

# Collections Management Policy

## Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to provide an overview of how Lothian Health Services Archive (LHSA) develops, cares for, provides access to and disseminates information about its collections. The policy sets out by what means LHSA follows best practice in the management of its collections and in its adherence to appropriate standards and legislation. It is supported by a suite of policies and procedures working together in support of the LHSA mission.

## LHSA's Mission

LHSA holds the historically important local records of National Health Service (NHS) hospitals and other health-related material in the Lothian region. LHSA collects, preserves and catalogues these records and promotes them to increase understanding of the history of health and for the benefit of all.

## Context

The LHSA collections are stored and managed by the University of Edinburgh (UE) and are part of Heritage Collections, Library & University Collections. LHSA collects important records created by NHS Lothian (NHSL) and its predecessor bodies and hospitals (LHB collections) in addition to material donated by individuals and organisations about health and healthcare in the Lothians (GD collections).

## Policy audience

This policy is for internal use by LHSA staff and the wider UE and published to provide the public, researchers, depositors and LHSA stakeholders, including NHSL, with transparency and assurance that the collections are managed appropriately in line with this policy and according to best practice.

## Policy scope

The collections managed by LHSA and covered by this policy fall into three main categories:

- Board records forming part of the original Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh archive established in 1967, and such other records concerning other hospitals in the region that were added to that archive following the NHS reorganisation in 1974. (LHB collections). These are the core historic records dating back to 1584.

- Records transferred directly from NHS Lothian departments, both paper and digital, since the establishment of LHSa at the UE in 1988. (LHB collections)
- Records related to health and healthcare in the Lothian area gifted or donated to LHSa by third party organisations and individuals. (GD collections)

## Definitions

- **Accession**  
A single item or a group of records from the same source/donor accepted into the archive at one time. The process of formally accepting the material into the archive is called accessioning. Materials are ascribed a unique, permanent accession number that aims to get material under basic archival control.
- **Accrual**  
Related material being added to a collection already accessioned, such as regular issues of hospital magazines. Accession paperwork need only be signed for the first instance.
- **Appraisal**  
Before or following accession, donations are assessed on their suitability for permanent preservation. This appraisal is a necessary part of the archival process, ensuring that physical and digital storage space is used effectively, and improving the management, access, and discovery of archival records.
- **Depositor**  
Used for the person giving the record(s) to LHSa regardless of the classification of the accession.
- **Deposits**  
Deposits are normally long-term loans, in which archive services are the custodians of the items or collections, but they remain in the ownership of an external individual or organisation. LHSa avoids deposits wherever possible due to the associated long-term collection management issues.
- **Gifts and donations**  
Donations from all other organisations or individuals are classed as gifts. Ownership and copyright (where it rests with the donor) is transferred to NHSL.
- **Transfers**  
NHSL's status as a public authority under the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 means that the records they send to LHSa are classed as transfers. Ownership remains with NHSL. Records selected for archival preservation and no longer in regular use by NHSL should be transferred to LHSa once the business need has expired.

## Funding and resource

LHSA is based within Heritage Collections at the UE’s Main Library in George Square, Edinburgh. LHSA is core funded by NHSL and is made up of a small team of staff, supplemented, where possible, by externally funded project staff. LHSA staff are employees of UE. Volunteers and paid interns are key stakeholders in delivering LHSA’s short and long term aims and objectives.

## Policy operation

As LHSA operates and is managed within the broader context of the Library & University Collections, where appropriate, the LHSA Collection Management Policy will refer directly to the Heritage Collections [Collections Management Policy 2020 - 2030](#).

The dissemination of LHSA collections management procedures and policies is integrated into LHSA’s everyday work and defined as best practice by means of an internal Operational Manual, staff induction, staff workplans and regular meetings and annual reviews.

## Monitoring and review

This policy is subject to regular review, or more frequently considering relevant legislative or sectoral changes. It will also be reviewed in line with the Heritage Collections Collections Management Policy 2020 – 2030 review cycle.

## Related procedures

- LHSA Operational Manual (internal)

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## Approval and review

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## Version control

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03/2022	LW	1.1	Review. Archives Accreditation
04/2024	AC	1.2	New LHSA policy template. Minor amendments to improve consistency. Reorganisation of sections to improve flow of document.
02/2026	AC	2.0	LHSA policies combined into a single Collections Management Policy in line with Heritage Collections and for ease of publication.  Required as part of Accreditation review and for NHSL Records Management Plan.
03/2026	AC	2.1	Minor amendments and corrections.



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## Collection policy

### Key policy points

- Collecting remit
- Scope of collecting
- Collecting process

This policy outlines the purpose and activities of Lothian Health Services Archive (LHSA) and the processes followed when accepting new material into the Archive.

### LHSA mission statement and collecting remit

LHSA is NHS Lothian's (NHSL) archive, managed by the University of Edinburgh (UE). LHSA collects important records created by NHSL and its predecessor bodies and hospitals (LHB collections), in addition to material donated by individuals and organisations about health and healthcare in the Lothians (GD collections).

LHSA retains a small, but significant, selection of records – those designated as worthy of permanent preservation (for research significance, legal need, and to ensure transparency, accountability and to maintain NHSL corporate memory). These records are evidence of important activities in healthcare and in the lives of medical staff and patients. This material usually makes up around two to five percent of all records produced in the course of NHSL's core activity.

### Authority to collect

LHSA collections are owned and core funded by NHSL; it has also received project funding from a variety of institutions, including the Wellcome Trust. LHSA was formed under agreement between the Lothian Health Board and the University of Edinburgh in 1980, supported by the Scottish Records Office (now the National Records of Scotland). LHSA is the designated archive for NHSL under compulsory Element 7 of NHSL's model records management plan in compliance with the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 (PRSA). PRSA requires Scottish public authorities to have proper arrangements in place for the management of the records they produce. LHSA achieved, and has since maintained, Archive Service Accreditation in 2014, the UK standard for best practice in archive services, which requires regular review.

