

**BERKSHIRE RECORD
OFFICE**

SPECIFICATION FOR SERVICES

July 2004

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1 Definitions of Terms

ACCESSION: Collection of documents acquired by the Record Office from a single source on a particular date.

ARCHIVES BOARD: Management board for the service set up under the joint agreement, consisting of representatives from each district and responsible for inter alia monitoring the Record Office's performance against the Specification.

ARCHIVES MANAGEMENT TEAM: Group of senior staff responsible for the management of the Record Office, headed by the County Archivist.

BERKSHIRE LOCAL STUDIES FORUM: planning and information-sharing group consisting of representatives from local authority local studies, museums and heritage services in Berkshire, convened by the Record Office.

CONSERVATION UNIT: Unit consisting of specialised staff, equipment and other resources, for the purposes of repairing and preserving records.

DEPOSITORS: Individuals and organisations who entrust items to the Record Office for safekeeping.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES INSPECTION: Independent inspection ordered by the National Archives in order to monitor the suitability of the Record Office with regard to storage facilities.

SEARCHERS: Members of the public visiting the Record Office for the purpose of consulting records.

SEARCHROOM: Public room, with appropriate facilities, set aside for the purposes of consulting records held in the Record Office.

STANDING CONFERENCE ON ARCHIVES: Record Office stakeholder forum created by the joint agreement, consisting of membership agreed by Archives Board.

STRONGROOM: Facility for storing records which provides correct atmospheric conditions and protection against water, fire and theft as prescribed in BS5454.

2 Introduction

2.1 Scope of Specification

This Specification covers all services delivered through the Berkshire Record Office. The Specification will be supported by policies and standards for core aspects of the service as from time to time agreed with Archives Board. These policies and standards will include aspects of service delivery as outlined in section 5 of this document. They will be available in hard copy from the Record Office and online via the Office website.

Procedures for staff will also be available covering practical aspects of administration, access, cataloguing and preservation procedures. These will not be published but will be available on demand from the Record Office.

2.2 Audit and monitoring the Specification

2.2.1 Audit reviews

The Berkshire Record Office can be audited at any time on behalf of Reading Borough Council's Director of Arts and Leisure in order to ensure that the terms of this Specification are being met. Archives Board will have responsibility for requesting an audit and for receiving its results.

2.2.2 Performance measurement

Archives Board will agree performance indicators and service guarantees for the Record Office. Reports on the Record Office's performance will be presented to Archives Board.

The Record Office will seek to meet the requirements of the service guarantees set by Archives Board. The Record Office will also collect routine management information and data from surveys to ensure continuous monitoring of the quality and effectiveness of the service.

The Record Office will participate in national archives surveys where appropriate in order to provide a comparison of the service offered against that of other Record Offices.

3 Purpose of the service

3.1 Service aims

The service aims of the Record Office (adopted in June 1991) are to:

- Seek to acquire a representative selection of documentary material from all sources, whether manuscript, printed or other media, relating to the County of Berkshire and its people, past and present
- Provide for the safe keeping of this material, undertaking conservation work where necessary, in order to ensure its preservation for the future
- Provide for public access at all levels to the materials preserved by means of public search facilities, and to encourage research into the County's past
- Promote an awareness of the County's past and its rich archival heritage through exhibitions, talks, publications and in other ways

3.2 Legal obligation

The statutory basis of the archives service rests upon the following:

- **Local Government Act 1972 s224-229**
Section 224 instructs principal authorities to make '*proper arrangements*' for the safekeeping of their records and records in their custody. This has been recently defined by the joint DTLR/LGA *Guidance note on Local Government Act 1972 s224* (1999).
- **Local Government (Records) Act 1962**
This Act empowered County (or other Principal) Councils to acquire archives or records created or collected by other bodies, including businesses and private individuals.
- **Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967**
These allow the Government (presently through the Lord Chancellor) to appoint local places of deposit for public records (records of hospitals, courts, prisons and other central government agencies). Berkshire Record Office is the appointed place of deposit for Berkshire public records. Places of deposit have to satisfy standards of storage and access laid down by the National Archives.
- **Freedom of Information Act 2000**
The *Code of practice on the management of records* under the Act states that archives of public authorities should only be transferred to institutions with '*adequate storage and public access facilities*'.

