



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
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# **Scottish Government Records Management Policy**



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## **Introduction**

The Scottish Government handles a very large amount of information. This information can relate to specific topics, people, organisations and events. This information can also form part of records of decisions made by Government, actions taken and the rationale behind them. 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 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 Scottish Government (permanent and temporary), contractors, consultants and secondees have a responsibility to effectively manage information and records in accordance with specified legislation and policy guidelines.

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

## **Definitions**

Records contain information that is a unique and invaluable resource and an important operational asset that is needed to support the day to day work of Scottish Government. Records are defined as recorded information in any form which is created or received in the conduct of government business and which can provide evidence of activities, transactions and decisions made for, or on behalf of, the organisation. Their purpose is to provide reliable evidence of, and information about, 'who, what, when, and why' something happened. E-mails, SMS messages, tweets, documents, spreadsheets, presentations, database entries, photographs, WhatsApp messages, telephone conversations, sound recordings and videos may all be records.

## Objectives

We recognise that a systematic approach to the management of Scottish Government records is essential to protect and preserve records as evidence of our actions.

Our approach to records management is to ensure processes, systems and controls are in place which support the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use, distribution, storage and disposal of records.

We will maintain a framework of integrated good practice and effective systems related to the core processes of Scottish Government which ensure that evidence of, and information about, its activities and transactions are captured and maintained as viable, accurate and up to date records.

We will ensure the effective transfer of Scottish Government records to the National Records of Scotland (NRS) which are selected by them for permanent preservation.

## Policy principles

We will:

- create and capture accurate, authentic and reliable records along with ensuring that we produce minutes for meetings including those involving ministers and external organisations/parties;
- maintain records to meet the Scottish 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 official with overall responsibility for this policy is the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO). This role is performed by the Director General, Corporate.

Under the oversight of the Head of Knowledge and Information Management and the Corporate Records Manager, the Knowledge and Information Management (KIM) Branch is responsible for the Records Management Plan, the administration of the organisation's electronic records and documents management (eRDM) system and the development and provision of guidance for good records management practice. The KIM Branch is also responsible for promoting good practice and supporting the wider business to be compliant with this policy and legislation. The KIM Branch also advises senior officials on policy and best practice and reports to the SIRO.

Scottish Government Directors have overall responsibility for the effective management of records generated by their business area's 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. This includes ensuring the use of the corporate eRDM system as the primary platform for managing records. They are supported by Divisional Information Asset Owners (usually Deputy Directors) and are further assisted by local Information Management Support Officers (IMSOs), who are nominated by the business area, and provide a key point of contact between business areas and the KIM Branch. IMSOs have a vital role in ensuring that records are maintained and disposed of in accordance with Scottish Government's published retention policies. They also advise local business teams and promote good record keeping in their areas.

All employees of Scottish Government (permanent and temporary), contractors, consultants and secondees must ensure that the records for which they are responsible are complete and accurate.

## **Minuting meetings**

Business areas and individual Chairs and Secretariats have a responsibility to consider the appropriate recording and minuting of business meetings and committing them to the corporate record. In line with normal practice across the UK civil service, it is for Scottish Government departmental policy areas, not ministerial private offices, to retain full and accurate corporate records of meetings/conversations which involve ministers. Departmental policy areas would also be responsible for ensuring that any letters, e-mails and briefings involving a minister which relate to Scottish Government business are captured on the corporate record.

## **Corporate Record Keeping Systems**

### **Paper Records**

Scottish Government had a purely paper based records management system until 2004. A project is in progress to digitise all paper records (where it is possible to do so) in order to meet with our “[digital first](#)” policy. This will ease access to files and vastly reduce the storage space required to hold our legacy material prior to its destruction/transfer to National Records of Scotland in line with the arrangements in our Records Management Plan.

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

Scottish Government has had an eRDM system since 2004. It is the corporate repository for the majority of information created and received by officials in the course of their duties, this includes e-mails that must be retained for business purposes as evidence of a decision or transaction carried out by or on behalf of Scottish Government. eRDM can hold information up to Official level (including Official Sensitive), any information marked as Top Secret or Secret must be retained in a paper file which is registered on eRDM.

### **The Use of Local Drives**

It is not technically feasible to store databases in eRDM. These are permitted to be stored on local drives, provided a snapshot is taken for the corporate record and stored on eRDM at intermittent periods during the life of the database. All other information which may form a record of business should be stored and managed in eRDM and not on network drives or other ungoverned repositories. Any information held in such repositories which is identified as a record of business should be transferred to eRDM and deleted from the original store. This includes emails.

### **Microsoft Teams and Office 365**

Any information created or managed in Microsoft Teams or Office 365 that is a record or documents which are in development and will become a record should be transferred to eRDM.

## **Retention and Disposal**

Information and records shall be retained only as long as they are required to support 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 management of our records, they set out the periods for which particular classes of records are 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 online training in the use of the eRDM system which is then complemented by organisational policies and procedures and guidance documentation.



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Records Management Policy  
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## **Introduction**

The Scottish Government handles a very large amount of information. This information can relate to specific topics, people, organisations and events. This information can also form part of records of decisions made by Government, actions taken and the rationale behind them. 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 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 Scottish Government (permanent and temporary), contractors, consultants and secondees have a responsibility to effectively manage information and records in accordance with specified legislation and policy guidelines.

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

## **Definitions**

Records contain information that is a unique and invaluable resource and an important operational asset that is needed to support the day to day work of Scottish Government. Records are defined as recorded information in any form which is created or received in the conduct of government business and which can provide evidence of activities, transactions and decisions made for, or on behalf of, the organisation. Their purpose is to provide reliable evidence of, and information about, 'who, what, when, and why' something happened. E-mails, SMS messages, tweets, documents, spreadsheets, presentations, database entries, photographs, WhatsApp messages, telephone conversations, sound recordings and videos may all be records.