LHSA's activity is governed by the following legislation and Scottish Government guidance:

- Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002
- UK General Data Protection Regulation 2016
- UK Data Protection Act 2018

- Scottish Government, Records Management Code of Practice for Health and Social Care, 2024

## Scope of LHSA holdings

### a) Physical formats

LHSA collects records across material forms, including paper (loose paper and bound), electronic (born-digital records), and a range of audio-visual carriers (such as cinefilm, x-ray film, and audio cassette). The physical material on which information is recorded is less important than the nature of the information / evidence itself. Whilst LHSA collects records across physical formats, we may prioritise some records on our ability to access information on them both now and in the future. For this reason, we may ask for material to be donated to us in certain formats (in the case of born-digital records, for example).

### b) Content

LHSA collects evidence of important decisions and activities related to local hospitals and healthcare across material formats. Although all records inside this remit are considered for permanent preservation, those relating to collection strengths (for example, local history of HIV/AIDS, and local psychiatric care) or those that fill notable collection gaps (such as community-led health activism) may be prioritised.

### c) Time period

LHSA collects records worthy of permanent preservation regardless of the time they were created. However, due to their relative scarcity outside LHSA, all surviving records created by NHSL predecessor bodies in or before 1948 are accepted.

### d) Geographical scope

LHSA's holdings relate to hospitals and healthcare in Edinburgh and the Lothians. We can advise on appropriate collecting repositories relevant to health-related records about other areas of Scotland and / or UK. In certain key collection areas (such as the local history of HIV/AIDS), material outside the immediate local area is considered at the discretion of the LHSA Archivist when its relevance to activity in Edinburgh and the Lothians can be clearly defined.

### e) Exclusions

LHSA does not collect: objects, material collected/created outside Edinburgh and the Lothians, published books or journals, or general practice records.

LHSA staff may be able to advise on appropriate heritage organisations to which historical objects and other material may be offered.

## Collecting processes

### Accessions

LHSA receives material into the collections (accessions) in two ways:

- Transfer from NHSL: LHSA works with NHSL to identify and facilitate the transfer of significant records for permanent preservation. This material is transferred in line with the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 and the latest version of the Scottish Government, Records Management Code of Practice for Health and Social Care. Ownership of this material remains with NHSL.
- Non-NHSL organisations and individuals: LHSA advises and liaises with organisations and individuals outside NHSL to identify and secure potential archive material on a gift basis. LHSA does not accept collections on deposit. Ownership of this material is transferred to NHSL. Where copyright rests with donors, we ask that this is transferred to LHSA.
- The purchase of potential archive material falls outside LHSA's remit.

Appropriate documentation is completed for all accessions to LHSA. Methods of physical / electronic transfer to LHSA are discussed with donors on a case-by-case basis.

## Appraisal

Before or following accession, donations are assessed on their suitability for permanent preservation. This appraisal is a necessary part of the archival process, ensuring that physical and digital storage space is used effectively, and improving the management, access, and discovery of archival records.

Where material is transferred from NHSL, any records that are not worthy of permanent preservation will be destroyed (or returned) in line with the NHSL Records Disposal Policy and the Scottish Government Records Management Code of Practice for Health and Social Care.

Donors outside NHSL can specify their own wishes about material not retained by LHSA (covering destruction, return to donor or offer to another repository). Records designated for destruction are handled according to NHSL secure destruction protocols and governed by rigorous procedures outlined in the LHSA Deaccession and Disposal Policy.

Numerous records of the same type (such as case notes) may also be sampled before or on accession to LHSA, either by donors or LHSA staff. This decision is a contextual one and is made at the discretion of the LHSA Archivist.

LHSA recognises that appraisal and sampling, though essential to archival management, are subjective and non-neutral processes. Where appraisal decisions have been made prior to or following donation, these decisions are recorded and transparent.

## Public access to LHSA records

In accordance with the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, LHSA records are open to public access unless they fall under an exemption. The most common exemptions

covering LHSA material relate to personal and sensitive data about living individuals and to the health records of the deceased. If records fall under an exemption, routine public access will not be permitted. However, LHSA have developed robust processes with NHSL to permit legitimate researchers access to otherwise-confidential patient-identifiable information under strict conditions.

Finding aids to collections in the form of lists or catalogues are made public when complete.

## Roles and responsibilities

LHSA Manager has overall responsibility for setting the collections development strategy, working closely with the LHSA Archivist to identify priorities and gaps in the collections, especially with respect to marginalised or under-represented groups. LHSA Archivist is responsible for the appraisal of collections prior to transfer or donation.

NHSL Corporate Records Manager is responsible for liaison with LHSA regarding potential transfers from NHSL and for compliance with element 7 of the NHSL Records Management Plan.

## Related policies and procedures

- LHSA Deaccession and Disposal Policy
- Scottish Government Records Management Code of Practice for Health and Social Care
- NHS Lothian Records Management Policy
- NHS Lothian Records Disposal Policy
- NHS Lothian Appraisal and Transfer to Archive Policy

## Collections information policy

### Key policy points

- Accession of material
- Cataloguing of collections
- Access to collections

### Introduction

Lothian Health Services Archive (LHSA) recognises the need to maintain a system, procedures and processes which will enable the service to know at any time exactly for which items it is legally responsible and where each item is located. It also acknowledges a responsibility to ensure that information about what is held, and how it may be accessed, is available to its stakeholders.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Heritage Collections ‘Collections Information Policy’; Policy 1 of the [Collections Management Policy 2020 – 2030](#).

### Policy aims

The overall policy aims for cataloguing and LHSA collection discovery are to ensure that the information relating to the collections is accurate, secure, reliable and accessible and that systems are developed in line with current good practice.

LHSA has evaluated and recorded its existing cataloguing backlog in a Cataloguing Priority Plan (in spreadsheet form). New accessions are added where it is not possible to catalogue on ingest. This spreadsheet constitutes the ongoing collection information plan. Work against this plan is included in individual and team workplans.

