

# **Invest Northern Ireland**



## **Records Management Policy**

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Version 1.5

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## **1.1 PURPOSE**

This corporate policy has been developed to provide staff with an understanding of good records management practice and the benefits that can be derived from its adoption.

## **1.2 SCOPE**

Specifically, the policy sets out the generic principles that apply to the management of records, both physical (paper) and electronic across the organisation. The policy also provides a platform for incorporating the principles of electronic record management into the day-to-day operations of Invest NI staff.

The policy aims to:

- Provide clear guidance on what records are and why they need to be kept;
- Explain how good records management will serve the needs of Invest NI;
- Define responsibilities for records throughout the organisation.

An explanation of some of the key concepts used in records management is provided as is the relationship between records management and Modernising Government/legislative requirements.

## **1.3 LINKS BETWEEN THIS POLICY AND OTHER CORPORATE POLICIES**

Maintaining the effectiveness of this policy means that it must complement and interact with other policies including:

- Best practice in record management as per Public Record Office NI (PRONI) and ISO guidelines
- Invest NI's knowledge management strategy
- Invest NI's Information Management Framework
- Existing paper-based policies
- Audit requirements

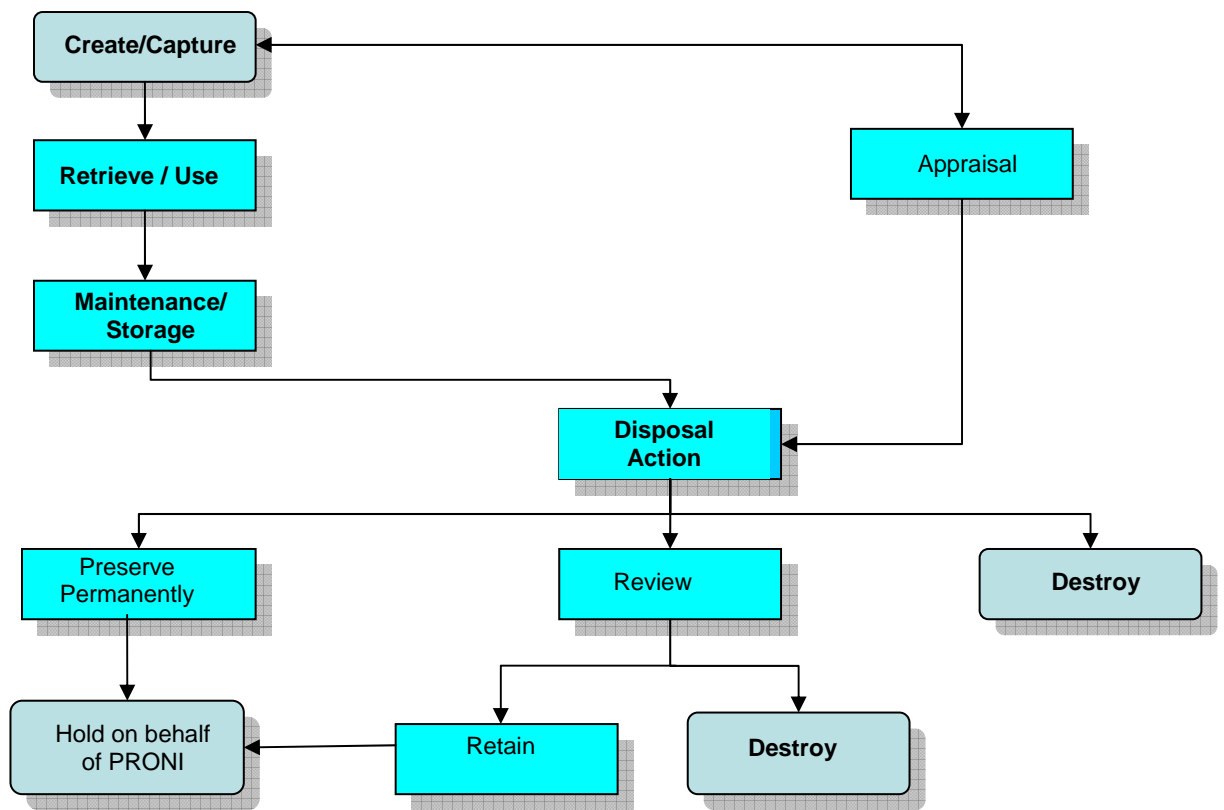
## 1. BACKGROUND

### 2.1 WHAT IS RECORDS MANAGEMENT?

Records Management is the term used for the range of activities which surround the creation, maintenance and disposal of records to meet business needs and accountability requirements. It includes setting up systems into which the records are created, received or added as well as the process of record creation itself. Another aspect of records management is organising records so that related records are grouped together, usually according to a fileplan. Managing groups of records helps users see the record in context.

