

60671 Public Art and Museums

For projects from January 2024 up to date

And for ongoing work and upcoming, planned work

Public art

What is being done to make the town hall space more inclusive in terms of race, and LGBT inclusion?

What artworks have been installed or removed to help with this? Paintings linked to empire and slavery for example.

Many of the artworks on display at City Chambers are part of the Museum Service's collection. The collection includes over 200,000 items and the team is actively reviewing individual pieces and their interpretation as opportunity allows, for example, on regular location audit, condition checking, loans administration or rotation of displays.

What public art more generally, has been commissioned to improve diversity and inclusion?

The City of Edinburgh Council approved a new policy on Public Art in February 2025. The policy can be accessed here: [Edinburgh Public Art Policy](#).

Relevant elements of the Public Art Policy are copied below:

“Public art should not be an afterthought but rather a central component that enhances the identity of different neighbourhoods and contributes to a sense of belonging. Historic inequalities in who is represented, and how, can be addressed through stating these policy priorities.

Use of the policy and commissioning guidelines will address existing inequalities in representation through intentional efforts to diversify the artists involved in public art projects and the people and achievements remembered. This will include actions which acknowledge Edinburgh's colonialist past and links to the slave trade.

It will encourage projects that raise awareness and prompt thoughtful conversations about the city's historical connections, fostering a deeper understanding of our collective past and future.

It will ensure that public art projects serve as a platform for dialogue, education, and reconciliation, contributing to a more inclusive and informed community.”

The Council does not generally commission new works of art, but in response to the findings of the Colonialism and Slavery Review, we are working with partners across the city to develop and realise a major new permanent, publicly sited artwork in Edinburgh which will explore the connections between Edinburgh, Scotland, the Caribbean and the transatlantic slave trade.

What public art more generally, has been removed, or given greater context, or reviewed for links to offensive or outmoded issues - statues linked to empire and slavery, for example

In 2020, the Council commissioned an independent review of Edinburgh's links with Slavery and Colonialism as represented in the public realm (through statues, public buildings and street names) led by Sir Geoff Palmer. The Review Group published its [report](#) in 2022. All

recommendations were fully endorsed by Council and an independent Implementation Group established to oversee their delivery. This includes two recommendations of relevance here:

- Statues, monuments, buildings and street names associated with slavery and colonialism in Edinburgh are retained and re-presented in accordance with a new, dedicated interpretation strategy which explains the nature and consequences of that involvement.
- A significant public artwork is commissioned acknowledging Edinburgh's links with slavery and colonialism. This initiates the development of a city-wide strategy for public art that fairly represents the diversity of the city and its histories and capitalises on the creative potential of a multicultural city.

Work to deliver these recommendations is ongoing.

Local museums

What is being done to make local museums (if applicable) more inclusive in terms of race, and LGBT inclusion?

The Museums Service observes the Council's EDI Policy, is currently reviewing and updating its own departmental EDI Framework and has a staff Inclusion Group to make sure relevant matters are regularly discussed and actions agreed where required. Staff also undertake EDI training provided by the Council in-house and by museum sector providers. We are currently taking part in the Delivering Change programme through Museums Galleries Scotland which has included anti-racism and anti-ableism training, with a view to establishing anti-oppressive ways of working long term.

What displays have been added or updated to help with this? For example, have outdated displays been taken down?

The Museums Service is currently undergoing a review and one of its key aims is to ensure galleries become more flexible, allowing for greater rotation of exhibits and more frequent change of displays. This will enable the service to work with more partners to co-curate new displays ensuring greater relevance and a more inclusive approach. We aim to actively work with people from a range of backgrounds who may have experienced exclusion or discrimination in cultural settings.

In the interim, displays in permanent galleries have been changed, for example at Museum of Childhood, to place collection items which are racially offensive into storage, and the service manages a regularly changing programme of interventions and temporary exhibitions to ensure a diversity of voice and range of contemporary subject matters are considered. Recent examples include Disrupting the Narrative, Local Foreigners, Respect: Caribbean Life in Edinburgh and Past Shelves: Histories of Queer Reading.

What research is being undertaken?

Research is undertaken on a project basis and focus is dependent on the resource available and outputs planned. For example, one of the actions agreed as part of the Museum Service's anti-racism action plan is to reconsider the South Seas material which is part of the Robert Louis Stevenson collection at Writer's Museum. This will be part of its ongoing work to understand and progress approaches to decolonisation across collections.

What tours are available?

A changing range of spotlight tours are available across Museum venues as part of the Service's public programme.

