



NORTHERN IRELAND AMBULANCE SERVICE

RECORDS MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

2006 to 2009

Title	Records Management Strategy
Ratified by:	Risk Management Committee (22 January 2007) Trust Board (15 March 2007)
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Publication Date:	February 2007
Next Review:	February 2009

Version	Date	Notes on Revisions
1	February 2007	

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1. RECORDS MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

1.1 Introduction

Records Management is the foundation on which the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) can build its responses to growing demands for governance and operational effectiveness relating to information. The Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000 require that NIAS processes Subject Access and Freedom of Information enquiries within the timeframes set out in law, while there is also an imperative to do so economically to ensure best use of resources. Furthermore, both Acts require that NIAS publishes and implements policies in relation to the management of records.

The NIAS therefore recognises that records are an important corporate asset requiring proper management throughout their lifecycle, with due regard taken of legal obligations, professional practice and the [Organisation]'s business needs. All public authorities must ensure that records management policies and procedures are fully compliant with legislation and are a good fit with recognised Best Practice regarding the management of information.

A list of legislative and guidance sources is included in Appendix 1.

2. WHY DO WE NEED A STRATEGY?

A records management strategy is essential to signal a clear direction to all concerned as to how the governance responsibilities and records/information management issues are to be managed by NIAS over what will inevitably be a medium-long term timeframe. Staff need to be aware of their individual responsibilities in supporting NIAS to deliver safe and effective services and support the delivery of the national and local agendas.

3. PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

The purpose of this strategy is to provide a framework for planning, developing and implementing records management policies and procedures, which are consistent with the aims and requirements described above. (Refer to Appendix 1).

4. SCOPE OF THE STRATEGY

The international standard of managing records, ISO 15489 defines a record as *“information created, received and maintained as evidence or information by an organisation or person, in pursuance of legal obligation or in transaction of business.”*

In the context of this strategy a record is any recorded information that contains information, electronic or in paper, in any media which is created, collected, processed, used, stored and/or disposed of by NIAS employees, as well as those acting as its agents in the course of NIAS business. The strategy applies to health and social services records as well as corporate records.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES FOR RECORDS

All records created by NIAS are public records as defined in the Public Records Act (Northern Ireland) 1923.

5.1 Statutory Responsibility

The Secretary of State for Health, all Health Authorities and HPSS organisations (including NIAS) and other HPSS bodies have a statutory duty to make arrangements for the safekeeping and eventual disposal of their records.

5.2 Roles and Responsibilities within organisations

The Records Management Strategy brings together responsibilities for records in all formats throughout their lifecycle from planning and creation through to ultimate disposal. A high level of summary roles, responsibilities and accountability arrangements is set out below.

General Responsibilities

All HPSS employees are responsible for all records that they create or use in the performance of their duties. They are responsible for documenting their actions and decisions in the records and for maintaining the records in accordance with good records management practice and professional guidelines. This responsibility is established at and defined by the law eg Public Records Act 1923, Data Protection Act 1998 and other professional guidelines covering the handling of public records.

▪ The Permanent Secretary

The overall responsibility as Accounting Officer for the HPSS lies with the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

▪ Trust Board

The role of the Trust Board is to oversee the effective records management by Officers of the Trust.

▪ **The Chief Executive and Senior Managers of NIAS**

The Chief Executive and all Senior Managers are personally accountable for the quality of records management within the NIAS, and have a duty to make arrangements for the safekeeping and eventual disposal of these records, under the overall supervision of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records at PRONI.

▪ **Corporate Manager**

The Corporate Manager will take the lead in developing the organisation's Records Management capability. They will also have the responsibility and authority for records management in the organisation.

They will provide guidance and assistance to management, administrative and other supporting/operational staff, who have responsibility for the day to day management of records in their branches.

Responsibilities include:

- Promotion, development and overseeing of Records Management Strategy and Policy;
- Ensuring that records management functions are supported in terms of commitment and resources;
- Reporting to Trust Board on the on-going operation of the Records Management programme.
- Ensuring that records management is suitably recognised in the planning process and in the setting and monitoring of budgets.

▪ **Local Level Records Officers**

Each Directorate must identify, in liaison with the Corporate Manager, a member of staff who will be responsible for overseeing the day to day management of records within the Directorate/Operational area in accordance with the overall Board Policy on Records Management.