- **Law of Property Act 1922, and Manorial Document Rules 1959 and 1963**
Under these rules the Master of the Rolls through the National Archives grants recognition to archives to hold manorial court records. Berkshire Record Office is a recognised archive, and as such needs to adhere to service and access conditions similar to those for public records.
- **Tithe Act 1936 and Tithe Apportionment Rules 1960 and 1963**
The Act and rules operate as for manorial records. Tithe records relate principally to surveys undertaken for taxation purposes in the 1840s. These surveys consist of detailed maps for each parish in a county, with an apportionment which lists landowners, occupiers and acreages.
- **Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978 and 1992**
This is legal guidance covering records of the Church of England. Under the measure, Berkshire Record Office provides storage and public access for records within the Archdeaconry of Berkshire (which corresponds broadly to the pre-1974 county). Berkshire Record Office is an appointed Diocesan Record Office for Oxford Diocese.
- **Government Policy on Archives 1999**
This was issued as a command paper and sets out a number of government objectives for archives:
To ensure ready access to archives to all citizens
To enable the educational sector to have proper access to archival resources
To ensure public institutions preserve and manage records in accordance with legislation and professional standards
To encourage private bodies to preserve their records
To prepare the archive sector for processing electronic data
To add maximum value to the archive sector's resource
- **Local Government Changes for England (Property Transfer and Transitional Payments) Regulations 1995**
These regulations relate to the abolition of Berkshire County Council. Regulation 5(3) precludes *'different successor authorities in relation to any property...which forms part of a relevant collection'*. Relevant collections include *'any collection of archives or other records of general or local interest'*. This means that the collection as at 31 March 1998 cannot be broken up.

The following general Acts and Regulations will also be adhered to:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act 1963
- Factories Act 1961
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995

3.3 Standards

The statutory basis for the service is supplemented by a number of authoritative standards that the Record Office should achieve:

- **BS5454: Storage and exhibition of archival documents, revised 2000**
This standard specifies temperature and relative humidity bands for archives storage, and light levels for display. The National Archives expects us to adhere to this standard.
- **BS4971: Conservation of documents, 1988**
This makes recommendations for repair processes used in conservation.
- **ISAD(G): International Standard of Archival Description, revised 2000**
This standard is published by the International Council on Archives (ICA), part of UNESCO. It relates to guides and catalogues produced by archive offices, and recommends what information they should contain. Adoption of this standard is important for data exchange and online access is expected to conform to it.
- **National Archives inspection scheme**
The National Archives was created by a merger of the Public Record Office and the Historical Manuscripts Commission on 1 April 2003. It is anticipated that a single standard and inspection regime will be applied to repositories which hold public, manorial or tithe records. The Record Office will be required to meet the standard when it becomes available.

The Record Office will also take note of any standards which may be adopted by the Council for Museums, Libraries and Archives (MLA).

4 Customers

4.1 The community served

The community served is anyone who wishes to consult records held in the Berkshire Record Office (either in person or remotely) or who wishes to deposit records therein. These may be those who have an interest in the County of Berkshire and its people or any other lawful interest. They may not necessarily be residents of the partner authorities.

Berkshire Record Office will make all records it receives accessible for consultation and research, unless access is

- Prevented by statutory exemption (such as by the Freedom of Information or Data Protection Acts)
- Against the wishes of a private depositor
- Likely to risk loss of a depositor's property
- Likely to cause damage to an item
- Provided for by an identical substitute copy

A policy for access will be agreed with Archives Board.

Berkshire Record Office will accept deposits of records according to the *Regulations Governing Gifts and Bequests of Records to, and Deposits of Records in, the Berkshire Record Office*.

Identifiable customer groups are:

Depositors:

- Those who wish to deposit Records under the terms of the Acquisitions Policy
- Those who are lawfully obliged to deposit in or transfer records to the Record Office

Searchers:

- Searchers wishing to visit the Record Office in person to consult records
- Searchers wishing to use the remote enquiry service to access information
- Searchers wishing to learn about the Record Office and/or its holdings or services

Searcher category groups include:

- Genealogists and family historians
- Local historians
- Educational and academic users
- Legal and administrative searchers

4.2 Liaison with customers

Berkshire Record Office will publish service guarantees to inform customers of the level of service they may expect. These guarantees will be available for inspection onsite and online.

The Record Office will participate in the national surveys of visitors to UK archives and in any other consultation that Archives Board should agree.

Standing Conference on Archives will be held at least once a year to provide a forum for stakeholders to discuss the service.

Customer comments must be invited, collected and recorded and must be taken into account in service planning. A clear complaints procedure must be in place.

5 Core Services

5.1 Access and learning

5.1.1 Access onsite

Berkshire Record Office will ensure that access to the public rooms is available to all. Access will be free of charge.

Records will be made available in the searchroom subject to the Record Office rules. The searchroom should be open for a minimum of 35½ hours per week, including at least one period of a minimum of 3 hours outside normal office hours. These hours must be published and displayed within the building. Any temporary changes to the published hours must be indicated with an explanation, and an alternative contact given.

