The National Archives
The National Archives’ Engagement Team
Working with the wider archives sector
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Archives sector leadership

• The National Archives took on the leadership role for archives in England in 2011

• Archives for the 21st Century – government policy (under review)

• Statutory role for Places of Deposit

• Merger with Historical Manuscripts Commission in 2003

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Engagement Team – who we are

• Wider Archives Sector Development department (35 staff):
  o Engagement
  o Independent Archives
  o Collections Knowledge
  o Programmes (e.g. Archive Service Accreditation, 20 Year Rule)
• Four Engagement Managers covering English regions:
  o East
  o West
  o North
  o London
• Places of Deposit management (2 staff) including liaison with Wales
• Strategic Engagement Manager dealing with major stakeholders at a national level
• Communications, events, training (2 staff)
Engagement Team – what we do

• Main points of contact for archives sector
• Intelligence-gathering – helping to define sector need
• Communicating our work programmes and the support we offer
• Visits to services
• Involvement in local networks
• Projects – hands-on work within the sector
• Advocacy – includes meeting senior people in the archive service’s parent body to help get their support for the service
• Interventions:
  o Advice on managing challenges (including budget cuts, restructuring)
  o Investigation or challenge if services are not meeting, or not likely to meet, national standards
A time of challenge and change

- Local government cuts:
  - Councils made £10bn savings 2011-2014
  - Prediction that funding for many services will shrink by 66% by 2020
  - Source: *Under Pressure*, Local Government Association (2014)

- Audiences are changing:
  - Decline in onsite visitor numbers (3% drop since 2005 in people visiting local authority archive services in their own time)
  - Increase in use of the internet, particularly amongst over-55s
  - Source: *Digital Services and Archive Audiences*, The National Archives (2014)

- Many services are changing how they operate, from governance to service provision
Targeted support

- Research including review of Archives for the 21st Century – will help us define priorities
- Guidance, e.g.:
  - In a spin – for local authority services entering alternative governance arrangements
  - Deaccessioning and disposal
- Training, e.g.:
  - How to survive a service review
  - Collecting in tough times
- Partnership projects in London and Manchester, with more starting in West Midlands and South East/South West
  - Exploring how to make best use of limited resources
  - Shared vision and action plan
  - Brings together senior managers and archivists
Advocacy and influencing

• We work across government and with national bodies to raise awareness of archives and bring benefits to the sector, e.g.:
  - Heritage Lottery Fund
  - Arts Council England
  - Local Government Association

• We deliver Explore Your Archive (awareness campaign) with the Archives and Records Association

• Much of our work takes place behind the scenes

• We often meet senior managers, including directors or portfolio holders within local authorities

• We are consulted on major changes (e.g. capital works, new governance) and provide comments and advice

• Our influence comes from being a national body with the sector leadership role, with good links to the sector (credibility)
Advocacy contd.

- Importance of Archive Service Accreditation for advocacy purposes
  - Working towards accreditation can help services advocate for themselves and make a case to funders
Accreditation

• New national standard for archives (replaces old Standard and self-assessment)
• All PoDs are expected to apply by 2017, but standard is scalable
• UK-wide partnership:
  o The National Archives
  o Archives and Records Association (UK and Ireland)
  o Archives and Records Council Wales
  o Arts Council England
  o National Records of Scotland
  o Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
  o Scottish Council on Archives
  o Museums Archives and Libraries Division of the Welsh Government
• We manage the programme and are the assessor body in England
• Assessor and peer reviewer make recommendations to the Panel
Interventions

• We ask questions, challenge, advise, explore alternatives if there are areas of concern, e.g.:
  o Access
  o Collections care
  o Governance

• We refer to relevant legislation, e.g. Local Government Acts or Freedom of Information Act, and to the expectations on Places of Deposit

• Archives applying for accreditation must show that they are:
  o Improving access and responding to the needs and interests of the communities they serve
  o Managing their resources to carry out their plans
Accreditation and risk

• Accreditation requires that services actively manage various types of risk:
  o Risks to collections (collections care and conservation, building standards, environmental monitoring, fire risk management, site selection, security, disaster planning)
  o Risks to services (budget, staffing, governance, forward planning, financial planning)

• Accreditation cannot guarantee sustainability, but it supports the preconditions for sustainability