

Barts Health NHS Trust Archives – move project: FAQs

Can I make an archives appointment?

It is not currently possible to make an appointment to access the archives in person. This is to allow us to focus on preparing the Prescott Street collections for the move, and to minimise the risk to staff and researchers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Please contact us by email with your enquiry before 28 August. We will do our best to answer your enquiry remotely, including providing remote access to records where possible. **We will not be able to respond to enquiries received after the end of August, until we reopen to new enquiries in January 2021.**

If you would like to be kept informed about the archives move and updated access arrangements for Barts Health NHS Trust Archives, please contact rlh.archives@nhs.net and ask to be added to our mailing list, or check our website at <https://www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/museums-and-archives>

Where are you moving to?

The archive collections currently housed at Prescott Street, known as the Royal London Hospital Archives, will be moving to new premises on the St Bartholomew's Hospital site in West Smithfield, central London. This will include a new public searchroom space for on-site access to the records.

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How will the collection be safeguarded whilst offsite?

During the interim period until the new archives space is complete, the collections will be moving to a specialist provider of archival storage, which meets the required British Standards for the storage of archive collections. The storage site meets the standards for the storage of archival records as laid down in PD5454:2012 and BS/EN16893, including high security, protection from flooding, fire, damp and pests, and climate control in thermally inert spaces with a low carbon footprint.

When will the new premises be ready?

The project to fit-out the new archives space has been delayed due to the current pandemic, as Barts Health NHS Trust has focused on the clinical response to Covid-19 and its wider impact on hospital care. Although current circumstances mean that we don't have a confirmed project timetable, we anticipate that work should begin in early 2021, and we hope to be able to move in to the new space by the end of 2021.

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Where/how can I access the records during the interim period following the move before the new space is ready?

The collections currently housed at Prescott Street (known as the Royal London Hospital Archives) will be in temporary specialist storage offsite until the new archive space is ready to move into, but will still be accessible via weekly retrievals to our existing St Bartholomew's Hospital Archives site. Once the move has been completed, the archives team will resume a remote enquiry service in January 2021. Our target response-time for archive enquiries will be revised from the current 10 working days to 20 working days, to allow for the additional time required to retrieve records from storage.

We hope to be able to provide some physical access to records on our existing St Bartholomew's Hospital Archives site from 2021, subject to the requirements of the public health guidance relating to Covid-19 at that time. If you would like to be kept informed about the archives move and access arrangements for Barts Health NHS Trust Archives, please contact rlh.archives@nhs.net and ask to be added to our mailing list, or check our website at <https://www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/museums-and-archives>

I want to make a request for access to my historic medical records under the Data Protection Act (a 'Subject Access Request'). Will this service be available during the closure period?

Although we do hold some medical records in the archives, these mainly comprise registers rather than detailed case notes for the latter part of the 20th century, and almost nothing for the 21st century. Records held in the archives are retained permanently for their historical, legal, and research value. We do not generally take in patient case-notes or clinic records for permanent retention, except in relation to certain specific clinical areas identified as of particular interest after the completion of their retention period. Where registers survive, they usually only provide outline details, such as the patient's name, age, and address, and length of stay, and rarely provide substantial detail regarding treatments or clinical outcomes. Individual patient case note files are not retained permanently in the archives, and are usually destroyed 8 years after completion of treatment.

However, we do sometimes hold records which may be relevant to a Subject Access Request, and we will still process these requests as required during the closure period. We will provide an initial response to all SARs within 30 days of receipt.

What impact do the move plans have on Barts Health NHS Trust Museums (St Bartholomew's Hospital Museum and the Royal London Hospital Museum)?

The museums have both been closed since mid-March due to the public health guidance around the Covid-19 pandemic. The safety of our volunteers (on whom we rely to supervise the museums), visitors and staff is paramount. To support our clinical colleagues in the Trust and across the NHS, the museums will remain closed to discourage non-essential journeys on public transport and non-essential visits to the hospital sites.

Archives staff continue to work from home as much as possible, with limited on-site work time focused exclusively on preparing the collections held at Prescott Street for the upcoming move. Although we are using the museum sector guidance on reopening to support planning, unfortunately we do not envisage that any potential reopening of the museums will take place before 2021 at the earliest.

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