



Corporate Records Management Policy

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Corporate Records Management Policy

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1.0 Introduction

NHS Ayrshire & Arran recognises records as a corporate asset, and records management as a key corporate function. Records are essential to support the delivery of services. They are also the organisation's corporate memory providing details of what action was required, what action was taken and can detail why decisions were made. It is therefore essential that they are managed effectively in the same way as any other asset.

This policy and its related documentation aim to ensure that adequate corporate records are held by the organisation and that processes are embedded into day to day practices in order that they are managed and controlled effectively to support legal, operational and information needs.

This policy does not address health records. Please refer to NHS Ayrshire & Arran's Health Records Management Policy.

2.0 Purpose

This policy is written with the intention of ensuring that adequate corporate records are created and managed by NHS Ayrshire & Arran to support operational and legal requirements. This policy will outline:

- business accountability and legal compliance requirements for managing records
- definitions of records, records management and associated terminology
- responsibilities for management of records
- life cycle management process
- training requirements
- monitoring requirements

3.0 Scope

This policy applies to all staff (management, clinical and administrative) who are responsible for managing corporate records in any format, including, but not limited to:

- paper/manual records;
- electronic records (e.g. Word, Excel, PDF, PowerPoint and within systems, Datix, eESS etc);
- scanned records;
- emails;
- media (e.g. photographs, recordings both audio and visual).

4.0 Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this Corporate Records Management Policy records are defined as specific recognised types of collated and organised information and data created, received, and maintained as evidence by an organisation for reference in the transaction of business or pursuance of legal obligations. This definition extends to the archive role, particularly in recording corporate memory.

Records management is the systematic control of an organisation's records, throughout their life cycle, in order to meet operational business needs, statutory and fiscal requirements, and community expectations. Effective management of corporate information allows fast, accurate and reliable access to records, ensuring the timely destruction of redundant information and the identification and protection of vital and historically important records. (National Records of Scotland).

Records management forms part of the organisation's functions related to governance and assurance. It is the professional discipline associated with managing and governing data, information and records from the point of creation throughout the lifecycle to their final disposal. The activities include identifying, classifying, storing, securing, retrieving, tracking, archiving and destroying records. Fundamentally records management is concerned with knowing what information you hold, where it is and how long you are required to retain it, either in relation to business or regulatory/legislative requirements.

A glossary has been included in Appendix 1 of this document, providing definitions of records management terms used in this policy.

5.0 Roles & Responsibilities

Records management is recognised as a specific corporate responsibility within NHS Ayrshire & Arran. It provides a managerial focus for all records throughout their lifecycle, from planning and creation through to ultimate disposal.

Under the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 (PRSA) Part 1 Section 1(2)(a) the individuals responsible for the management of the authority's public records and the individual responsible for compliance with the organisation's Records Management Plan must be named. Within NHS Ayrshire & Arran these responsibilities for corporate records fall to the Chief Executive and the Information Governance Manager (Corporate Records) respectively.

Additionally the PRSA outlines that all Public Authority employees are responsible for any records that they create, receive or use in the course of their duties. Any corporate records created by an employee of the NHS are public records and may be subject to both legal and professional obligations.

The **NHS Board**: is responsible for ensuring that it corporately meets its legal responsibilities, and for the adoption of internal and external information governance requirements.

The **Chief Executive**: has overall responsibility for records management in NHS Ayrshire & Arran. As accountable officer they are responsible for the management of the organisation and for ensuring appropriate mechanisms are in place to support service delivery and continuity. Records Management is key to this as it will ensure appropriate, accurate information is available whenever required.

The **Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO)** oversees the identification, assessment, and treatment of information risks within the organisation. Those are

risks related to information and information technologies, including records and records management information systems. They should sit at director level or equivalent and must provide the Accounting Officer and Executive Board with assurance that information risk is being managed appropriately and effectively across the organisation and its service providers. Furthermore, they play a crucial role in recognising opportunities stemming from information and information technologies, thereby facilitating informed decision-making processes, and fostering a culture of innovation and growth driven by information and related technologies. This strategic position requires a comprehensive understanding of the organisation's objectives, coupled with the ability to align risk management, information and information technologies strategies with overarching business goals.

