Herefordshire Council

PROCEDURE FOR THE CREATION, KEEPING, MAINTENANCE AND DISPOSAL OF ELECTRONIC RECORDS

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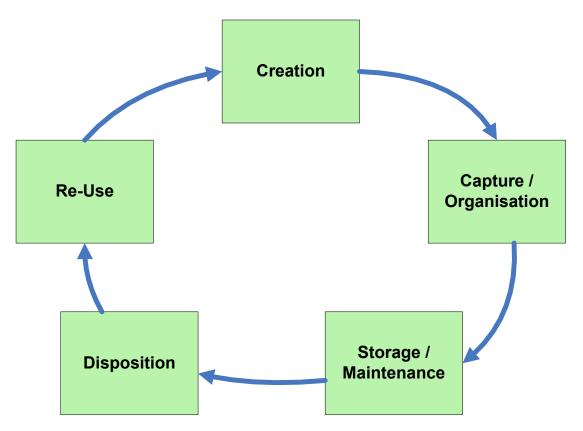
Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 What is records management?

Records management involves creating accurate, complete, reliable records, providing controlled, ready access to them, and retaining only those records necessary for the business use of the organisation, for as long as that use lasts. This approach has several benefits:

- Compliance with information legislation (including the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000).
- Efficient use of physical and virtual space.
- Efficient use of staff time (saving time searching for records).
- Reliable evidence for protecting the rights and interests of the organisations.
- Effective evidence for demonstrating performance and accountability.
- Identification for preservation of records with lasting historical or heritage interest.

The lifecycle of a record reflects its' use by the organisation.

Whilst a record is being created, captured and organised, it is known as an active record. It is semi-active, or non-current, when it is being stored for audit, legal, administrative or operational reasons and no longer referred to on a regular basis. Disposition is when a record is destroyed or archived, which may result in re-use (such as when used as an historical record in Herefordshire Record Office).

This procedure sets out how the council will manage its records in electronic format through all of these phases by putting in place practices that make information accessible and secure as appropriate. More detailed procedures may be needed for specific areas of record keeping within council offices, which should be written by the department concerned with assistance from the Records Management Service.

2. Who does this procedure apply to?

2.1 Who should follow this procedure?

This procedure applies to all employees of Herefordshire Council who create and/or use records in electronic format. It also applies to those acting as its agents in the course of a council activity, who will be depositing records of their work with or for the council. Any contract with such an agent should include reference to this procedure.

The procedure does not apply in all parts to the historical records held by the Archive Service, to which different standards, particularly in terms of preservation and access, will apply.

3. Record Creation

3.1 Requirements for record creation

All records that are created must be complete and accurate, so that the content of the record can be quickly and easily identified and accessed when needed. Failure to locate and retrieve records when they are needed can seriously impede business processes and affect the council's ability to meet its legal obligations.

The content of records should meet the following requirements:
- Records must be complete and accurate, and enable current and future employees to do their jobs by reference to the information in the record;
- Records must protect the legal rights of the authority, its clients, or any other person affected by its actions;
- Records must be authentic so that any evidence from them is credible and authoritative.

Records should therefore document the activities of the council, and be kept in conditions where they cannot be tampered with and changed in an unauthorised way. There must be an accompanying audit trail showing what changes have been made to a record, when, and by whom. These may be a change in format (such as migration of records to a new system) or a change in the content of the record to ensure that it reflects the current situation, plus any past history showing how the current situation was reached. For example, a file containing details of the terms of a contract agreed with a third party must be kept for the duration of the contract. Once those terms have reached their final, approved state, this should be clearly indicated on the file so that the record is accurate and reliable in the event of resolving future disputes and challenges, and that past versions of the terms of the contract are not confused with the approved ones.

3.2 File and folder naming

To enable records to be identified, file folders should be clearly labelled with
- the title for the contents of the folder
- the dates covered by the folder

The name and job title of the person creating the record should be recorded within the document, such as on the Properties box in Word documents, as this provides reliability of the content due to the known position and authority of the creator

Each file should be given a meaningful name that gives users an indication of the content of that file. When constructing a file name, place the subject of the file at the beginning of the name (for example, *sickness absence* or *budget*), then the focus of the record (for example, *monitoring*), followed by the format (for example, *procedure*, *returns*, or *reports*). Such an approach will provide consistency of file naming across the organisation.

