

Notes on applications to move from provisional to full award:

Service name	Suffolk Archives	Assessor
<p>Context of provisional award</p>	<p>The service (a Place of Deposit) applied for Accreditation before the start of the major move entirely out of their Ipswich building and archive stores at Lowestoft and Bury St Edmunds (outstore only) to move the majority of the county's archives into a new building, The Hold, which was in the process of construction in Ipswich. The service retains a service point in the NE of the county and a full branch at Bury St Edmunds, but the move was designed to create standards-compliant, low-risk new stores to replace a number of stores with identified risks, as well as creating a high-profile new home for the service.</p> <p>As the service was undergoing major change, and some of the then-stores presented some enduring risks but with a viable plan for replacement, the panel followed precedent to offer a provisional award, to be reviewed post-move.</p>	
<p>Update on set actions (are they complete?)</p>	<p>The award was provisional for two years from March 2019, on condition of progress against three actions relating primarily to the move project and its impact on the service point in the NE of the county:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Complete The Hold building project and move collections from identified stores to improved accommodation. (4) Develop and deliver the service transformation element of The Hold project, ensuring that staff are supported to understand the new roles and ways of working that will make the reshaped service successful, and that capacity to manage and preserve collections is sustained. (10) Develop and confirm the public service delivery plans for the north east of the county once The Hold opens <p>The move project has been delayed by the pandemic, and the actions therefore not completed in full. However, there has been substantial progress:</p> <p>1: The Hold building has been completed and dried out to a point where collections can safely be moved. The moves from two out of three buildings have been completed, with the final move from the Bury outstore projected for summer 2021. This has included extensive repackaging work. The new building is designed to meet high preservation standards and to support the service's delivery across all collections and onsite access functions. The National Archives has seen and approved various iterations of the Hold plans throughout its development, including at the original Accreditation assessment. Although a site visit has not been possible within the limits of the pandemic, TNA has been content for the public records to move into the building on the basis of the high quality planning and delivery.</p> <p>Importantly, there have also been improvements to access areas at the Bury and Lowestoft sites, ensuring that the multiple service points continue to improve; The Hold is vital to the service's delivery but it has not obscured the needs of other elements of the service. There is strong progress against this action, which would have been completed but for pandemic delays. However, while public service has been opened in Bury and Lowestoft, research access</p>	

	<p>to The Hold will not open until late summer at earliest, so this cannot be signed off in full.</p> <p>4: at the time of the original award, staff changes were clearly imminent, and these were delivered in 2019 into the senior structure seen by the original assessment team, as well as changes to assistant roles to reflect the different service patterns to be in place. Training has been delivered across a multitude of relevant topics both to ensure collections familiarisation and to think about delivering differently at The Hold. The full implementation of the structure in early 2020 was inevitably impacted by the pandemic, but the report shows how the service has been considering bringing the new teams together and creating new relationships as well as sustaining long-term knowledge. With improved remote communications established, it should be more sustainable in the long term to support teams across the three sites. There has also been substantial, potentially transformational, change in terms of the volunteer base for the service, with a broader range of opportunities and good contacts with those seeking placements for excluded groups. The report mentions a staff survey which shows that there is still work to do to engage the teams in the revised service; this action shows progress but cannot be considered completely delivered.</p> <p>10: the physical spaces and service offer at the Lowestoft building have been significantly reshaped and reworked to deliver both an effective local studies service and a more flexible use of the space for different audience and community needs. This was put in place just before the pandemic, and delivery has been impacted by public health regulations.</p> <p>For the wider community served by this geographical area of the service, the report notes the extensive community engagement plans developed by the Community Liaison Officer and other Suffolk Archives partnership and development activities. This demonstrates an ongoing attention to the area and determination to broaden the service offer. This action will continue to be an essential part of the service's offer, and will be further embedded once onsite services can be more flexibly offered.</p>
<p>Any other points of concern</p>	
<p>Any other positive points to note</p>	<p>The service's ability to continue to progress the build, move and public programming despite the overwhelming challenge of the pandemic is impressive and also reassuring about its resilience. At the time of original award, some of the new posts had yet to begin, and seeing these embedded and delivering across areas of outreach and engagement is a major positive. The online tour of the November 2020 exhibition Global Events – Suffolk Stories shows not only the ability to bring existing archive collections to life</p>

	<p>but the service actively working to collect stories of the pandemic. Although we have seen this in multiple archive services it is particularly notable that Suffolk Archives has been able to approach this alongside the major build and move work.</p> <p>There have also been digital improvements, particularly with respect to investment in front-end searching. Preservica has been retained as the repository solution although the update notes that progress has been slowed by commitments around delivering the Hold. It has however been possible to undertake that contemporary collecting work which required digital acquisition capacity.</p> <p>It is reassuring to note that there has been recruitment to posts like Heritage Trainees which support the exhibitions officer – there was obvious potential for the Hold’s public programming to put pressure on the sole conservator post. In general, temporary student and trainee roles, and new partnerships, show the service reaching out successfully to new groups and team members. There has also been a range of positive developments regarding standardisation of events approaches, structuring the commercial offer and other essential preparatory work.</p> <p>Partnerships and community engagement activity across the county and particularly in the partnership with University of Suffolk. Several of the community activities have been award-winning, reflecting high quality outputs as well as quantity.</p>
<p>Assessor recommendation</p>	<p>Retain at provisional award for up to 16 or 20 months (ie submission December 2022/April 2023 allowing for any further delays due to the exceptional public health situation but also timely assessment once submitted) aiming to have this timed for the completion of the move, and fully establishing a more normal level of public service and staff processes, before the award is considered again. This should be managed as part of the routine review stage submission, and the provisional award considered by the panel as part of that review. A site visit to Ipswich and perhaps other branches will be required, both to see spaces and to talk to team members about how their roles are now delivered. Although there has been real progress on all the required actions relating to provisional award, it seems appropriate to request further updates at review stage rather than signing them off as completed at this point.</p>