The **Information Governance Operational Delivery Group**: is responsible for the overall development and maintenance of corporate records management practices throughout the organisation. They have particular responsibility for drafting guidance to support good records management practice (other than for clinical records) and for promoting compliance with this Corporate Records Management Policy.

Directors and Senior / Departmental Managers: have overall responsibility for the management of records generated under their remit of responsibility in compliance with NHS Ayrshire & Arran's records management policy. They are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of their personal responsibilities for records management and for ensuring that their staff are aware of this policy and their individual responsibilities. This includes covering records management in local induction programmes, personal development plans, job descriptions and identifying and meeting training needs.

Corporate Records Manager: has responsibility to provide advice and support to all services or functional areas throughout NHS Ayrshire & Arran, on all matters relating to corporate records management to ensure measures are in place to support full compliance with the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011.

Corporate Records Management Champions: are responsible for promoting good records management within their Directorate, raising awareness of policies, procedures and guidelines in relation to corporate records management and encouraging staff within the Directorate to participate in corporate records management training. They will monitor the implementation of this policy and will retain the master copy of the Directorate's Retention & Disposal Register.

All Staff: All NHS staff, whether management, clinical or administrative, who create, receive and use documents and records have records management responsibilities. All staff must ensure that they keep appropriate records of their work and manage those records in keeping with this policy and associated documentation.

6.0 Managing Corporate Records

6.1 Business requirements

Records are a vital asset of NHS Ayrshire & Arran and therefore it is essential that effective records management systems and practices are implemented. Effective

records management supports operational efficiency and delivery of services by reducing the time taken to identify and locate information, minimising duplication of records and confusion over version control, and offering significant savings in physical and digital space. It also supports better decision making and reduction in error when staff are accessing up to date, accurate and relevant information.

Records are a valuable resource because of the information they contain. High quality information underpins the delivery of first-class evidence-based care, accountability, governance, and many other key service deliverables. Information has most value when it is accurate, up to date and easily accessible when it is needed. Effective records management ensures that information is properly managed and is available whenever and wherever there is a justified need for information, and in whatever media it is held to:

- support the delivery of integrated health and social care;
- support day to day business which underpins the delivery of care;
- support evidence-based clinical and social care practice;
- support sound administrative and managerial decision making, as part of the knowledge base for health and social care services;
- meet legal requirements, including requests from patients/services users and customers or other individuals made through provisions of legislations;
- assist clinical and business audits;
- support improvements in health and social care effectiveness through research;
- support archival functions by taking account of the historical importance of material and the needs of future research;
- support patient/service user choice and control over treatment and services designed around them;
- support patient/service user safety and safeguarding;
- support accountability and transparency in the provision and management of services.

6.2 Legislative requirements

6.2.1 Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011

The Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 (PRSA) places an obligation on named public authorities to:

- prepare, implement, and keep under review a Records Management Plan (RMP) which sets out proper arrangements for the management of their records;
- identify individual(s) who are responsible for management of the authority's records and for ensuring compliance with the plan;
- outline the procedures to be followed in managing the authority's public records, specifically around maintaining the security of information and the archiving and destruction or disposal of records.

Under Part 1, Section 3(1) of the Act public records are defined as:

- a) records created by or on behalf of the authority in carrying out its functions,

- b) records created by or on behalf of a contractor in carrying out the authority's functions,
- c) records created by any other person that have come into the possession of the authority or a contractor in carrying out the authority's functions.

NHS Ayrshire & Arran is obliged under Section 3 of the PRSA to safeguard public records being created on their behalf by third parties when contracted to deliver one or more of a public authority's functions. An authority's expectations for the management of its public records created or held by the third party should be detailed within standard contract terms and conditions as required under Part 1 Section 3(1)(b) of the PRSA and Element 15 of the Keeper's Model RMP.