What advice on racial inclusion and LTGBT issues is provided to staff?

Please see response above with regards staff training and adherence to existing EDI policy.

Libraries

If applicable, what is being done to make local libraries more inclusive in terms of race, and LGBT inclusion?

Edinburgh libraries are committed to fostering inclusivity and diversity in our citywide collections. To achieve this, we ensure that our stock includes a broad range of fiction and non-fiction titles that reflect the diverse interests and needs of our communities.

Inclusive Stock Selection

- Our supplier selection specification prioritises works related to groups with protected characteristics (e.g., disability, ethnicity, sexuality) as defined by UK law.
- Titles include storylines exploring diverse themes and characters, as well as works by authors from underrepresented groups.

Foreign Language Materials

- A range of foreign language materials is included to cater to the needs of multilingual communities, further enhancing inclusivity.

Public Engagement

- We actively encourage public participation in the selection process. For example, our "suggest-a-book" service allows the public to recommend titles, helping to identify gaps in our collection and meet specific needs.

Event-Specific Resources

- Listings and materials produced for events and promotions, such as Black History Month and LGBTQ+ History Month, are reviewed and incorporated into the collection to ensure representation and support the delivery of activities in local libraries.

A calendar of awareness days/weeks/months has been created using several broad themes, including: Inclusion and Diversity; Health and Wellbeing; Reading and Literacy. All Edinburgh libraries use this to help create a diverse programme of events and activities for all age groups. The table below summarises the calendar activities for year 25/26 for Inclusion and Diversity, this is not an exhaustive list as it reflects only the awareness days/weeks/months that all libraries are expected to support. Local library teams also have autonomy to ensure the delivery of events and activities that are relevant to and meet the needs of their local communities.

Holocaust Memorial Day	Events and Promotion
LGBTQ History Month	Events and Promotion

International Women's Day	Promotion
World Autism Acceptance Month (includes World Autism Acceptance Day 2nd April)	Events and Promotion
Deaf Awareness Week	Events and Promotion
Hi VIS - Visually impaired in Libraries	Promotion
International Youth Day	Events and Promotion
World Alzheimer's Day	Events and Promotion
Black History Month	Events and promotion
International Day of Older People	Promotion
Dyslexia Awareness Week - Scotland	Events and Promotion
Winter Festivals (Hanukkah, Dwali)	Events and Promotion
Human Rights Day	Events and Promotion

What books have been added to stock in relation to this?

As stated above, our stock is selected to offer the broadest range of subject coverage both within fiction and non-fiction titles. Therefore, it is not possible to provide specific details of titles added as the extent of our stock would negate providing an itemised list. However, all titles available for lending can be found on our [online catalogue](#).

Our stock has not been categorised in such a way that enables us to identify all added stock that may be within scope of your request.

What books have been removed or moved to a reserve stack, or a less prominent place, because their content might be problematic; for example, outdated, racist, homophobic, transphobic, Islamophobic?

No books have been removed or moved due to problematic content other than out of date or inaccurate material, as outlined in our withdrawal guidance below:

Stock selection and acquisition is a continuous process requiring regular assessment of shelf stock and the withdrawal of older, less popular items to allow space for newer, more popular, or more up to date titles.

Stock items will be moved between libraries as appropriate to ensure maximum usage is achieved before they are removed from general circulation.

Items, which are no longer required for general circulation, may be held in a reserve because of their uniqueness, or contribution to the overall intellectual value of the collection.

Items may be withdrawn for any of the following reasons:

- poor physical condition and beyond reasonable repair

- out of date or inaccurate material
- more copies in stock than needs dictate
- superseded editions
- declining issue rate

It is not possible to provide a list of titles that have been withdrawn specific to 'outdated' as there is no data recorded detailing the reason for withdrawal and withdrawn items could meet any of the criteria outlined above.

Can you provide details of any complaint received in the timeframe relating to the above issues?

2024

Granddads Pride by Harry Woodgate

Complaint raised concerns about the appropriateness of the images and ideas in the picture book. It was established that a later edition had been edited and images replaced by the publisher to make it more suitable for the age group concerned and the original copies were replaced with later edition copies.

2025

Feminism for Women by Julie Bindel

Difficult Women by Helen Lewis.

Complaint requested that the titles be removed from a Leith Library International Women's Day display as they suggested that they were written by 'anti-trans activists'. Our process of selection for this display was to feature a variety of relevant books on the topics of feminism and celebrating women and offered a variety of opinions. Therefore, the complaint was not upheld, and the books were not removed.