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1 Scope

This policy covers the management of the physical care of archives in the custody of Berkshire Record Office. Reference is made throughout the document to both conservation and preservation work, though the term preservation is used to apply to both.

Conservation is used to define the remedial protection or repair of archives by physical or chemical treatments.

Preservation is used to define the preventative protection of archives without any direct treatment being applied to them.

The Record Office will create a preservation strategy document to define how it will implement this policy.

2 Governing standards

Berkshire Record Office has adopted the following standards for its preservation work:

- BS4971: British Standard: Repair and allied processes for the conservation of documents - recommendations 2002
- PD5454: British Standard: Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival documents 2012
- PAS198: British Standard: Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections 2012
- The National Archives Standard for Records Repositories 2004

In addition Berkshire Record Office will seek to implement best practice guidance on preservation from the Archives and Records Association, the Institute of Conservation, or other recognised national bodies.

3 Staffing

- 3.1 Conservation work at Berkshire Record Office will be undertaken either by professionals with a relevant conservation qualification or by staff with relevant experience under the direction of such a professional.
- 3.2 Preservation work may be undertaken by staff or volunteers under direction from a suitably qualified professional.
- 3.3 All staff at Berkshire Record Office will receive some preservation training. Volunteers will receive task-specific training. Dedicated preservation staff will additionally undergo job-specific training either in-house or through a recognised external provider.

4 Funding

- 4.1 Berkshire Record Office will commit dedicated resources to preservation work. However the Office may additionally seek external funding for preservation projects from time-to-time.

5 Security, storage and environment

- 5.1 Archive storage at Berkshire Record Office will conform to the recommendations for construction, security and environment set out in PD5454 and PAS198 above. Storage areas will be monitored constantly to ensure that the recommendations are adhered to, and a record of storage conditions will be maintained.
- 5.2 All archives acquired by the Office will be assessed for mould, dirt or infestation before they are transferred to archive storage. Only appropriate archival packaging will be used within storage areas.
- 5.3 The Office will maintain good housekeeping within the storage areas. All storage areas will be kept clean and periodic inspections for mould or infestation will be undertaken.
- 5.4 Access to the storage areas will be controlled and no visitor to the Office will be left unaccompanied within them. The storage areas will be locked at the end of every working day.

6 Preventative work

6.1 Berkshire Record Office aims to provide protection to all documents in its care, so that they are not at risk from harm in its custody.

6.2 Documents will be assessed individually for action to protect them from harm. This assessment will include the existing condition and state of materials as well as action to protect documents from harm through future handling or use. Examples of preventative work include removing staples or fastenings and document cleaning.

6.3 The Office will manage a programme to copy vulnerable material in its care so that visitors and staff are provided with an alternative to using original items.

6.4 The Office will manage a programme to provide packaging for all items in its collection. This packaging will include boxing, wrapping and sleeving.

6.5 All materials and methods used in preventative work shall not affect the condition of the documents in any way, and shall conform to BS4971 where appropriate.

7 Remedial repair

7.1 Berkshire Record Office aims to repair documents that are either received in too poor a condition to be used, or are at risk of significant damage without remedial repair.

7.2 Berkshire Record Office will manage a programme of repair work. Items selected for repair will be assessed by professional archivists and professional conservation staff before any action is taken. In general the level of repair used will be the minimum required to stabilise the item. Examples of remedial repair work include strengthening or infilling damaged papers, resewing or recovering books, and reconstituting seal fragments.

7.3 Certain principles will always be adhered to during repair:

- 'like for like' materials should be used
- the nature and extent of the repair should be evident
- the repair will not affect the evidence or information contained in the document
- the repair should not damage or weaken the document
- the repair should be reversible without damage

7.4 All materials and treatments used will conform to the recommendations in BS4971. A record of both materials and processes used will be kept for each document repaired, and will be available on demand.

8 Emergency preparedness

8.1 Berkshire Record Office will maintain and review an emergency plan to protect its collections. This emergency plan will be approved by Reading Borough Council's Emergency Planning Officer.

8.2 Berkshire Record Office will ensure that Health and Safety risk assessments are carried out to support the emergency plan.

8.3 Training and equipment will be provided for all staff who volunteer to assist in emergency work.

9 Document handling and access

9.1 The Office will promote good handling of documents by both visitors and staff to minimise the risk of harm through use, and will provide advice, materials, equipment and training to support good handling practice.

9.2 The Office's public searchroom will be supervised at all times it is open. Staff will be required to ensure the security of documents is maintained and that good handling is practised.

9.3 The Office will not produce items for research if such use would result in a high risk of loss or damage to the item. If such an item is requested the Office will undertake to assess the item for repair and inform the researcher of the outcome of this assessment. The Office will also consider other options for providing access to the item, such as through staff research or creation of a copy of the item.

9.4 Copies of any item will be provided in such a way that the item is not at risk of harm or damage from the copying process. Guidance on copying practice will be made publicly available, and will also include information relating to copyright and permissions for re-use.

10 Exhibition and loan

10.1 Berkshire Record Office will conform to PD5454 and PAS198 in respect of any documents exhibited within the Office.

10.2 Loan or exhibition of any document to another party will be approved by a senior professional at Berkshire Record Office. Documents on loan or out for exhibition should be stored securely, and efforts made to provide conditions as close as is practicable to PD5454 and PAS198.

10.3 A receipt specifying documents out on loan should be signed by a representative of the person or institution accepting the loan. The receipt will specify the conditions of the loan. A register will be kept of all documents provided on loan. The register will be the responsibility of a professional member of staff.