6.2.2 Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004

All records and information held by NHS Ayrshire & Arran are requestable under Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA) and Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004 (EIR), subject to applicable exemptions. Under Section 61 of FOISA, Scottish Ministers have published a Code of Practice on Records Management for Scottish Public Authorities. The Code of Practice sets out the acceptable standards for the management of records to support compliance with FOISA. Under Regulation 4 of EIR there is a specific requirement on a public authority to take reasonable steps to organise and keep up to date environmental information relevant to its functions.

6.2.3 Data Protection Laws

The Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 is the principal legislation governing how organisations process and handle personal data, including special categories of data, such as health-related data. The UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018 provide the legal framework for processing personal data, including that contained within health and social care records. Records containing personal data must be managed in accordance with the requirements of this legislation.

The Data Protection Principles state that personal data shall be

- a. processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner;
- b. collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes;
- c. adequate, relevant, and limited to what is necessary;
- d. accurate and where necessary, kept up to date; every reasonable step must be taken to ensure that personal data that is inaccurate, having regard to the purposes for which they are processed, are erased or rectified without delay;
- e. kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data is processed;
- f. processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the personal data.

In addition organisations have an accountability principle which requires organisations to take responsibility for how they process and manage personal data and how they comply with the other principles.

The Act also provides exemptions with regards to Research and Statistics – Schedule 2 Part 6 Paragraph 27 and Archiving in the public interest – Schedule 2 Part 6 Paragraph 28(1).

Handling records in a way that complies with these principles, as well as the many rights conferred on individuals by the legislation, is not only good records management, but is also necessary for data protection legal compliance.

6.2.4 Inquiries Act 2005

The Inquiries Act is intended to provide a comprehensive statutory framework for Ministers to set up formal, independent inquiries relating to particular events which have caused or have potential to cause public concern, or where there is public concern that particular events may have occurred. Of note:

- Section 21 of the Act provides inquiries with statutory powers to compel evidence.
- Section 35(1) of the Act makes it an offence to fail, without a reasonable excuse, to comply with a formal notice requiring attendance at the inquiry or the production of evidence. Subsections (2) and (3) go wider, making it an offence to deliberately distort or conceal relevant evidence.

The Inquiries Act 2005 is supplemented in Scotland with The Inquiry (Scotland) Rules 2007.

If an Inquiry is conducted, which covers NHS Ayrshire & Arran, they must take action to identify and protect records which may be relevant to the inquiry. Records form an important part of the evidence in inquiries. What is required can vary by Inquiry; however organisations will need to consider what information may be relevant based on the terms of reference for the Inquiry. It is an offence to fail to provide evidence (which is held by the organisation) required by the Inquiry; therefore organisations must put in place the appropriate measures to ensure, as far as reasonably possible, that information and records are prevented from alteration or deletion and are easily retrievable should they be requested.

6.3 Corporate Records Life Cycle Process

All corporate records held by NHS Ayrshire & Arran should be managed through the information lifecycle process. The key life cycle phases of a record are outlined below:

Phase	Comments
Creation/Receipt	Corporate records are created or received and (where appropriate) captured into the NHS Ayrshire & Arran records management systems e.g. department shared

drives/SharePoint sites, specific systems and paper files where these are still in existence.

Use	Corporate records are being used/updated for the business purpose for which they were created.
Maintain	Corporate records are stored and maintained for reference purposes or still need to be kept under statutory obligations.
Appraisal	Staff appraise the value (business/legal/financial/research/historical) of corporate records.
Disposal	Corporate records are destroyed or transferred to the NHS Ayrshire & Arran records archive.

6.3.1 Records Creation

All records created must be sufficient in context, content, and structure to allow the events and transactions that they document to be reliably reconstructed. This requirement should ideally be considered at the design stage, before records come into use, to ensure that all necessary data is captured. A key concern for ensuring the adequacy of records is to consider every stage in the process where the record will be used, and to test that the record contains the necessary data to meet all these needs.

It is the responsibility of all NHS Ayrshire & Arran staff to ensure all official documents that record essential activities are filed in an appropriate manner.

