

Information to help you plan your visit

– for visitors with autism, learning difficulties or additional needs

Chelmsford Museum is an inspiring place to visit. However, we understand that it can be overwhelming if you or someone in your care is on the autistic spectrum. We hope this information will help you to prepare for a visit.

Please contact us if you have any other questions or need more information.

Email: museum@chelmsford.gov.uk

Telephone: 01245 605700

Website: www.chelmsford.gov.uk/museums

How can I prepare for a visit?

Before you visit, download a copy of the [Photo journey through Chelmsford Museum](#) and the [Annotated map of Chelmsford Museum](#) from the website to help you plan your visit and decide what you may like to see. The annotated floor plan of the museum provides information about the sensory experiences in each room and alternative routes.

You can also download a copy of our [Sensory Rainbow Trail](#) which you can borrow from the Welcome Desk when you visit. There is always a Visitor Host at the Welcome Desk and one around the museum who will be able happy to answer any questions. Our Visitor Hosts all wear dark grey shirts with a gold and white logo, so they are easy to identify.

What is the museum like?

The museum is in a Victorian house with a modern extension, in the middle of Oaklands Park. In Victorian times the house was home to the Wells Family and their servants.

The museum tells the story of Chelmsford from prehistoric times to the present day, through displays in a series of rooms in the old house. In the new extension there is an observation beehive, natural world taxidermy display showing animals you may find in the park and the Essex Regiment Museum. There is also a Toy room, Costume room, Ceramics room, Victorian kitchen and a temporary exhibition space with regularly changing displays.



Throughout the museum you will find orange based exhibits which have practical and sensory activities to try.



There are also audio-visual touch screen kiosks in most rooms, which have additional information, photos and games.

The **Hive Café** is on the ground floor of the museum in the original house. The café is fully accessible through the museum or through the door from the park at the rear of the museum. There are three steps by the entrance to the café next to the car park.

The café is popular and at lunchtimes, especially during the holidays can be busy and noisy. On warmer days you can sit outside on the terrace over-looking the rose garden.

If you have questions about the café contact them directly:

email: enquiries@hivecafechelmsford.co.uk

telephone: 01245 351860

When is the museum open and how much does it cost to visit?

The museum is open every day from 10am to 5pm except 25 and 26 December and 1 January. Entry to the museum and parking is FREE. If you are planning to stay for longer than 2 hours please ask a member of staff at the Welcome Desk for a parking permit.

We charge for some special events, but you can still look around the museum for free at this time. Please be aware that the museum can be busy and noisy on special event days, so check the [events page on the website](#) to see what is happening before you visit.

Do I need to book my visit in advance?

No, you can visit at any time during museum opening times. You only need to let us know if you are coming as an organised group with more than 5 people or if you are coming for an event which has limited places.

How do I get to the museum?

Please see the ['Visit' page on our website](#) for information about travelling to the museum. There is car parking in the park and a number of designated accessible parking spaces a short distance from the front entrance. There are bollards that prevent vehicles driving right up to the entrance. If you need to be able to set down passengers by the front door, please ring before you visit so we can arrange to remove the bollards for you.

Is the museum noisy and crowded?

The museum is very popular with families and is especially busy during the school holidays. The museum is usually quietest on Sunday and after school during the week. 'Our Chelmsford Gallery' provides a quieter and less distracting space with seating.

The museum can be very busy when we hold special events, so please see the [What's On page on the website](#) before you visit.

Are there any activities or events designed for visitors with autism?

As well as our online autism-friendly pre-visit materials ([accessibility webpage](#)), younger visitors may like to pick up a pair of binoculars and the 'I spy picture trail sheet' from the green Explorer box by the entrance.

Please ask at the Welcome Desk if you would like to borrow a pair of ear defenders, a twiddle muff or our Sensory Rainbow Trail bag. This bag contains: a visual trail booklet, object feely bags, annotated museum floor plan, colouring sheet and sensory toys.

Boris' Bear Cubs is a monthly group for Under 5's and their carers. With a mix of stories and rhymes, handling objects, trails and crafts, this relaxed session allows our youngest visitors and adults to enjoy exploring the museum together. The last session of the day 1.30 – 2.30pm is usually the quietest. Visit our ['Boris' Bear Cubs' webpage](#) for more information about these sessions.

Can we have food at the museum?

You may not eat in the museum building as crumbs attract pests that can destroy the collections. You are welcome to have your own picnic in the park surrounding the museum. There are picnic benches on the front lawn and a quiet 'walled garden' with benches at the side of the museum.

For group visits booked in advance it is possible to reserve a room where you can eat a picnic lunch if you do not wish to visit the café.

The **Hive café** www.chelmsford.gov.uk/museums/the-hive/ is on the ground floor of the museum. The café serves food from 8am to 5pm and has a varied menu catering for different appetites. It is popular and can be busy and noisy over lunchtime but on warmer days you can sit outside on the terrace over-looking the rose garden.

If you are bringing a group and planning to visit the café it is helpful to contact them directly before your visit. It is not possible to book a table, but staff will rearrange tables to accommodate your group. Please email: enquiries@hivecafechelmsford.co.uk or telephone: 01245 351860

<https://www.hivecafechelmsford.co.uk/>

Where and what toilet facilities are available?

Toilets are located on the ground floor near the Welcome Desk and in the Hive café.

In the accessible toilet by the Welcome Desk the lights and air conditioning are activated when you walk in. The toilet is large enough for a user to be accompanied if required. Unlike the other toilets, it does not have hand dryers which makes it a quieter environment.

The accessible toilet in the Hive café is smaller.

The museum entrance has a double set of automatic doors. What help is available with this?

The front entrance is permanently attended by a Visitor Host on the Welcome Desk who will be aware if someone is struggling to come through the doors and set them to 'stay open'.

Please contact the museum before your visit if you will find these doors challenging so we can set them to 'stay open' when you come in.

Another question?

If you have any other questions or would like more information about visiting the museum, [see the museum website](#) or contact us directly:

Email: museum@chelmsford.gov.uk

Telephone: 01245 605700

Website: <https://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/museums/>