

Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums

Ethics Policy

Introduction

Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums (TWAM) endorses the seven principles of public life, as set out in Standards in Public Life: the First Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (1995), chaired by Lord Nolan. The principles apply to all who work in or for archives and museums and to all who serve on our governing bodies (see Appendix 1).

This policy sets the standards of conduct which TWAM expects from its “representatives”, including elected members, all paid employees and workers, volunteers, and contractors working on TWAM premises. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with TWAM in their own premises. It is supplemented by TWAM’s Counter Fraud Policy and Confidential Reporting Policy. <https://twmuseums.org.uk/corporate-publications-and-policies/policies>

Ethical Principles

TWAM’s mission is to help people determine their place in the world and define their identities, so enhancing their self-respect and their respect for others.

The success of TWAM depends on the trust and confidence of all those with whom we come into contact with. All representatives of TWAM must recognise the public purpose of archives and museums and must uphold the highest standards of personal conduct and corporate integrity expected in public service.

It is expected that in all actions, activities and relationships TWAM representatives will act with the highest standard of integrity and professionalism and strive at all times to avoid acting in such a way as would, accidentally or otherwise, bring TWAM into disrepute.

Of paramount importance is the simple principle:

No individual should use his or her position in TWAM for personal gain or to benefit another at the expense of TWAM, its mission, its reputation, or the public which it serves, nor should any individual act in a way that could reasonably be seen by others as compromising the independence and integrity of TWAM.

Process

In all dealings TWAM expects all representatives to:

- Act with honesty and integrity, and never knowingly mislead any person;

- Recognise and acknowledge the contributions of others to the work and support of TWAM;
- Protect confidential information obtained during their work;
- Be impartial, for example:
 - declare and make known any personal interests, do not give or receive inducements which could be, or could be seen to be, in conflict with the interests of TWAM.

TWAM will maintain registers of interests for all Elected Members, Trustees, and senior staff.

In furtherance to these principles, all staff of TWAM must:

- Understand their responsibilities and obligations to uphold the public trust;
- Follow appropriate policies and procedures;
- Make known to their line manager any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest by following the guidance in the Interests, Gifts and Hospitality Policy.

Professional codes of ethics

Within the areas in which TWAM works there are specific codes of ethics covering areas of activity (for example, but not exclusively, museums, archives, archaeology). In some cases these are maintained by the relevant professional bodies. TWAM will have reference to these codes of ethics and, where appropriate, the Joint Committee will formally adopt them.

As a museum service

TWAM recognises its role as a public-facing, collections based institution that preserves and transmits knowledge, culture and history for past, present and future generations. For these purposes, TWAM recognises and upholds the code of ethics for museums endorsed by the Museums Association in relation to:

1. Public engagement and public benefit

- Actively engage and work in partnership with existing audiences and reach out to new and diverse audiences;
- Treat everyone equally, with honesty and respect;
- Provide and generate accurate information for and with the public;
- Support freedom of speech and debate;
- Use collections for public benefit – for learning, inspiration and enjoyment.

2. Stewardship of collections

- Maintain and develop collections for current and future generations;
- Acquire, care for, exhibit and loan collections with transparency and competency in order to generate knowledge and engage the public with collections;
- Treat museum collections as cultural, scientific or historic assets, not financial assets.

3. Individual and institutional integrity

- Act in the public interest in all areas of work;
- Uphold the highest level of institutional integrity and personal conduct at all times;

- Build respectful and transparent relationships with partner organisations, governing bodies, staff and volunteers to ensure public trust in the museum's activities.

<http://www.museumsassociation.org/ethics/code-of-ethics>

As an archives service

TWAM recognises its role to maintain the highest standards of professional conduct expected of archivists, archive conservators, records managers and those occupied in related activities; standards expected by the Archives and Records Association of the UK and Ireland, in relation to:

- Promote the objects of the Association;
- Protect the integrity of archival material, that it continues to be reliable evidence of the past;
- appraise, select and maintain archival material in its historical, legal and administrative context;
- Protect the authenticity of documents during processing, preservation and use;
- Ensure the continuing accessibility and intelligibility of records and archival materials;
- Record, and be able to justify actions on records and archival material;
- Promote the widest possible access to archival material and provide an impartial service to all users;
- Respect both access and privacy, and act within the boundaries of relevant legislation;
- Avoid using their position to unfairly benefit themselves or others;
- Systematically and continuously updating professional knowledge, and sharing the results of research and experience;
- Promote the preservation and use of the world's documentary heritage, through working co-operatively with the members of their own and other professions.

http://www.archives.org.uk/images/documents/ARACouncil/ARA_Code_of_Conduct_final.pdf

Ethical Fundraising

Consistent with its ethical principles, TWAM will not accept funds in circumstances when:

- The donation is made through an intermediary who is not prepared to identify the donor to anyone at TWAM;
- The donor has acted, or is believed to have acted, illegally in the acquisition of funds; or,
- When acceptance of the funds would, in the judgment of the TWAM Joint Committee or the TWAM Development Trust Board of Trustees, having taken the advice of the Director where appropriate, significantly damage the effective operation of TWAM in delivering its mission, whether because such acceptance would:
 1. Harm TWAM's relationship with other benefactors, partners, visitors or stakeholders;
 2. Create unacceptable conflicts of interest;
 3. Leave TWAM open to accusations of money laundering;
 4. Materially damage the reputation of TWAM; or,

5. Detrimently affect the ability of TWAM to fulfil its mission in any other way than is mentioned above.

Compliance

The Director shall have responsibility for compliance and oversight, and will report to the Audit Committee, or in the case of the Development Trust, the Trust Board as deemed necessary, on an annual basis.

This policy will be reviewed every two years.

Ivor Stolliday
Chair of Trustees, Tyne &
Wear Archives & Museums
Development Trust

Councillor Ged Bell
Chair of Tyne & Wear
Archives & Museums Joint
Committee

Iain Watson
Director, Tyne & Wear
Archives & Museums

5 April 2017

24 March 2017

24 March 2017

Review date: April 2021

Appendix 1

The Nolan Principles - the 7 principles of public life

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life/the-7principles-of-public-life--2>

1. Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

2. Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

3. Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

4. Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

5. Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.