Records should also be identified as being not yet in their final form where this is the case. For example, always clearly mark where documents are a "draft".

The following guidance is taken from the Intranet document library guidelines:

- Generally avoid using anything other than alphanumeric characters (a to z and 0 to 9), "-" or "_" in filenames.

  new & favourite file v1.0 ✗ (contains special characters)
  new and favourite file v1_0 ✓

- Try not to make the filenames excessively long for example more than 30 characters with spaces.
- Do not use spaces because they are shown in web addresses as %20.

  new%20and%20 favourite%20file%20 v1_0

- If you use dates in your filenames then using the year then month followed by day (e.g. yyyy-mm-dd) will help the files to be listed in the folder in date order.

- Use the correct file extension for the type of files you are creating as our search engine uses the extension to show the appropriate icon in the search results and can get confused.

- Use meaningful filenames for the document as it helps people scanning search results – if it's a draft say it's a draft!

<div align="center">

fav_policy_20071109_draft or
DRAFT_2007_11_09_fav_policy

</div>

3.3 Version control

Version control should be used on documents to identify if they are in draft form, or approved and released. For further information on version control, see the Version Control Procedure available on the Intranet under the Records Management folder.

May 2018   **Version 1.1**

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4. Record Keeping

4.1 Record surveys

The Records Management Service will carry out regular surveys of the records kept by the council. This will enable the organisation to have an overview of which records are kept, and where they are located. The surveys will also identify which records are vital to the interests of the organisation in terms of their loss causing serious financial, human and / or reputational damage. In addition, the records surveys will also be used to identify which paper records are accessed most frequently and would therefore be most suitable for back scanning.

Retention schedules will be drawn up or reviewed and updated following each survey, and the records included in the corporate classification scheme.

Where possible, process mapping will identify that the processes carried out by council services are properly recorded.

5. Record Storage and Maintenance

5.1 Storage of records

Electronic records should be kept on a team, shared or personal network drive. Information personal to individual employees, such as training and SRD information, should be stored on the employee's personal drive on the network. If records are saved to a local drive or a desktop and something goes wrong with the laptop or PC, records will be lost. Equally, if employees are unable to attend work for any reason, no one will be able to access records in order to deputise for their colleague.

Records should be stored in a filing system that is accessible and that groups records by class (see Section 5.5 *corporate classification scheme* below).

Special arrangements must be made for the storage of any electronic records which are required to be kept for long periods of time, due to the issue of changing digital storage formats and mediums. The records management service will identify such records and give advice on digital preservation for any electronic records that must be stored for more than twenty years.

5.2 Storage of vital records

Records considered as vital to the interests of the organisation should be stored on shared drives, where they will be backed up and accessible from other offices if one office is placed out of action.

Vital records are ones which, if lost or damaged, could cause serious financial, human and / or reputational damage to the organisation. Examples of vital records are

- Deeds
- Insurance certificates
- Pension records
- Contracts

If vital records are lost, the consequences to the organisation could vary from loss of intellectual assets and competitive advantage, to inability to protect the interests of stakeholders, through to possibly, in extreme circumstances, the inability to prove ownership of the built estate. By providing adequate protection for these records, the risk of loss from incidents affecting the area that they are stored in is reduced.

5.3 Security for confidential records

Confidential records include information that could cause personal, commercial or other damage if made generally available, and which could also cause breaches of legislation such as the Data Protection Act 2018. Examples of confidential records are those that contain personal details of people, and tender submissions whilst a contract is out to tender. Security precautions should be taken to ensure that electronic files assessed to be confidential are stored with access restricted to authorised users. A list of the authorised users must be maintained by the office concerned. Confidential documents must not be left unattended on display screens or photocopiers or where they can be seen by anyone passing a desk.

Documents which are confidential must be marked as such, with the security classification *restricted access*, and an indication of who is authorised with access. Files containing some confidential information must also be marked as such; if only a part of the file is confidential, this should be indicated on the file for the purposes of release or exemption under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. For example, a file for a contract may be marked "Value of contract commercially confidential whilst contract is out to tender". Marking can be placed on the document itself and within the document properties as metadata. Password protection should always be used for confidential electronic information.