NHS Ayrshire & Arran manages a proportion of corporate records using electronic records systems. Steps require to be put in place to ensure that these systems will:

- accommodate both paper file systems and records that are created or exist in electronic format
- provide a simple information structure for logical file storage
- provide referencing and classification information for effective retrieval of accurate and related information
- require all documents to be indexed in a common format

The corporate records of NHS Ayrshire & Arran must be trustworthy, complete, accessible, legally admissible in court, and robust for as long as the records retention schedule requires. Corporate records that are consistently and logically indexed are easier to manage to meet these requirements. To support these requirements the following should be considered:

Records Management Systems	The design and configuration of information architecture within any electronic systems managing NHS Ayrshire & Arran corporate records will ensure that related records and the information within them can be efficiently retrieved by those with a legitimate right of access. In the meantime, all staff must save electronic records in accordance with NHS Ayrshire & Arran policy.
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Naming Conventions	The Naming Convention and Version Control Guideline, should be consistently used to name all electronic documents.
Version Control	Version control is a method to manage the updating of records. It ensures that those accessing information are able to identify the current version of a record and retrieve previous versions where appropriate. A key factor in quality decision making and action is the ability to access the most up-to-date information available. It is therefore vital that all staff maintain version control procedures when updating a record.
Information Security	Staff must ensure that all corporate records are secure from unauthorised or inadvertent alteration or erasure and that access and disclosure are properly controlled. Further information can be found in the NHS Ayrshire & Arran Secure Storage, Communication & Transportation of Personal Information Policy.
Storage and Retrieval of Paper Records	All staff must file paper records in accordance with departmental procedures. Official corporate records in paper format must be managed in a filing system that provides appropriate indexing information for effective retrieval and must have a matching record in the appropriate information management system, for example record keys. Details must include location details and record custodians. A procedure for the secure logging and tracking of the movement of official paper records throughout the organisation including records received as incoming mail must be in place.
Email	Emails generated or received by NHS Ayrshire & Arran staff are subject to the corporate records management principles of the equivalent corporate record in any other format. The NHS Ayrshire & Arran Email Policy and Appropriate Use of IT Facilities Policy provide more detail on the use of email within NHS Ayrshire & Arran.

6.3.2 Corporate Records Maintenance and Use

While the record is in active use by the organisation to support the delivery of services or to inform decision making, it is important that; the record is reviewed to ensure it meets its intended purpose, security/access is monitored to ensure it is only accessible by those who have a justified need to access, and version control is utilised to ensure points of change can be identified.

Once the record has fulfilled its intended purpose and becomes inactive, whereby the content is no longer altered but the record continues to be stored by the organisation. The record should be 'closed' and consideration given as to whether the retention period can be triggered. It is essential that the record is stored appropriately in order that: it continues to be visible to the 'owner', it can be identified when requested and it is managed through the final stages of its lifecycle. Access should continue to be monitored and any change to the storage or format of the record should be carefully considered. A further consideration is that at this point the records may be re-used for another purpose, for example for research, service improvement or as evidence in an investigation where a copy may be taken to form part of a new record.

6.2.3 Appraisal and Disposal

Records appraisal is the process of evaluating information and documentation to determine whether they require to continue to be retained, transfer to long term or offline storage, transfer to a permanent preservation facility or destruction. NHS Ayrshire & Arran staff must implement effective appraisal of corporate records to ensure that they are retained only for as long as they are required. The Corporate Records Retention & Disposal Policy sets out the arrangements for managing the corporate records appraisal process and recording the final disposition decisions for all NHS Ayrshire & Arran records when they come to the end of their useful life.

It is crucial at this stage that the 'owner' of the record has oversight of this decision making and that decisions are based upon business use, legislative requirements, and the organisation's retention schedule. For some records, especially those in digital systems, automated deletion functionality may have been applied to appropriate record types which negates for the manual review of these record types.

Whenever corporate records are selected for destruction, this should be done in accordance with the Corporate Records Retention & Disposal Policy. This determines the recommended retention periods required to meet operational needs and to comply with legal and other requirements. The retention schedules are an essential component of efficient and effective records management and must be consistently applied by NHS Ayrshire & Arran staff.