The diagram below illustrates the record management lifecycle.

**Diagram 1: Record Management Lifecycle**



Records are created not for the sake of it but to ensure that information about what happened, what was decided and how things have been done is retained. Individuals cannot be expected nor relied upon to remember to policy, actions and decisions accurately over a period of time.

When records are being received or created it is necessary to have a system to keep them and link them to related records, to be able to find them when they are needed and to decide when to dispose of them when they are no longer required.

## **2.2 WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF GOOD RECORD MANAGEMENT PRACTICE?**

Organisations with good records management practices benefits in many ways including:

- Ensuring that information is shared and can be accessed throughout the organisation
- Saving staff time in both storing and retrieving records
- Supporting the decision-making process through the maintenance of relevant records
- Ensuring that record storage is cost-effective by removing redundant records from filing and server space
- Ensuring that records are created and managed in compliance with access to information legislation and associated codes of practice.

## **2.3 WHY DO WE NEED A CORPORATE POLICY FOR RECORD MANAGEMENT?**

Essentially a formal policy statement is needed to provide a common standard for consistent record management practice throughout the organisation and guarantee, irrespective of whether a record has been generated on paper or electronically, that:

- **the record is present** and therefore the organisation can demonstrate accountability of policy, decision-making and actions
- **the record can be located and accessed** and displayed in a way consistent with its initial use
- **the record can be interpreted** and it can be established in the context of the record by whom it was created, during which business process and how it relates to other records

- **the record can be trusted** and its integrity and authenticity can be demonstrated
- **the record can be maintained through time** for as long as it is needed despite migration between hardware or software formats.

The development and adoption of a record management policy also enables the organisation to meet its obligations under relevant legislation and government targets. These include:

### **Public Records Act**

The Public Records (NI) Act 1923 established the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) who has been given overall responsibility for the receipt and preservation of 'public records', ie the records of all government authorities.

Alongside the Public Records (NI) Act is the Disposal of Documents Order (NI) 1925. This order sets out guidelines for managing the retention and disposal of records. The Order establishes the criteria for the creation of retention schedules within public authorities.

### **Freedom of Information Act**

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 provides individuals with the right to access "recorded" information held by government bodies. The Act came into force in January 2005 and is fully retrospective. Individuals have the right to know whether the information requested is held and to have the information supplied, provided it does not fall within one of the exemption categories.

The Act requires a timely and certain response. In order to achieve this it is essential that the records held by an authority are structured and accessible. The Department of Constitutional Affairs (formerly The Lord Chancellor's Department) has issued a Code of Practice on the Management of Records under Section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act. This code sets out the requirements for effective records management and specifically references the need for public authorities to have a policy in place on "how it manages its records, including electronic records."

### **Data Protection Act**

The Data Protection Act 1998 sets out regulations for the processing of information relating to individuals. It includes the holding, use and disclosure of information. The Act provides individuals with the right to access personal information held about them, not only in electronic systems but also in manual record keeping systems.

## **E-government Policy Framework for ERM**

This policy framework forms part of the Modernising Government Agenda which mandates that by 2004 all newly created public records should be stored and retrieved electronically.

The framework provides guidance on how to best include electronic document and records management in the overall e-business strategy of the organisation through the achievement of key milestones. One of these key milestones is the operation of a corporate policy setting out the principles for managing electronic records.

### **2.4 WHAT IS AN EDRMS?**

An Electronic Document and Record Management System (EDRMS) can essentially be defined as a computerised information system that captures, maintains and provides access to documents and records.

Unlike manual record-keeping systems, an EDRMS enables the effective sharing of information and contributes to the flow of knowledge throughout the organisation. The flexibility offered in terms of access, searching and retrieval, as well as the co-ordination of content provided by an EDRMS unlocks aspects of information not previously possible within a paper environment.