5.4 Email

An email system is not a record storage system, and consideration needs to be given as to which emails should be treated as records and kept according to the retention schedule for that class of record. Further guidance is available in the *Procedure for Keeping Email as Records*.

5.5 Corporate classification scheme

Files should be kept in a filing system following the corporate classification scheme being developed by the records management service. This will ensure that collections of files are structured according to business process instead of organisational hierarchy, and as such not have to be changed much or at all during departmental reorganisations. Contact the records management service for assistance in using the corporate classification scheme.

5.6 Tracking files

Whenever electronic files are moved to another system, network or format, an audit trail of the movement should be kept. Consideration must be given to moving the record in its' entirety, such as with any associated metadata or with any linked documents. Equally, a list should be maintained of records that have been deleted once they have reached the end of their retention period and are no longer required for the business of the organisation.

Draft documents should be version controlled and routinely deleted once a final version is declared, once any need to evidence the development of the document has passed.

Ephemeral emails should be routinely deleted within the email system.

Within the EDRMS (Electronic Document Records Management System), a record will be kept of each time that a file is removed from the system.

5.7 Master copies of documents

Many paper documents are duplicated to enable them to be read or worked on by a number of people. Examples include minutes of meetings and project plans. To reduce duplication, always identify who will retain the master copy, so that other copies can be destroyed. The master copy may be the copy of the minutes signed by the chair of the meeting as a true and accurate record, or the project manager's copy of the project plan. Procedures should then be put in place to ensure that the master copies are collated together and stored according to the appropriate retention schedule for the section that they originate from.

5.8 EDRMS (Electronic Document Records Management System)

An EDRMS has been procured by Herefordshire Council as part of the Herefordshire Connects transformation programme, and is being implemented from summer 2009 over a period of years. EDRMS is a repository for records, providing records with context, structure and an audit trail for any change made to them. EDRMS will work with other applications, including Sharepoint, Frameworki, Civica and Agresso to enable collaborative working and to ensure seamless and efficient access to electronic information.

Departments will be assessed for storage of their records on EDRMS on a case by case basis to ensure that tangible and non-tangible benefits are secured from use of the system.

Separate specific procedures will be developed for use of EDRMS.

5.9 Metadata

Metadata is data describing a record. For example, a scanned image of a photograph may have accompanying metadata providing information on what the photograph is of, who photographed it and when, who owns the photograph and who owns the image, who owns the copyright of the image, and where the image is stored.

A Metadata Policy is being developed which will give further guidance on how to use metadata.

6. Record Disposal

6.1 Closing files

Folders should not be started (*opened*) and added to indefinitely; if there is an ongoing case or project, the folder should be closed after five years and a new folder started continuing the record of activity. Folders should be weeded periodically to ensure that only documents of use to the business of the organisation are kept, ensuring that the record is complete, accurate and up-to-date. For example, consideration should be given as to whether or not it is appropriate to keep all previous draft versions of a document.

6.2 Retention schedules

Records should be kept for the period of time as specified in the retention schedule for each section. Destruction of records within the file retention period set out in the schedules may be unlawful and may result in the prosecution of the individual concerned. Any destruction of records must be halted as soon as individuals become aware that the records to be destroyed are subject to a request made under the Freedom of Information Act, or an investigation by the police or auditors.

The retention schedule for each section of the council specifies the action to be taken on files that have reached the end of their business use; in most cases, either destruction or transfer to Herefordshire Modern Record Office or Archives for permanent preservation.

6.3 Document scanning

Some paper files may be scanned after a certain period of time. This may be incoming correspondence scanned quickly after receipt, or it might be records in bulk in a programme of back-scanning. In all cases, the change of format of the record must be documented in the relevant retention schedule for the section that creates and / or holds the records. The action to be taken for disposal of the paper record after scanning should also be documented in the schedule.

6.7 Destroying records

The person authorising destruction of records should have appropriate seniority to do so, and familiarity with what the records are.

Confidential electronic records should always be destroyed via ICT Services. ICT services currently securely wipe all old laptops and computers sent for disposal and can also arrange the safe disposal of other types of ICT equipment.

