

Royal College of Surgeons of England Museums: Access Policy

Collections: The Museums of The Royal College of Surgeons of England, including the Hunterian Collection (RCSHC); the College Museum Collection (RCSHM); the Historical Instrument Collection (RCSIC); the Special Collections including portraits, busts and furniture (RCSSC); the Odontological Collection (RCSOM) the Anatomy Collection (RCSAC); the Pathology Collection (RCSPC); the Microscope Slide Collection (RCSMS) and associated reserve collections.

Governing Bodies: The Council of the Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS England)
The Board of Trustees of the Hunterian Collection (for Hunterian Collection)

Date approved by Trustees of the Hunterian Collection: 9 October 2024

Date approved by Library, Museums and Archive Committee: 19 September 2024

Date approved by RCS England Council: 5 December 2024

Date for Review: June 2029

Royal College of Surgeons of England Museums' Statement of Purpose

The Royal College of Surgeons of England Museums (RCS England Museums) hold collections of outstanding medical, scientific, historical and cultural significance. Some are Designated and/or Accredited by Arts Council England. The collections are held in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. These are to:

- 1 Enhance RCS England's reputation by raising awareness of surgeons and their work in society.
- 2 Aid the professional work of RCS England by providing training resources.
- 3 Facilitate and generate excellent medical, scientific, historical and other research.
- 4 Support public engagement with, and understanding of, surgery, its history and practice and related arts and sciences.

RCS England Museums operates two museums: the Hunterian Museum, which is open to the general public and the Anatomy and Pathology Museum (APM) for the use of medical and allied-health trainees and professionals.

Purpose of Access Policy

This document outlines RCS England Museums commitment to the widest possible access to the collections held in its care. RCS England Museums is committed to increasing public access to collections and information associated with the collections, to increase knowledge and understanding of the art and science of surgery from ancient times to the present day.

RCS England Museums defines access as something that is made possible when physical, intellectual, sensory, emotional, cultural, social, economic, geographical are removed or reduced.

RCS England Museums aims to ensure interpretation, learning activities, talks, events and projects are accessible to as wide a range of people as possible by addressing: physical, social, cultural, intellectual, economic and geographical barriers to participation. RCS England Museums is also committed to creating equal opportunities for staff and volunteer applicants.

The Access Policy includes current measures in place to reduce barriers to access. The *RCS England Museums Action Plan 2024-2029* outlines steps to improve access in displays, interpretation, activities and resources over the next 5 years

Physical Barriers

Full access information is available on the Hunterian Museum website, including how to get to the building

Step free access is available into the main Royal College of Surgeons of England building and to the Hunterian Museum. Lift access is available to all public and collection storage areas of the building.

Free locker space is available for all visitors

PEEPs are completed for all visitors requiring special assistance in evacuating the building in the event of fire or other emergency

Design for access

RCS England Museums have been designed to meet best practice in accessibility through:

- Exhibition design following NMS Access for All (2002) guidelines
- Wall mounted graphics and screens are within the optimum viewing band (1100-175mm)
- Object labels are as close as possible to the specimens or objects to allow viewing from the same vantage point
- Wherever possible, labels mounted at a height and angle that are visible to wheelchair users, while maximising specimens and objects on display (remedial action is planned for low labels in the Hunterian long gallery)
- All pathways through the Museums meeting minimum requirements for wheelchair users
- Museum signage meeting accessibility standards for font readability, point size and background and text contrast
- Access to RCS England Museums collections being facilitated through a wide range of learning activities and resources, from object handling collection within the galleries, guided visits, BSL tours, to surgical skills workshops
- The provision of a bookable wheelchair
- The provision of Personal Evacuation Plans (PEEPS) for all visitors who use wheelchairs or have sensory or mobility impairments
- All activities and collections use are promoted using accessible means of communication

Resources and activities for hearing impaired people.

RCS England Museums support visitors with hearing loss through:

- The provision of subtitled videos
- Providing a portable induction loop at the Museum Reception desk
- Welcoming Assistance Dogs, such as Hearing Dogs for the Deaf (in a scarlet coat) into the Museum
- Providing a Hunterian Museum App which is hearing aid compatible
- The provision of BSL tours of the Hunterian Museum and building artworks
- The provision of a BSL tour of the Museum on the Hunterian APP

Resources and activities for visually impaired people

RCS England Museums support visitors with visual impairments through:

- The provision of magnifying glasses at Museum Reception
- The provision of sound installations
- Audio guide via Hunterian Museum APP
- Welcoming Guide Dogs for the Blind (with a yellow harness)
- Ensuring walkways are kept clear
- The provision of handling collections in the Hunterian

- the provision of Braille material for interpretation of some objects
- the provision of a Large Print Guide (in production)
- the provision of ALT text on all digital images

Intellectual and Sensory Barriers

RCS England Museums support visitors with special educational needs (SEN) and different learning styles through:

