

Records and Information Management Policy

Version 6.01, March 2026

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Document control

Title	Records and Information Management Policy		
Governance group	Data Governance Board		
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Revision history

Version	Originator	Review start date	Revision description and record of change
6.0	Fiona Hughes	21 July 2025	Bi-annual review.
5.0	Fiona Hughes		Bi-annual review.
4.0	Fiona Hughes	26 March 2021	Full review.
3.0	Fiona Hughes	15 January 2019	Bi-annual review.
2.0	Fiona Hughes	15 November 2016	Bi-annual review process. Revised in line with Records Management Plan.
1.0	Marcia Jarnell	25 July 2014	Combination of Record Management and Information Management policies.

Document approvals

Version	Governance group	Date approved	Date approval requested (if document still in draft)
6.0	Policy and Strategy Committee	19 March 2006	
5.0	Policy and Strategy Committee	08 June 2023	
4.0	Policy and Strategy Committee	03 June 2021	
3.0	Policy and Strategy Committee	10 June 2020	
2.0	Policy and Resources Committee	21 June 2017	
1.0	Policy and Resources Committee	18 September 2014	

Consultation record (for most recent update)

Consultation status	Stakeholders consulted between 21 October 2025 and 05 November 2025	
Stakeholders consulted and dates	Data Management and Compliance Group	21 October 2025

Strategic alignment

Plan for North Lanarkshire

Improving the Council's Resource Base – A Workforce Strategy that is built around the needs of the Council (as a single resource base) to deliver the priority outcomes, ensuring future workforce requirements, new skills and innovative approaches, and succession planning are recognised.

Digital and IT Strategy

The Digital and IT Strategy brings together separate but related plans and policies that contribute to the development and delivery of our digital vision. The Records and Information Management Policy is one of these. It supports the strategy by providing a framework for good record keeping practices making sure records are managed effectively and efficiently, and the Council complies with its statutory and regulatory obligations.

Next review date

Review Date	01 May 2027
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1. Introduction

Information and records are an essential corporate asset without which we would be unable to carry out our functions, activities and transactions, meet the needs of our stakeholders, provide evidence of our activities and ensure legislative compliance.

Records management is the systematic control of an organisation's records, throughout their lifecycle, to meet operational business needs, statutory and fiscal requirements and community expectations.

The benefits of implementing records management systems and processes include:

1. Improved business efficiency through reduced time spent searching for information;
2. demonstration of transparency and accountability for all actions;
3. the maintenance of corporate memory and evidence of Council business and decision-making;
4. the creation of modern working environments and identification of opportunities for office rationalisation and hybrid working;
5. risk management in terms of ensuring and demonstrating compliance with all legal, regulatory and statutory obligations, and
6. the meeting of stakeholder expectations through the provision of good quality services.

North Lanarkshire Council recognises the importance of effective records management in supporting its core functions, providing authentic and reliable evidence of Council business, and documenting historical and cultural activity within North Lanarkshire.

2. Purpose

This policy demonstrates that the Council considers records and information to be a vital corporate asset and is committed to managing them lawfully and in compliance with current standards of professional practice. It acts as a mandate for the support and delivery of records management guidance, training, procedures and initiatives across the organisation.

The [Public Records \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#) requires the Council to produce a Records Management Plan which sets out its proper arrangements for the effective management of all public records. The act defines public records as records created by, on behalf of, or in the possession of, the authority or a contractor, in carrying out the functions of the Council. Having a records management policy statement fulfils one of the mandatory elements of this plan.

3. Scope

This policy is applicable to all records created or managed by North Lanarkshire Council and North Lanarkshire Licensing Board for the purpose of performing Council functions, and applies to Council records in all formats, whether accessed on Council premises or via mobile or home-working equipment. It also applies to records managed on Council systems on behalf of North Lanarkshire Integration Joint Board.

The policy applies to all staff, workers, elected members, clients, suppliers, third party contractors and any other individuals or organisations who carry out functions on behalf of the Council.

4. Governance

This policy forms part of a suite of documents that form part of the [Digital and IT Strategy](#).

