

# **1. Establishment of the Guidelines**

## **1.1.0 Scope of the Guidelines**

- 1.1.1 These Retention Guidelines have been issued to support local authorities in the areas of Data Protection, Freedom of Information and the Local Government Act. It has been issued by the Records Management Society of Great Britain after consultation with a number of local government authorities, their agencies and other experts in the field.
- 1.1.2 The Guidelines were developed to reflect an understanding of the administrative processes that give rise to record creation. This is intended to make the Guidelines independent of any particular format of record that might be historically created (e.g. card, register) or media (e.g. paper, electronic) and prolong the Guidelines' period of application.
- 1.1.3 The Guidelines are intended to cover the continuum of records and information from creation through to destruction or for retention for historical or research purposes.
- 1.1.4 Records sentenced for destruction under the Guidelines may be destroyed in accordance with the provisions of the Guidelines. Backup copies stored on alternative media (server/microfilm/paper) should also be destroyed. This is vital to ensure compliance with the requirements of Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation.
- 1.1.5 The local authority or the agency acting for it should hold notification of the records destroyed in accordance with the Guidelines on its behalf. See Section 9 for how long these should be kept.
- 1.1.6 Records for permanent preservation should be passed to the local authority's Archivist or its agency's place of deposit. In most cases this will be the appropriate local Record Office.

## **1.2.0 Limitation of Scope**

- 1.2.1 These Guidelines should only be used by local authorities for the disposal of common functional and housekeeping records as described in the Guidelines. It should be taken as a baseline for each authority to interpret and apply appropriately in accordance with local practice. These Guidelines are not intended to cover school records, however the majority of school administration records can be sentenced under these Guidelines.

## **1.3.0 Objectives of the Retention Guidelines**

- 1.3.1 The aims of the Guidelines are to:
- Assist in identifying records that may be worth preserving permanently as part of a local authority's archives.
  - Prevent the premature destruction of records that need to be retained for a specified period to satisfy legal, financial and other requirements of public administration.
  - Provide consistency for the destruction of those records not required permanently after specified periods.
  - Promote improved Records Management practices within local government.

#### **1.4.0 Transfer of Records to Archival Storage**

- 1.4.1 Local authorities wishing to transfer permanent records to archival custody should contact the Archivist/Local History Officer at the appropriate County Record Office/Archive for further information on transfer procedures. The collection policies of individual archives vary; the identification of classes of records here as suitable for archives are for guidance only.
- 1.4.2 The Data Protection Act provides an exemption for information about identifiable living individuals that is held for research, statistical or historical purposes to be held indefinitely, provided specific requirements are met. It is the responsibility of the Archivist to ensure that this is so.
- 1.4.3 Records identified in this schedule as '**permanent**' are marked '**Offer to Archivist**'. The Archivist may choose to select a sample of the records for permanent preservation in the archives; the remainder should be destroyed as specified in the Guidelines. The sample may be random, selective or purposeful.
- 1.4.4 '**Offer to Archivist for review**' is used to indicate record classes where the Archivist will not usually be interested in retaining the class of records, but may wish to retain those concerning high profile or controversial policies/projects.
- 1.4.5 Records no longer required for administrative use may still retain sensitive information. The Archivist should be informed of sensitivity at the time of transfer of the material to the archives, and an appropriate closure period agreed. The closure period should comply with Freedom of Information legislation and the authority's policy.

#### **1.5.0 Enactment of Standard for a Local Authority**

- 1.5.1. As there is no legal basis for the enforcement and support of these Guidelines, each local authority needs to ensure that the actions shown in the Guidelines are ratified internally within the local authority or its agency.
- 1.5.2. Ratification can be achieved by obtaining signatures of the Chief Executive and or Internal Audit.

1.5.3. This Retention and Disposal Schedule has been authorised by

**Signature of the Chief Executive Officer**

..... Date of Issue.

**Chief Executive Officer**

**OR**

**Signature of the Chief Internal Auditor**

..... Date of Issue.

**Chief Internal Auditor**

**1.6.0 Destruction of Records**

- 1.6.1 Whenever there is the possibility of litigation, the records and information that are likely to be affected should not be amended or disposed of until the threat of litigation has been removed.
- 1.6.2 When records identified for disposal in the Guidelines are destroyed, a register of such records needs to be kept. For records not covered by the Guidelines contact your record management service, legal department or suitable experienced sources for further advice. It is not sufficient to document that a quantity of records had been destroyed on a certain date. Enough details should be retained to identify which records have been destroyed. <Insert your own contact details>

**1.7.0 Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)**

- 1.7.1 There are some records that do not need to be kept at all; Standard Operating Procedure defines types of records which staff may routinely destroy in the normal course of business. However, the retention and disposal schedule must still contain reference and instructions referring to them.
- 1.7.2 SOP usually applies to information that is duplicated, unimportant or only of short-term facilitative value. Unimportant records or information include:
  - ‘with compliments’ slips
  - catalogues and trade journals
  - telephone message slips
  - non-acceptance of invitations
  - trivial electronic mail messages or notes that are not related to agency business
  - requests for stock information such as maps, plans or advertising material
  - out-of-date distribution lists
  - working papers which lead to a final report
- 1.7.3 Duplicated and superseded material such as stationery, manuals, drafts, forms, address books and reference copies of annual reports may be destroyed under SOP. Electronic

copies of documents where a hard copy has been printed and filed, and thermal paper facsimiles after making and filing a photocopy, are also covered.

- 1.7.4 SOP should not be applied to records or information that can be used as evidence – to prove that something happened. If you are in doubt about what information is required consult with your legal unit.
- 1.7.5 All of these may be destroyed by standard operating procedure that should be part of any ISO 9000 (Quality Management) system if applicable.

### **1.8.0 Reviewing the Schedule**

This Guideline prescribes minimum and permanent retention periods. This guideline will also be reviewed at regular intervals.

### **1.9.0 Further Information**

- *Records Management Society of Great Britain* <http://www.rms-gb.org.uk>
- *Society of Archivists* <http://www.archives.org.uk>