



LOTHIAN HEALTH SERVICES ARCHIVE: PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION POLICY (SUMMARY)

1. Aims

As the only NHS archive in the Lothian region, and the largest of the medical archives in Scotland, LHSA is an important repository of medical information for the Scottish nation. 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 a number of written statements collated in the Preservation and Conservation Policy.

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

2. Potential applications

The Preservation and Conservation Policy will be used to support the work of the LHSA Paper Conservator and the allocation of funds from the annual budget to the preservation and conservation programme. In addition, the Policy will act as supporting evidence for applications to external grant-giving bodies, serving to illustrate LHSA's professional commitment to collection care.

3. Policy statements: general

3.1. Objectives

LHSA aims to undertake preventive conservation strategies, coupled with interventive conservation treatments as necessary, in order to address the preservation and conservation needs of the Archive. The preservation and conservation programme of work aims to ensure access to the collections for both the short- and long-term.

LHSA aims to maintain the positive work that has already been undertaken to preserve and conserve the collections and to raise the standard of care over time by following the principles laid out in this Policy.

LHSA aims to raise staff and reader awareness of preservation and conservation issues in order that collections are accessed in a manner that facilitates their long-term preservation.

LHSA aims to foster information exchange in order to provide the highest level of care to the collections possible.

LHSA aims to formalise its approach to collection care to meet the above objectives. The Preservation and Conservation Policy is an official statement of LHSA's commitment to the long-term care of the Archive in order to facilitate current and future use.

3.2. Management of preservation and conservation

LHSA understands the importance of establishing and maintaining responsibility for collection care at a senior level.

3.3. Philosophy

LHSA understands the need to address the preservation and conservation requirements of the Archive, whilst also balancing requirements on a series and/or item level.

3.4. Finance

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.

3.5. Staffing

LHSA understands that a conservator solely dedicated to the treatment of the collections, and other relevant conservation staff where possible, must be employed in order to ensure the execution and maintenance of an effective preservation and conservation programme.

3.6. Assessment

LHSA understands that continued assessment of the collections plays an important role in formulating and delivering a comprehensive preservation and conservation programme.

3.7. Prioritisation

LHSA understands that the size of the Archive necessitates prioritisation for conservation treatment and that this prioritisation is based on a combination of condition, historical significance and access requirements.

3.8. Retention

LHSA understands that budget and time constraints on the preservation and conservation programme mean that the proposed retention period of an item or items will influence the level of treatment provided.

3.9. Ethics of treatment

LHSA understands that it has a professional, ethical responsibility to provide the Archive collections with the highest standard of treatment.

3.10. Documentation

LHSA understands that accurate and thorough documentation of all preservation and conservation work undertaken is an essential part of ethical treatment, and is vital to the effective communication of previous interventions to future custodians and users of the collections.

3.11. Communication and liaison

LHSA understands that communication and liaison between conservation and archival staff facilitates dissemination of specialist knowledge and promotes a high standard of care for the collections.

3.12. Partnerships

LHSA understands that partnerships with external bodies may increase and enhance the level of collection care provided.

4. Policy statements: preventive conservation

4.1. Storage

LHSA understands the importance of providing suitable storage conditions and the impact, both positive and negative, that the storage system may have on the collections.

4.1.1. The building

LHSA understands that the provision and maintenance of a suitable building structure contributes to storage conditions conducive to the long-term preservation of the collections.

4.1.2. Storage furniture

LHSA understands the importance of appropriate storage furniture to ensure safe and easy access and reduce the risk of damage to the collections.

4.1.3. The environment

LHSA understands the influence that the ambient environment - including light, relative humidity, temperature and atmospheric pollutants - has on the condition of the collections and adheres to the recommendations in PD5454:2000 as far as possible.

4.1.4. Boxing policy

LHSA understands that, providing appropriate storage materials are used, boxing the collections offers an additional layer of protection and may serve to secure long-term preservation.

4.2. Security

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.

4.3. Housekeeping

LHSA understands the importance of maintaining a high level of cleanliness in storage and work areas in order to reduce risk to the condition of the collections.

4.4. Pest management

LHSA understands the risk that pests pose to the long-term preservation of the collections, both in terms of the potential damage to the integrity of the building structure and to the items themselves.

4.5. Handling and transportation

LHSA understands that good handling practices, both by readers and by LHSA staff, should be imposed.

4.6. Exhibition and loan

LHSA understands that exhibition and loan can be used to positive effect both to promote the Archive 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.

4.7. Surrogating and substitution

LHSA recognises that surrogacy and substitution may aid in the long-term preservation of the collection and/or the informational content of an item.

4.8. Reprographics

LHSA understands that reproduction of collection items may be necessary to promote the Archive and to fulfil access requirements, be it for publication or enquiry. LHSA also recognises that the reprographic process itself has the potential to cause damage to the collection item(s) concerned.

4.9. Training

LHSA understands that basic preservation training for all staff will increase the level of care offered to the collections.

4.10. Disaster prevention, response and recovery

LHSA understands that the production and maintenance of Disaster Prevention and Disaster Response and Recovery Policies are necessary in order to provide proper care for the collections, and are essential in the control and limitation of potential damage in the event of a disaster.

5. Policy statements: interventive conservation

5.1. Workshop facilities

LHSA understands that an active and effective preservation and conservation programme requires a suitable work space and access to materials and equipment to support treatment.

5.2. Commission of commercial work

LHSA understands that the treatment of certain material types is outside the remit of a qualified paper conservator and that professional ethics necessitate the commission of commercial work. Time constraints on the Paper Conservator may also prompt out-sourcing of conservation treatment to a commercial company. LHSA demands the highest standard of treatment for all items that undergo conservation by a commercial company.