The **Data Governance Board** has **approval** authority for, and oversight of, this policy. The **Data Management and Compliance Group** – as **key stakeholders** – oversee its review and consider its contents before referring it on for approval. The **Chief Officer (Legal, Democratic, and Strategy)** – as the Council's Senior Information Risk Owner – is **accountable** for its governance. The **Records and Archives team** is **responsible** for the following activities:

1. Produce, publish and promote this policy. Provide guidance on how to apply and comply with this policy through standards, procedures and guidance notes as referred to within the policy.
2. Review every two years, with other reviews when needed. For example, following new legislation, new guidance or an audit action.
3. Report to management teams, governance and working groups, committees and scrutiny panels.

5. Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

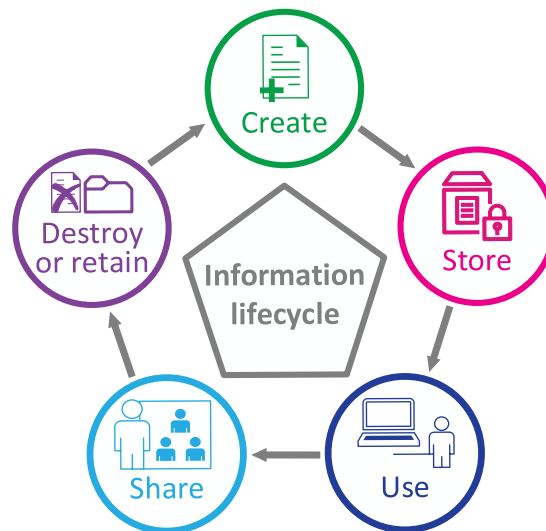
- Provide a **framework** for good record keeping practices within the Council, ensuring that records are managed effectively and efficiently, and that the Council complies with its statutory and regulatory obligations.
- Develop and encourage a **working culture** that recognises and acknowledges the benefits of effective records management.
- Ensure a **corporate approach** to the management of the Council's records as a corporate resource.
- Define **responsibilities** for records management throughout the Council.
- Ensure that Council records are **reliable, authentic** and have **integrity**.
- Ensure that records are **retrievable** as required but also **secure** to prevent unauthorised access, alteration or destruction.

- Ensure **lawful management** of records that include **personal data**. Support **public rights of access** to information. Ensure that **records of long-term value are identified and preserved as archives** within the collections of the Council.

6. Records and information lifecycle management

The lifecycle of a record comprises the following:

- initial creation by the Council or receipt from a third party;
- maintenance and use, including sharing and audit; and
- disposal through confidential destruction or preservation in the Council's archive.



7. Capture and control of records

The Council uses a variety of systems to manage its records. These systems, regardless of the format of the records, must be designed to ensure that records are saved, stored, organised and managed effectively and efficiently.

The Council is committed to using appropriate systems to manage its structured records e.g. line of business systems or corporate records stores. Unstructured, electronic records will primarily be stored within M365 and managed with records management software (Avepoint Opus). This supports appropriate information sharing, aids search and retrieval processes and reduces the unnecessary duplication of records.

The corporate file plan and Records Retention Schedule will be applied to records when they are stored, created, or documented in M365. All documents and folders should be given names and metadata that facilitate meaningful use according to the Council's Naming Standards.

8. Storage of records

Staff are encouraged to save in **electronic format** where appropriate for reasons of improved security, functionality and efficiency. Records should be stored on media that ensures that they can be retained and are accessible for as long as they are required, which in some cases is in perpetuity. **Paper records** held locally in offices should be locked away securely when not in use.

The Council has adopted the use of **M365**, particularly **MS Teams** and **MS SharePoint** for storing unstructured records. All Teams and SharePoint sites are allocated a function in the Council's file plan and staff should use the allocated sites for these records. Using unofficial storage areas, such as OneDrive, for records that should be managed under the file plan and Records Retention Schedule, will undermine efforts to effectively manage this corporate asset and puts the Council at risk of non-compliance with relevant legislation.