This is particularly important for Invest NI as it is an agency formed through the merger of several legacy organisations, all of whom had different approaches to record management.

Invest NI has adopted Meridio as its EDRMS and is moving towards full electronic records management. Meridio adheres to the minimum functional requirements for electronic record management systems specified by PRONI.

## **3. WHAT IS A RECORD?**

### **3.1 DOCUMENT vs RECORD**

The term 'record' is most commonly used to refer to documents. However, it should be noted that not all documents are necessarily records. A document, is an electronic or a physical piece of paper eg booklet, map, report etc which provides information, particularly of an official nature.

A record is information that documents an action, a policy or a decision ie it records something. Good records give clear account of actions, decisions and policies and are created at the same time as or after the event, indicating who was involved the organisational context and the date. For a document to be declared as a record it should not only provide an account of

an activity or decision but should also include proof of ownership and assurance that it has not been altered.

Documents that meet any of the following criteria fall within the definition of a record and should therefore be saved within the file plan:

- The document contains unique or valuable information developed in preparing reports, policies, etc eg accounts;
- The document reflects actions undertaken in conducting organisational business eg casework submissions;
- The document outlines organisational policy and the rationale for decisions or actions undertaken by the organisation eg further education policy;
- The document describes oral exchanges (in person or by telephone) during which policy decisions are taken or activities are planned or completed eg correspondence;
- The document portrays important meetings eg Board minutes;
- Facilitates scrutiny of the organisations actions and decisions by both internal and external bodies; and
- Protects the financial and legal rights of the organisation and its customers eg contracts.

### **3.2 CREATING RECORDS FROM DOCUMENTS**

In determining whether a document should be declared a record the following questions should be asked:

- Does it document the reasons for a particular course of action?
- Does it document why something was rejected or approved?
- Does it document why something has or hasn't been done?
- Does it document who was involved in undertaking a decision or completing a piece of work?

Once a document is no longer in draft form it should be declared as a record. This protects it from being deleted and acts as a mechanism for ensuring the record's authenticity.

A document can be declared as a record either at the point of creation or a later date. The document creator retains responsibility and ownership of the document until it is declared as a record. Once it becomes a record, however, the document passes into corporate ownership and cannot be amended.

## **4. TYPES OF RECORD AND THEIR MAINTENANCE**

### **4.1 DEFINING RECORDS**

Records can refer to information recorded by any means in the form of words, symbols, images or impressions. It can exist in either electronic or paper format. Therefore records include the following:

- Written documents (these can be internally created or received in the post from outside the organisation and can consist of one or multiple pages);
- E-mail messages;
- Drawings, maps plans or graphs;
- Photographs; and
- Audio or video recordings.

Records are maintained by an organisation because they are deemed to be worthy of preservation and provide evidence of whether the organisation or individuals within the organisation have met defined legal, organisational or social obligations.

Invest NI creates and manages both paper-based and electronic records and these broadly fall into two categories:

- Customer/client related records - information received and created in relation to companies funded or otherwise supported by Invest NI; and
- Corporate related Records - information received and created in relation to the day-to-day functions of the organisation. This includes strategic management, finance and personnel records.

While records within both these categories contain information of varying importance, it is essential that they are managed within a consistent and controlled environment. This will ensure that Invest NI is able to meet accountability and evidential requirements outlined by the various acts of legislation governing record management.

### **4.2 PAPER/PHYSICAL RECORDS**

Although Invest NI's approach to records management is that where possible records are stored electronically, there will be instances where records need to be kept in hardcopy format eg property deeds, contracts with original signatures, tenders, signed claim forms, invoices and payments etc. For those instances where a new paper file is required the request is submitted to Record Management. If there is a legitimate need to hold a hard copy of the file, then Records Management will allocate a unique identifier in the form of

a barcode number. In Meridio a marker can be added for these paper files that will include their barcode number and location so that in the event of a request for a file/or information under Fol we can retrieve the information quickly.

In the case of existing paper files, although the old reference number or registered file number and name still appears on the file, the new barcode enables tracking of the file both in Meridio and at the offsite storage facility.