LHSA prioritises collections documentation/cataloguing wherever possible. To achieve this, LHSA commits staff and resources, and trains interns and volunteers, to carry out the work. LHSA investigates options to produce more accessible catalogues, with efficiencies in creation, and uses language and index terms that are representative and inclusive. This work is undertaken in collaboration with archive sector colleagues across Heritage Collections.

LHSA ensures that information systems are kept secure and up to date. Security copies of key information are held off-site in a secure format and digital material is backed up by University IT systems.

In addition to addressing the cataloguing backlog, LHSA also reviews existing catalogues for quality and accuracy, and updates them as necessary.

LHSA is committed to delivering collections information in established, and innovative, ways in order to meet the needs of its stakeholders, and to develop its audience.

Collections information is generated in tandem with other related policies and procedures, in particular accessioning and collection development, deaccessioning, and conservation.

## Context

In fulfilling its Collections Information Policy, LHSA ensures compliance with relevant information governance and copyright legislation and NHS guidance.

This policy has been written with reference to:

- UK Data Protection Act, 2018
- UK GDPR, 2016
- Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002
- Scottish Government, Records Management Code of Practice for Health and Social Care, 2024
- Public Records (Scotland) Act, 2011

LHSA acknowledges that compliance with data protection legislation and Scottish government guidelines on public access to health records applies to both the material held and any finding aids and means of collections discovery created or employed.

## Collections ownership

LHSA collects material directly transferred from NHS Lothian (NHSL) and its predecessor bodies (LHB collections) and material gifted from individuals and organisations outside the NHS (GD collections). Ownership of LHB collections rests with NHSL, and ownership of GD collections is transferred to NHSL/LHSA on accession.

LHSA does not normally accept deposits, except in exceptional circumstances.

## Existing collections information

### Accessions

LHSA maintains a comprehensive accessions database. Detailed information collated on accession of material ensures that LHSA understands the provenance and ownership of the material and that future access is understood and has legal basis. Information on conditions of use of material, including copyright is recorded. Where donors of gifted collections own copyright in some/all of their donation, deeds of gift stipulate that this should be transferred to LHSA. Copyright limitations beyond the control of donors are documented as part of the LHSA accession procedure. Accession documentation dates to 1967, from LHSA's origins as the archive of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh.

### Cataloguing

Item-level catalogues are produced for LHSA collections, in compliance with relevant professional standards, ISAD(G) 2nd edition and EAD for archival description. LHSA has quantified and analysed the cataloguing backlog, and a priority plan is in place to ensure that as much of the collection as possible is accessible via item-level catalogues (available as PDFs). Series level descriptions of uncatalogued collections are available via the website (<https://library.ed.ac.uk/heritage-collections/our-collections/lhsa>) to ensure access to as broad a range of LHSA-held material as possible.

All collections have been assessed for exemption in relation to the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. This information is collated in a database and updated with newly catalogued material. Accessions are also assessed, and exemptions recorded.

### Case notes

LHSA acknowledges that the absence of item-level catalogues for its extensive historically significant case note collections is an obstacle to access and has developed a methodology that enables the production of a catalogue without compromising sensitive patient data. Case notes in neurosurgery, cardiothoracic surgery, sexual dysfunction, and respiratory medicine have been catalogued to item-level to this methodology, comprising c. 57 000 item-level descriptions.

### Digital collections

At present, LHSA has a limited cataloguing system for born-digital collections. A small quantity of born digital material has been ingested and information on material held is via the server structure in which they have been stored. LHSA will liaise with colleagues in the Heritage Collections and the wider Library & University Collections division to facilitate the effective delivery of a trusted digital repository, via the Heritage Collections Digital Archivist.

### Location information

LHSA has developed, and maintains, a locations database which ensures that the location for all collection items is known. Additional data on collections location is collated in the accessions database.

### Disposal information

LHSA also collates information on collections that have been appraised and disposed of, in line with established guidelines.

## Roles and responsibilities

LHSA appoints appropriately qualified and trained staff to carry out cataloguing work as part of temporary and/or ongoing projects. Existing staff, interns or volunteers are adequately trained and allocated time for the execution of cataloguing/collection discovery work.

Volunteers and interns are an important part of LHSA's service and contribute a great deal towards its overall success. A variety of roles are available working on a range of projects and tasks, and LHSA is happy to support those interested in gaining experience of its core services. From time to time, LHSA also takes placements from related university courses, particularly those with an archive focus.

The LHSA Archivist is responsible for overseeing the work of volunteers and interns.

### Related procedures

- Accession database and procedures
- Locations database
- Cataloguing priority plan
- LHSA Operational Manual

## Collections care and conservation policy

### Key policy points

- Preventive and interventive conservation
- Storage and housing of collections
- Emergency or incident planning

### Introduction

As the only NHS archive in the Lothian region, and the largest of the medical archives in Scotland, Lothian Health Services Archive (LHSA) is an important repository of medical information for historical research. The importance of the collections, and LHSA's responsibility for its care and usage, requires activity to maintain the condition of, and safe access to, the archive. This is formalised in several written statements collated in this policy.

This policy outlines LHSA's approach to the care of the collections, both present and future, and to describe current conditions, preventive and interventive conservation work.

It should be read in conjunction with the Heritage Collections 'Collections Care and Conservation Policy'; Policy 2 of the [Collections Management Policy 2020 – 2030](#).

### Policy aims

LHSA will store, handle, display and use its collections in such a way as to minimise the risk of damage and deterioration, enabling increased long-term access to and appreciation of the collections.

LHSA aims to undertake preventive conservation strategies, coupled with interventive conservation treatments as necessary, to address the preservation and conservation needs of the collections.

### Management of preservation and conservation

LHSA understands the importance of establishing and maintaining responsibility for collection care at a senior level. The management of the preservation and conservation of the LHSA collection lies within the remit of the LHSA Manager. This is done in consultation with Heritage Collections Conservation and Collections Management team.