If you have any business floppy disks, CDs, DVDs, tapes, hard drives or other computer equipment in the office, that are no longer required, please contact the ICT helpdesk via the online form at http://intranet/intranet/content/3480.asp or telephone extension 0160 to arrange the collection and safe disposal of these items.

If you are unsure as to whether the items may be required for further reference, please contact the Records Management Service who will be able to give further guidance.

Electronic information may still be stored on back-up media even after deletion from office computers.

6.8 The Archive Service

Records identified on the retention schedule for permanent preservation should be transferred to the Archive Service Record Office in Harold Street, Hereford, following the Herefordshire Record Office transfer procedures. Following the construction of the new Historical Archive Service at Rotherwas, records should be transferred there.

6.9 Accidental loss or damage to records

A record must be kept of any files that are accidentally lost or destroyed before their disposal date. Form RM001 (see Appendix 1) must be used to list any files that have been lost or destroyed, and forwarded to the Senior Archivist – Records Management.

7. Responsibilities

The Records Management Service is responsible for the implementation and monitoring of this procedure. All employees are responsible for ensuring that they follow this procedure when creating, keeping, storing and disposing of paper records in their department / directorate.

8. Other relevant policies / council documents

This procedure should be read alongside the following documents:

- Records Management Policy

- Version Control Procedure

- Information Security Policy

- Information Security Protective Marking Policy

- Data Quality Policy

- Information Sharing Policy

- Metadata Policy

- Intranet Document Library Guidelines

- Document Scanning Policy

- Modern Records Unit User Guide

9. Compliance

Various legislation and standards apply to records management, including
- Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
- Records Management: NHS Code of Practice
- Retention Guidelines for Local Authorities: A Guide Produced by the Local Government Group of the Records Management Society of Great Britain 2003
- Access to Medical Records Reports Act 1988
- Access to Health Records Act 1990
- Public Records Act 1958 and 1967
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000, including the Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Management of Records
- The Environmental Information Regulations 2004
- BS 4783 British Standard for Storage, Transportation and Maintenance of Media for use in Data Processing and Information Storage
- BS ISO 15489 International Standard for Information and Documentation – Records Management
- BSI BIP 0008 Code of Practice for Legal Admissibility and Evidential Weight of Information Stored Electronically

Failure to follow this procedure may result in non-compliance with one or more of these Acts or standards, and in the sponsoring officer facing disciplinary procedures.

10. Impact on the council's key priorities

This procedure ensures that the outcomes identified in the Community Strategy and in the Corporate Business Plan for Herefordshire are underpinned by the proper retention of records recording the council's business activity.

11. Training and awareness requirements

Once approved, all officers and members will be made aware of the existence of this procedure through formal and informal organisational communications such as Team Talk and team meetings. Training on records management will also be offered as part of the council's corporate information management training.

12. Monitoring arrangements

Records Management staff will regularly visit all departments within Herefordshire Council to carry out a record survey on how records are kept and to give advice and awareness on a team or individual basis regarding this procedure.

13. Review date

This procedure will be reviewed after three years by the Records Management Team.

Appendix 1
Form RM001: Record of files accidentally lost or destroyed

Name:

Section:

Department / Directorate:

Please give a description of how the files were lost, destroyed or damaged.

Where would these files have been stored?

What is the impact resulting from the loss of these records? (for example, will the council suffer any financial loss? Will the records be needed as evidence for legal actions or auditing?)

Please list the files affected giving as much description as possible

Record Class (eg planning application, care file)	File Reference	File Title	Dates covered within the file

Continue on another sheet as necessary.

Please return this form immediately to:
Senior Archivist – Records Management, Modern Records Unit, Merchant House, Burcott Road, Hereford HR1 1RA (Courier code H24)

Equality Impact Screening Tool

To be completed and attached to any procedural document when submitted to the appropriate committee for consideration and approval.