The Council operates a **records management service** for semi-current and non-current physical records, allowing services to store and access records off-site when they are not required for business use on a daily or weekly basis. This service manages intake of records, storage, destructions and transfers to archive, in line with the corporate Records Retention Schedule.

Service managers should ensure that they have a **contingency or business continuity plan** to provide protection for records which are vital to the continued functioning of the Council, in the event of a system outage or records being inaccessible because of e.g. fire or flood. The requirements are outlined in more detail in the Vital Records Guidance.

9. Access to records

Appropriate procedures and processes should be put in place to ensure the physical, electronic and intellectual security of Council records. This facilitates the Council's ability to respond to requests for information under, for example, data protection and freedom of information legislation.

Access to information is governed by the statutory and regulatory framework within which the Council operates, and the business needs and requirements of the Council. Staff must comply with the relevant information policies, processes and procedures to protect records from unauthorised access.

10. Audit trail

An audit trail allows records to be tracked effectively, deters unauthorised access and can provide a method of monitoring changes to a document.

- The Council has demonstrated its commitment to tracking and monitoring records by migrating its unstructured records away from on-premises, network drives onto M365 which track all interactions with records automatically.
- Physical records held in two corporate records management stores, and the archives repository are tracked using Avepoint Opus.

11. Retention and disposal

There are substantial financial, legislative, and reputational risks associated with keeping records for too short or too long a time period. Retaining records for the correct period ensures compliance with a range of legislative requirements and promotes efficient information management. This is of particular significance for records containing personal data.

A corporate **Records Retention Schedule** enables staff to make informed decisions about retention and disposal of records across the Council and its partner organisations. The Records Retention Schedule is maintained and updated regularly by the Corporate Records Manager and the most up-to-date version is on the Council's website.

At the end of a record's disposal period, the **disposal actions** will be to:

- destroy,
- review for business value, or
- transfer to the archive.

The **Records Retention Schedule only applies to master records**. Duplicate, local or convenience copies should be destroyed as soon as they are no longer required. Short-lived documents such as telephone messages, meeting notes etc. should be transferred to a more formal document and saved as a record if they contain business critical information.

The Council acknowledges that there will be occasions when records cannot be destroyed in-line with the Records Retention Schedule because of legal proceedings or information requests.

12. Transfer to archive

North Lanarkshire Archives exists to collect, preserve and make available to the public the historical records of North Lanarkshire Council and its predecessor administrations. Its role is to maintain a traceable and uninterrupted line of care, control and possession of the Council's records from creation to preservation that serves as a means of protecting the authenticity of the records.

Arrangements for transfer of records to [North Lanarkshire Archives](#) are governed by the Records Retention Schedule and can take place on a regular basis or as one-off transfers. At the disposal date, the archivist should be contacted regarding records identified in the Records Retention Schedule as for permanent preservation, as being of historical value or to be offered to the archivist.

In some cases, only a sample of the records will be selected for permanent preservation, and the archivist will work with the service to select the most appropriate sampling method.

North Lanarkshire Archives has achieved Accredited Archive Status with the UK's Archive Service Accreditation Standard and has developed a suite of procedures and guidance documents concerning all aspects of collections and stakeholder management, in line with this standard.

Currently only physical records are being transferred to North Lanarkshire Archives however, in future, appropriate measures will be put in place to preserve digital records identified for permanent preservation as outlined in the Digital Preservation Framework.

13. Destructions

Electronic records that are due for destruction should be deleted from Council systems. Records that are held on NLC servers are backed up for 5 weeks whereas records that are held on M365 will be backed up for a further 6 months before they become irretrievable.

Physical records that contain Council information should be securely destroyed by the Council's preferred third-party provider or shredded so that they cannot be reproduced.

14. Responsibilities

1. The **SIRO** is responsible for ensuring that all Council records are managed according to this policy.
2. The **Corporate Records Manager** is responsible for maintaining the Council's Records Management Plan, providing procedures, advice and guidance on good records management practice, and ensuring that all service areas are supported by a Records Retention Schedule and file plans.
3. The **archives** are the designated place of deposit for Council records of continuing evidential and historical value, and the archivist is responsible for identifying, preserving, promoting and making accessible these records and other historical records that may be acquired by the Council.
4. All **managers** have day to day responsibility for records management and should ensure that systems are in place to enable compliance and that staff are familiar with and adhere to this policy and any related procedures, standards and guidance.
5. All **members of staff** must complete an introductory online training course in records management and are accountable to their supervisors for documenting their actions and decisions and for maintaining records and information systems in accordance with this policy and any related procedures, standards and guidance.