### Preventive conservation

LHSA concentrates on preventive conservation as the most cost-effective and satisfactory approach to the preservation of and access to its collections. This is defined as preventing damage and slowing down deterioration by employing appropriate collection care procedures and putting into place measures to manage the storage environment.

The preventive conservation approach cannot entirely remove the need for interventive conservation treatment, as existing damage to items, might already be present when items are accessioned. Interventive conservation treatment is undertaken where necessary to maintain the condition of individual items. In the context of LHSA collections, interventive treatment is largely limited to the treatment of paper-based material.

As they are co-located with Heritage Collections archives and special collections, LHSA collections are housed in appropriately secured storage, with effective environmental and pest control and monitoring. This is detailed in the Heritage Collections ‘Collections Care and Conservation Policy’ (section 2.4)

## Interventive conservation

Interventive treatment is kept to the minimum possible in order to maintain the physical and historical integrity of the treated item, while providing the necessary measures to address physical and/or chemical degradation.

## Storage

The LHSA collections are housed in two locations on University of Edinburgh (UE) curtilage: c.50% of the collection is held in the Heritage Collections stores in the Main Library building and c.50% of the collection is held in the University Collections Facility. The physical and environmental conditions of the buildings in which the LHSA collections are housed are the responsibility of the UE Estates and Facilities Department. LHSA has limited control over the storage areas, nevertheless, the guidelines laid out in BS EN 16893:2018 and BS 4971:2017 are adhered to as far as possible and are monitored by the Senior Collections Manager. Within the stores, the collections are housed on metal mobile racking: it is stable, safe, allows good air flow and is of the highest quality possible.

LHSA aims to monitor, and improve where necessary and/or possible, the storage conditions, be it the stores, storage furniture or the environmental conditions. This work is undertaken in collaboration with colleagues in the wider Heritage Collections and in the Information Services Facilities team.

## Housing of collections

LHSA ensures that appropriate storage materials are used, in as far as practicable and within funding constraints, for the boxing of collections. This offers an additional layer of protection for the collection items and may serve to secure long-term preservation.

LHSA has implemented a boxing programme to gradually provide suitable housing for the whole collection using standardised sizes of folders and boxes in high specification materials, tailored where necessary to meet the requirements of different material types. New accessions are provided with appropriate primary and secondary housing on arrival and are subsequently listed and re-boxed as required.

## Resources

LHSA understands that its professional commitment to the long-term care of the collections has resource implications, and that a successful preservation and conservation programme needs financial support.

LHSA benefits from the expertise of the Heritage Collections Conservation and Collections Management team and considers all collections-based advice, information and activities as required when developing its own collections care plans that will guide the future care and conservation of LHSA collections.

LHSA has access to preservation and conservation expertise and time resource in the form of the Heritage Collections Senior Collections Manager, the Works on Paper Conservators and the specialist Book Conservator. Every effort is made to secure funds for further conservation, on a fixed-term or project basis. When there is no qualified conservation expertise available, the LHSA Archivist ensures that basic preservation activity is maintained in the form of housekeeping, assessment and storage of accessions, as funds allow.

Where possible, LHSA will pursue external funding opportunities to support smaller conservation projects, addressing the preservation and conservation needs of specific parts of the collections.

## Condition assessments

At present, LHSA generally prioritises collection-wide preventive treatment over interventive treatment of individual items to improve the condition of the Archive overall. Nevertheless, items to be used by a reader or for display that require limited interventive treatment to aid safe and easy access are prioritised for treatment wherever possible.

LHSA undertakes regular assessments of the collections, ensuring that any potential risks are identified at an early stage. However, the size of the LHSA collections has meant that an item-by-item assessment has not been possible. Instead, a procedure has been put in place that enables the LHSA Archivist to identify and record individual items requiring conservation treatment when accessioning or accessing: the 'Conservation Action List'. This spreadsheet is available to all LHSA staff to input details of items that require treatment.

LHSA undertakes condition assessments, in collaboration with Heritage Collections conservation colleagues if required, before items are consulted in the Reading Room, and before loans to other institutions.

## Handling and moving of collection items

LHSA manages the safe handling and moving of collections items to prevent damage by adhering to strict handling procedures and by undertaking regular training. All new staff, volunteers and interns must undertake training before handling items or objects. All staff

must complete annual refresher handling training, delivered by the Heritage Collections Conservation and Collections Care team.

LHSA staff observe the regulations established by the Health and Safety at Work Acts, especially the use of risk assessments and routine procedures when undertaking any activities that may cause hazards to staff, volunteers and the public (outlined in the Health and Safety Policy).

Visitors to the Reading Room who are using LHSA materials must abide by the Heritage Collections [appointment regulations](#) and must register to access collections. This includes basic handling instructions.

## Digitisation or creation of surrogates

LHSA recognises that digitisation and the creation of surrogates can greatly aid access to the collections and maintain the long-term preservation of fragile, damaged or heavily used items. For example, copies of photographs may be used in a display rather than the originals to reduce damage from light exposure.

Photocopying of LHSA material is not permitted because of the risk posed by this reprographic process. Instead, photographs may be taken in response to specific enquiries by the LHSA staff whilst readers may take their own photographs (without flash) and scans in the Reading Room, but only after they have been screened by the LHSA Archivist for data protection and confidentiality.

High quality images of LHSA collections have been created by the [Cultural Heritage Digitisation Service](#) and made available through the University's image collections website <https://images.is.ed.ac.uk/> or the Open Books platform <https://openbooks.is.ed.ac.uk/>

## Emergency or incident planning

LHSA is included in the UE Disaster Prevention and Disaster Response & Recovery Plan and information on LHSA storage areas, evacuation priorities and contacts has been included in these documents. LHSA ensures that its contributions to the Plan are accurate and updated as necessary. The Plan is reviewed annually, and staff are educated on their responsibilities in this area. Materials and equipment for use in the event of a disaster have been provided in locations holding LHSA collections and all stores have undergone a risk assessment in collaboration with UE Estates and Facilities team and the UE Fire Officer. The Disaster Response & Recovery Plan is reviewed annually and on any deployment of the plan.

