# East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office Collections Development Policy

**Date:** March 2026

## Document summary

This document explains why East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office collects archives, what it collects and how it does so. It also identifies areas for development in the Record Office's holdings in order to set priorities for the future.

## Enquiries

The Keep, 01273 482349 or thekeep@eastsussex.gov.uk

## Contents

Key points ..... 2
1. Name of Archive Service ..... 2
2. Relationship with Brighton & Hove City Council and The Keep Board ..... 2
3. Legislation ..... 2
4. Scope ..... 3
5. Acquisition of Archives ..... 4
6. Formats of Archives ..... 5
7. Areas for development in the collections ..... 6

# East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office Collections Development Policy

## Key points

- The role of the East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office is to locate, acquire, collect and preserve archival material relating to past and present life in the administrative county of East Sussex and the City of Brighton and Hove, and to make that material available to the public. It is based at The Keep, which is run in partnership with Brighton & Hove City Council and the University of Sussex.
- The Keep is an Accredited Archive service and conforms to guidelines set out in The National Archives Accreditation Standard.
- This policy is essential to support the role and aims of East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office, and explains why East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office collects archival material, what it collects and how it does so. This policy takes into account the recommendations of The National Archives for collections development, and current government policy on archives.

### 1. Name of Archive Service

1.1. East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office.

### 2. Relationship with Brighton & Hove City Council and The Keep Board

2.1. East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office is part of the Communities Division of the Communities, Economy and Transport Department of ESCC.

2.2. East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office provides an archive service to Brighton & Hove City Council, a unitary authority formed on 1 April 1997, under a Service Level Agreement dated August 2013, which has a term of twenty (20) years.

2.3. Relevant policies and procedures are reviewed by representatives of the three partners of The Keep – East Sussex County Council, Brighton & Hove City Council and the University of Sussex – at the Keep Management Team. Any changes affecting the management of The Keep are approved by the Keep Board.

### 3. Legislation

3.1 East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office holds the archives of East Sussex and Brighton & Hove in line with the following regulations:

3.1.1 S.224 of the Local Government Act 1972, whereby East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office fulfils East Sussex County Council's responsibility for making proper arrangements for documents belonging to or in its custody.

3.1.2 The Local Government (Records) Act 1962 whereby East Sussex County Council was constituted an 'archive authority' with powers to make provision for the inspection and copying of documents, to prepare finding aids, publish records, hold exhibitions, stage lectures, purchase and accept gifts and deposits of records including those of other local authorities, and 'do all such things as appear to it necessary or expedient for enabling adequate use to be made of records under its control'.

3.1.3 S.4(1) of the Public Records Act 1958, whereby, as an appointed place of deposit, East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office accepts the deposit of defined categories of public record of a local character on behalf of the Lord Chancellor.

3.1.4 The Manorial Document Rules of 1959 and the Tithe (Copies of Apportionment) Rules of 1960, whereby East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office accepts custody of, respectively, manorial and tithe documents under the charge and superintendence of the Master of the Rolls.

3.1.5 In addition, East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office exercises the powers of East Sussex County Council in respect of the records of Parish Councils under s.226(1)(b), (4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972.

3.1.6 An instrument dated 24 December 1954, as amended by further instrument dated 29 March 1974, whereby the Bishop of Chichester established a diocesan record office at East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office to serve as a place of deposit for registers and records of ecclesiastical parishes located within the administrative county of East Sussex and the City of Brighton & Hove. Such records are currently held under the provisions of the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978.

3.1.7 East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office is committed to ensuring it complies with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

## 4 Scope

4.1 East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office seeks to collect archives that relate to any geographical part of the administrative county of East Sussex and the unitary authority of Brighton & Hove as constituted on 1 April 1997.

4.2 East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office may consider accepting any archives that record or illustrate the administration, life and development of East Sussex or Brighton & Hove throughout history.

4.3 In keeping with good archival practice, East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office will aim not to split archives which contain elements relating to other geographical areas. However, we will only accept such archives when the majority of papers relate to East Sussex or Brighton & Hove.

4.4 There are certain classes of records that East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office will not consider taking unless there are extraordinary reasons for their acceptance. These include personal papers which are mainly research notes; collections of appointments of office diaries; low-level accounting records including receipt and account books, especially where audited annual accounts exist; and archives in any format where the depositor wishes to impose a lengthy closure period for reasons other than Data Protection. We will also not accept Oral History recordings unless we consider them to be of significant historical value and they have been recorded and documented in line with Oral History Society guidance.

4.5 East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office's collecting focus is the statutory records of Local Authorities and parishes. As such, we will only consider accepting collections from external sources if they are of historical or cultural value. Material

offered that comes from funded projects will be considered provided the cost of East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office time to catalogue and preserve the material, including packaging and/or processing costs, has been included in the project funding bid.

## 5 Acquisition of Archives

5.1 Archival material passes into the custody of East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office in a number of ways.

5.1.1 East Sussex County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council.

5.1.2 Central Government under the Public Records Act and other statutes (see paragraph 3.1.3-3.1.5 above).

5.1.3 The established church under the Parochial Registers and Records Measure (see paragraph 3.1.6 above).

5.1.4 District and Parish Councils and statutory bodies such as water authorities, the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner and East Sussex Fire Authority.

5.1.5 Organisations, businesses, or individuals (subject to 4.5 above).

5.1.6 More information regarding the make up of existing holdings can be found in the Collections Information Statement.

5.2 East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office will not accept unsolicited deposits of archive material. Accessions will only be accepted by prior arrangement and following an assessment of the material being offered, in accordance with this policy and related documents. All potential depositors should read the information available and then contact EBHRO@eastsussex.gov.uk in the first instance.