### **4.3 ELECTRONIC RECORDS**

Electronic records can be defined as records communicated and maintained via electronic equipment. At a basic level, electronic records are a computerised version of traditional paper records and typically refer to electronic documents created in most desktop environments. These include:

#### **Desktop Applications – Word, Excel etc**

A large proportion of electronic records created within Invest NI, especially those of an administrative nature, will be created using the normal range of desktop applications such as Word, Excel and PowerPoint. Meridio gives the end user a certain degree of autonomy in the creation and filing of records. As a consequence careful consideration needs to be given in determining what documents are captured as records.

An electronic document created from a desktop application should be treated in the same way as a traditional paper document in determining if it should become a record. That is, an electronic document created either internally or externally should provide evidence of an operational or corporate transaction, decision or action before being saved into Meridio.

#### **E-Mail**

E-mail systems contain information regarding business activities and transactions, which like records in hardcopy format, need to be managed and retained in accordance with organisational and legislative requirements. Traditionally, e-mail messages have been poorly managed as they have not been recognised as records. In order to better manage these records, e-mail messages should be saved into Meridio using the same rules that identify other record types. Further guidance on email management can be found in the Invest NI Email Management Policy.

#### **Hardcopy Records scanned and saved as PDF**

Hard copy documents that have been scanned and saved as PDF files should be considered on the same basis as any other type of record. Generally speaking all documents received from outside the organisation that are deemed to be records eg original signed contracts, appraisals, correspondence concerning decisions etc should be scanned and saved into Meridio.

Further guidance on the procedures to be followed when scanning documents can be found in Invest NI's Scanning Policy.

### **Websites/ Intranet**

As interaction between the organisation and its customers increasingly moves towards electronic methods it is essential to ensure that information on the Invest NI website and intranet is captured and managed in accordance with standard record management practices.

Essentially, web content can be divided into two basic types: static and interactive communications. Static communications refer to documents posted on the website for information purposes eg policies and advice. In contrast, interactive communications refer to communications received from visitors to the site eg contributions to on-line discussions and the completion of forms on-line.

As with other record types the criteria used to identify what should be saved into Meridio should be the same as that used for other record types. Additionally, when determining if web content should be captured into Meridio it is important to establish whether the information contained on the site is unique or has been captured elsewhere.

To assist in the creation of documents and records a number of standard document types have been established. These document types are designed to simplify and standardise the management of information by assigning specific metadata ie information about the record such as the date created, owner etc and automatic disposal schedules. When declaring a document as a record into Meridio the appropriate document type should be selected and assigned to that record.

The table below outlines the eight different document types and the associated retention periods and actions.

| Document Type  | Disposal Action   |
|--|---|
| Customer - Financial Documents                           | Document reviewed 7 years after last action.  |
| Customer - Other Documents                               | Document reviewed 5 years after last action.  |
| Financial Documents                                      | Document destroyed 7 years after last action.   |
| Customer/Other Financial Documents (PAC)                 | Document to be retained for at least 10 years from date of conclusion of investigation. |
| Strategic Documents                                      | Document retained permanently.  |
| Executive Documents                                      | Document retained permanently.  |
| Legal Documents  | Document reviewed 5 years after last action.  |
| Personnel Documents                                      | Document destroyed 5 years after last action.   |
| Administrative Documents                                 | Document destroyed 5 years after last action.   |
| General Documents  | Will inherit default disposal schedule applied to file plan.                            |
| EU Documentation - BSP & Peace II                        | Documents to be retained until 2015.  |
| EU Documentation – Sustainable Competitiveness Programme | Documents to be retained until 2022.  |
| EU Documentation - ERDF                                  | Documents to be retained until 2022.  |

## 5. INVEST NI'S FILE PLAN

### 5.1 FILING ELECTRONIC RECORDS

Responsibility for determining the significance of a document as a record will rest with the owner, which is usually the person responsible for initially creating the document. Owners will also be responsible for ensuring that records are placed into the correct folder within the file plan.

A file plan is basically a systematic and logical arrangement of files into sections based on defined relationships. It enables documents relating to a specific function to be grouped and managed together.

The file plan facilitates the rapid retrieval, use, and disposition of records and provides the framework for a successful records management programme. Essentially a good file plan is determined by its ability to provide structure, flexibility and uniformity, while remaining simple and easy to use.

Invest NI's file plan has been designed to reflect the organisation's functions.

Broadly, these functions can be separated into two distinct categories:

#### **Customer-Related Functions**

This part of the file plan is designed to reflect the interaction with Invest NI customers and third party organisations. It is organised according to customer name and co reference numbers, with each customer having one file within which all activities and decisions undertaken in relation to that customer are managed.

