

TRANS- INCLUSIVE CULTURE

Resources to support trans-inclusive practice for museums, galleries, archives and heritage organisations

SCENARIO:

Anti-trans stickering, defacement and placement of print materials

6

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This resource has been developed by the University of Leicester's Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) through a partnership of leading UK museums, galleries and heritage organisations and a team of experts in trans inclusion, equalities, law and ethics. The resources have been created to support a step change in the capacity and confidence of the UK's culture sector to advance trans inclusion as part of their commitments to inclusion for all.

More information about the partnership – supported by Art Fund, the national charity for museums and galleries, and the Economic and Social Research Council – can be found at transinclusiveculture.le.ac.uk

Disclaimer

Please note that this guidance is intended only as a starting point to assist relevant organisations in enhancing trans inclusion. Every effort has been made to ensure that it is correct from a legal standpoint. Readers must, however, be aware that it is pitched at a general level and it does not purport to offer a full account of the law. Readers are advised to, where necessary, take legal advice on the specific facts of their situation.

Note

Where the word “trans” is used in relation to legal duties, it is used synonymously with the term “gender reassignment” in section 7 of the Equality Act 2010.

Scenario: Anti-trans stickering, defacement and placement of print materials

In recent months, we have experienced increasing instances of anti-trans stickering in the museum – in the toilets, shop and galleries. We have also experienced some labels being written on and anti-trans print material being left in public spaces. What advice can you give on tackling this?

Stickers placed on museum walls, cases or labels, and/or defacement of labels, constitute vandalism, regardless of message.

Recognised museum standards, including the Museum Accreditation Scheme, require museums to take reasonable steps to protect collections from damage, manage risks to people and property, and ensure access that is safe and inclusive. Unauthorised stickering and defacement of labels is inconsistent with these professional obligations.

Stickering or defacement with the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them engages additional statutory and ethical duties in relation not only to the care, security and conservation of collections held in public trust, but also in relation to visitors and staff.

Organisations should have policies and procedures for dealing with issues such as these, framed around preventing defacement of museum property and placing of unauthorised print materials, and also safeguarding of people and collections, rather than engaging with the content of the material.

An approach such as this ensures consistent decision-making, supporting staff and volunteers to take actions that are lawful, proportionate and visibly backed by the organisation. Clear guidance enables organisations to fulfil their obligations, protecting collections, and minimising risk to all visitors and staff, including those who are trans, and their friends and families.

Make sure that your organisation has publicly visible messaging that clearly informs visitors that all stickering and graffiti is prohibited.

Also, consider having a copy of your organisation's written policy available, so that if there are questions about the organisation's position, the reasons for it can be explained.

Adopting this approach might be constructive and beneficial, for example in the event of a protest event, helping others to appreciate why stickering is not permitted, and that

enforcement of this policy applies irrespective of that individual or that group's message, and is not an interference with their individual rights, such as freedom of expression or belief.

Clear procedures and protocols are essential to support staff and give them confidence in dealing with situations. They should be given training which explains what is expected, and how to apply the policies, procedures or protocols in place within your organisation.

Typically, these will include guidelines such as:

- visitors observed stickering or defacing labels should be told to refrain from doing so, and anyone who continues is asked to leave, and told that persistent behaviour may justify exclusion;
- the incident, and any repeated incident, should be documented and reported.

Specific tools to support individual staff and volunteers in those situations might include:

- Short intervention scripts to equip them to approach anyone observed stickering or defacing museum property;
- Specific actions to be taken if stickers/print materials or defaced labels are found, for example:
 - Where stickers are attached to collection items, to always seek the advice of curatorial/collections /conservation teams before removal;
 - In all other situations, where it is safe to do so, and where the content is inoffensive, simply carefully remove and dispose of the material;
 - Where material is offensive, or if you feel the content may be illegal, notify your supervisor to determine what further action is needed (for example, taking photographs of the item in situ). If no supervisor is available, photograph the item in situ and take appropriate action, for example restricting access to the area, or covering or concealing the item where this can be done without causing damage.

It is often appropriate not to publicise individual incidents, as attention can amplify behaviour and encourage imitation.