The LHSA storage areas are covered by a high specification VESDA fire detection system connected to the local Fire Services department. Although no provision is made for flood detection, potential problem areas have been identified and regular inspection is undertaken. Risk has been reduced as far as possible with adherence to the principles of

good storage laid out in BS EN 16893:2018 and the elimination of possible risk factors, by supervising external contractors when working in the storage areas for example.

## Record keeping

LHSA will ensure that any collections care activities undertaken are fully recorded. All staff will be aware of the existence of the documentation and have appropriate access to it to enable regular review.

## Roles and responsibilities

Responsibility for the overall enforcement of the wider ‘Collections Care and Conservation Policy’ is formally allocated to named individuals within Heritage Collections. LHSA staff must adhere to any guidance or instruction issued under this policy.

LHSA staff are responsible for the day-to-day monitoring of LHSA storage areas and collections to ensure all environmental sensors, storage and equipment and security measures are operating effectively.

## Related procedures

- Collections care plan
- Disaster Response and Recovery (SharePoint)
- LHSA Operational Manual

## Collections access and engagement policy

### Key policy points

- Engagement with key stakeholders and audiences
- Access to collections
- Loans and exhibitions

### Introduction

This policy sets out the broad principles for enabling and increasing access to and engagement with Lothian Health Services Archive (LHSA) collections for academic researchers, NHS stakeholders and the wider public.

This policy operates within the framework established by the Heritage Collections [Collections Management Policy 2020- 2030](#).

### Policy aims

LHSA aims to make its collections accessible to all, within the reasonable constraints of resources, conservation and security.

LHSA aims to enhance, improve and increase access for as broad a range of users as possible. LHSA aims to increase inclusion and representation across its collections and by doing so work to reduce barriers to both physical and intellectual access.

### Access to LHSA collections

Access to LHSA collections is available through a range of methods.

- Collections information is provided via the [LHSA webpages](#) with links to the online catalogues and finding aids.
- LHSA also provides a dedicated and specialist email enquiry service by contacting [lhsa@ed.ac.uk](mailto:lhsa@ed.ac.uk)
- Appointments to consult LHSA collections can be made by contacting [lhsa@ed.ac.uk](mailto:lhsa@ed.ac.uk) and study space is available in the Centre for Research Collections Reading Room in the Main Library at the University of Edinburgh (UE).
- Opening hours are published on the Heritage Collections webpages <https://library.ed.ac.uk/heritage-collections/using-the-collections/locations-contact>
- Users can follow LHSA on Social Media channels, Facebook and Instagram, and by reading the [LHSA blog](#).

LHSA encourages and supports the most diverse user groups to access its collections and will make no discrimination regarding access on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

LHSA aims to offer improved physical, social and intellectual access to its collections by alternative means where possible, including through events, virtual access, community outreach and social media and publications. It also promotes and encourages study of the collections through its website and provides secure spaces for use by researchers, via the Centre for Research Collections Reading Room.

## Limitations to access

All access to LHSA collections must be balanced against the need for the conservation, care and security of the materials and the confidentiality or sensitivity of the content. Where any such concerns arise, LHSA may refuse any request for access that might jeopardise the long-term preservation of its collections. We also consider the welfare of the individual accessing particularly sensitive material. Individuals will receive full reasons for a refusal if that is the decision.

- LHSA may also limit access to specific parts of the collections due to the need to comply with Health & Safety legislation or legal requirements.
- Copying or reproduction of any LHSA information or materials will be subject to compliance with current copyright legislation and permission from NHS Lothian, as the owners of the collections.
- Access to LHSA collections is subject to the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018 and any other relevant legislation. However, we can help legitimate researchers (including individual members of the public) to apply for responsible access to records that would otherwise be confidential. Legitimate researchers are either relatives of deceased individuals or academic researchers inside a named institution or research project. Decisions on access to records are made by the NHS Lothian (NHSL) Caldicott Guardian, who oversees how confidential personal information owned by the NHS can be used in research.

## LHSA audiences and outreach

Engagement is at the core of making LHSA collections available and accessible to as diverse an audience as possible. However, engagement and outreach activity should complement and support other core services wherever possible to best use limited staff capacity.

LHSA stakeholders

- NHSL is a key stakeholder in LHSA: LHSA is the designated archive for NHSL under element 7 of the Records Management Plan in compliance with the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 (PRSA). LHSA staff advise on record transfers and retention, facilitate appropriate and responsible access to archival records, and contribute to wider NHSL and NHS Scotland information governance and records management committees/groups.  
LHSA has further refined its NHSL stakeholders to
  - staff with records management and information governance responsibilities at all levels of the organisation and
  - the wider NHSL staff. This delineation is intended to help inform targeting outreach at planning level.
- LHSA's key stakeholders outside NHSL are UE academic and administrative staff and students: records are used for teaching and research, and in developing archive research and collections management skills through both established programmes and individual contact.
- LHSA collections are public records and are of relevance to the wider public. LHSA's key public audiences are charities working within the healthcare context, retired NHS staff, current and future patient groups, community history groups, non-UE academics/students and genealogists.

LHSA staff facilitate appropriate access for all its stakeholders and visitors and catalogue and conserve the collections to ensure material is discoverable and usable.

## Audience development

LHSA recognises the importance of evaluating the success of activities and events to inform future work: engagement activity is reported both informally via team meetings and formally through regular reports and the Heritage Collections reporting mechanisms. Engagement activity is also informed through stakeholder and visitor feedback. This information is analysed regularly at team meetings and used to inform forward planning and identify potential new users and audiences.

The list below is intended to serve as a guide to previous engagement and outreach activity. It is not a prescriptive list and LHSA's strategy in this area allows for staff to take a flexible and reactive approach to make best use of opportunities to engage with stakeholders as they arise.

- Maintenance and development of high-quality online content, including social media and LHSA blog.

NHSL stakeholders:

- Introductory tours and talks to explain the function and role of LHSA.
- Contributions to NHSL staff communications/publications.