▪ **Individual Members of Staff**

Every member of staff employed with NIAS is responsible for maintaining records in accordance with Trust's Records Management Policy. No member of staff may destroy a file other than in accordance with the Trust's Disposal Schedule.

▪ **PRONI**

The Public Records Act (NI) 1923 made PRONI responsible for the records of any Court, Government Department, Authority or Office in Northern Ireland over which the Parliament of Northern Ireland has power to legislate.

6. THE CURRENT POSITION

The policies and procedures which have/are being developed or reviewed by the Trust, include:

- Handling requests for Information to include Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations;
- Records Management Policy;
- Guidelines on the use of email;
- Redaction guidelines (blanking out information with black marker, where information is deemed sensitive and not for general release);
- Trust's Disposal Schedule based on Disposal Schedule released by DHSSPS (Good Management, Good Records);
- Publication Scheme Policy;
- Development of Corporate Housestyle Manual;
- Development of Policy for Agreement for Sharing of Personal Information with other Agencies.

Records management, Freedom of Information and Data Protection training is currently being developed within the Trust and as part of the induction process. Information relating to Freedom of Information practices has been developed and communicated to staff.

The Corporate Manager currently deals with all Freedom of Information requests and subject access requests under the Data Protection Act 1998. Information relating to how to make requests etc is placed on the Trust's website at www.niamb.co.uk.

NIAS operates both manual and electronic records systems and work is currently underway to co-ordinate and streamline this activity within the Trust in line with good practice.

Formalised training for minute taking and guidance for staff has currently been undertaken and will continue to be developed.

7. STRATEGIC AIMS

This section of the Strategy sets out the objectives of NIAS in respect of the key components of a Records Management programme, namely:

Compliance with legislation and Best Practice;
Records Management Policy;
Roles and responsibilities;
Training and skills;
Implementation of procedures;
Communication and awareness.
Technology.

How Do We Get There? - Action Plan
Strategic Aim 1 – Systems and Accountability

Aim	Objective	Action	When Will It Be Done?	Who Will Do It?	Resource Implications
To develop systems, policies, and procedures that ensure the effective management of records and define accountability and responsibility arrangements for the Trust.	To review the current record-keeping systems throughout the Trust.	To set up a schedule for surveying all Trust records to determine what records are kept. This will inform the process of appraisal of Trust records, help establish Retention and Disposal Schedules determine the lifecycle of each series or category of record in accordance with business needs and statutory and legal requirements, taking into account the recommended Retention periods.	2006/07 Onwards	Corporate Manager Divisional Officers	Staff time. Possible overtime costs.
	To develop policies and procedures for Records Management throughout the Trust	Development, implementation and ongoing monitoring of the Trust's Records Management Policy. Establishment, monitoring and review of the Records Management Strategy. Once established, the Strategy will be passed to Directors for approval.	2006/07 2006/07 Ongoing	Corporate Manager Chief Executive Corporate Manager	Staff Time Staff Time

Aim	Objective	Action	When Will It Be Done?	Who Will Do It?	Resource Implications
		The Strategy will initially be monitored on a continuous basis with a formal review taking place each year			
		Formal launch and implementation of the Records Management Strategy, provision of advise on records management, establishment of good practice guidelines and compliance with the Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice	2007/09	Corporate Manager	Staff Time
		To commence monitoring of the records management process to ensure legal and statutory requirements are met and new records have a life cycle determined at the point of creation.	Ongoing		Staff Time
		Co-ordination of Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Policies. Aforementioned legislation are inextricably linked. There is therefore a need to co-ordinate Trust policy in all areas of Information Governance.	Ongoing		Training costs for Corporate Manager and relevant staff

Aim	Objective	Action	When Will It Be Done?	Who Will Do It?	Resource Implications
	<p>To define and implement a clear chain of management responsibility and accountability for all records created throughout the Trust.</p>	<p>To define the governance arrangements, roles and responsibilities for Records Management as part of the Records Management Strategy.</p> <p>The Strategy will detail will detail roles and responsibility for all employees of the Trust and the governance arrangements the Trust must undertake with the various Government Agency that exist to oversee records management.</p>	<p>2006/07</p>	<p>Corporate Manager</p>	<p>Staff Time</p>
	<p>To ensure that all staff throughout the Trust understand their responsibility in relation to the creation, amendment, management and storage of records.</p>	<p>To ensure the closure of records when no longer current and the secure and effective disposal or transfer to archives, as soon as required.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Corporate Manager Local Level Records Officers (when identified)</p>	

