



Hinckley & Bosworth  
Borough Council

*A Borough to be proud of*

Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

# Records Management Policy

## 2015 - 2018

April 2016



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# 1 Introduction and purpose

Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council needs reliable, accurate and timely information to manage services and measure performance. Our records are an important asset and should be managed as such. They provide evidence of business decisions and are necessary to administer public functions effectively and provide accountability for decisions taken.

The Freedom of Information Act (2000) sets out in its section 46 Code of Practice, the need for efficient records management systems. The Data Protection Act 1998 also specifies that data should be accurate and up to date, principle four.

As a business there is a strong interest in the ability to locate and retrieve information speedily and efficiently in response to delivering services and responding to information requests.

In addition:

- Managers have to ensure that their staff are familiar with all policies and procedures **relevant** to their positions, new members of staff (including temporary, contract and volunteer) must be made aware of these documents as part of their service induction.
- Managers and staff need to ensure that data collection, use and processing comply with relevant legislation namely;
  - The Data Protection Act 1998
  - The Freedom of Information Act 2000
  - Environmental Information Regulations 2004
  - RIPA Regulation Investigatory Powers Act
  - Corporate policy for information security
- Service providers need good information to make judgements about the efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness of their services.
- Managers often need to make complex decisions about their priorities and use of resources.
- Service users and members of the public need accessible information to make informed decisions.
- Regulators and government departments must satisfy their responsibilities for making judgements about performance and governance.

Good quality data is the essential ingredient for reliable performance and financial information. The data must be fit for purpose, representing in an accurate and timely manner the organisation's activity.

At the same time, a balance must be achieved between the importance of the information requirement and the cost of collecting the supporting data with the necessary accuracy, detail and timeliness.

This council is accountable for the public money it spends and must manage the competing claims on resources to meet the needs of the community.

The risk in not identifying and addressing weaknesses in records management and data quality, or the arrangements that underpin collection and reporting activities, is that information may be misleading, decision making may be flawed, resources may be wasted, poor services may not be improved, and policy may be ill-founded.

## 2 Scope

This policy applies to all employees of the council including elected members, contract, agency and temporary staff, volunteers and employees of partner organisations working for the council. It is directly related to all data captured and records created, maintained and destroyed across all council systems, processes and procedures whether in physical or electronic form.

## 3 Standards

There are five key standards the council uses to ensure the quality of the records and data it uses for managing, reporting and to enable compliance with ISO15489-1:2001:

### Information and documentation - Records management

- a) **Governance and leadership** - There is a corporate framework for management and accountability of records and data quality, with a commitment to secure a culture of data quality throughout the organisation
- b) **Policies** - There are appropriate policies and procedures in place to secure the quality of the data recorded and uses for reporting
- c) **Systems and processes** - There are systems and processes which secure the quality and protection of records and data as part of the normal business activity of the organisation
- d) **People and skills** - There are arrangements in place to ensure that staff have the appropriate knowledge, competencies and capacity for their roles in relation to records management and data quality
- e) **Data use and reporting** - There are arrangements in place that are focussed on ensuring that data and records supporting reported information is actively used in the decision-making process, and is subject to a system of internal control and validation

## 4 Principles

The council has six key principles applicable to the management of its data –

### a) Accuracy

Data and consequent records should be sufficiently accurate for their intended purposes, representing clearly and in sufficient detail the interaction provided at the point of activity. The need for accuracy must be balanced with the importance of the uses of the data, and the costs and effort of collection.

### b) Validity

Data and consequent records should be used in compliance with relevant requirements, including the correct application of any rules or definitions.

### c) Reliability

Data and consequent records should reflect stable and consistent collection processes across collection points and over time, whether using manual or computer-based systems, or a combination.

### d) Timeliness

Data and consequent records should be captured and created as quickly as possible after the event or activity and must be available for the intended use within a reasonable time period. Data and records must be available quickly and frequently enough to support information needs and to influence the appropriate levels of service or management decisions.

### e) Relevance

Data captured and records created should be relevant to the purposes for which it is used.

### f) Completeness

Data and record requirements should be clearly specified based on the information needs of the organisation and data collection and records management processes matched to these requirements.

## 5 Record management system

We have in place a record keeping system that documents its activities and provides for quick and easy retrieval of information. We take into account the legal and regulatory environment specific to each service area.

The system will include:

- Records arranged in such a way that they can be retrieved quickly and efficiently;
- Records that are linked within a metadata framework;
- The ability to cross reference electronic and paper records;

## 6 Record storage and protection

The record keeping system must be maintained so that the records are properly stored and protected, and can be easily located and retrieved. This will include:

- Ensuring that adequate storage accommodation is provided for the records; physical record stores should be clean, tidy, should prevent damage to the records and be protected from unauthorised access
- Monitoring the movement and location of records so that they can be easily retrieved and provide an audit trail;
- Controlling the access to the information; the content and integrity of records held in any format should be properly protected
- Identifying vital/critical records and applying the appropriate protection, including the production of a business continuity/recovery plan
- Ensuring non-current records are transferred in a controlled manner to a designated records store rather than stored in offices; electronic records no longer in active use but retained for reference purposes should be maintained away from directories or folders which are in constant use

## 7 Record retention, archiving and disposal

An important part of a records management system is a records retention schedule.

This helps this council:

- Assist in identifying records that may be worth preserving permanently as part of the council's archives.
- Prevent the premature destruction of records that may need to be retained for a specified period to satisfy legal, financial and any other requirements
- Provide consistency for the destruction of those records not required permanently
- Ensure that the public has proper access to information whilst protecting personal rights as required by law.

Having a record's retention schedule as part of an overall records management system ensures compliance with the Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the management of records issued under section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, specifically, section 12: Disposal of Records:

**'Authorities should define how long they need to keep particular records, should dispose of them when they are no longer needed and should be able to explain why records are no longer held'**

HBBC's record's retention schedule is kept on the council's performance and risk management system 'TEN' where it can be viewed by all HBBC staff to ensure adherence to latest policy guidelines.

## **8 Training, guidance and advice**

If any service requires further support in relation to this policy either through the provision of training, awareness, guidance or detailed advice they should in the first instance contact the Information Governance Officer or Consultation & Improvement Officer who will advise on an appropriate course of action.

## **9 Monitoring and review**

The policy will be subject to ongoing review in light of any changes in legislation or good practice, and will be formally reviewed on a periodic basis, and at least in line with the period the policy covers. This policy forms part of our overall Information Governance Framework.