		Yes/No	Actions
1	**Has any base line data been collected on your policy / function and analysed?**	No	**(If no then needs to be identified in full impact assessment as this will need to be collected)**
2.	**Does the policy/guidance affect one group less or more favourably than another on the basis of:**		
	• Race	No	If yes, is this justifiable, legal and valid? Give reasons.
	• Disability	No	As above
	• Ethnic origins (including travellers)	No	As above
	• Nationality	No	As above
	• Gender	No	As above
	• Culture	No	As above
	• Religion or belief	No	As above
	• Sexual orientation including lesbian, gay and bisexual people	No	As above
	• Age	No	As above
3	**Is it relevant to the general duty under the equality legislation (1. eliminating discrimination 2. promoting equality of opportunity, 3, promoting good relations)**	1 – creating accurate records	State which it supports.
4	**Is the impact of the policy/guidance likely to be negative?**	No	If yes, why and what actions are you going to take?
5.	**What alternatives are there to achieving the policy/guidance without the impact?**	None	
6.	**Can we reduce the impact by taking different action?**	Electronic records	Procedure on electronic records to follow
7.	**Is there any public concern that the function and policies are being operated in a discriminatory manner?**	No	
8.	**Depending on the above answers does a full impact assessment need to be carried out?**	No	
9.	**How is this policy going to be monitored and by whom?**	See Section 12 of the procedure	

If you have identified a potential discriminatory impact of this procedural document, please refer it to the Corporate Diversity Team who can advise on how to complete a full impact assessment with suggestions as to the action required to avoid/reduce this impact.

Rural Issues Checklist

Each policy should be assessed against two criteria:
   a) does it have a significant or not significant impact on rural communities.
   b) does it have a positive or negative impact on rural communities.

Rural issues are identified below – this list is intended to be a guide not all issues will apply to any one document.

1) Protecting/enhancing local facilities and shops
   How does the policy affect rural facilities such as village shops, post offices, pubs, garages, other retail outlets, village halls, banks, churches and community enterprises? Can polices be amended to protect or enhance such facilities? – N/A

2) Maintaining/improving access to services
   Does the policy impact on access to and maintenance of services for the rural population, particularly for less mobile groups such as the elderly? – N/A

3) Improving transport links and options
   Will the policy affect transport links and options for commuting, accessing services and recreation? Are different modes and uses of transport considered? – N/A

4) Tackling poverty and promoting social inclusion
   Does the policy affect any disadvantaged groups e.g. elderly, people with disabilities, homeless people, unemployed, women or ethnic minorities? Does it have an impact on sources of information and advice, social services, health, community development and capacity building? – N/A

5) Providing activities/facilities for young people
   Will the policy impact on young people and how? – N/A

6) Improving employment opportunities
   Will the policy impact on employment opportunities and how? – N/A

7) Strengthening/diversifying the rural economy
   Does the policy affect the rural economy? Will it affect market towns, business support, agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, retail, credit sources, community enterprises, farmers markets, training, ICT or start-up premises? – N/A

8) Provide affordable, quality rural housing
   Will the policy affect the affordability and quality of housing across all types of tenure? Does the policy relate to prices, registered social landlords, developers, planning policies, migration, second homes, the elderly or special needs? Does it enhance sustainable communities? – N/A

9) Protecting/enhancing the local environment
   How does the policy affect the protection and/or enhancing of the local natural and built environment? How sustainable is this? – N/A

10) Developing education and training opportunities/facilities
    Does the policy impact upon education and training? How does it affect schools, colleges, ICT, access via local facilities or through transport or distance learning? – N/A

11) Promoting the use of and access to ICT
    Will the policy have an impact on the use of and access to ICT? – N/A

12) Encouraging recreation and tourism
    Does the policy affect recreation and tourism? Will it have an impact on rights of way, access to the countryside, recreational activities, local heritage, culture, villages and market towns? – N/A

If you have identified a potential discriminatory impact of this procedural document, please refer it to the Director of Public Health together with any suggestions as to the action required to avoid/reduce this impact.

Environmental (GEM) and Sustainability Checklist

The overarching questions here are
- How will this document impact on our outstanding natural environment?
- Is what is proposed sustainable in the long term?

