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# **Scottish Government Records Management Policy**

**Knowledge and Information Management Branch  
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## **Introduction**

The Scottish Government handles a very large amount of information. This information relates to specific topics and individuals as well as records of decisions made by the Government, actions taken and the rationale behind these decisions. The Scottish Government recognises that its records are an important public asset and are a key resource in the effective operation, policy making and accountability of the Scottish Government. Like any asset, records require careful management and this policy sets out the Scottish Government's responsibilities and activities in respect of this.

## **Scope**

All employees of the Scottish Government have a responsibility to effectively manage records in accordance with specified legislation and guidelines.

This policy applies to all records created, received or maintained by Scottish Government staff in the course of carrying out their functions.

## **Definitions**

A record is a piece of recorded information or document, regardless of format, which facilitates the activities and the business carried out by the Government and which is thereafter retained for a set period to provide evidence of a transaction or decision carried out by or on behalf of the Government. Records may be created, received or maintained in hard copy or electronically. Emails, SMS messages, tweets, documents, spreadsheets, presentations, database entries, photographs, sound recordings and videos may all be records.

Records management is a field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use, distribution, storage and disposal of records. It constitutes a series of integrated systems related to the core processes of the Government that ensure that evidence of, and information about, its activities and transactions are captured and maintained as viable records.

## Objectives

Records contain information that is a unique and invaluable resource and an important operational asset. A systematic approach to the management of the Scottish Government's records is essential to protect and preserve records as evidence of our actions.

A small percentage of the Scottish Government's records will be selected for permanent preservation by the National Records of Scotland (NRS) to support historical research.

### Policy principles

We will:

- Create and capture accurate, authentic and reliable records
- Maintain records to meet the Government's business needs
- Operate a "digital first" policy, maintaining only one corporate copy of a record in one location
- Dispose of records that are no longer required in an appropriate manner
- Protect vital records
- Conform to any legal and statutory requirements relating to record keeping
- Comply with rules on best evidence in Scottish law courts
- Comply with government directives.

## **Responsibilities**

The Scottish Government has a corporate responsibility to maintain its records and record keeping systems in accordance with the regulatory environment. The senior manager with overall responsibility for this policy is the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO).

The Knowledge and Information Management (KIM) Branch is responsible for drawing up guidance for good records management practice. The KIM Branch is also responsible for promoting compliance with this policy in such a way as to ensure the easy, appropriate and timely retrieval of information. The KIM Branch will advise on policy and best practice and will report to the SIRO via its Senior Leadership Team.

Scottish Government Directors have overall responsibility for the management of records generated by their divisions' activities. They are responsible for ensuring that a complete record of the business undertaken by their area is captured, and that systems (electronic or otherwise) and procedures are used appropriately. They are assisted in this by Information Management Support Officers (IMSOs), who are nominated within the Directorates, and provide a key point of contact between business areas and KIM.

All employees of the Scottish Government (permanent and temporary), contractors, consultants and secondees must ensure that the records for which they are responsible are complete and accurate. They must also ensure that records are maintained and disposed of in accordance with the Scottish Government's records management principles.

## **Corporate Record Keeping Systems**

### **Paper Records**

The Scottish Government had a purely paper based records management system until 2005. Searches can be conducted on file titles and not on the contents.

### **Electronic Records and Document Management (eRDM) System**

The Scottish Government has had an eRDM system since 2005. It is the corporate repository for the majority of information created and received by Government officials in the course of their duties: this includes emails that must be retained for business purposes as evidence of a decision or transaction carried out by or on behalf of the Government. Items protectively marked, as TOP SECRET or SECRET must be retained in a paper file which is registered in eRDM.

### **Shared Drives**

It is not technically feasible to store linked spreadsheets and databases in eRDM. These are stored on team-shared drives, with a snapshot taken for the Corporate Record and stored on eRDM at intermittent periods during the life of the spread sheet or database.

## **Retention and Disposal**

Information and records shall be retained only as long as they are required to support the Scottish Government in its business requirements and legal obligations. At the end of that time, the records will either be destroyed or transferred to the National Records of Scotland for permanent preservation.

The Scottish Government's retention schedules are the key to effective records management, they set out the recommended periods for which particular classes of records should be retained in accordance with legal, audit and operational requirements. They provide a formalised, accountable system for the retention and disposal of records, and can help to save time, money and space by ensuring that information is not kept unnecessarily.

## **Training**

All Scottish Government staff receive training so they are aware of their responsibilities as individuals with respect to record keeping and management and to ensure they are competent to carry out their designated duties. This includes training in the use of the eRDM system which is then complemented by organisational policies and procedures and guidance documentation.