

# Records Management Policy

This policy was agreed by the Trust Board on 19 December 2017 to be used as an interim policy by Sandwell Children's Trust.

The intention is to review this policy by 1 July 2018 to ensure that it is fit for purpose for the Trust.



**Sandwell**  
Children's Trust

## **Information Management Unit**

### **Records Management Policy**

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## Document Control

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## Revision History

<b>Revision Date</b>	<b>Editor</b>	<b>Previous Version</b>	<b>Description of Revision</b>
23 <sup>rd</sup> April 2014	James Trickett	n/a	Final version

## Document Distribution

Please note – once printed, this document is uncontrolled. The latest version will always be found on the Council's intranet.

## Document Approvals

<b>Approval required</b>	<b>Date approved</b>
JCP	25 <sup>th</sup> March 2014
Leader Decision Making Session	23 <sup>rd</sup> April 2014

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## 1.0 Introduction

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- 1.1 The Council recognises that by efficiently managing its information records, it will be able to comply with its legal and regulatory obligations and to contribute to the efficient and effective overall management of the Council.
- 1.2 This policy is a key component in the Council's Information Governance Framework and sits alongside the Information Governance Policy.
- 1.3 Sandwell Council's records are a vital asset that support ongoing operations and provide valuable evidence of business activities over time.
- 1.4 It is the policy of Sandwell Council to establish effective records management to:
  - Maximise the use of our information assets;
  - Ensure that the integrity of the council's records is protected and that records are authentic, reliable and useable in order to meet the council's needs, now and in the future;
  - Ensure compliance with legislative and best practice requirements;
  - Support the business requirements of the council.
- 1.5 This will be achieved by creating a policy and procedural framework which ensures that:
  - Relevant records are captured and held for the business needs of Sandwell Council;
  - Records can be easily understood (adequate context is provided);
  - Records can be trusted (they are complete, accurate, up to date and protected).

- Employees are made aware of, and trained in, the management of records within their sphere of responsibility;
- Records are made accessible to those employees who need and are permitted to access them to enable well informed and proper judgements to be made;
- Records are kept securely and protected from accidental loss and destruction;
- Records are kept for no longer than is necessary, in accordance with legal and professional obligations;
- Records are disposed of appropriately, in accordance with legal and regulatory obligations.

## **2.0 Scope**

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- 2.1 This policy applies to all records created, received or maintained by staff of the Council, its contractors, consultants and agents acting on behalf of the authority who have access to the authority's records, in the course of carrying out its functions.
- 2.2 Records are defined as all those information / data sets which facilitate the business activities carried out by the Council and which are thereafter retained, for a set period, to provide evidence of its transactions or activities. These records may be created or received, and then stored, in hard copy or digital form.
- 2.3 Information may be held in any format including:
- Paper based files
  - Documents - including written and typed documents
  - Computer files - including word processor files, databases, spread sheets and presentations
  - Email
  - Diary records
  - Reports
  - CCTV recordings and photographs

- 2.4 Some records maybe selected for permanent preservation via the Council's Archives Service.

### **3.0 Objectives**

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- 3.1 The overarching objective of this Policy is to ensure Council records are managed appropriately and specifically to:
- Build an information management culture where information and records are managed coherently and consistently across the council;
  - Ensure compliance with legislation and standards;
  - Collect information efficiently to support the council's objectives;
  - Make better use of physical and electronic storage space;
  - Ensure appropriate information is accessible when required;
  - Ensure records are maintained in a safe and secure environment;
  - Ensure records are kept for no longer than is necessary in accordance with the Retention and Disposal standards and disposed of or retained correctly;
  - Ensure the council's vital records are identified and protected (i.e. those required to maintain business continuity in the event of a disaster, and without which the council could not operate).

### **4.0 What constitutes a Record**

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- 4.1 According to the ISO 15489 standard for the management of records, a record is:

*"Information created, received, and maintained as evidence and information by an organisation or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business."*

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- 4.2 Essentially, it is a record of the council's business that requires effective management and preservation. Records exist in various formats, sometimes with older documents existing in different formats to those created today.

Examples of records include:

- Correspondence
- Payroll documents
- Case files.

A non-record, by definition, is an item of information that does not require the same rigour of management that is required for records. A non-record is information that is of immediate value only. Non-records may share some characteristics with administrative records but they are distinguished from administrative records by their transitory usefulness.