5.3 When accepting archives, East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office will establish ownership of the material and any separate intellectual property rights. We will also agree restrictions on access arising from legislation or the wishes of the donor/depositor. We will encourage people to donate their records to East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office rather than depositing. We will adhere to the guidelines for dealing with new accessions set out in the Collections Information Statement.

5.4 The acquisition of non-statutory deposits will only be considered if records are first appraised as having archival value by an archivist, and will be subject to East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office having sufficient resources available to catalogue, care for, store, and make accessible the records.

5.5 All depositors of large or complex accessions that are accepted are encouraged to provide an item or box list at the time of transfer. East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office reserves the right to refuse the acquisition of such collections without finding aids if they would otherwise be inaccessible and difficult to catalogue.

5.6 Depositors of accessions of any size must remove supplementary material from the records (such as, but not limited to, plastic wallets) that will increase the time required for cataloguing to take place. East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office reserves the right to return records transferred to the Record Office if such supplementary items are not removed before transfer.

5.7 Areement to take records (physical or digital) may be subject to charges for cataloguing, preservation, processing, packaging and storage.

5.8 East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office continues a policy of purchasing archives to place or keep them in the public domain. Such purchases are funded entirely from external grants and external funding, particularly from the Friends of The Keep Archive (FoTKA). East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office reserves the right to make the final decision on the acceptance of purchases.

5.9 East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office will appraise and assess archive holdings in accordance with this and related documents before, during and after acquisition.

## 6 Formats of Archives

6.1. East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office will consider accepting archives in a wide range of formats including paper, parchment, digital (including digital audio-visual material), microform, and visual media (including photographs, glass negatives, slides and transparencies).

6.2. Format and transfer of digital records with be discussed with depositors prior to acceptance. See the East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office Digital Preservation Policy.

6.3. East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office does not accept archive film (for example reel-to-reel, cinefilm) forming part of a donation or deposit. We will not accept material on VHS, DVD or CD if we cannot extract the data or provide access to it.

6.4. Books, newspapers, pamphlets and journals will be added to the reference collection at The Keep if they form part of an existing archive or are considered to have enough local relevance.

6.5. East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office will consider accepting copies of documents held in other repositories if they relate closely to its existing holdings and are otherwise not readily accessible.

6.6. Museum objects and artefacts will not normally be accepted. Potential depositors should instead contact an appropriate museum service. Artefacts which form part of an archive, such as elements of uniforms, may be accepted. Textiles will generally not be accepted.

6.7. East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office may accept artistic material under two circumstances: when it forms part of an artist's archive, or when it forms a record of now-vanished elements of the landscape. East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office will never compete with galleries or museums to acquire such material.

6.8. Archives offered to East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office in poor physical condition are unlikely to be accepted unless the donor/depositor agrees to cover the costs of conservation, to be agreed on a case-by-case basis, and only if resources are available to carry out the conservation work.

## 7 Areas for development in the collections

7.1 Current strengths

7.1.1 East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office has an excellent relationship with the East Sussex County Council Record Centre (for modern records) and a well-established, streamlined process for transfer of records of archival value at the end of their retention period.

7.1.2 East Sussex County Council has embedded a detailed retention schedule for the management of these records, and has a robust process for approval of changes to this retention schedule.

7.1.3 East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office works with ESCC departments to update the retention schedule where records that are appraised as not having archival value are being regularly offered to the archive.

7.1.4 The Record Office has established relationships with District, Borough and Parish Councils to increase the transfer of statutory records from these organisations.

7.1.5 Archivists have worked with the East Sussex County Council Childrens Services department to increase awareness of and deposits to the archive service amongst Secondary Schools.

7.1.6 East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office has developed clear processes for accepting and accessioning offers of non-statutory records within the resources available, including supporting community projects that work to develop collections and collections information within the scope of the Collections Development Policy.

7.1.7 The Record office has established relationships with several local community organisations in support of 7.1.6 above.

7.1.8 The Keep Public Engagement Group produces an annual Communications and Engagement plan to ensure that engagement activity is carried out making best use of available resources.

7.1.9 East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office has an established volunteer programme enabling further community engagement with the sector, and collections development activity.

7.1.10 The Record Office is responsive to The National Archive in its capacity as a Place of Deposit for public records, and has an established process for regular transfer of Coroner's Records from East Sussex and Brighton & Hove to the archive.

7.1.11 East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office does not have a cataloguing backlog. Less than 1% of the archive's holdings (current accessions) are unlisted.

7.2 Areas for development

7.2.1 East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office will develop and implement an internal communications programme to increase awareness of what records the archive holds on behalf of Council departments, and how these can be a useful resource for wider Council staff.

7.2.2 The Record Office will continue to work with District, Borough and Parish Councils to ensure regular transfers of records that are made accessible to the public (subject to relevant legislation).

7.2.3 The Record Office will continue to address representation of, and support improvements to existing catalogues of marginalised and underrepresented communities through its accessions policy and project work.

7.2.4 East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office has acquired Preservica for digital preservation and will continue to increase the assets held on the system, making them accessible via the online Universal Access platform where practicable.

7.2.5 The Record Office will continue to improve access to collections through cataloguing new accessions in a timely manner, improving finding aids for customers, enabling access to records no longer in copyright, and improving access to unorderable items through its Conservation Development Plan.

7.2.6 Senior staff from the East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office will continue to attend local, regional and national groups and meetings to keep up to date on the developing Mayoral Combined Authority for Sussex, and on plans for Local Government Reorganisation, and their potential impact on the archive.