#### **Corporate Functions**

This part of the file plan is designed to reflect areas that are common across the entire organisation, as well as across other government authorities. It includes areas such as Human Resource Management, Financial Management, Accommodation & Services and Information & Communications. This part of the file plan also contains an area where operational divisions can store records relating to their own division eg team meetings, local procedures/guidelines and divisional reports.

### 5.2 FILING PHYSICAL RECORDS

One of the many benefits of an EDRMS is its ability to manage both physical and electronic records within a single environment.

In some instances it may not always be possible to scan physical documents into Meridio due to legislative restrictions or practical considerations (for

example if the document exceeds fifty pages – see Invest NI Scanning Policy.

Where either of these circumstances arises, a physical marker should be created within the appropriate file in Meridio. A physical marker is used to denote the existence of a record held in hardcopy and will provide the actual physical location eg division, offsite etc.

It is essential that any records that are held in hardcopy format be registered in Meridio to ensure that all information relating to a particular action, decision or subject can be viewed and managed together.

## **6. NAMING TITLES/CONVENTIONS**

Naming conventions are standard rules applied to documents, records and files in order to enforce consistency in the structure and words employed to describe their content. Standard naming conventions should be utilised throughout the Invest NI file plan in order to bring related records together under a common label and to clearly distinguish between different types of information.

Adherence to the following simple rules should result in consistent practice and reduce the possibility of information being lost or misplaced in the file plan due to inadequate naming conventions.

- give a unique title to each document – no duplication
- give a meaningful title which closely reflects the document contents using key words and which can be recognised by individuals not familiar with that area of work
- express elements of the title in a structured and predictable order
- locate the most specific information at the beginning of the title and the most general at the end
- give a similarly structured and worded title to documents which are linked (for example, an earlier and a later version)
- avoid the unnecessary use of dates (remembering that Meridio will date-stamp the document at time of creation and edit)
- avoid the use of generic names which are only meaningful in a personal context
- avoid the use of non-standard abbreviations and words that add no value.

For example: “Invest NI-Organisational Strategy 2003/2004- Final Report” is more useful than

“Final report on the organisational strategy for Invest NI 2003/2004”.

The use of keywords provides a more meaningful and logical method of titling, and enables the same structure to be applied consistently to all information within the file plan.

Document, record and folder titles should avoid the use of generic terms such as ‘general’ or ‘miscellaneous’, as well as the use of non-standard abbreviations and words, that provide little or no context.

## **7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

A successful records management programme requires support and recognition from all staff members within the organisation. Invest NI regards recorded information as a corporate asset and therefore all staff have a responsibility to ensure that they comply with and adhere to the principles outlined in both this policy and the associated Meridio guidelines and procedures. Whilst compliance will be monitored by the Knowledge Management team, responsibility and accountability in this area is the same as that for other aspects of corporate governance and as such is cascaded down through line management.

The sections below outline defined organisation responsibilities for records management within Invest NI.

## **7.1 DIRECTORS**

Directors have a responsibility in respect of information within their division for ensuring that:

- information is kept, as a record of activity and decision-making
- statutory obligations and corporate guidelines are met
- information is managed effectively, and exploited as resource
- information roles and responsibilities are assigned and that designated staff are allocated the necessary time to fulfill their roles

## **7.2 INFORMATION CO-ORDINATORS**

In order to implement information management policies and guidelines across the organisation, each team has a designated Information Co-ordinator (ICs), who is responsible for information management within their section. These ICs can use their expertise within their own area, to help ensure that all policies are fully implemented in their teams, and will be responsible for compliance by all team members and will also:

- Act as a local reference point within the business area for issues relating to FOI/DP, Meridio and other information management issues.
- Assist in the ongoing development of corporate policies, standards, guidance and procedures relating to knowledge management by ensuring that local considerations important to their business area are taken into account.
- Help ensure that information is managed according to corporate policies and standards and in such a way as to meet statutory and other requirements.
- Manage lower levels of the file plan.

## **7.3 ALL USERS**

All users, who participate in the creation of documents and records, have a responsibility in ensuring they comply with the guidance set out in this document.