Examples of non-records include:

- Duplicate copies of original master records, official copies of which have been retained for record purposes;
- Superseded copies of published manuals, policies and directives;
- Catalogues, trade journals, magazines, etc;
- Information copies of correspondence;
- Physical exhibits, artefacts, and material objects lacking documentary value.

- 4.3 Non-records should be disposed of once they have served their useful purpose.



## **5.0 The Key Principles of Records Management**

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5.1 Records will be managed through an information lifecycle from creation, through to storage, processing / use and ultimately disposal

5.2 All service areas will have in place record keeping procedures that document their activities and provide for quick and easy retrieval of information. The processes will take into account the legal and regulatory environment specific to the area of work.

The processes will include:

- Procedures to ensure the creation and maintenance of authentic complete and reliable records;
- Procedures and guidelines for referencing, titling, indexing, version control, protective marking and other metadata;
- The ability to cross reference electronic and paper records;
- Records will be arranged so that that they can be retrieved quickly and efficiently using key index information through either a filing system, a file plan for network folders, an electronic document management system, or other search facilities;
- Procedures for keeping systems updated;
- Documentation of the record systems and guidance on how to use them.

5.3 Records keeping processes in all service areas will be maintained to ensure that all records are properly stored and can easily be located and retrieved. This will include:

- The provision of suitable storage accommodation;

- Tracking and monitoring the movement and location of records in transit so that they can be easily traced;
- Procedures for reporting and investigation lost or misplaced files or records;
- Ensuring semi-active records are transferred to designated archives at least annually rather than storing them in offices;
- Documentation for the transfer of records.

5.4 All service areas will maintain adequate levels of protection for records. This will include:

- The control of access to information to minimise the risk of accidental loss or deliberate unauthorised attempts to access and use information;
- Maintenance of an information asset register as part of the Council's information risk management approach to information security;
- Documenting decisions regarding access to records;
- The identification of vital records and appropriate physical protection, in accordance with the protective marking and information handling guidance, and including a business recovery plan;
- Appropriate training for staff on how to handle information and process requests for access to information under the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act in accordance with agreed processes.

5.5 All service areas will retain and dispose of records as part of a managed and documented process. This is increasingly important given the need for transparency and publication of data. There will be a defined process for the assessment and selection of records for disposal or preservation and for documenting this work. The process will ensure that:

- A detailed retention and disposal schedule of records is maintained and reviewed for the authority;
- Documentation of the disposal of records is completed and retained;
- Records are disposed of in a secure and confidential manner;
- An intended disposal/review date will be captured when a record is closed;
- Where a record is updated after it has been closed the disposal/review date will reflect this.

5.6 One unique record should be created and maintained encompassing all related, relevant information / datasets which is referred to as the “Master Record”. E.g. an adoption record will contain all the relevant information, documents, court orders in one place or one linked location - individual duplicate copies should not be retained. This Master Record is owned by a designated data owner who is the ultimate custodian.

## **6.0 Responsibilities**

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- 6.1 The Council has a corporate responsibility to maintain its records and record keeping systems in accordance with the regulatory environment. This will include the promotion and development of clear and effective procedures and guidance for staff on record management issues. At a senior level this is the responsibility of the Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO) who has responsibility for Information Governance at management board level. The SIRO is responsible for reporting progress on records management improvement in accordance with the Information Governance Framework.
- 6.2 All Managers and Information Asset Owners will ensure:
- Agreed records management policies and procedures are implemented;

- Potential risks are identified, assessed and appropriately mitigated/managed;
- Appropriate employees are designated to assist with the maintenance of records management policies and procedures;
- Employees are supported in terms of training and development to enable them to handle information appropriately;
- Authorisation for the disposal of records is carried out in accordance with agreed policies;
- Retention and disposal schedules and procedures are created and maintained.

### 6.3 All Officers and employees will:

- Ensure actions and decisions taken in the course of Council business are properly recorded.
- This policy and local service area procedures for records management are followed consistently.
- All information they hold, regardless of the medium, is kept secure, and personal information is not disclosed deliberately or accidentally either orally or in writing to any unauthorised third party;
- Records are identified for disposal in accordance with agreed policies and retention and disposal schedules;
- Disposal procedures are implemented consistently.

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