15. Product set

The table below lists documents in the Records and Information Management Policy product set and other related products. This may include links to other file types, websites and IT systems.

- Those listed under policies, standards, procedures and guidance are the responsibility of the Records and Archives team. As per the [note](#) at the start of this policy, there are no active hyperlinks to files and web services used exclusively by council staff and elected members.
- Those listed under related products are the responsibility of other teams, services or agencies.

Product type	Product
Policies and plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Records Management Plan
Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Records Retention Schedule
Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Naming Convention Guidance ▪ Archives Guidance ▪ Digital Preservation Framework ▪ Records and Information Management Guidance ▪ Vital Records Guidance ▪ Physical Records Management Guidance
Related products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data Protection Policy ▪ Digital and IT Strategy ▪ Information Asset Register ▪ Information and Cyber Security Policy ▪ North Lanarkshire Archives ▪ Payment Card Data Security Policy
Legislation, regulations, and government guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Archive Service Accreditation Standard ▪ BS 15489-1:2016 Information and Documentation - Records Management ▪ BS 4971:2017 Conservation and Care of Archive and Library Collections ▪ Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 ▪ Data Protection Act 2018 ▪ Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 ▪ Model Records Management Plan - National Records of Scotland ▪ M365 Guidance ▪ Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 ▪ Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2015 ▪ Section 61 Code of Practice on Records Management under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 ▪ Scottish Council on Archives Record Retention Schedules (SCARRS) - Scottish Council on Archives ▪ Supplementary Guidance on Proper Arrangements for Archiving Public Records ▪ UK General Data Protection Regulation

Appendix 1: Glossary of terms

Term	Description
Access	The right, opportunity or means of finding, using or approaching documents and/or information in any format. Access may also be affected by the legal requirements and the physical condition of the materials, or the need to conserve them.
Authenticity	The trustworthiness of a record, i.e. the quality of a record that it is what it purports to be and that is free from tampering or corruption.
The Council	North Lanarkshire Council and North Lanarkshire Licensing Board.
Disposal	Action taken at the end of the retention period. This can be a decision to retain longer, transfer to the archive or secure destruction.
File plan	A file plan is a form of classification that arranges records by function. The M365 file plan arranges MS Teams and SharePoint sites within functional hubs that mirror functions and activities as set out in the Records Retention Schedule.
Information	Data that has been given value through analysis, interpretation, or compilation in a meaningful form.
Lifecycle	The life span of a record from its creation or receipt to its final disposal.
Non-current records	Records no longer required for the work of the Council but retained for evidential purposes.
North Lanarkshire Archives	Contains records of any age and any format which are identified by the archivist as having long-term historical, evidential, or legal value. Exists to maintain a traceable and uninterrupted line of care, control and possession of the Council's records from creation to preservation that serves as a means of protecting the authenticity of the record.
Records	Information recorded, in any format or media, created, received, and maintained by the Council in the transaction of business, or the conduct of affairs and kept as evidence of such activity.

Term	Description
Records Retention Schedule	A comprehensive list of records series, indicating for each the length of time it is to be maintained after reaching a trigger date, and its method of disposition.
Semi-current records	Records that are still referred to on occasion for business purposes on an irregular basis.
SIRO	Senior Information Risk Owner - role held by the Chief Officer (Legal, Democratic and Strategy) with senior management responsibility for records management and information risk within the Council.
Structured records	Electronic information created or obtained by end users where the information is stored in tables in a relational database system such as line of business systems.
Unstructured records	Electronic information such as emails, word processing documents, spreadsheets, presentations and graphics – documents mostly created by individual users from desktop applications that are not relational databases. Unstructured records would also include Adobe PDF files and electronic captures of facsimiles as well as other image files.