Strategic Aim 2– Training and Guidance

Aim	Objective	Action	When Will It Be Done?	Who Will Do It?	Resource Implications
To provide training and guidance on responsibilities and good practice for all staff involved with records.	To identify training needs, develop and implement a programme of training for all staff throughout the Trust.	Development of targeted training programmes for those who need basic training in records management and those who need more advanced training in records management.	2007/08	Corporate Manager Records Management Training Consultants?	Costs associated with Training Consultants. Staff time
		Provision of training and advice on DPA and FOI	Ongoing	Corporate Manager	Staff time. Costs associated with Training Consultants. Staff time
		To provide a range of training courses for staff ie induction, basic, advanced and specialist	Ongoing	Corporate Manager	Costs associated with Training Consultants. Staff time
	To develop guidance for staff on the management of records in line with good practice.	Provision for staff in general, Managers and Directors of guidance on good practice and advice on procedures and requirements	2006/07 Ongoing	Corporate Manager	Staff time
		To raise the profile of records management within the Trust through the provision of information about the issues involved	2006/07 Ongoing	Corporate Manager Directors All senior staff Local level Record Officers	Staff time

Strategic Aim 3 – Record Quality

Aim	Objective	Action	When Will It Be Done?	Who Will Do It?	Resource Implications
To ensure records are of a quality that meet the statutory, legal and business requirements of the Trust	To develop a set of quality standards for records in line with best practice guidelines	Development of guidance on good practice with the aim of establishing common and consistent standards of record creation and record keeping within the Trust. This will take into account the legislative requirements of DPA, FOI and EIR.	Ongoing	Corporate Manager	Staff time

Strategic Aim 4 – Access and Security

Aim	Objective	Action	When Will It Be Done?	Who Will Do It?	Resource Implications
To further develop systems which provide appropriate access to records whilst maintaining the confidentiality, security and integrity in storage, use and disposal	To ensure the fast and efficient access to records and compliance with the DPA, EIA and FOI legislation.	The development and implementation of a standardised and agreed corporate file plan	Ongoing	Corporate Manager	Staff time
		The development of procedures in relation to Trust's Policy on the Protection and Use of Personal Information for access to records under DPA	2007/2008	Corporate Manager IT Manager	Staff time
		Follow the Trust's FOI and development of EIA Regulations procedures in conjunction with the Trust's Publication Scheme for requests for information by staff and the public	Ongoing	Corporate Manager	Staff time

Aim	Objective	Action	When Will It Be Done?	Who Will Do It?	Resource Implications
	To keep records securely in order to protect the confidentiality of their contents	To develop policies and procedures to protect records from unauthorised alteration, to ensure that access to records is properly controlled and maintain adequate audit trails to track the use and location of records within the Trust.	2006/07 Onwards	Corporate Manager	Staff time
		To review storage arrangements for all records ensuring that records are secure and meet standards in order that no environmental damage is caused to records and they are safe from unauthorised access.	2006/07 Ongoing	Corporate Manager	Financial cost of upgrading storage facilities.
		To identify and implement a secure and confidential method for the disposal of records.	Qtr 1/2 2006/07 Ongoing	Corporate Manager	Financial cost of disposal services. Staff time
	To ensure, as far as practicable that record management systems are sufficiently robust that Trust activity can continue in the event of unforeseen circumstances.	To develop a Business Continuity Plan which can be referred to in the event of unforeseen circumstances which may prevent the normal day to day operations of the Trust.			

LEGISLATION AND NATIONAL GUIDELINES

1.1 Access to Health Records

Data subjects now have access rights to records irrespective of when they were created, although under Section 30 certain records including health may be constrained or denied.

The Data Protection Act supersedes the Access to Health Records apart from the sections dealing with access to information about the deceased. The Access to Health Records Act provides rights of access to the health records of deceased individuals or their personal representatives and others having claim on the deceased's estate. In other circumstances, disclosure of health records relating to the deceased should satisfy common law of confidence requirements.