The searchroom should offer adequate study facilities for documents, maps and microform. There should be trained staff available to visitors (including at least one professional archivist) at all times the Record Office is open. Catalogues and indexes should also be provided. Access to original items should be possible during all opening hours.

The Record Office should provide a welcoming atmosphere that promotes informal learning and study. This should be reflected in the presentation of the building itself; the furniture, equipment and signage within the building; and the response of our staff.

Signage should be clear and consistent, and the public rooms should contain no health and safety hazards.

5.1.2 Search and enquiry service

Berkshire Record Office will respond to all enquiries by telephone, letter, fax or email. Enquiries are defined as questions in which information is requested or advice sought.

Information about the Record Office, its holdings, and how to search for them will be made available free of charge. The Record Office will produce information about itself and its holdings in hard copy form and online.

Some enquiries will require research in original or primary sources. The Record Office will charge a fee for these, as in 5.1.3 below.

5.1.3 Charged-for services

The following access and learning services may be charged for:

- research services: members of Record Office staff consulting documents on behalf of the public
- certificates: both statutory certificates such as marriage certificates and the preparation of certified copies of documents
- reprographics: copying documents by photocopy, microfilm print, photography or digital medium
- consultancies: offering advice on document care and repair or document appraisal, arrangement or cataloguing for documents not deposited in the Record Office
- talks and visits: sessions for external groups wishing to learn about the Record Office or sources for research

5.2 Collections management and support

5.2.1 Acquisitions

The Berkshire Record Office must accept, subject to the terms of the Acquisitions Policy, a representative selection of records relating to past or present life in Berkshire. Records may be accepted either as gifts or bequests, or as deposits in which case ownership is retained by the depositors and their heirs at law.

The receipt of donations and deposits must be acknowledged. The *Regulations Governing Gifts and Bequests of Records to, and Deposits of Records in, the Berkshire Record Office* must be adhered to and accessioning procedures in place.

5.2.2 Cataloguing

All records acquired by the Record Office must be catalogued according to international standards. Cataloguing procedures will be available to reflect all classes of material that the Record Office catalogues.

A cataloguing strategy should be in place. On the basis of this, a cataloguing programme should be prepared annually with output targets measured by both producible units and cubic volume.

A copy of all completed catalogues and indexes must be made available on open access to researchers in the searchroom.

5.2.3 Storage

The Record Office should aim to provide storage conditions in line with BS5454: 2000, *The Storage and Exhibition of Archival Documents*. Storage of archives must also satisfy the requirements of the National Archives inspection. An emergency plan should be in place.

5.2.4 Preservation and conservation

All staff undertaking preservation and conservation work should be appropriately trained. A preservation strategy should be in place. On the basis of this, a programme of preservation and conservation work should be prepared annually with output targets. All conservation work should be undertaken according to national standards.

5.2.5 Support for collections held elsewhere

The Record Office will provide support for archives and local studies collections held by the partners to the joint agreement. This support will include the allocation of some resources for preservation work. An annual plan for collections support will be prepared in consultation with the Berkshire Local Studies Forum.

5.3 Promotion

The Record Office should not only meet the needs of existing customers, but also increase the awareness and understanding of the importance of archives within the community. The Record Office should also promote its services for informal learning, and support formal learning in partnership with other agencies. A marketing strategy should be in place, and outreach and promotion work targets should be prepared annually.

Examples of promotional activity that the Record Office will provide include:

- Events, both within and outside the building
- Talks and visits for groups and individuals
- Exhibitions, both for the Record Office and support for other organisations
- Publications, both free and for sale, in hard copy and online
- Media work

6 Staffing

6.1 Knowledge, skills and expertise

All staff working in the Record Office should have:

- A friendly and helpful approach to providing information about the Record Office and the archives to customers
- An understanding of the particular requirements of the storage and use of archive material
- The ability to communicate complex information with clarity
- Accuracy and neatness in all aspects of their work
- Enhanced literacy and basic numeracy skills
- A commitment to further knowledge and skills development

All public service staff need:

- Training in enquiry techniques and knowledge of alternative sources in order to assist all members of the community
- Knowledge of Berkshire local history and sources

Archivists should also have:

- A postgraduate qualification recognised by the Society of Archivists in archive administration or the equivalent

Conservators should also have:

- A qualification recognised by the Society of Archivists

Administrative staff should also have:

- The ability to type accurately to a high standard

Preservation staff should also have:

- Manual dexterity and craft skills

6.2 Training

All staff should have a tailored induction training programme for their post. This induction programme should include health and safety and customer care training.

A training plan should be in place and annual targets set for further staff development.