



Delivering Across Scotland: National Strategy 2023-2027

How to access collections advice from National Museums Scotland

This guidance was last updated in November 2023.

National Museums Scotland's National Programme supports the museums sector across the country by sharing our collections and expertise for the widest benefit. This guidance is for organisations holding public collections in Scotland who want to ask for collections advice from National Museums Scotland.

Before asking for advice, please check that the advice you require is not already covered by other resources, for example:

- [National Museums Scotland](#) online training and guidance
- [Museums Galleries Scotland](#) advice topics
- [Collections Trust](#) resources
- [Historic Environment Scotland](#) advice and support
- [Museums Association](#) Museums Essentials courses.

1. Can I ask for collections advice?

You can ask for collections advice if you **work or volunteer for an organisation that holds a public collection in Scotland**.

If your organisation is a museum, we normally expect it to be accredited under the [UK Museum Accreditation Scheme](#), managed by Arts Council England in partnership with Museums Galleries Scotland.

Due to available resources, we cannot give collections advice if you're not directly involved with a public collection, for example, if you're a consultant or an individual working on a personal project.

2. What collections advice can I ask for?

2.1 Normal services

As part of our normal services, you can ask staff in our collections departments for **specialist curatorial or collections care advice**. The request should be for **advice that can be provided easily by an email or phone call**. Our staff can:

- Advise on collections in their area of expertise, including identification, care and management
- Signpost to relevant resources
- Share our own approaches or procedures, for example, to help you judge how to approach the specialist care or conservation of a collection.

There is normally no charge for this service.

To make the most of available resources, please use this service **only when you need specialist curatorial or collections care advice that you cannot get from other sources**. Please refer to the list at the beginning of this guidance for examples of other sources of collections advice.

If we notice a number of museums asking for similar advice, we may try to address these needs through guidance resources [on our website](#), or training and knowledge sharing events as part of our National Training Programme. [Sign up here](#) to receive our National & International Partnerships newsletter to keep up to date with these opportunities.

2.2 Specialist services

We're not able, as part of our normal service, to give advice that involves a **significant investment of time**. For example, site visits, detailed reviews of collections, conservation analysis, or advising on a specific project.

We may, however, provide this level of advice when it contributes to our wider strategic aims and priorities, if it's part of a formal partnership agreement, or if it can be done on a cost-recoverable basis.

3. How do I ask for collections advice?

1. Before you ask for advice, please check that the advice you require is not already covered by other resources, such as those listed at the start of this guidance.
2. If you cannot get the advice you need from other sources, [browse the collections departments on our website](#) to identify the member of staff with the relevant expertise. If you need help finding the right person, please contact partnerships@nms.ac.uk
3. Once you have identified the relevant member of staff, send an email directly to them with your query.
4. When you receive a response, please record and share the advice with your colleagues so it can benefit your organisation in the long term.

Please be aware that there may be periods when specific staff or collection departments cannot respond to requests for advice, due to current priorities, demands and available resources.