

A Guide to Archiving

Information Governance Team
Version 1.0



North Tyneside Council

DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET

Document Title: A Guide to Archiving

Revision History

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1.0	Nov 2016	New Guidelines

Document Authorisation

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1 Purpose of an Archive

This guidance describes best practice to create and maintain a paper filing system and an up to date, compliant archive. Paper files should be consistently marked and logically organised, with retention applied. This will ensure accurate, prompt retrieval for as long as the files are required.

The Archive exist to:

- assist in the preparation of responses to enquiries from customers, members, government departments and audit purposes.
- provide evidence of the Authority's accountability in its role as a public body handling public money
- comply with statutory obligations, in particular the Freedom of Information Act 2000, under which access to information must be provided in a timely and reliable way
- enable staff and customers to get the right type of business information easily when required and all relevant historical information that will inform future decision making.

2 Retention Schedules

Retention and disposal is an important aspect of establishing and maintaining control of corporate information and record resources. The principles behind records retention and disposal are to ensure that:

- records are kept for as long as they are needed
- all legitimate considerations have been considered and balanced
- records are kept or destroyed as appropriate

Retention Schedules can be found on the intranet:

<http://intra.northtyneside.gov.uk/page/1831/retention-and-archive>

3 Data Protection

To comply with the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018, the Authority must:

- only keep information for as long as there is a business need
- keep records secure, whether electronic or paper
- allow a person access to information held about them, should they request it

Following these guidelines will ensure that the authority complies with the Data Protection Act which requires that we do not store material that has no business use.

4 Preparing files for archiving

When archiving files, you should remove ephemeral material, for example:

- Un-annotated drafts
- Copies
- Pro forma correspondence
- Compliment slips
- Publications, such as brochures, manuals, catalogues
- Blank forms
- Newsletters
- Copy, i.e. unsigned, minutes.

The Authority retention schedule describes the retention and disposal information for all records. You should check and 'tidy up' records that are to be retained permanently, or for longer than 12 years, to ensure that the contents do not include items that will damage paper, for example:

- Post-it notes
- Sellotape
- Steel paper clips
- Staples
- Rubber bands
- PVC sleeves and folders.
- Electronic media, such as floppy disks, **should not** be attached to or stored with paper files.

5 When to archive

Items should be added to the archive when a department or team no longer has a **business need** for the documents. Documents should only be retrieved in exceptional circumstances. If it is likely that a file will need to be viewed regularly it should be retained on site, unless there is insufficient storage space.


Files or items when added to the archive should be recorded on the Records Management System (RMS) and appropriately indexed with the inclusion of a [Transfer Sheet](#) with retention dates detailing the contents. The RMS captures the minimum amount of information about files to enable their retrieval and disposal at the end of their useful life.

Please note - the information captured must include the date that the item is due for destruction or the box will not be accepted for archive.

6 Naming

Before an archive box will be accepted in the archive it should include a [Transfer Sheet](#) in the archive box, placed clearly on top of the files within each box.

The cover sheet provides a clear point of reference for users looking for a record and is used to manage the longer term retention of the records within the archive box. An example of a transfer sheet is below:

KEY (R)- Review, (D)- Destroy, (P)- Permanent		Records Management Transfer List				 North Tyneside Council	
SERVICE AREA							
Managers Name				TEL	JOB TITLE		
FILE REF	TITLE / DESCRIPTION OF RECORDS (Please give details of each file / bundle)	COVERING DATES		RETENTION	ACTION		
		FROM	TO	PERIOD (R/D/P)	DATE		
RP1256/1	Case File Litigation (Dog Fouling) J BLOGGS	Dec-13	Mar-14	D7	Mar-20		
LISTED / PACKED BY:	DATE	Record Centre use:		Checked by:		RM BOX No.	
JOB TITLE	TEL	Date:		Date:			

Retention period is to show when files are to be Reviewed, Destroyed or marked Permanent, i.e. D7 Destroy after 7 years

Action date is the date that the file will be destroyed/Reviewed

Covering dates should show the dates that the documents were created and completed

Please note – boxes NOT on the RMS or NOT having a Transfer Sheet will be rejected

7 Disposal of records

At the end of their useful life, records should be confidentially destroyed. In general, records will not be retained beyond the lifespan indicated in the retention schedule unless the senior manager of the originating service area indicates otherwise.

Once boxes have been identified for destruction, the service archiver must select 'box destroyed' on the RMS and update the system for each box to be securely destroyed. Please ensure that a list of the boxes destroyed is then emailed to Information.governance@northtyneside.gov.uk for them to be physically removed from the archive space.

8 Maintaining paper files

Records contained in paper files should be managed according to business and legal requirements. This means they should be filed correctly. Documents should not be placed loose into files or folders. The following principles will help in maintaining an orderly filing system:

- File latest record on top

- Box files with the same retention period together
- File in order of the date on which the document was written, not date of receipt
- File attachments or enclosures immediately below the documents to which they relate. Place bulky items such as plans or drawings in a pouch or pocket with the contents described on its front
- **Do not** file duplicates
- Circulated papers should be marked in such a way as to identify the original or master set and copies. File the original and, if necessary, insert a file note into other files to indicate its location

9 File lists

It is good practice to maintain a list of the files for your service area. A file list should contain the following information:

- File reference
- File title
- Date opened
- Date closed
- System reference
- Keywords
- Disposal details.

Remember to update lists when files are destroyed.

10 Retrieving files

Retrieving documents from the archive must be for a **valid business reason**, the cost of retrieving files is high.

11 Tracking files

To request a box from archive, this must be done using the RMS to track the movement of the box between office and courier.

When returning a box back to archive, ensure that the box is checked back in on the RMS and any changes in the box contents recorded on the RMS and Transfer Sheet.