

Terms of Reference for The National Archives' User Forum – Updated July 2013

The role of the User Forum is to:

Represent the interests of all users of The National Archives' public services (onsite, online, and remotely)¹

Act as a body to seek feedback on quality of service being provided and put forward suggestions for improvement

Provide a forum for management to communicate our strategic and business priorities, the goals we set and the work we do to meet them

Provide a forum for management to test ideas for service improvement

Advise management on measures that can be taken to improve public consultation on service delivery

Bring issues of concern or potential risk to the attention of management

Provide an opportunity for users to be updated on the strategic User Advisory Group (UAG) meetings by UAG delegates, as well as a channel to raise matters of concern with the UAG delegates.

The role of the User Forum is distinct from:

The role of the User Advisory Group, which provides advice, guidance and feedback on the development and delivery of public services at a strategic level. However, it is likely that there will be links and communication channels between the 2 groups, in both directions (see above).

Executive responsibility of The National Archives' formal governance structure

Any other consultative group not listed above

Method of engagement

The User Forum will be open to all interested users of our services.

Management will make a commitment to encourage both onsite and online users to attend, and to make the meeting accessible to a broad range of user types (e.g. Independent Researchers, Family Historians, Military Historians) and user demographics.

We will advertise the forums widely so as to encourage a diverse attendance. Timings of the meetings will be varied so as to maximise opportunities to attend.

The National Archives commits to:

Allow all users the opportunity to have their say

Listen to, and take on board the opinions of those present

Manage and Chair the meetings effectively to promote productive communication and discussion

In return, users will be expected to:

Following a successful pilot with a controlled number of invited members in 2012, our online community platform went live and open to all in March 2013.

Respect the right of all users to have their say

Behave courteously and thoughtfully towards other users and staff

Respect the roles of the Chair and other staff in managing and steering the meetings

Constitution of the User Forum

The User Forum will meet 8 times a year with:

(Chair²)

The Head of Public Services Development (Chair²)

The Head of Advice and Records Knowledge (Chair²)

The Head of Document Services (Chair²)

The Commercial Director and / or the Head of Commercial Delivery

The Quality Manager

Additional members of staff can be made available depending upon agenda topics. Where appropriate, issues raised at the User Forum can be referred for an off line meeting between the user(s) concerned and the appropriate member(s) of staff. Similarly, where appropriate, issues raised at the User Forum can be escalated to the User Advisory Group.

For the purpose of communicating Business Plans and Reports, the forum will also be attended at least once annually by the Chief Executive.

Agendas for meetings will be published in advance, and decisions and actions will be recorded and agreed following the meetings.

Resources

We will make limited resources available to support the User Forum:

Advertise the User Forum onsite, online and in publications where appropriate

Provide meeting space, refreshments and facilities, as required

Provide a standing agenda item at the next User Forum meeting following each UAG meeting for a nominated UAG delegate to provide an update on the content of the UAG meetings and seek feedback from users to be fed in to future UAG discussions as appropriate.

Provide an open agenda once a year enabling users to raise any issues of concern to them (in addition to the limited opportunity for open discussion at each meeting). Users will be encouraged to provide notice of items they wish to raise so as to enable us to prepare a detailed response. Responses to items without notice may need to be deferred to the next meeting.

² Following the departure of the Director of Operations and Services in June 2012, chairing will be rotated, until at least February 2014.