

Records Management Policy Statement

Introduction

1. The Commission for Local Administration in England holds corporate records on behalf of the whole organisation. The Commission Secretary has overall responsibility to the Commission for maintaining these records.
2. The Local Government Ombudsmen each hold the case records on the complaints they investigate, and each Ombudsman has overall responsibility for their case records.
3. The terms 'organisation' and 'organisational' are used in this document when referring to both categories of record.

Scope

4. This policy provides for:
 - The requirements that must be met for the records of the Commission and of the Local Government Ombudsmen to be considered as a proper organisational record.
 - The requirements for systems and processes that deal with organisational records.
 - The quality, reliability and security which must be maintained to provide a valuable information and knowledge resource for the organisation.
 - Review of the policy and checking the quality of implementation.
 - An overall statement of records management policy which is supplemented by detailed procedures.

It covers records in all formats created in the course of business of the Commission and the Ombudsmen, including electronic and non-conventional records.

Statement

5. Information is a corporate asset and the records of the Commission and of the Local Government Ombudsmen are important sources of administrative, fiscal, legal, evidential and historical information. They are vital to the organisation in its current and future operations and constitute its corporate memory.
6. In consultation with bodies that may be concerned with the management of its records, the Commission and the Ombudsmen will create, use, manage and destroy or preserve records in accordance with all statutory requirements.
7. Systematic records management is fundamental to organisational efficiency. It ensures that the right information is:

- captured, stored, retrieved and destroyed or preserved according to need;
- fully exploited to meet current and future needs, and to support change;
- accessible to those who need to make use of it;

and that the appropriate technical, organisational and human resource elements exist to make this possible.

8. All staff who create, use, manage or dispose of records have a duty to protect them and to ensure that any information that they add to the record is accurate, complete and necessary. Staff involved in managing records will receive the necessary training.
9. The records management policy is a specific part of the Commission's overall corporate programme and relates to other policies including:
 - Best practice
Records should be managed in accordance with relevant standards for records management such as ISO 15489.
 - Information Services Strategy
Electronic records will underpin e-business providing records for business use, corporate knowledge management and evidence-based policy making, evidence for quality and accountability, and historical use.
 - Risk management
Measures should be taken to minimise risk of loss, damage or misuse of paper and electronic records.
 - Audit policy
Records have to meet audit requirements
 - Local Government Act 1974
Records need to be managed in accordance with the requirements of statutory framework within which the Commission and Ombudsmen operate, set out by part III of the Act.
 - Data Protection
Records need to be managed in accordance with procedures under the Data Protection Act 1998
 - Freedom of Information
Records need to be managed in accordance with procedures under the Freedom of Information Act 2000

Accountability

10. The **Chief Executive**, the **Secretary** and the **Ombudsmen** have a duty to ensure that the Commission complies with the requirements of legislation affecting management of records, and with supporting regulations and codes.

11. The **Communications and Records Manager** will work closely with **Facilities Managers** to ensure that there is consistency in the management of records and that advice, training and guidance on good records management practice is provided.
12. Wherever a set of records is maintained, an **individual member of staff** will be given responsibility for ensuring that records and information systems in their area conform to this policy and to the requirements of legislation.
13. **All members of staff** are responsible for documenting their actions and decisions and for maintaining the records in accordance with good records management practice.

Monitoring compliance

14. The Commission will follow this policy within all relevant procedures and guidance used for operational activities, including the risk management register. Interpretation of the policy will be monitored and there will be regular planned inspections by Internal Auditors to assess how the policy is being put into practice. These inspections will seek to:
 - identify areas of good practice which can be used throughout the Commission;
 - highlight where non-conformance to the procedures is occurring; and
 - if appropriate, recommend a tightening of controls and make recommendations as to how compliance can be achieved.

Documentation, legislation and standards

Commission policy

Audit Committee terms of reference
Comtrac System User Training Manual
Financial Regulations
Guidance note on the Data Protection Act 1998
Guidance note on the Freedom of Information Act 2000
Information security policy
Policy on the management of complaint casework email and electronic documents
Policy on the retention and disposal of complaint casework records
Procedure on dealing with requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000
Risk management register

Legislation

Local Government Act 1974
Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
Sex Discrimination Act 1975
Race Relations Act 1976
Limitation Act 1980
[Disability Discrimination Act 1995](#)
[Data Protection Act 1998](#)
[Human Rights Act 1998](#)
[Freedom of Information Act 2000](#)

Standards

ISO 15489: International Standard on Records Management
BS 4783: Storage, transportation and maintenance of media for use in data processing and information storage

BS 7799: Code of practice for information security management

Approved by the Commission December 2003, revised August 2005