- Provision of advice, material and support to resident artists, charity-based art projects in the hospital context through the NHS Lothian Charity.
- Oral history projects with past and current NHSL staff.

UE and wider public:

- Involvement in University led events and programmes, such as widening participation initiatives.
- Provision of teaching support for undergraduate and postgraduate courses, including workshops and displays.
- Community led courses developed with voluntary sector partners.
- Discovery sessions co-curated with groups from LGBT+ community and those with lived experience of mental health issues.

## Loan and exhibition

LHSA understands that exhibition and loan can be used to positive effect both to promote the collections and to convey the important informational content of the collections. LHSA also recognises that the potential for damage or deterioration of the collection item(s) is a risk associated with any exhibition or loan activity.

### Loan

Parties wishing to borrow a collection item or items must have legitimate reason as determined by the LHSA Manager and must conform to the wider Heritage Collections loans policy and process. Any items requested will be subject to a condition check which is recorded in the loan documentation. Only items in sufficiently good condition to enable safe transit and exhibition may be loaned. If deemed appropriate, interventive treatment may be undertaken to enable loan of a given item.

The borrower must be able to offer storage conditions to an equal or better level than that provided by LHSA and ensure the preservation and security of the item(s) during both transit and the loan period. If items are displayed, the cases must be secure and provide the appropriate environmental conditions outlined in the loan agreement.

Loan activity is subject to the same data protection legislation and guidance as other means of access.

### Exhibition

LHSA does not have a regular programme of in-house exhibitions. However, occasional temporary displays may be organised within Heritage Collections or the wider UE. The content of the exhibition is largely dictated by the condition of the proposed items and the length of display is kept to a minimum. The security of the items displayed within cases is maintained by UE. Environmental conditions and light levels during the period of display are monitored and managed to limit potential risk of damage.

## Roles and Responsibilities

- The LHSA Manager is responsible for the overall strategy and work plans of the team, including engagement activity and outreach. The LHSA Access officer and LHSA Archivist plan and deliver engagement activities.
- Access to confidential material is managed by the LHSA Archivist and approved by the NHS Lothian Caldicott Guardian, where appropriate.
- Loans of LHSA material to external organisations is approved by the LHSA Manager and the Heritage Collections Loans Group, with support from the Collections Registrar.

## Environmental sustainability policy

### Key policy points

- Commitment to sustainability
- Social responsibility
- Environmental controls

### Introduction

This policy outlines Lothian Health Services Archive's (LHSA) approach to environmental sustainability and its responsibility for the care of the collections, both present and future, and to describe current conditions, preventive and interventive conservation work.

It should be read in conjunction with the Heritage Collections 'Environmental Sustainability Policy'; Policy 4 of the [Collections Management Policy 2020 – 2030](#).

Environmental sustainability is a critical part of both Heritage Collections and LHSA's overall approach to sustainability including collections care, exhibitions and loans, preservation and conservation, audience development, staff and volunteer development, succession planning, income generation and fundraising as well as responsible forward planning.

### Context

LHSA follows the University of Edinburgh's (UE) whole-institution approach to social responsibility and sustainability. This policy statement operates in the context of the following UE strategies and policies:

- Sustainability (and Social Responsibility) 2020
- Regenerative Sustainability Strategy
- Sustainable Travel Policy 2020

In addition, LHSA will, in as far as possible, comply with NHS Lothian (NHSL) policies in respect of the environment:

- NHSL Records disposal policy
- NHSL Waste management policies and procedures, including the disposal of confidential waste

### Policy and practice are also supported by the following:

- The National Archives Sustainable Environmental Management
- University of Edinburgh 'Be Sustainable' information for staff and students

- BS 4971:2017 Conservation and care of archive and library collections

## Policy Aims

In the context of compliance with university policy in this area, and in alignment with Heritage Collections policy, LHSA will implement, in as far as possible, the requirements of all relevant sustainability legislation and regulations, and integrate the principles of environmental sustainability within all collections policies and practices, specifically to those relating to:

- procurement of goods and services
- waste minimisation and recycling
- energy saving
- use of recycled and recyclable materials wherever possible
- use of energy-efficient equipment
- monitoring energy use

## Environmental Sustainability and Collections Care

LHSA, under the direction of Heritage Collections, will support the monitoring of standards for environmental control with a view to saving energy or reducing dependency on air-conditioning.

When developing projects, LHSA will consider the impact of the project on the environment and sustainability during the planning stage.

## Training

Heritage Collections encourages all staff and volunteers to attend appropriate sustainability training and development. Staff and visitors are encouraged to walk, cycle or use public transport as the principal means of commuting to work and for travel by staff on LHSA business, or for visiting the collections.

Staff are required to undertake the UE Introduction to Sustainability online training module and are encouraged to become Carbon Literate.

## Planning, implementation and review

Continuous improvements and ongoing review of environmental sustainability will be embedded in both LHSA and Heritage Collections' forward planning for the development of collections and are reflected in the strategic plan.

## Roles and responsibilities

Responsibility for environmental controls rests with the Heritage Collections Conservation & Collections Care team, reporting to University Library and Collections and working with University Estates and Facilities.

Day-to-day management and monitoring of LHSA stores and management of waste disposal is the responsibility of the LHSA Archivist and LHSA Manager.

## Collections security policy

### Key policy points

- Protection of collections from loss or damage
- Staff safety
- Information security and confidentiality

### Introduction

This policy sets out the principles for ensuring the effective management and security of Lothian Health Services Archive (LHSA) collections stored within Heritage Collections at the University of Edinburgh (UE).

This policy operates within the Heritage Collections ‘Collections Security Policy,’ Policy 5 of the [Collections Management Policy 2020- 2030](#).

LHSA understands that the provision of secure storage and access is essential to effective long-term collection care. Security measures must also ensure the confidentiality of the sensitive medical information found in the collections.

