



Top tips for...Museum Security

By Samantha Jenkins and Susannah Darby, Assistant Registrars at National Museums Scotland.

The [Museums Association Code of Ethics](#) states that museums have a duty to 'maintain and develop collections for current and future generations.' This includes keeping the objects in their care safe from theft and accidental damage. In a talk given at the UKRG event on 20 April 2018, William Brown shared some advice gleaned from his years as National Museums Security Advisor. These tips are based on this talk.

1. Remember ABC:

Assume nothing, believe no-one and check everything. When assessing the security arrangements of a borrowing venue, ask further questions to clarify any points of concern or unclear information and check that the conditions reported on their Security Supplement will be in place in the space they are using to show the loan item. How recently was the Security Supplement completed and could provisions have changed in the interim? If possible, check that the information you have been given is accurate by consulting with the National Security Advisor, colleagues who know the venue or open source information such as Google Streetview.

2. Know your Annex D:

Annex D to the [Government Indemnity Scheme Guidelines for National Institutions](#) and for [Non-National Institutions](#) sets out the security and environmental requirements that must be in place for an object to be covered under the terms of the Government Indemnity Scheme, and represent good practice in preventing avoidable loss and damage through theft and accidents. In particular, ensure that framed works are secured to walls using appropriate security fixings, that pictures under A3 size are not displayed near windows or entrances, and that works on open display have a barrier that keeps visitors at least 1m away from them on all sides.

3. Consider all of the following aspects when assessing a venue's security:

- -Physical security (doors, windows and locks)
- -Intruder detection
- -Fire detection
- -Invigilation
- -CCTV
- -Display Systems
- -Alarms

3. Ensure that all detection systems are effective:

Ensure that Intruder and fire detection systems will be active at any time the space is left un-manned, that they will alert someone who is in a position to

respond to the alert and that the response will be quick enough to prevent loss or damage of objects. Ensure that there are no obstacles between motion sensor alarms and entry points and that CCTV cameras have a clear view of the space. Ensure appropriate staff are aware of when alarms are set and the procedure for responding to alarms.

4. Cases:

As well as providing a dust-free environment for displaying objects and keeping them out of reach of visitors, display cases can provide the last line of defence against theft. If 'trembler' alarms are used, ensure that they are sensitive and close enough to detect attempts to knock over or access the case at any point. Consider potential weak spots of display cases. It may be worth considering using metal frames, and ensuring the glass is set far enough into these frames so that it will not bow away from the frame on impact, allowing access to the case.

If you are in any doubt about security arrangements at your own venue or a borrower's, do ask for advice. The National Security Advisor has a remit to advise museums throughout the UK. Other sources of information include:

- The National Museums Security Group

<https://www.nmsg.uk.com>

This group provides a platform for security teams within the UK's cultural organisations to share intelligence and communicate with each other. Through this integrated system we aim to reduce crime across the sector; safeguarding visitors, collections and cultural heritage.

- Collections Trust museum security toolkit

<https://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/the-museum-security-toolkit>