- The provision of a sensory map on the Hunterian Museum APP
- Writing labels in clear and simple language, wherever possible, suitable for a reading age of 12.
- Professional medical terms being described in plain English, where space allows.
- Activities which provide differentiated levels of engagement
- Opportunities to learn through touch and other senses
- Providing an on-line visual story of the Hunterian Museum on Hunterian website and APP to give people confidence in advance of visiting
- Gallery videos and AVs placing the collections and interpretation in a wider context
- Content on Hunterian APP supported by audio descriptions and transcriptions
- Building into all aspects of Museum services and activities a wide range of different sensory experiences
- All activities and collections use are promoted using accessible means of communication
- The development of a Large Print Guide to the Hunterian Museum
- The provision of SEN packs is in development

Autism

RCS England Museums support visitors with autism through:

- The provision of an on-line visual story to view ahead of visit
- The provision of detailed descriptions of sound, light and seating in all galleries within the Hunterian Museum on the Hunterian website to view ahead of visit
- The development of monthly relaxed early openings to allow audiences to browse in quiet and participate in activities that best suit their needs (Spring 2025)
- The provision of ear defenders on request at Reception Desk

English as a Second Language

- The Hunterian APP has a translate feature for over 30 languages
- BSL tours are held regularly
- Most AVs and displays are highly visual and can be understood with limited English
- References to key points in British History are explained, where possible, and text assumes little pre-knowledge of the people or events being described.

Social, Emotional and Attitudinal Barriers

RCS England Museums aim to promote social inclusion by

- Helping people and groups of all backgrounds and communities feel welcome, valued, supported and empowered through staff and volunteer engagement and engaging displays and activities
- Encouraging staff and volunteers to avoid the use of personal possessive language in describing or referencing the Museums and collections
- Delivering activities that promote positive outcomes such as enhanced self-esteem, confidence and creativity
- Representing inclusive communities (minority groups etc) within the collections and displays where possible and through activities, promoting tolerance, difference, inter-community respect and to challenge stereotypes

Economic Barriers

RCS England Museums aims to break down financial or economic barriers through:

- Providing free access to the Hunterian Museum
- Providing a range of activities free of charge
- Partnering schools free transport schemes
- Having discounted rates for some events and offering free places
- Developing access programmes for careers in surgery with RCS England Learning

Geographical Barriers

RCS England Museums aims to break down geographical barriers through:

- Providing object loans to other museums, nationally and internationally
- Providing an online collections catalogue – Surgicat
- Sharing collections content digitally through digital displays and exhibitions and through social media channels including the Hunterian Website, Facebook, X, You Tube and Instagram
- The provision of digital learning activities and resources for schools and colleges

Cultural Barriers

RCS England Museums aims to break down cultural barriers through:

- Acknowledgement in museum interpretation of the impact of colonial history and its legacies
- Better representing the lives and stories of people and communities whose voices have been marginalised and/or under-represented
- Proactive programming in exhibitions, talks, events and other activities which give greater representation of communities and individuals previously under-represented
- The promotion of a programme of Diversity and Inclusion in Museum themes – Hunterian Provocations
- The promotion of exhibitions, talks, events and activities which better represent the lived experience of patients

- The promotion of exhibitions, talks, events and activities which better represent diversity in the surgical workforce
- The review and contextualisation of historic catalogue text with outdated and/or offensive language

Equal opportunity recruitment and training

RCS England adheres to all national statutes of law, including specifically in relation to access, but not exclusively the Equality Act 2010 and Data Protection Act 2018.

The Royal College of Surgeons of England is an equal opportunities employer. This Policy is consistent with RCS England HR Policies and the recommendations of the Royal College of Surgeons of England Kennedy Report (2020).

Advertisements for all jobs and volunteer opportunities are placed on sites aimed at people from groups under-represented in the Museum sector and through Job Centres.

RCS England Museums staff undertake mandatory Diversity and Inclusion, Health and Safety and GDPR awareness training at induction, with more in depth training as needed for their job roles, including being directed to Museum Development London's online training resources [Museum Development London | London Museum](#) and offered opportunities to attend in-person training sessions.

All Museum staff undergo emergency evacuation procedures training.

The Museum volunteering programme aims to make sure volunteers are welcomed, respected and given opportunities to grow in knowledge, skills and experience.

Evaluation

RCS England Museums evaluates and monitors audience experience, needs and comments through a variety of methods, including:

- Invited specialist focus groups, including non-users
- Teacher consultations on site and online
- A visitors' comments book at the exit to the Hunterian Museum. The comments are transcribed by volunteers and action points raised in Museum Team meetings
- Electronic QR feedback online form
- Google and TripAdvisor Reviews
- Emails sent directly to the Museum
- Post events and learning programme activities audience feedback forms
- Virtual environmental learning tool digital form
- Annual qualitative and quantitative visitor evaluation programme to commence in 2025

Policies, plans and other documents related to this Policy:

1. RCS England Museums Action Plan 2024 - 2029
2. Royal College of Surgeons of England Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy
3. Royal College of Surgeons of England Kennedy Report

4. Equality Act 2010
5. Data Protection Act 2018
6. Museums Association Code of Ethics (2015)
7. NMS Access for All (2002)