



Harewood House Trust Access Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Access Policy is to set out Harewood House Trust's commitment to maximising access to Harewood House, its grounds and collections, and to identity the ways in which we can achieve this across the organisation.

2. Scope

This Access Policy relates to all collections held and cared for by Harewood House Trust, Harewood House, its grounds and ancillary buildings, our programmes, events, facilities and services both on site and online.

3. Applicable Frameworks

Accreditation

The Accreditation Scheme is the UK industry standard for museums and galleries. The Accreditation Scheme is run for museums and galleries of all sizes and types across the UK. It is managed as a UK Partnership between ACE, the Welsh Government, Museums Galleries Scotland and the Northern Ireland Museums Council.

An approved Access Policy is both good practice and a key requirement of the Museum Accreditation Scheme, under which Harewood House Trust has Full Accreditation status (Accredited No. 306). Museums participating in the Scheme must have an access policy or statement approved by the governing body. It covers how people can see, use, and reference the collection, gain access to the museum buildings and site, and how the museum shares information about the collection with people.

4. Access Audit

In 2015 we undertook a full site access audit with an external consultant – Jane Toplis Associates Ltd. Since this point, our EDI Group undertake periodic reviews of specific areas of access. We have also employed an access consultant – David Burdus Associates – to consult on specific areas of development, including plans for the new playground (opened in 2025) and plans for HHT's Masterplan. Focus Groups have also been held to assess specific areas of access, including interpretation, and physical access across the site.

An internal audit was carried out in May 2026, which has informed the latest version of our Access Plan.

5. Commitment to Access

At Harewood House Trust, we strive to make our buildings, grounds and collections as accessible as possible, for our visitors, staff, volunteers, and communities. We aim to remove as many barriers to access as we are able to, within the limits of budgets, planning and legal considerations. We strive to achieve this through our programme, interpretation, events, training, facilities and staff, with an aim to make Harewood a place that is welcoming and accessible for everyone.

As an organisation, we are focussed on the following key areas of access:

i. Physical and Sensory Access

Visitors with physical disabilities, restricted mobility, visual impairments, hearing impairments or neurodiversity may not be able to access some or all areas of Harewood. We strive to make the site, including Harewood House and its surrounding grounds and ancillary buildings as physically accessible as possible, within the constraints of a Grade I listed site, introducing alternative approaches and resources for opening up areas of the site where physical access is restricted in ways beyond our control.

ii. Intellectual Access

Some visitors may find information presented at Harewood too specialist or inaccessible, particularly for visitors with special educational needs, or those who do not have English as a first language. We aim to adopt a range of methods and formats for information sharing, in order to meet the needs of our diverse audiences, taking in to account different learning styles, and language barriers.

iii. **Cultural**

Some visitors may not see their own cultures or values reflected at Harewood, causing a barrier to engagement. Considering Harewood's challenging colonial history, some visitors may also experience additional barriers to engaging with Harewood. We strive to represent more diverse and authentic voices and cultures – throughout our programming, events and teams – to ensure Harewood is a place for everyone, and reflective of the diverse cultures on our doorsteps.

iv. **Financial**

Some visitors may face financial barriers to accessing Harewood, and our programmed events, as a pay to enter site. Where possible, we will introduce schemes to minimise financial barriers for those most in need, whilst balancing our pressures of maintaining financial resilience as a charity.

v. **Geographical**

Some visitors will not be able to access Harewood due to their geographical location. We will strive to make Harewood as accessible as possible via digital means, to engage with those audiences unable to reach us physically.

This Access Policy is available to view online at harewood.org/access

6. Audiences Research and Community Engagement

In order to understand the needs of our diverse range of visitors, we understand the importance of audience research and consultation, to help us define who our visitors are and how we can best engage with them.

Audience research with Morris Hargreaves McIntyre has provided us with insights into audience segmentation, visitor motivations, learning styles and approaches to accessing information, which in turn has helped inform the way we communicate with our visitors.

As part of our Community Access Membership (CAM) scheme, we regularly consult with local communities to ensure our activities, interpretation, access resources and organisational decisions meet their needs. Our CAM members represent a diverse range of community voices including families of children with additional needs, neurodivergent families support groups, low-income families and carer support groups.

We are committed to audience consultation, and for larger or long-term projects, we will form dedicated Focus Groups to allow us to fully consult and evaluate our projects and decision making with our audiences.

7. Premises and facilities

Harewood House is a Grade I listed building, sitting within a Grade I listed landscape, built largely on a steep gradient site. Despite these restrictions, we strive to improve accessibility at Harewood where possible.

The following measures have been introduced to improve accessibility and the visitor journey, both before and whilst on site:

- General visitor information including facilities, services, and access is online on social media, in printed literature and via telephone and email enquiries
- Access information is available online, with a dedicated Access Page presenting all relevant information: <https://harewood.org/visit/access/>
- A Visual Story and maps of the site are available online, and over the phone
- Access information is shared within a pre-visit email for all visitors who book online
- A shuttle bus and ferry service is available to improve access around the site
- Manual wheelchairs are available to borrow on site
- Two tramper vehicles are available to hire on site
- Wheelchair lifts are installed in key areas to enable access to all levels of Harewood House
- Blue badge parking and drop off points are available in key areas of the site
- Accessible toilets are available across key areas of the site
- Seating/benches are installed around the house and grounds
- Assistance Dogs are permitted in all areas of the site
- Pram parking and baby change facilities are available across key areas of the site
- Highchairs are available to use in our café spaces

8. Collections

Harewood House Trust is committed to its provision of access to its collection, archive and historical information, whilst maintaining a commitment to high standards of collections care.