The final stage of the lifecycle is the disposal of the record, either through transfer to the Ayrshire Archives or by confidential destruction, so that the record is put beyond any possible reconstruction. NHS Ayrshire & Arran require to put in place robust procedures to ensure the secure and confidential destruction of records containing personal data which must comply with the "NHS Ayrshire & Arran Secure Storage Communication and Transportation of Personal Information Policy" to ensure that confidentiality is maintained at all times. The records should be accompanied by a responsible officer, to the area where destruction is to take place.

They should also record the disposal (destruction or deposit) of records on disposal logs and/or obtain destruction certificates where required, and particularly in the event of the destruction of personal data.

6.4 Training and Support

All staff, whether managerial, clinical or administrative, must be appropriately trained so that they are fully aware of their personal responsibilities as individuals with respect to record keeping and management, and that they are competent to carry out their designated duties.

This policy will be cascaded to all staff via Directors. Directors will nominate key staff with responsibility for implementing this policy within their respective areas. Nominated key staff are required to undertake more detailed training on corporate records management.

Corporate records management training comprises of an electronic eLearning solution hosted on learnPro, or in person / virtual training sessions.

Guidance on corporate records management standards and procedures have been collated into a Corporate Records Management Toolkit which is available for all staff to access via AthenA.

6.5 Compliance Monitoring

This Corporate Records Management Policy will be supported by the implementation of Corporate Records Directorate Improvement Plans.

An audit programme should be put in place to monitor compliance with corporate records management policies and procedures in NHS Ayrshire & Arran and put in place corrective actions to resolve any areas of non-compliance identified during the audit.

Regular reports will be provided to the Information Governance Committee. The reports will include

- Details on progress with the implementation of the organisation's Records Management Plan.
- Summary of Directorate's status with completion of the Corporate Records Directorate Improvement Plan.
- Outline of the records transferred to long term storage within the previous financial year.
- Register of destroyed records within the previous financial year.
- Details of records selected and transferred for permanent preservation (archiving) within the previous financial year.

7.0 Related Documents

NHS Ayrshire & Arran Corporate Records Management policy documentation is made up of this main policy and a number of related and supporting policies and guidance.

7.1 Local

- NHS Ayrshire & Arran Retention & Disposal Policy
- NHS Ayrshire & Arran Naming Convention and Version Control Guideline
- NHS Ayrshire & Arran Corporate Records Electronic Storage Guideline
- NHS Ayrshire & Arran File Plan Guidance
- NHS Ayrshire & Arran HDrive Data Cleanse Guideline
- NHS Ayrshire & Arran Email Management Guideline
- NHS Ayrshire & Arran Secure Storage, Communication & Transportation of Personal Information Policy
- NHS Ayrshire & Arran Email Policy & Best Practice Guidance

7.2 National

- National Records of Scotland

- Scottish Government Records Management Code of Practice for Health & Social Care 2024
- Scottish Ministers Code of Practice on Records Management under Section 61 Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002

8.0 Legal Context

The policy complies with the following acts, regulations and best practice standards:

- [Public Records \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#)
- [Data Protection Act 2018](#)
- [UK General Data Protection Regulations \(GDPR\)](#)
- [Freedom of Information \(Scotland\) Act, 2002](#)
- [Environmental Information \(Scotland\) Regulations, 2004](#)
- [Inquiries Act 2005](#).
- [Human Rights Act, 1998](#)
- [Electronic Communications Act, 2000](#)
- [Computer Misuse Act 1990](#)