Patient Report Forms (PRFs) form records under this legislation base.

1.2 Audit Commission (NIAO) Compensation Payments for Clinical Negligence 2002

The Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report on "Compensation Payment for Clinical Negligence" 2002, identified a number of areas that require improvement within the systems and procedures for dealing with clinical negligence and any resulting compensation payments.

1.3 The Caldicott Review (England)

In March 1996, guidance on the Protection and Use of Patient Information was published by the Department of Health. This guidance required that when the use of patient information was justified, only the minimum necessary information should be used and it should be anonymised wherever possible. In light of that requirement, the Chief Medical Officer established the Caldicott Committee to review the transfer of all patient identifiable information from NHS organisations to other NHS or non-NHS bodies for purpose other than direct care, medical research or where there is a statutory requirement, to ensure that current practice complies with the Departmental guidance.

On completion of the work, the Committee concluded that, whilst there was no significant evidence of unjustified use of patient identifiable information, there was a general lack of awareness throughout the NHS of existing guidance on confidentiality and security, increasing the risk of error or misuse.

The Caldicott Committee's Report, published in December 1997, included sixteen recommendations which related to ensuring best practice in the use of information flows between organisations.

Caldicott Guardians are currently being appointed through all HPSS Trusts in Northern Ireland.

1.4 **Controls Assurance**

Records Management is one of the Controls Assurance Standards developed by the HPSS. The standard requires a systematic and planned approach to the management of records to be in place, so that the Trust can ensure, from the moment a record is created until its ultimate disposal, it can control both the quality and quantity of information it generates; can maintain that information in a manner that effectively services its needs and those of its stakeholders; and it can dispose of the information appropriately, when it is no longer required.

1.5 **The Data Protection Act (DPA) 1998**

The DPA 1998 places a statutory responsibility on all HPSS organisations to protect the personal data which they hold. In relation to records management, this means that organisations must implement measures to:

- Maintain the accuracy of records held;
- Protect the security of personal data;
- Control access to personal data;
- Make arrangements for secure disposal once the record is no longer required.

1.6 **Freedom of Information Act 2000** **Environmental Information Regulations 2005**

The Freedom of Information Act and Environmental Information Regulations 2005 gives the public the right to access to information held by public bodies. The Act recognises that members of the public have the right to request from the Trust information such as:

- Our costs?
- What services are being provided?
- How to make a complaint?
- Response times;
- Targets that are being set;

Section 19 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires that some documents be released for public scrutiny pro-actively. This has been implemented by NIAS by the posting of a Publication Scheme, which has been approved by the Information Commissioner.

Members of the public can access this information on the Trust's website (paper copies also available if required).

Since 1 January 2005, any person who makes a request to the Trust for information, must be informed within 20 days whether the Trust holds that information and if so, it must be supplied. A public interest test may be carried out to determine if the benefit in disclosure outweighs the public interest in non-disclosure.

Freedom of Information relies on good record keeping including the creation of reliable records, which can be located when requested, and which are correctly disposed of, or selected for permanent preservation, at the appropriate time. Freedom of Information requires that there should be an audit trail to track the legal disposal of documents that are no longer required.

1.7 **Good Management Good Records (DHSSPS 2004)**

These guidelines offer an overview of the key issues and solutions and best practice for HPSS staff to follow when preparing a Records Management Strategy. It represents the joint DHSSPS and PRONI view of how records should be administered and sets the standards required of the HPSS.

1.8 **Human Rights Act 1998**

The Trust must observe the right of individuals to respect for their private lives. Information should only be disclosed when the disclosure is authorised by law. In selecting information for disclosure, the Trust should make the least intrusion possible into an individual's private life.

1.9 **The Public Records Act (NI) 1923**

All HPSS records are public records under the terms of the Public Records Act (NI) 1923. Chief Executives and Senior Managers of all HPSS organisations are personally accountable for records management within their organisation. They have a duty to make arrangements for the safe keeping and correct disposal (under the Disposal of Documents Order (NI) 1925) of those records under the overall supervision of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records whose responsibility includes permanent preservation.