

Response to Request for Information

Reference FOI 003324
Date 6 March 2019

Staffing and Costs of Conservation and Collection Care at Wolverhampton City Archives

Request:

Please could you tell me who manages conservation at Wolverhampton City Archives office and are they on the collections management team or a similar team who make decisions on the collections?

[The manager of Wolverhampton City Archives is the Senior Archivist, who reports to the Manager of Arts and Culture, and sits on the Cultural Management Team.](#)

Do you have in-house conservators or do you outsource all your conservation requirements to external conservation firms and if so, who and how much do you spend per year on this?

[At present, we have one full-time conservation post, whose title is Collections Officer \(Archives\). Under a recent restructure, however, this post is being deleted from the structure so from June 2019 onwards we will be partly relying on collections expertise based within the Arts and Culture service and partly outsourcing our conservation requirements to freelance conservators.](#)

Do you have any contract staff working in-house on external grant funded projects or do you send specific items out for specialist conservation?

[We do not have any contract staff at present and we have never sent out specific items for specialist conservation.](#)

If the conservation manager is a conservator do they make the conservation decisions for the collections or are these decisions made by the archivists without consulting with the conservator?

[The conservation decisions are made jointly in discussion between the Collections Officer \(Archives\) and the Senior Archivist. In future, these decisions will be made primarily by the Senior Archivist in consultation with other collections staff within the Arts and Culture team and/or with external conservators.](#)

If you do have conservators on staff, are any of them accredited conservators and do you support staff training, accreditation and continued professional development (CPD) to keep up conservation skills?

The Collections Officer (Archives) is an accredited conservator and all staff training and continued professional development is supported, including networking with fellow professionals via the Midlands Conservation Group. We will ensure that any freelance conservator who we use in the future will also be an accredited conservator.

Do you have conservation volunteers working regularly at the record office? If so how many and do these volunteers undergo security checks or other checks? Are they managed by the in-house conservator/s or are they left to work on their own on the collections and be in the archive stores on their own?

We do not at present have any conservation volunteers, although we have done in the past. All volunteers undergo reference and security checks and only work under supervision.

If you don't have in-house conservation staff do you have volunteers doing the skills of trained conservators?

We have never had volunteers doing the skills of trained conservators and we do not intend to use them in this way in the future.

Do you pay for any external conservation support via an annual membership fee such as that with National Conservation Service (NCS) or Harwell and if so how much per year do you spend or have spent on this and what level of membership do you have?

The City of Wolverhampton Council has a Priority User contract with Harwell Drying and restoration service. The annual charge for this is £260.

How much is the annual budget for conservation and collection care, this would include items such as conservation materials, conservation packaging, conservation equipment and maintenance and staff training for conservation and collection care.

The amount spent on conservation materials, packaging, equipment and training can vary from year to year, and the money comes from various budget lines rather than one set budget for conservation. The amount spent on conservation in the last financial year 2017-2018 was £3995, which was mainly spent on acid-free boxes and archival folders, as well as unbleached cotton tape. We usually buy these items in bulk for greater efficiency.

Do you also undertake any income generation for conservation where you offer your in-house conservation services to generate income for Wolverhampton City Council if so how much do you charge per hour and what has the income been in the last three years?

We currently sell the services of our Collections Officer (Archives) to Dudley Archives and Local History Service. We do not charge per hour, as the income covers the post's salary (including oncosts) and travel expenses. The income over the past three years has been £1133 per year. This service will cease once we no longer have this post on the establishment, so in future we will not be undertaking income generation for conservation.

[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]