9.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Definition of Terms

Appendix 1

Definition of Terms

Term	Definition
Access	The right, opportunity, [or] means of finding, using, or retrieving information.
Accountability	The 'principle that individuals, organisations, and the community are responsible for their actions and may be required to explain them to others'.
Appraisal	The process of evaluating business activities to determine which records need to be captured and how long the records need to be kept, to meet business needs, the requirements of organisational accountability and community expectations. Effective appraisal of the recordkeeping requirements of an organisation ensure that: appropriate records are created and maintained; and records are retained for as long as they are required to meet business needs, as well as broader organisational and cultural needs.
Archive (noun)	A physical or digital collection of records of continuing value, either for historical research, corporate memory or accountability purposes. In the context of health care, records are generally transferred to an external archival facility, operated by the National Records of Scotland, a University, Local Authority or sometimes an internal archive. These facilities are referred to as a permanent place of deposit. An archive must meet strict operational and environmental standards in order to preserve and maintain the integrity, accessibility and availability of the records for a significant number of years or indefinitely.
Archive (verb)	The action of transferring records to an archival facility for permanent preservation. The term archive is often incorrectly used to describe the ongoing storage of 'inactive' records physically or digitally within an organisation without the appropriate preservation standards in place. Therefore this document will refer to 'transfer to the permanent place of deposit' rather than archive to be clear on the action being described/recommended.
Capture	A deliberate action which results in the indexing of a record into a recordkeeping system. For certain business activities, this action may be designed into electronic systems so that the capture of records is concurrent with the creation of records.
Control	Control systems and processes associated with records management include: registration which provides evidence of the existence of records in a recordkeeping system; classification which allows for appropriate grouping, naming, security protection, user permissions and retrieval; indexing which allocates attributes or codes to particular records to assist in their retrieval; and tracking which provides evidence of where a record is located, what action is outstanding on a record, who has seen a record, when such access took place and the recordkeeping transactions that have been undertaken on the record.
Data	Raw, unprocessed information which requires to be organised.
Disposal	A range of processes associated with implementing appraisal decisions, including destruction and long term storage
Electronic records	Records communicated and maintained by means of electronic equipment.
FOI(S)A	Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act, 2002
Indexing	The action of specifying or determining the predestined topic, name, number, or caption under which a record is to be filed.

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Term	Definition
Information	Data that has been organised within a context and translated into a form that has structure and meaning.
Legal admissibility of electronic records	Legal admissibility concerns whether or not a piece of evidence (for the purpose of this policy, an electronic record) would be accepted by a court of law. Some evidence might be admitted to the court (i.e. is legally admissible) but the opposing lawyer might call the evidential weight of it into question. For instance can it be proved that the record has not been tampered with? Is it possible to prove that the system the record is kept in is a secure system? Is it possible to prove that the system was secure throughout the lifetime of the record? If not the evidential weight placed on the record would be reduced, which has the potential to harm severely the case being fought.
Lifecycle of records	The management concept that records pass through the stages of creation, maintenance, use, and disposition.
PRSA	Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011
Official record	Records that need to be retained to meet legislative responsibilities under FOI(S)A, Data Protection Legislation and NHS Ayrshire & Arran business and accountability requirements, e.g. contracts, the NHS Ayrshire & Arran publication scheme, records management policy.
Record	Information created, received and maintained as evidence and information by an organisation in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business.
Recordkeeping	Making and maintaining complete, accurate and reliable evidence of business transactions in the form of recorded information.
Records management	The discipline and organisational function of managing records to meet operational business needs, accountability requirements and community expectations
Records management system	An information system which captures, manages and provides access to records through time
Records retention schedule	A document that identifies the length of time records must be retained in active/current and inactive/non current storage before its final disposal to permanent storage, archival preservation, or destruction. The schedule also indicates confidentiality, privacy, and vital records for business continuity.
Retention period	The period of time that records need to be retained before their disposal, generally either by destruction or retention.
Retrieval	The manual or machine searching of a database to retrieve specific data or records to satisfy requests for information from the database.
Review (in context of records disposal)	Where it is not possible to determine the final disposal of records, they can be scheduled for review at a later date.
Selection	The activities involved in selection of authentic records for long term preservation.
Storage	The systematic assembling of documents in containers or depositories for possible future use.
Version control	Is a method established to manage the updating of records. It ensures that those accessing information are able to identify the current version of a record and retrieve previous version where appropriate.
Vital record	Records containing information necessary to its operation in an emergency created by disaster; and records to protect the rights and interests of individuals or to establish and affirm the powers of an organisation in the resumption of operation after a disaster.