



**PLAN
CARE
HEAL**

A guide to working with
spontaneous memorial collections

Interest from members of the public

Learning Objective

To explore the role that memorial collections can play as part of a continued recovery process

To evaluate factors around public access and ownership

Scenario Summary

LOCATION: IN THE ARCHIVE

You receive the following email:

"I am reaching out to inquire about the possibility of accessing the archived materials from the spontaneous memorial that was created following the [attack/event] five years ago.

I am a survivor of the attack and have really struggled to process what happened. I have spent the past few years in and out of therapy and I am thankfully doing much better now. In fact, it was my therapist who recommended I email you. You see I have found myself drawn to the way the public reacted to the attack and to the memorial that formed in the weeks that followed. At the time, I did visit the site and did leave an item there. However, I really wanted to do a second trip but never had the opportunity to return before the memorial was removed. My therapist

believes that seeing these objects again - whether in person or through available records - might be a meaningful step forward in my healing process.

Of course, I do understand that these materials may be restricted for privacy and preservation reasons, and I fully respect any protocols in place. If there is a formal process for requesting access, I would appreciate any guidance you can provide. I am willing to comply with any necessary procedures, including a supervised viewing or reviewing digital records if that is the only option available.

Thank you for your time and consideration and thank you for taking care of the collection. I appreciate the work you do in preserving the memories of that time, and I look forward to hearing from you.”

Key Considerations

- Consider a trauma-informed, empathetic approach in all communication
- Be mindful of community ownership and the emotional significance of the collection
- Assess for any personal data in items (names, photos, messages) and comply with GDPR
- Ensure physical access won't compromise fragile items; offer digital alternatives if possible
- Review internal access policies, especially for sensitive collections

Further training, support, and key readings

Wright, Kirsten, and Nicola Laurent (2021) [Safety, Collaboration, and Empowerment: Trauma-Informed Archival Practice](#)

Collins, H., Allsopp K., Arvanitis, K., Chitsabesan, P., and French P (2020) [Psychological impact of spontaneous memorials: A narrative review](#)

Bown, C (2023) [Cultivating healing spaces: Trauma-informed practice in museums](#)