We acknowledge that we are custodians of the Harewood collections for future generations, and the safety, security and conservation of the collection remain a key priority. Access to the collections is made available wherever possible, without putting the collection at risk.

Access to the collections is provided in the following ways:

- Permanent and temporary displays within Harewood House
- Specialist tours (e.g. Private Apartment Tours, Attic Tours) are run, offering access to areas of the collection and interiors not usually available to the public
- Collections enquiries are responded to regularly by our Collections team via email
- Research visits are regularly hosted, enabling further access to the collection for researchers and academics
- Support is offered when possible for family history enquiries relating to Harewood, particularly in relation to colonial histories and descendent communities
- Loan requests for items within the Harewood Collection are accommodated when possible to do so, enabling the collection to be accessed by more audiences at other venues across new locations
- Investment in the Harewood website has meant more of the collection is now available to access online – with plans for more information to shared going forward
- Regular ‘Conservation in Action’ sessions for visitors delivered by our Collections Care team.

9. Interpretation and displays

All interpretation is designed to suit a range of audience needs, and is written in line with insights provided by audience research into suitable reading age and learning styles.

The following resources and considerations are adopted when any interpretation is produced at Harewood:

- Font style and size will always be of an accessible size
- All content written will be of an appropriate reading age to the target audience
- Transcripts and/or captions are available for all audio and video content within the House
- Content warnings will be displayed in/ahead of rooms where sensitive information is presented
- Display cases and objects will – where possible – be displayed at an inclusive height for all visitors
- Sensory bags are available for all visitors to support and enhance the museum experience
- Large print guides are available for any text panels or interpretation with a smaller font size
- Audio descriptions are produced for key objects/narratives within an exhibition of permanent display

- EnChroma Glasses are available to borrow for visitors with colour vision deficiency

10. Language

In the 2021 Census, 91.3% of West Yorkshire residents aged 3 and over spoke English as their main language. Based on this data, English is the primary language used across all Harewood House Trust information and communications.

Language is recognised as one of the key barriers to engagement. Other than English, there are over 170 languages spoken in Leeds. Harewood has a commitment to ensure access to key information in different languages is available, and is working towards improving this provision for those visitors who do not have English as a first language.

Key texts are currently available in other languages for visitors at the House Entrance Hall. There are also key questions and answers prepared at Visitor Reception, translated into languages other than English frequently used by visitors, to assist with frequently asked questions on arrival. We have an ambition to make more translated texts available in the future.

Symbols are also used wherever possible on signage, to ensure more universal understanding.

Printed signs are used wherever possible (over handwritten signs), to allow for translation apps to be used.

11. Learning and Public Programme

As an educational charity, learning and engagement is at the heart of all activity at Harewood. A fully established, award winning learning programme has been in place since 1986, offering a range of formal learning sessions to engage learners of all levels and ages with Harewood's history and collections.

Access provision through our learning and public programme includes the following:

- Formal school programme with facilitated and self-guided visits across Harwood House and grounds
- Resources for teachers and students of all ages
- Educational resources for families to support engagement with the collection and site
- Specially adapted sessions for SEND learners
- Family events programme, often themed around temporary exhibitions or specific Harewood histories
- Quiet mornings offered for neurodivergent visitors during key family programmes

12. Staff and Training

Improving access to Harewood is a key priority for all our teams. One of our core values of 'Caring' is instilled in all our team members, who are dedicated to welcoming all visitors to Harewood with care and respect, taking a proactive approach to meet each visitor's individual needs.

Staff and volunteers are located at key points around the site to ensure a positive welcome and support for visitors throughout their visitor journey.

An EDI Group was established in 2020 which regularly meets and reviews access and inclusion across the organisation. Visitor Feedback is also regularly reviewed to enable us to monitor and identify any specific access related feedback, and take action where possible.

Training is a key tool of making Harewood an accessible site for our visitors:

- All staff are trained in our policies and procedures for emergency responses and Safeguarding, to maintain a safe environment for all our visitors and team members at all times.
- In order to best support the varying needs of our visitors, key staff within the organisation have undertaken specific training including Dementia Friends and VocalEyes, as well as partaking in the Hidden disabilities sunflower scheme.
- Specific EDI training has been invested in, to enable staff to support visitors who may experience specific barriers/reactions to Harewood in connections to its colonial histories, in addition to supporting staff in holding difficult conversations.

13. Financial

Harewood House Trust operates a charity, with paid for entry to the site.

Whilst balancing the financial pressures of operating as a charity reliant on income generated through ticket revenue in the current financial climate, we are committed to removing financial barriers to accessing and engaging with Harewood through the following means:

- Beyond the pay barrier, we strive to ensure the majority of activities and events are free of charge.
- Our Membership Scheme offers unlimited year-round access to Harewood for a fixed annual/monthly price.
- Our Community Access Membership Scheme is an annual membership, charged at a significantly reduced rate, for charitable organisations who support local communities in the North, South and West Yorkshire areas.

- Our Access+ ticket offers a reduced price ticket for those in receipt of Universal Credit, Pension Credit, Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP).
- Our Learning Programme offers a reduced price entry for educational group visits.

14. Legislation and Guidance

The Equality Act 2010 provides a legal framework to protect individuals from unfair treatment and promote equality in Great Britain. It consolidates previous anti-discrimination laws into a single Act, covering nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>

Other specialist advice has been considered from:

Royal National Institute of Blind People (<https://www.rnib.org.uk>)

Leeds Museums and Galleries: A Practical Guide for text interpretation

<https://www.museumdevelopmentyorkshire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Practical-guide-for-text-interpretation-2017.pdf>

VocalEyes <https://vocaleyeyes.co.uk>

15. Review

Date approved: July 2026

Review Date: July 2027