on the original.

7.2 Good Handling practices

SA is dedicated to ensuring the longevity of its collections through good practice. All staff and volunteers are trained in the safe handling of a wide range of materials as an essential part of preserving collections for current and future use. Staff will monitor handling and self-service photography within the SA Searchroom and will offer advice including the use of book supports, cushions, weights, gloves (if applicable) and other equipment. Continued access to study and photograph original archives depends on users following staff advice and Searchroom and Self-Service Photography Guidelines, which are clearly displayed.

7.3 Closure periods

Whilst SA is committed to free access it recognises its responsibilities to observe legal, ethical and contractual restraints on access. It will constantly monitor those restrictions and seek to ensure any closure is not unduly onerous or without justification. SA holds a range of collections, which are subject to different legislation, rules, etc which result in a range of closure periods and dates. These include but are not limited to, adoption records, children's homes, coroners inquests, health records, council records, Methodist and Masonic records, Petty Sessions, Poor Law institutions, Roman Catholic records, schools and reformatory schools. For more information please see Appendix 1. Further advice is available from the SA Collections Team.

All closure periods are calculated from the date of the original (most recent date in a volume, file or bundle). Closed material is opened on 1 January the following year e.g. if the last date in a closed volume is 12 November 2011 and it is closed for 100 years under the Data Protection Act because it contains personal sensitive information it will be opened on 1 January 2112.

8. Commercial research, transcription, translation, copying, certification and publication

SA charges a higher rate for any research, transcription and translation work carried out by SA staff for commercial clients and commercial publication. Professional Records Searchers and Genealogists using SA collections to research information for their clients should ask their clients to sign the copyright declarations on SA copying order forms if the copies are for their clients own private study and research, or ask their clients to order any copies directly from SA. SA can also provide officially certified copies of many documents, for a fee, if required for legal purposes.

9. Education and outreach

Education and outreach is a key methodology for SA to broaden access to its collections and SA is committed to a diverse and dynamic approach. SA develops and promotes an annual outreach programme that caters for different learning styles and hosts visits by the University of Suffolk, colleges, schools, local organisations and societies. Through these informal events, courses, workshops, talks, walks, open days, family learning activities and more formal learning opportunities

SA encourages awareness amongst a wide range of audiences and fosters the use of archives and local studies collections by all ages to:

- help local people to understand and use their documented heritage
- inspire an interest and pride in and connection with people, places and our shared histories and experiences
- help people and communities to help themselves, improve educational attainment, knowledge, skills, confidence, employability, quality of life, wellbeing, and etc.

10. Copying records for private research, publication, commercial and official uses

Copies can be made from many of the items in SA collections as long as the original is in good physical condition and a suitable size and format and the relevant declarations have been completed acknowledging compliance with copyright. See Appendix 2 for guidance on what can be copied.

Users can photograph records themselves after paying for a photo permit and filling out a copyright form. Users can also make copies from microfilm/fiche using SA printers. When copying items from collections for users or advising users making their own copies, SA is guided by:

- Copyright Law - Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988, is the main statute
- The rights of owners or depositors and donors
- The rights of living people that can be identified in the archives must be safeguarded under the General Data Protection Regulations 2018
- The size, format, condition and amount of copying to which an item might be exposed, to protect it from damage. SA will only allow copying that is suitable for the nature of any items

For more information, see

<https://www.suffolkarchives.co.uk/services/copying-service/>

Any publication of copies must be agreed in advance with SA, who advise if owners, depositors or donors' permission should be sought. Users who wish to copy large (over 20 items) amounts of original documents, fragile items, or those in large format should discuss their requirements in advance of their visit, or at an early stage, with the Archive Team so they can be advised on the best solution. All enquiries regarding copying should be sent to archives@suffolk.gov.uk

11. Enquiries

11.1 Free enquiries

All written enquiries (letters and emails) receive a response within 20 working days from receipt of the enquiry, although we aim to reply sooner. Staff will undertake a short desk based search of our catalogues and suggest relevant sources using keywords from the customer's enquiry. Original archives will not be produced or consulted when answering a free enquiry. SA will usually answer letters by email if an email address is given to encourage sustainability. Those who telephone may be asked to send in a written request via email or letter if it requires a search of our catalogues for the information.

