



## **Retention and Disposal Policy**

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## 1 Purpose and scope

This policy sets out the framework for how South Lanarkshire Council manages the retention and disposal of its records.

It applies to all Resources and Services that create, receive, manage, and use records.

## 2 Retention Schedule

All records in South Lanarkshire Council should be covered by a retention schedule developed for each business function. A records retention schedule sets out the retention periods by which the council's business records should be retained to meet legislative, administrative, and operational requirements. A small selection of records identified for transfer to the archive to preserve historical corporate memory.

A retention schedule is a records management tool used to:

- identify and capture groups of common records, known as 'record series'
- assign retention periods with reference to legislation, best practice and operational need
- record disposal fate these being destroy, review, permanent or transfer to archive.

The Archives and Information Service (AIMS) is responsible for developing retention schedules for all services across the council. These are developed with the individual Services, the final agreed version is signed off by the appropriate Head of Service. For those records held in paper format stored at the Records Centre the signed and agreed retention schedule allows the Archives and Records Assistants to destroy the records at their appointed expiry date without needing to refer back to the services.

Retention schedules apply to records in all formats so where a record is held in both paper and electronic format those records should be disposed of at the same time or as near as operationally possible using appropriate disposal methods.

## 3 Benefits of a retention schedule

There are a number of benefits which arise from the use of a complete retention schedule:

- Managing records against the retention schedule is deemed to be "normal processing" under the UK General Data Protection Regulations/Data Protection Act 2018 (UK GDPR) and the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. Provided members of staff are managing record series using the retention schedule they can not be found guilty of unauthorised tampering with files once a freedom of information request or a data subject access request has been made.
- Members of staff can be confident about destroying information at the appropriate time.

- Information which is subject to Freedom of Information and Data Protection legislation will be available when required.
- The Council is not maintaining and storing information unnecessarily.

## 4 Disposal Fate

The disposal fate is determined in consultation with the department who owns the record series in question and is documented on the agreed retention schedule.

The disposal fate of a record can be one of the following: -

### **Review**

Review means that when a record reaches the end of its retention period, its fate is considered either for inclusion into the Council's historical archives, or if not, destruction. In some cases, further retention may be agreed, for example, if new retention instructions are given by an external funder.

### **Destroy**

Destroy as fate means that once the record reaches the end of its retention period it is considered of no continuing value to the Council and can be destroyed. Occasionally the destruction of specific record series is put on hold, for example, when there is an inquiry such as The Scottish Children's Abuse Inquiry.

### **Transfer to archive**

Paper records which have been identified for accessioning into the Council's historical archive collection will have Archive as their fate. Electronic records with Archive as their fate should be held by the Resource in the native system for long term preservation.

### **Permanent**

Some record series have permanent as their disposal fate which means they are retained permanently by the Service either in the office, on an official council electronic system or in the Record Centre. In these instances, permanent records are not identified to be archival records and therefore are not transferred to the council's archive.

## 5 Expiry of retention period - paper records held in offices

Once the retention period has expired as per the retention schedule, records held in council offices should be destroyed. If the records contain confidential, personal and or sensitive personal data, these should be destroyed using the confidential waste service via the Print Centre (see section 8) or by local secure confidential destruction procedures.

Records identified as having continuing value must be transferred into the council archive as directed in the [Collection, transfer and archiving policy](#).

## **6 Expiry of retention period - paper records held at the Record Centre**

Where paper records have been consigned to the Record Centre and the retention period has expired, the records are either:

- reviewed for further retention by the Archives and Information Management service where 'review' is given as the fate on the retention schedule
- transferred into the archive for permanent preservation as indicated on the retention schedule by disposal fate 'archive' or
- confidentially and securely disposed using the Council's Confidential Waste contract where 'destroy' is the assigned fate.

All disposal decisions, dates of disposal and certificates of destruction of records destroyed at the Records Centre are documented and a record permanently kept.

## **7 Expiry of retention period – electronic records**

Records of business activities and transactions may be maintained in many different media and formats and are often stored in multiple locations. Regardless of location and format effective retention and disposal rules must be applied to all electronic records using approved retention schedules. Where possible it is recommended that the retention period is identified before or at the time of file creation and applied as part of the retention and disposal process.

- **Network files**

Electronic records held on a network drive or an electronic system must be deleted at the same time as their duplicate paper records. An exception to this would be when paper copies are electronically scanned and then destroyed, and the electronic copy becomes the master record. All copies of network files must be deleted from the system.

- **C:drives**

Records must not be held on c: drives. Any records deleted from your desktop or c: drive can end up in recycle bins so these must be checked to ensure that all copies of the record have been deleted and cannot be resurrected. This is particularly important for records that hold personal and sensitive information. With digital records deletion from a server may not be sufficient. Duplicate and/or backup copies must also be destroyed at the same time, to ensure compliance with the UK General Data Protection Regulations/Data Protection Act 2018 (UK GDPR) and Freedom of Information legislation.

- **Emails**

Emails which are or contain council records should be retained within the relevant subject matter folder within the network or electronic system with a retention period applied. Microsoft Outlook should not be used as a filing system.

- **Electronic content management systems**

Records held on any official council system must have retention periods assigned to them based on approved retention schedules.

- **Long term preservation**

Electronic records which have been designated as permanent or for transfer to the Archives should be maintained in the native system (their original system). Arrangements should be made for the long-term preservation of these records ensuring that the integrity of the record is maintained, and digital continuity is guaranteed. At present the council archive has no means of accepting electronic transfer into a digital repository so it is the responsibility of Resources to ensure the preservation of these records. The future long-term aim of the Council is to develop a digital preservation strategy.

- **Portable media**

Records and information held on portable media such as tapes, CDs or DVDs, should be destroyed by destroying the physical media concerned. For example, CDs/DVDs can be cut in half and items can then be placed directly into a general waste container. Larger quantities of portable media can be disposed of using the Confidential Waste disposal service from the Print Centre. (See section 8.)

## **8 Confidential waste disposal**

The Print Centre operates a confidential waste disposal service. The service can be accessed from the [Print Shop icon located in the middle of the menu bar on the intranet](#) or by emailing [printing@southlanarkshire.gov.uk](mailto:printing@southlanarkshire.gov.uk) or by phoning 01698 454241.

## **9 Further information**

Further information on records retention and disposal is available on the [records management pages](#) of the intranet or contact the Archives and Information Management Service:

Phone: 01355 239193

Email: [recordcentre@southlanarkshire.gov.uk](mailto:recordcentre@southlanarkshire.gov.uk)