Briefly, this includes the following:

- Ensuring that documents containing information of a corporate or operational nature are managed within Meridio and not within personal Outlook folders or drives;
- Ensuring that all documents deemed to be records are declared as such within Meridio;
- Ensuring that documents are titled according to the defined naming conventions; and
- Ensuring that the Knowledge Manager is informed of issues effecting the creation and management of records within Meridio.

#### **7.4 KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT**

Both the legislation and standards governing records management recommend the appointment of a designated member of staff, with appropriate seniority to have lead responsibility for records management.

In order to comply with the legislative drivers governing records management, Invest NI has appointed a Knowledge Manager who has overall responsibility for monitoring the creation and management of records within the organisation. Additionally, the Information Governance Manager within the Corporate Governance & Compliance team has overall responsibility for overseeing compliance with the Freedom of Information Act and Data Protection Act.

#### **7.5 KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT TEAM**

In order to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of the electronic and physical records, Invest NI has a designated records management resource. This team is responsible for the following:

- Monitoring the creation of new paper files and those files held in offsite storage
- Monitoring the regular review and destruction of records (both physical and electronic) in-line with authorised disposal schedules;
- Liaising with PRONI with regards to the review of records.
- Making changes to the higher levels of the File Plan as requested by the Change Control Board and ensuring that there is no duplication in the lower levels of the file plan.
- Providing advice and guidance to branches and divisions.

### **8. MANAGING SECURITY AND ACCESS**

The implementation of security and access controls within Meridio assists in building confidence in the electronic management of records. It also ensures that individual records are safeguarded from interference and amendment and that their integrity is maintained from a corporate governance viewpoint.

The facility to audit significant actions taken against documents, records or files within Meridio ensures that appropriate measures exist to monitor processes and trace any deviation from corporate procedures.

## **8.1 SECURITY**

In order to facilitate and improve the sharing of information across divisions within Invest NI, all users will be given 'read' access to all areas of the file plan. This will not only improve access to information but will also reduce the duplication of information across the organisation.

There will be a limited number of information types exempt from the open access policy eg HR related material. Staff should not store their own personal information in Meridio, rather it should be stored on individual K:\ drives.

With the exception of the above, the default for all files and documents created within the file plan will be no security marking and read only for all staff using the file plan.

If this is not the case for a particular file or section of the file plan then the Head of Knowledge Management Team should be contacted in order for the specific security required to be applied.

## **8.2 ACCESS CONTROLS**

Essentially, access rights are designed to prevent the inappropriate and unauthorised use of information. Each user's permissions are determined based on their functional role. As a consequence, with very few exceptions, users will have limited functionality within Meridio. In some instances, certain groups or individuals will be prevented from accessing certain information.

Access controls ensure that only authorised users have the authority and functionality to perform particular tasks within Meridio. This in turn helps to protect the authenticity and integrity of records created and managed within the system by preventing users from amending the record content.

As with security restrictions, access controls have been established as part of the initial roll out of Meridio across the organisation. Requests to increase or remove permissions from specific users or groups should be forwarded to the Knowledge Management Team for consideration.

### **8.3 AUDIT TRAILS**

Meridio provides the ability to automatically track and record all actions performed against documents, records and files. Any actions which affect that status of the record and its reliability will automatically be captured, as well as any changes to the metadata of documents, records, files or the file plan.

Audit trails will be maintained for the following types of actions:

- Creation;
- Updates or amendments;
- Storage;
- Disposal;
- Access; and
- Deletion or destruction.

The monitoring of audit trails will be undertaken on a regular basis. This will not only ensure the authenticity of the record but also enables the Knowledge Management Team to ascertain whether users are correctly using Meridio to manage and maintain corporate and customer records in-line with organisational procedures.

## **9. MANAGING RECORD RETENTION AND DISPOSAL**

### **9.1 IDENTIFYING CATEGORIES OF RECORDS**

The point at which a record can be destroyed is assigned upon its creation or declaration and is determined by the record type. Records fall into the following three categories:

- Records which require retention for a specific period;
- Records which merit permanent preservation; and
- Records that will require a later judgement to confirm or change the initial disposal assigned.

### **9.2 DISPOSAL SCHEDULES**

To properly co-ordinate and facilitate the management of records, all records within the organisation are controlled by the use and application of an authorised disposal schedule approved by PRONI.