### Context

UE has a responsibility for the stewardship of its unique and heritage collections, which are managed and preserved by its staff for current and future users. This includes LHSA collections that are held on deposit and that are owned by another party, in this case NHS Lothian (NHSL). UE commits to managing all externally owned collections in line with good practice and security:

- Protecting collection items from loss or damage.
- Ensuring preservation of physical condition.
- Securing collections from inappropriate access.

The Collections Security Policy outlines the overall approach to this stewardship and the principles which we use when making decisions and development procedures.

LHSA collection is almost entirely composed of NHSL public records, which are not insured under any general government indemnity scheme. The collections also include gifted and deposited items. LHSA collections are included in the UE insurance policy for rare/unique collections.

### Policy principles

The following principles apply:

- The safety and well-being of individuals takes precedence over any collections.

- Users of the LHSA collections must not put themselves in physical danger to protect any part of the collections.
- The collections of the University are one of its core physical assets. However, they bring with them a range of potential risks that could have financial, intellectual and reputational impact. All collections users and all members of the UE have a responsibility (direct or indirect) for their stewardship.
- Responsibility for collections care is delegated to users within agreed frameworks (e.g. a reader consulting a book in the reading room or a lecturer handling manuscripts as part of a formal seminar), but the same good practice must be followed by these users.
- Sites where LHSA collections are stored maintain a consistent high level of collections security, including a specific store that can only be accessed by LHSA staff (and occasionally by other members of Heritage Collections staff where necessary)
- The focus of Heritage Collections is on prevention (through planning, procedures and developing culture) rather than on response after an incident.
- Heritage Collections Conservation & Collections Management take the lead in the monitoring of buildings and facilities to ensure that they provide an appropriate and secure environment and will report any issues promptly.
- While it is accepted that in a large and complex collection it is not possible to have a comprehensive item-level inventory, LHSA will do everything practically possible to ensure that we know what collections we hold on behalf of NHS Lothian (NHSL) and other depositors and track their movement and usage.
- LHSA recognises that mistakes will happen, however we will develop systems and procedures, with support from Heritage Collections, to document and minimise risk.
- Security requirements for individual items within the collections will be determined on a risk-based approach. They will be applied to ensure that there is an effective balance between making the items accessible when required and ensuring their security.

## Standard procedures

### General security

- Collections held in the UE Main Library are subject to the high security levels applied to the building. It is physically secure and access to the building is restricted to holders of swipe cards, i.e. registered users and staff, and entry is monitored by UE security staff. The building is covered by CCTV, a fire detection and partial suppression system and a security alarm. Material held in the University

Collections Facility is covered by CCTV and, outside opening hours, a security alarm.

- Reader access to collection items is through the Centre for Research Collections Reading Room, which is monitored at all times by a member of Heritage Collections staff. Items that are consulted in the Reading Room are counted in and out of the secure storage areas and housed in a secure store between consultations.

#### Security in detail

- Designated secure areas (e.g. stores) and spaces where collections are used must be kept secure at all times and when unoccupied must be locked / alarmed as appropriate; a full audit trail will be kept of all accesses to and issues from strongrooms.
- Except in a Disaster Response & Recovery (DR&R) situation, no collection items may be removed from designated storage or consultation areas, e.g. Reading Room, without following agreed operational procedure.
- Movement of collections offsite (e.g. loans, moves) must be authorised by the LHSA Manager (and following consultation with Conservation & Collections Management staff, if required) and documented in line with relevant procedures.
- Work which involves changes to physical items (e.g. repair, disbinding, cutting unopened pages) must not be undertaken without express approval from LHSA Manager and following consultation with Conservation & Collections Management.
- During in-house conservation work, material is temporarily transferred to the conservation studio. This is a secure area, accessed via a code entry system. Additional locked storage is available in the studio if necessary.

#### Incident reporting

- Anyone who identifies or suspects a breach of security is responsible for intervening (if it is safe to do so) and / or reporting the incident to managers and / or University Security as appropriate.
- No-one is considered too senior or too important to be incapable of making a mistake or to be above suspicion when it comes to theft / damage: all staff are encouraged to report any incident involving other staff.
- LHSA follows the Heritage Collections process for keeping records of security information – including incidents, authorisations to access keys / alarms, details of valuations and records of lost / missing items.
- We will be open and honest about mistakes and incidents, sharing information within the UE and NHS Lothian as appropriate and as is compliant with legislation.

LHSA's security procedures and decision-making process in respect of security follows those set out by Heritage Collections. Refer to Collections Information Policy section 5.4 of the Heritage Collections [Collections Management Policy](#).

## Training

- All Heritage Collections staff cover collections and information security as part of their induction, reinforced by annual refresher training.
- LHSA, with support from colleagues in Heritage Collections where required, will provide training and direction to users to help them handle collections appropriately and to make them aware that security is managed and monitored.

## Information security

LHSA is also responsible for the security of the informational content of collections held, in particular sensitive patient records, and adheres to rules of confidentiality laid out in the Scottish Government, Records Management Code of Practice for Health and Social Care, 2024 guidelines and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Medical information, due to its sensitive nature, is closed for up to 100 years from the latest date in an individual's record, although permission to access records for *bona fide* research purposes may be obtainable from the NHSL's Caldicott Guardian via the LHSA Archivist.

## Roles and responsibilities

- All LHSA and Heritage Collections staff are responsible for ensuring that collections are handled appropriately and that collection items are secure when taken from and returned to storage following consultation. This includes the reporting of any security breaches.
- As LHSA collections are housed within the UE Main Library secure storage, overall responsibility for the maintenance of security rests with University Security.
- The Heritage Collections Conservation & Collections Management take the lead in the monitoring of buildings and facilities to ensure that they provide an appropriate and secure environment and will report any issues promptly.

## Related procedures

- Disaster Response & Recovery Plan
- LHSA Operational Manual
- Procedures for confidential enquiries and for request of Caldicott Guardian approval

## Collections development policy

### Key policy points

- Transfers and gifts
- Addressing gaps in the collections
- Inclusion, diversity and access

### Introduction

Lothian Health Services Archive (LHSA) actively seeks to enhance its collections by encouraging the accession of new material to increase the breadth and depth of resources available for understanding the history of health in the Lothian region. It also ensures NHS Lothian's (NHSL) compliance with the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 (PRSA). LHSA will ensure that sound curatorial reasons for both acquisition and disposal of material are carried out transparently and are fully documented.