11.2 Research service for closed records

Requests for paid research will be acknowledged within 10 working days. The acknowledgement will include an estimated completion date for the full research. During busy periods, this may be up to 6 weeks. SA warns enquirers that the nature of archive research means that some requests may

result in no answers being found. We do not refund where we have carried out the agreed search (both timeframe and sources) but found no relevant information. SA therefore reserves the right to turn down requests for paid research, when we consider no specifically relevant sources have been identified or that, in our view, the chances of finding any relevant information are slight. We might suggest another repository, organisation etc is approached instead. Further details about the service can be found on www.suffolkarchives.co.uk

12. Loaning of Archives

Due to the unique and irreplaceable nature of SA collections and the expectations of users who may visit to see them, SA does not loan archives and local studies materials unless there are exceptional circumstances. Loans are either:

- made back to the owner/depositor
- or to an individual/organisation who has the written permission of the owner/depositor, the Archivist or a member of the Suffolk Archives Management Team.

Any person borrowing archives and local studies materials accepts full responsibility for the condition and safety of the items. Owners/depositors are advised that items will not be covered by SA/SCC insurance whilst they are outside the custody of SA staff or not on SA premises as listed in the insurance agreement. Borrowers undertake to meet the cost of any drying, decontamination, cleaning, repairs which may become necessary as a result of damage incurred during the period of loan.

SA ensures any items taken out on loan are suitably packaged for their protection during transit. Owners/depositors/borrowers are given advice on how to keep the items safe whilst they are out of custody. This includes transporting, displaying, using and storing them correctly e.g. they should be kept in a cool dry location and away from radiators, pipes and direct sunlight in the folders and enclosures provided, when not on display.

See Loans Policy for further information.

13. User involvement

SA places the needs of users at the centre of its service development and is keen to incorporate their views into its decisions.

- SA users are invited to make comments, suggestions and complaints by talking to staff and filling in feedback forms. They can also use the SCC comments and complaints procedures available at

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/give-feedback-or-make-a-complaint/>.

The SA team regularly consider these contributions and use them to inform improvements to the service where appropriate. Changes made as a result are communicated to users and to staff. SA also participates in the Public Service Quality Group National Survey of Users to UK archives for personal visitors and distance enquiry users. SA managers analyse the results and look for areas for improvement.

- Volunteers are invaluable to SA. Volunteers enable SA to do work that would not otherwise be possible, and they often contribute specialist knowledge or skills to projects. Working with volunteers provides an opportunity for SA to engage directly with its users, and to increase

SA's understanding of user requirements and how SA's activities and services meet their needs. See Volunteer Policy for more details.

- The Friends of Suffolk Archives (FOSA) and Suffolk Archives Foundation (SAF) committee members also provide the SA management team with invaluable feedback. SA also works with local interest groups such as the Suffolk Family History Society (SFHS), Suffolk Local History Council (SLHC), Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History (SIAH) and Ipswich Heritage Forum. SA also works with the Suffolk Records Society. Members of the SA management team sit on the committees of all of these organisations, which enables us to hear their news and to keep them informed about our work and projects and to identify areas where we can work together.
- We publicise news about our collections, interesting usage of our holdings, forthcoming events etc via social media as well as on our website and in our annual report to FOSA and we respond to user Facebook posts and tweets.

14. Related documents

SA will constantly seek to develop and expand access. This policy informs the Conservation, Digital Preservation, Digitisation, Collecting, Collection Development, Collection Information and Volunteer policies and work plans and will be monitored and reported on as part of the annual performance review of SA.

15. Review period

This policy will be reviewed every three years.

Last reviewed July 2025.

Suffolk Archives, The Hold, 131 Fore Street, Ipswich, IP4 1LR

01473 296666

archives@suffolk.gov.uk

www.suffolkarchives.co.uk

If you need help to understand this information in another language please call **03456 066 067**.