## Objectives

We recognise that a systematic approach to the management of Scottish Government records is essential to protect and preserve records as evidence of our actions.

Our approach to records management is to ensure processes, systems and controls are in place which support the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use, distribution, storage and disposal of records.

We will maintain a framework of integrated good practice and effective systems related to the core processes of Scottish Government which ensure that evidence of, and information about, its activities and transactions are captured and maintained as viable, accurate and up to date records.

We will ensure the effective transfer of Scottish Government records to the National Records of Scotland (NRS) which are selected by them for permanent preservation.

## Policy principles

We will:

- create and capture accurate, authentic and reliable records along with ensuring that we produce minutes for meetings including those involving ministers and external organisations/parties;
- maintain records to meet the Scottish 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 official with overall responsibility for this policy is the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO). This role is performed by the Director General, Corporate.

Under the oversight of the Head of Knowledge and Information Management and the Corporate Records Manager, the Knowledge and Information Management (KIM) Branch is responsible for the Records Management Plan, the administration of the organisation's electronic records and documents management (eRDM) system and the development and provision of guidance for good records management practice. The KIM Branch is also responsible for promoting good practice and supporting the wider business to be compliant with this policy and legislation. The KIM Branch also advises senior officials on policy and best practice and reports to the SIRO.

Scottish Government Directors have overall responsibility for the effective management of records generated by their business area's 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. This includes ensuring the use of the corporate eRDM system as the primary platform for managing records. They are supported by Divisional Information Asset Owners (usually Deputy Directors) and are further assisted by local Information Management Support Officers (IMSOs), who are nominated by the business area, and provide a key point of contact between business areas and the KIM Branch. IMSOs have a vital role in ensuring that records are maintained and disposed of in accordance with Scottish Government's published retention policies. They also advise local business teams and promote good record keeping in their areas.

All employees of Scottish Government (permanent and temporary), contractors, consultants and secondees must ensure that the records for which they are responsible are complete and accurate.

## **Minuting meetings**

Business areas and individual Chairs and Secretariats have a responsibility to consider the appropriate recording and minuting of business meetings and committing them to the corporate record. In line with normal practice across the UK civil service, it is for Scottish Government departmental policy areas, not ministerial private offices, to retain full and accurate corporate records of meetings/conversations which involve ministers. Departmental policy areas would also be responsible for ensuring that any letters, e-mails and briefings involving a minister which relate to Scottish Government business are captured on the corporate record.

## **Corporate Record Keeping Systems**

### **Paper Records**

Scottish Government had a purely paper based records management system until 2004. A project is in progress to digitise all paper records (where it is possible to do so) in order to meet with our “[digital first](#)” policy. This will ease access to files and vastly reduce the storage space required to hold our legacy material prior to its destruction/transfer to National Records of Scotland in line with the arrangements in our Records Management Plan.

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

Scottish Government has had an eRDM system since 2004. It is the corporate repository for the majority of information created and received by officials in the course of their duties, this includes e-mails that must be retained for business purposes as evidence of a decision or transaction carried out by or on behalf of Scottish Government. eRDM can hold information up to Official level (including Official Sensitive), any information marked as Top Secret or Secret must be retained in a paper file which is registered on eRDM.

### **The Use of Local Drives**

It is not technically feasible to store databases in eRDM. These are permitted to be stored on local drives, provided a snapshot is taken for the corporate record and stored on eRDM at intermittent periods during the life of the database. All other information which may form a record of business should be stored and managed in eRDM and not on network drives or other ungoverned repositories. Any information held in such repositories which is identified as a record of business should be transferred to eRDM and deleted from the original store. This includes emails.

### **Microsoft Teams and Office 365**

Any information created or managed in Microsoft Teams or Office 365 that is a record or documents which are in development and will become a record should be transferred to eRDM.

## **Retention and Disposal**

Information and records shall be retained only as long as they are required to support 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 management of our records, they set out the periods for which particular classes of records are 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 online training in the use of the eRDM system which is then complemented by organisational policies and procedures and guidance documentation.



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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 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 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 business carried out by 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 Government. Records may be created, received or maintained in hard copy or electronically. Emails, SMS messages, tweets, documents, spreadsheets, presentations, database entries, photographs, Whatsapp messages, 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 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 Scottish Government's records is essential to protect and preserve records as evidence of our actions.

A small percentage of Scottish Government 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 report to the SIRO via its Senior Leadership Team.

Scottish Government Directors have overall responsibility for the management of records generated by their business area's 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 by the business area, and provide a key point of contact between business areas and KIM.

All employees of 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 2004. A project is in progress to digitise all paper records (where it is possible to do so) in order to meet with our "[digital first](#)" policy. This will ease access to files and vastly reduce the storage space required to hold our legacy material prior to its destruction/transfer to National Records of Scotland in line with the arrangements in our Records Management Plan.

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

The Scottish Government has had an eRDM system since 2004. 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 databases in eRDM. These are stored on shared drives, with a snapshot taken for the corporate record and stored on eRDM at intermittent periods during the life of the database.

### **Office 365**

Any information that is a record or documents which are in development and will become a record are stored in eRDM where they are managed in line with the arrangements in our Records Management Plan.

## **Retention and Disposal**

Information and records shall be retained only as long as they are required to support 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 periods for which particular classes of records are 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 online training in the use of the eRDM system which is then complemented by organisational policies and procedures and guidance documentation.