		Response	Any changes proposed as a result of impacts identified
1	What effect will the document have on carbon/greenhouse gas emissions[1]?	None	Possible reduction in amount of paper used for duplication of records.
2	How will the operation of the document impact on natural systems?[2]	None	Possible reduction in amount of paper used for duplication of records.
3	What effect will the document have on the use of resources[3]?	Less time spent locating records.	
4	How would the operation of the document be affected by predictable changes, such as a more unstable climate or increases in the price of oil[4]?	N/A	
5	Are there sufficient resources for the provisions set out in the document to be carried out for the foreseeable future?	Yes	
6	What effect will the document have on the character of Herefordshire in terms of landscape, buildings, street scene, biodiversity & use of land?	Access to and retention of records relating to these.	
7	Does the policy enable people to take more responsibility and build their capacity for positive response?	Yes	

Please contact the Sustainability Unit if you would like support on either:-
- How to assess impacts the document may have or
- How to adjust the document to reduce negative impacts you have identified – or increase positive benefits.

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[1] Carbon/GHG emissions result from energy use in buildings, transport & release of other pollutants
[2] Impacts could include fragmentation or degradation of natural habitat, increased water runoff, potential for pollution, threatening environmental limits
[3] Including selection and purchase of materials and costs of disposal
[4] Climate change is likely to lead to hotter summers and more frequent extreme weather events.

Document Classification

Author Name and Role	Anthony Sawyer (Records Management)
Date Created	2009-02-09
Date Issued	YYYY-MM-DD
Description	Procedure giving corporate guidance for the creation, keeping, maintenance and disposal of electronic records
File Name	Electronic Record Keeping Procedure
Format	Microsoft Word / 2003
FOI/EIR Disclosure	Yes
Geographic Coverage	Herefordshire
Group Access	Public
Language	Eng
Master Location	<Intranet Info Library>
Publisher	Herefordshire Council
Rights Copyright	Copyright of Herefordshire Council
Security Classification	Public
Status	Draft
Subject	Records Management
Title	Procedure for the Creation, Keeping, Maintenance and Disposal of Electronic Records
Type	Procedure

Consultation Log

Date sent for consultation	03/02/2009
Consultees	<u>Herefordshire Council</u> James Anthony (Principal Libraries Officer) Robert Blower (Head of Communications) Annie Brookes (Corporate Support Officer) Annie Bushby (Education Liaison Co-ordinator) Russell Cheasley (Land and Property Information Officer) Anne Coutts (Assistant Chief Executive - Human Resources) James Davies (Modern Records Assistant) John Eades (Improvement Manager) Donna Etherton (Project Assurance Manager) Tony Ford (Audit Services Manager) Tony Geeson (Head of Policy and Performance) Geoff Hardy (Principal Lawyer) Alan McLaughlin (Assistant Chief Executive - Legal and Democratic) Linda Maden (Service Manager – Referral and Assessment) Emma Matthews (Health and Safety Officer) Roger Matthews (Modern Records Assistant) David Mitchell (Information Systems Manager) Anna Morgan (Arts and Culture Information Officer) Zack Pandor (Head of ICT and Information Services) Ellen Pawley (Knowledge Manager) David Powell (Director of Resources) John Pritchard (Information Security and Data Centre Manager) Anna Rawson (Modern Records Assistant) Kathy Roberts (Head of Improvement and Inclusion) Elizabeth Semper O'Keefe (Information Services Manager) Sara Siloko (Directorate Services Officer - Health) Christian Smith (Assistant Performance Officer) Madeleine Spinks (Principal Research Officer) Sally Storey (Social Care Records Officer) Alan Stokes (Quality Assurance Manager) Heather Stuckle (Modern Records Officer) Bryan Twitty (Children and Family Information Service Manager)

	Kathryn Wood (BS7666 Technician) Herefordshire Primary Care Trust Simon Collings (Acting Head of ICT) Wendy Huxley-Marko (Head of Corporate Risk) Karen Wells (Information Governance Team Leader)

Approval Log

		Date
Equality impact assessment completed by	Senior Archivist – Records Management	
To be agreed by	Deputy Chief Executive	04/02/09
To be approved by	Information Management Group	
Finally to be ratified by	Joint Management Team	
To be reviewed by:	Senior Archivist – Records Management	

Version Log

Version	Status	Date	Description of Change	Reason For Change	Pages affected
0.01	Draft	2009-02-09	Creation of document		
1.1	Released	2018-07-05	Update		All