Se precisar de ajuda para ler estas informações em outra língua, por favor
telefone para o número abaixo. 03456 066 067

Portuguese

Jeigu jums reikia šios informacijos kita kalba,
paskambinkite 03456 066 067

Lithuanian

Jeżeli potrzebujesz pomocy w zrozumieniu tych informacji w swoim języku
zadzwoń na podany poniżej numer. 03456 066 067

Polish

Dacă aveți nevoie de ajutor pentru a înțelege această informație într-o
altă limbă, vă rugăm să telefonați la numărul 03456 066 067

Romanian

إذا كنت بحاجة إلى المساعدة في فهم هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على
03456 066 067

Arabic

Если для того чтобы понять эту информацию Вам нужна помощь на другом
языке, позвоните, пожалуйста, по телефону 03456 066 067

Russian

If you would like this information in another format,
including audio or large print, please call **03456 066 067**.



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Appendix 1 Closure Periods

Adoption records

75 years closure. Access can be obtained through Suffolk Adoption Agency or the Suffolk County Council Adoption and Fostering Team

Advisory Committee on JPs

75 years closure

Children's homes

We hold 2 catalogued collections in the archives for children's homes in Ipswich – they are Hope House and St John's.

If people want access to these records (for themselves or a 3rd party) within the 100-year closure, then they need to apply direct to the archivist at Suffolk Archives in writing including the following information:

- Name, address, date of birth
- if they wish to access their own records
- or if they are records of someone else, we need to know if the person is living and details of why they cannot apply themselves and proof of the relationship to this person.

Proof of identity is required under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations 2018. Documents which may provide proof are: Passport, UK birth certificate, UK driving licence, EU national identity card, Adoption certificate.

If people want access to their own records from other children's homes run by SCC, or their social care records then they need to submit a Subject Access Request direct to the SCC Information Governance Team. Some of these records may be held in the County Council Archives at Suffolk Archives but the SAR needs to go to the Information Governance Team.

Details on how to submit a Subject Access Request are on the SCC website at

[Privacy and data protection - Suffolk County Council](#)

Coroners' records [public records deposited under s.4 (1)]

Inquest files and papers relating to deaths – 75 years

Inquests relating to treasure trove – 30 years

Diocesan collection – as currently on CALM

- FE500/8/2 **Baptism, marriage and burial registration, licensing and procedures**
- FE500/8/3 **Bishop's Directions for solemnisation of marriages**
- FE500/9/1 **General diocesan correspondence** 1945-1975
- FE500/11 **Diocesan Board for Social Responsibility** Adoption case files, 1957-1973: reports, correspondence and related papers. (100 years closure. Not catalogued. Section Level entry only on CALM)
- FE500/13a **Diocesan Pastoral Committee** 1967-1975
- FE500/14 **Transferred Diocesan Registry Files** – these more modern DR files are in the process of being catalogued and allocated to the correct section of the catalogue.

- All of the above FE500 Sections are restricted access. Please contact Suffolk Archives for further details.

East Suffolk, West Suffolk and Suffolk County Council records

- Minutes, agendas and reports are open unless they are Part 2 minutes
- Social Services and other client case files – 100 years closure
- Personal information held around employees – wages books 30 years

Hospitals

Records containing sensitive medical information - 100 years closure. Please see information on access to the patient records of St Audry's Hospital and St Clement's Hospital for more information.

Methodist records

- Published material e.g. circuit plans, newsletters, published accounts, books, leaflets, orders of service, newspaper reports, photographs – open
- Unpublished material that doesn't contain sensitive or personal data- 30 years
- Baptism, marriage and burial registers- 75 years
- Records of confidential or sensitive nature e.g. complaints, discipline records, interviews, invitations, stationing, pastoral matters, case studies, assessment files – 75 years closure

Masonic records

- Items including sensitive personal information may be subject 100 years closure
- Most other resources subject to a 70-years closure

Petty Sessions records [public records deposited under s.4 (1)]

- Court registers, licensing registers, pardons – 30 years closure
- Juvenile court registers – 75 years closure as some adoption material may be included

Poor Law Institutions

- Records containing sensitive medical information - 100 years closure
- All other records including creed registers, admissions registers etc – 30 years closure

Quakers

- For the general public all records are closed for research for 50 years unless an 'officer' of a Quaker meeting provides express permission.
- For sensitive records eg Elders or Children's committees, membership information or other material deemed highly sensitive, Quakers nationally indicate a 100 year closure period.

