

The National Archives

Development Networks Evaluation Report: Case Study

A new beginning – from established foundations

[Archives West Midlands](#)

“The possibilities of coming together to share knowledge and expertise are far greater than if archive services worked in isolation.”

Archives West Midlands (AWM) aims ‘to complement and enhance the work of its constituent services by enabling and supporting work that is best achieved collectively.’ The network represents a diverse range of archives including local authority archives and record offices, universities, cathedrals, business archives and specialist collections. It is open to all archives and archive services in the West Midlands region who share its ambitions.

In June 2015 members of the West Midlands Regional Archives Forum decided to change the name of the network to Archives West Midlands and to redefine the existing objectives and purpose of the network.

The establishment of Archives West Midlands was supported by The National Archives (TNA) through the Sector Sustainability Fund (SSF). An investment of £10,000 was met with match funding from the network. The intention for the funding was to strengthen the representation of archives within individual parent organisations, and to enhance the collective voice within the region's heritage and cultural sector. It allowed the forum to contract an external consultant to look at collaborative models between the network members.

The plan for the funding included:

- Establishing Archives West Midlands as a new organisation.
- Launching a prospectus to showcase the new organisation as a formal partnership.
- Securing a prominent person to act as the first Patron.
- Introducing an annual subscription of £500 for AWM members, starting with a two-year commitment.
- Developing an appropriate governance structure for AWM, which should include a small managing Board.
- Continue to support a professional network for all archive services in the region.

Because of the SSF investment, Archives West Midlands has:

- Created a new formal partnership of archives in the West Midlands and registered as a charitable company.
- Secured the public endorsement of the member organisations.
- Established its remit and authority to create, develop and deliver regional projects to support the member organisations.
- A better financial base which has enabled AWM to seek further funding opportunities*.
- Provided a strong identity and focus.
- Strengthened AWM's relationship with key partners, including TNA and Arts Council England.

* AWM received additional funding from: Arts Connect, Arts Council England, The Grimmitt Trust and The Owen Family Trust.