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| **Title of document:** | Information Audits Briefing Paper |
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## 1 Background

1.1 Records management sits at the heart of both the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998. The authority is required to have a records management policy which commits it to managing its information to ensure compliance with both of the Acts. The records management programme will ensure:

- that personal information is managed according to the eight data protection principles and is available for subject access requests within the required time frame;
- that all information which is required for the authority to do its business is available when it is needed and is safely disposed of at the end of the process;
- that all requests for information made under the Freedom of Information Act are dealt with appropriately and that any exemptions relating to information created or held by the individual sections are identified and documented;

1.2 The first phase of information audits has now been completed and the corporate retention schedule has been populated with a critical mass of data. A further series of information audits are to be completed as part of internal audit's monitoring of data protection and freedom information compliance. Now that the new directorate structure is operational, the new series of information audits will be used to ensure that all the information in the retention schedule is correct and to add additional record series where appropriate.

## 2 What is an information audit?

2.1 The audit is called an information audit rather than a records survey because it aims to cover all the information which is created regardless of the format in which it is kept. This includes microfilm, electronic media and hybrid systems as well as systems which are held entirely in paper format.

2.2 The information audit is based around all the different functions of the organisation. It works from the basic assumption that information is created by a business process for a specific purpose. The audit identifies these processes, notes the information/records which each step (or transaction) creates, notes the format in which the information is held and how it can be accessed and defines how long this information needs to be retained.

2.3 For the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act the audit also identifies which information is already being made public and which information could be made public as part of the overall publication scheme. It also helps to identify which information may be exempt under the Freedom of Information Act.

## 3 Carrying out an information audit

3.1 The records manager and the information governance officer will meet with the senior manager(s) in each division to decide which members of each section need to be approached to take part in the audit. It is expected that the senior manager(s) will let these people know they have been identified and endorse the process.

**KENT COUNTY COUNCIL**
**Communities Directorate – Libraries and Archives**
**Archive and Local History Services – Records Management**

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3.2 Once the key people have been identified the records manager and the directorate information governance officer will set up a meeting. These meetings usually last about 90 minutes and we would expect them to take place in the working area so that if necessary examples of records can be examined.

3.3 The new phase of information audits will also include a questionnaire which will help to structure the information audit and allow some of the information to be collected in advance.

3.4 If further contacts are identified during the course of the audit the records manager and the directorate information governance officer will contact them separately to ask for their input to the process.

## 4 Outcomes of the information audit

4.1 Once the audit has been completed the information which has been collected can be used as a basis to put together an effective records management programme for the part of the organisation creating the records, define retention periods to be included in the retention schedule and to ensure that any requests for information can be met within the required time frames.

4.2 Once the recommendations have been put together there will be a period of consultation and amendment before the final records management programme is agreed and put in place.

## 5 Information Audit Model

5.1 An information audit should result in the following information for each business process identified being documented:
- The number and description of the record series produced;
- The format in which they are stored and whether it would be appropriate to store them in a different format;
- The length of time the records:
- are needed for administrative purposes;
- should be retained in the semi current period;
  - and what should happen to the records at the end of their administrative life.
- safely disposed of;
- sent for permanent retention in the archives.
  - The number and description of the record series made available to the public currently and in what format;
  - The number and description of the record series which could be made available to the public and in what format.

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5.2   This information can be obtained by following the process below.

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            ┌─────────────────────────┐
            │ Identify business process│
            └─────────────────────────┘
                        │
            ┌─────────────────────────┐
            │ Define transactions which│
            │          arise           │
            └─────────────────────────┘
                        │
            ┌─────────────────────────┐
            │   Identify the records   │
            │     created by each      │
            │       transaction        │
            └─────────────────────────┘
                        │
            ┌─────────────────────────┐
            │   Identify methods of    │
            │ storage and retention    │
            │        periods           │
            └─────────────────────────┘
```

- Compile retention schedule
- Identify information which can be made public
- Identify information which could be made public

Compile publication scheme entry