Roman Catholic records

- Sacramental registers - 110 years closure

Schools

- Log books and admission registers - 30 years closure
- Managers minutes/governors' minutes and punishment books - 50 years

Kerrison Reformatory School, later a SCC Community home

- Log books, punishment books, admission, licence and discharge registers - 75 years closure

- Medical records – 100 years closure

Scouts

- Minutes - 30 years closure.
- Appointments Committee - 50 years closure
- Directories - 50 years closure
- Census material - 100 years closure.

Specific collections – the catalogues for these collections are marked up with the closure periods agreed with the depositors.

- HA558 Ickworth
- HA572 Archives of the 8th Marquess of Bristol

Appendix 2 What can be copied?

Copying of documents

Copies can be made from many of the items in the collections as long as the original is in good physical condition and suitable in size and format. There may be restrictions on what can be copied. Customers will be asked to complete the relevant order form, including a copyright declaration before any copying can be provided.

Unpublished material that is still in copyright can be copied for the customer by one of the staff under "Library Privilege". For more information about the duration of copyright in unpublished works, please refer to the duration of copyright chart in *Copyright for Archivists and users of archives* by Tim Padfield.

Customers must complete and sign the relevant declaration form prior to any copying taking place. This must be fully completed by the customer or copies cannot be supplied.

Copies of artistic works (such as photographs) cannot be copied unless they are illustrations to literary, dramatic or musical works that are intrinsic to the understanding of text.

Copies can be made providing that:

- The copyright owner has not prohibited copying. If copying has been prohibited, this is an infringement of copyright and the staff cannot provide any copies of the requested material
- A copy of the same material has not been supplied to the customer by the staff or someone else

Types of copying

Fiche and film

Reader-printer copies can be made from microfilm or microfiche, either by customers or staff. For copyright reasons photographs cannot be taken of images on the fiche or film screen.

Digital copies

Digital or print copies can be provided, as long as the original is in good condition and of a size and format that is suitable for the bookscanners.

Self-service photography

Self-service permits must be purchased before any photographs are taken. Permits are valid for a full day. Customers must complete the self-service permit form detailing what material they have photographed. The resulting images should only be used for private study and non-commercial research. Customers wishing to use the photographs in any other way should contact the Collections Team as detailed in below.

Unless special arrangements are made, advance payment is necessary on all orders. Customers should give full and accurate references including date, page and column for newspaper articles otherwise research charges may be incurred.

How much can be copied?

Staff are only permitted to provide single copies of each item for customers. However, there are no limits on the number of items that can be copied.

What can copies be used for?

Staff can only supply single copies for non-commercial research or private study purposes. They are not obliged to ask what the purpose is, but the customer must declare that the purpose for which they are requesting the copy is not directly or indirectly for commercial purposes. More information about the type of activity, which might constitute commercial research, can be found on the British Library website: <http://www.bl.uk/services/information/copyrightfaq.html>.

If copies are required for any other purpose, such as publication, web use or commercial purposes, customers should contact the Collections Team by email at archives@suffolk.gov.uk

Who should sign the form?

Staff should ensure that the signature on the declaration form is that of the person making the request, i.e. the final user of the copy not a third party acting on their behalf.

Professional researchers should complete a Request for Copies: third party use form where they are requesting copies on behalf of their clients.

What if the item I wish to copy is out of copyright?

We do not own many of the unpublished works that are available to view at Suffolk Archives. Companies, organisations, families and individuals deposit them with us. They are kind enough to allow their archives to be viewed free of charge by the public. We have a responsibility to protect the rights of the owners of these archives. We therefore ask that the same declaration form be signed even if the item is out of copyright. The same terms and conditions will apply.

Why are customers charged?

Under the *Copyright Regulations 1989*, the customer can be charged for the copies at a level which covers the costs of production as well as including a modest contribution to the general expense of the archive.