This policy describes how, when and why collections are transferred to LHSA and references the policies and procedures that guide collection development. This policy is supported by several more specific policies working together to fulfil the LHSA Mission Statement.

This document is primarily for internal use by LHSA and University of Edinburgh (UE) staff, although the policy is shared with the public, researchers and other organisations for information and in the interests of transparency.

This policy is guided by and should be read in conjunction with the Heritage Collections 'Collections Development Policy', Policy 6 of the [Collections Development Policy 2020 - 2030](#).

### Collection development commitments

LHSA is committed to complying with the legislative, and records management guidance governing the collection, storage and access to health records. LHSA recognises the need to adapt to changing record formats to retain a comprehensive historical record. LHSA accessioning is governed by the Collection Policy.

### Transfer and gift of collections to LHSA

LHSA works with NHSL to identify and facilitate the transfer of historically significant records, that are no longer in active use, for permanent preservation. This material is transferred in line with the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 and the latest version of the Scottish Government Records Management Code of Practice for Health and Social Care. Ownership of NHSL material remains with the parent body.

LHSA advises and liaises with organisations and individuals outside NHS Lothian to identify and secure potential archive material on a gift basis in line with the LHSA Mission Statement and in order to fill identified gaps in collections, in compliance with the LHSA Collection Policy.

LHSA does not purchase potential archive material as this falls outside its remit.

## Collection development stakeholders

LHSA staff work with the NHS Lothian Caldicott Guardian and wider NHS Lothian information governance colleagues in order to ensure the appropriate transfer of and conditions of access to collections held. NHS Lothian staff with records management responsibilities play a key role in identifying potential NHS Lothian material worthy of permanent preservation by LHSA and in the transfer of these records. This is in line with the NHS Lothian Appraisal and Transfer to Archive Policy, available from NHS Lothian Policy Online.

## Accession procedures

The accession and secure transfer of archive material to LHSA is directed by internal accession procedures and guidelines governed by the LHSA Mission Statement and Collections Management Policy and are described in more detail in the LHSA Collections Development Plan. These procedures and guidelines are communicated in an internal Operating Manual, induction procedures, staff workplans and through meetings and reviews.

## Appraisal of collections

LHSA actively appraises its records to ensure that all collections continue to reflect collections policies (Collection Policy and Collections Development Policy) and the LHSA Mission Statement. Although potential collections are appraised prior to accession, decisions on subsequent deaccession are thoroughly documented in the internal LHSA accession database. This process is described in more detail in the Collection Policy and Collections Development Plan.

## Addressing gaps in collections

LHSA transfers more recent records from NHS Lothian under the provisions of the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011.

A review of LHSA's UNESCO-recognised collections related to HIV and AIDS identified that LHSA's Collections Management Policy and Mission Statement could be widened to encompass material for such specialised collections at a national level.

LHSA acknowledges that ongoing appraisal of the collections, actual and potential, is required to ensure the LHSA Mission Statement and Collection Policy are met to their full and will include a viable system for the transfer and curation of born digital records.

## Disposal

LHSA collections are professionally appraised by a the LHSA Archivist to retain items of evidential, legal, transactional and historic value that fit with the overall collections policy. Collections are often appraised after accession, before any indexing or cataloguing has commenced. During the appraisal process items deemed incompatible or unworthy of preservation are identified and documentation covering the collection is completed and signed off to note decisions on retention and disposal. Unwanted records from NHSL are either securely destroyed or returned to the Board.

## Inclusion, diversity and access to collections

LHSA has a responsibility to develop its collections in a way that is inclusive, diverse and accessible to as wide an audience as possible. When making collecting decisions, LHSA will ensure that it is aware of and reflects changing society and communities. LHSA aims to increase inclusion and representation within the process of acquiring and the describing of its collections through openness to protected characteristics, cultures, marginalised communities and people. LHSA staff are aware of the need to reflect on the existing collections, collections information and language used (such as descriptive metadata) and to seek to improve for the future. LHSA recognises its public and social responsibility in developing this area for the future as well as in tackling legacy issues.

## Priorities for collecting

As the designated archive for NHS Lothian (NHSL), LHSA will always prioritise transfers from its parent body. Although current transfer arrangements are ad-hoc (cultivated through relationships with NHSL staff and LHSA involvement in NHSL information governance and NHS Scotland records management groups), it is recognised that effective longer-term collections development of NHSL holdings will depend on assistance from the NHSL Corporate Records Manager.

- Born-digital records (as format): reflecting the media of most modern health-related records.
- LGBTQ+ experiences: building on the existing LGBTQ+ healthcare-related records and their relative scarcity in local and national archive collections.
- Representing diverse communities in healthcare: The experiences of non-white communities (as health activists, medical staff, and patients) are under-represented in LHSA collections.
- Covid-19 (NHSL records): the Covid-19 pandemic demanded an extraordinary response from NHSL and resulted in new and existing teams generating a vast number of (mostly born-digital) records.

## Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

LHSA staff recognise their responsibility to work within the parameters of the Archives and Records Association Code of Ethics (2024) when considering acquisition and disposal.

## Roles and Responsibilities

LHSA Manager has overall responsibility for setting the collections development strategy, working closely with the LHSA Archivist to identify priorities and gaps in the collections, especially with respect to marginalised or under-represented groups. LHSA Archivist is responsible for the appraisal of collections prior to transfer or donation.

NHSL Corporate Records Manager is responsible for liaison with LHSA regarding potential transfers from NHSL and for compliance with element 7 of the NHSL Records Management Plan.

## Related procedures

- LHSA Collections Development Plan
- LHSA Operational Manual
- NHSL Appraisal and Transfer to Archives Policy
- NHS Lothian Records Disposal Policy