The objective of the disposal schedule is to:

- Identify records worth preserving permanently;

- Prevent the premature destruction of records that need to be retained for a specific period in order to satisfy business and legal requirements;
- Authorise the destruction of temporary records after a specified period;
- Minimise the costs of long-term records storage; and
- Promote improved records management practices within the organisation.

Disposal schedules operate at two levels within Meridio. They are either applied at the file plan class/folder level, which means all records within that particular classification inherit a specific retention period, or else they are applied through defining the a specified document type. The selection of a defined document type will override the disposal action applied at class/folder level.

In some instances it may not be practical to manage retention schedules at the file plan level, as any one file can contain a number of different documents types which have varying disposal schedules. In instances where these circumstances apply users should ensure that they pick the correct **document type** in order to ensure that the appropriate retention period is applied to the record.

### 9.3 DESTROYING DOCUMENTS AS PART OF ROUTINE BUSINESS

Routine business refers to administrative documents created, acquired and maintained within the organisation. Documents of this type can be destroyed without the need to obtain authorisation, once their usefulness ceases.

The following are examples:

- Working papers consisting of rough notes used to assist in the creation of other records;
- Extra copies of documents preserved for reference; and
- Published materials preserved for reference.

### 9.4 DESTROYING RECORDS

Records that have not been actioned or referred to within their defined retention period should be destroyed. Where the retention period has been applied at the file plan level, the file should be closed; this will then trigger the disposal action.

The Records Management Assistant will identify records due for destruction. Authorisation will then be sought from the relevant divisional or branch manager.

While Meridio simplifies the destruction of a large majority of organisational records, established methods are in place to deal with the destruction of scanned records and physical records. The Records Management Team within Knowledge Management should be contacted for further guidance in this respect.

In order to conform to government policy on green issues, records due for destruction should be shredded and arrangements made for recycling.

## **9.5 REVIEWING RECORDS**

In addition to identifying records due for destruction, at the year's end the Records Management Assistant will also undertake the task of identifying records that are due for review. Details of these records will be forwarded to the relevant branch or division to determine whether the record should be retained or destroyed.

Where records have been identified for permanent preservation, the Knowledge Management Team will notify the Records Management & Administration Section of PRONI to arrange a visit so that a review of the records can be carried out. PRONI will then confirm those records that should be transferred to their office and those that can be destroyed following the procedure detailed above.

For further advice and information regarding the review and permanent preservation of records

**Records Management & Administration  
Public Record Office of Northern Ireland  
66 Balmoral Avenue  
BELFAST  
BT9 6NY**

**Telephone Number: 028 90 255905  
Fax: 028 90 255999  
E-mail: [proni@dcalni.gov.uk](mailto:proni@dcalni.gov.uk)**

## **ADDENDUM TO DAO (DFP) 08/07**

**15 March 2010**

### **RETENTION OF PAPER AND ELECTRONIC RECORDS FOR 10 YEARS WHERE THERE HAS BEEN AN INVESTIGATION OR PROSECUTION**

#### **Purpose**

1. The DFP Memorandum of Reply (MOR) to the NI Assembly PAC report on the Hospitality Association of Northern Ireland required DFP to ask departments to retain certain records for a 10 year period. The guidance is set out in paragraph 3 underneath.
2. This requirement is closely related to the retention of Board Members' appointment papers (for 7 years) as set out in DAO to address this issue together with advice on the sharing of information which was also raised in the Hospitality Association report. Clarification of the sharing of information has taken longer to resolve than anticipated and it is therefore necessary to issue separate guidance on the retention of papers.
3. This guidance should be treated as an addendum to DAO (DFP) 08/07. The DAO will be revised when the advice on the sharing of information has been clarified.

#### **Guidance – Retention of paper and electronic records for 10 years where there has been an investigation or prosecution**

4. The Hospitality Association PAC report recommended that where a publicly funded organisation has been the subject of an investigation which has led to significant criticism or prosecution, the relevant records should be retained for at least 10 years from the date of conclusion of the investigation. DFP accepted the recommendation in the MOR and undertook to ask departments to secure and retain both paper and electronic financial records for a 10 year period from the conclusion of an investigation or prosecution.

#### **Action**

5. Departments should note this guidance and bring it to the attention of NDPBs, including the agreed list of Third Party Organisations and other relevant publicly funded organisations.

**FIONA HAMILL**

**Treasury Officer of Accounts**

