

Wheatley Group Records Management Policy

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The bottom half of the page features a large, abstract graphic composed of several overlapping triangles and polygons in various shades of beige and taupe, creating a modern, geometric design.

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ہم درخواست پر معلومات کو بڑے حروف، بریل، ٹیپ پر یا کسی اور غیر تحریری صورت میں بغیر کسی لاگت کے مہیا کر سکتے ہیں۔ ہم اس کا دوسری زبانوں میں ترجمہ بھی کروا سکتے ہیں۔ اگر آپ کو ان میں سے کسی صورت میں یہ معلومات درکار ہوں تو برائے کرم ہمیں 0800 479 7979 پر کال کریں یا info@wheatley-group.com پر ای میل کریں۔

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1. **Introduction**

- 1.1 The Wheatley Group Records Management Policy (the Policy) is intended to provide the framework for the effective management of records within the Group comprising Wheatley Housing Group and all of its subsidiaries ('the Group'). It is also a statement of our commitment to a high standard of records management and a mandate for action to achieve it. This applies to both working in an office and home based environment.
- 1.2 The establishment of a Records Management Policy is recognised as good practice in line with guidance issued by the Information Commissioner's office. This is because it supports good data governance and data protection and it enables the more effective use of resources.
- 1.3 The Group's vision is to ensure that information is managed as a strategic asset and safeguarded to maximise its value in how we deliver excellent services through efficient and effective processes to our staff, customers and communities; and wherever possible, be born digital by default.

It is Group policy to:

- Regard records management as a key organisational activity and maintain a comprehensive records management framework to implement and manage this;
 - Implement an appropriate records management strategy that meets the needs of the Group;
 - Manage records effectively through their lifecycle from creation through to disposal;
 - Define the responsibilities involved in records management activities;
 - Provide relevant training through regular data protection training to raise employee awareness of records management and ensure compliance with this Policy;
 - Ensure that all employees are aware of the importance of records management and of their roles and responsibilities;
 - Regularly review our records management policies, retention schedules, guidance and responsibilities to ensure that the records management framework remains appropriate to its needs
- 1.4 This Policy, together with the retention schedules, guidance and procedures, provide a clear statement of our commitment to ensure that information is managed as a strategic asset.

- 1.5 A **record** is information in **any** medium, created, received and maintained as evidence and information by an organisation or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business. A record may exist on paper or any other medium including as a file on a computer (PC or laptop), a document on SharePoint, a text or WhatsApp message on a work mobile phone, an entry on a Group system, chat history on MS Teams or any other medium used to record data.
- 1.6 **Records Management** is defined as the field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposal of records, including processes for capturing, maintaining, using and disposing of records.
- 1.7 It is our intention to develop and maintain a practical and effective records management framework to manage information as a strategic asset and safeguard same to maximise its value.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This Policy covers the Group as a whole. All employees (whether permanent or temporary), office, home or field based, agency workers, contractors, consultants, modern apprentices, secondees, work experience placements and all visitors to and/or working in or from Group business premises shall comply with this Policy.
- 2.2 The Policy applies to all records regardless of format or medium, including paper, electronic, data held in Group systems, emails, audio, visual, CCTV and digital images or any other medium used to record data. In this Policy, reference to a record is a reference to the original. Original records **must not** be disposed of other than in accordance with the Records Retention Schedules.
- 2.3 This Policy covers records that are held by the Group whether on Group premises or in any other location.

3. Aims and Objectives

- 3.1 The purpose of this Policy is to set out a framework for the effective management of records of the Group and its subsidiaries. It provides the framework through which the effective management of records can be achieved. It demonstrates the importance of managing records effectively within the Group, outlines key aims and objectives in relation to record keeping and acts as a mandate for the support and delivery of records management across the Group.
- 3.2 Aims:
- Our aim is to ensure effective management of all Group records;
 - To ensure records management is successfully embedded, we aim to integrate the framework and processes with our strategic and day-to-day business practices as well as aligning it with business priorities; and
 - To ensure that all staff are aware of what they must do to manage records in an effective and efficient way.

3.3 Objectives

In order for an effective records management framework to be successfully embedded, our objectives are to:

- Develop, promote and encourage a records management culture where the value and benefits of effective records management are recognised;
- Set out the Group's commitment to managing records effectively;
- Promote an organisation-wide awareness of good records management
- Ensure that senior management take individual responsibility supporting effective records management across the Group and within each subsidiary;
- Ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and effective and that relevant training is provided;
- Ensure that all staff are aware of what they must do to manage records in an effective and efficient way;
- Promote continuous improvement of the effectiveness of records management;
- Ensure that records management is included as part of any new project planning; Appoint Records Management Champions across Group;
- Review Group wide performance of compliance and reporting on records management. and
- Identify and mitigate corporate business continuity risk.

4. Organisational Benefits

4.1 Records are a key strategic asset, as such, they support the delivery of excellent services through efficient and effective processes to our staff, customers and communities. There are many benefits to be gained by embedding effective records management into our culture and organisation. These include:

- Supporting the Group's business and discharge of its functions;
- Supporting good governance;
- Promoting business efficiency and underpinning service delivery by ensuring that authoritative information about past or current activities can be retrieved, used and relied upon;
- Supporting compliance with other legislation and regulations which requires records and/or information to be kept, controlled and accessible;
- Improving accountability and enabling compliance with legislation and other rules and requirements to be demonstrated;
- Protecting the rights and interests of the Group, its staff and its stakeholders;
- Protecting the rights and interests of individuals who seek access to information;
- Increasing efficiency and cost-effectiveness by ensuring that records are disposed of when they are no longer needed;
- Promoting the more effective use of resources,
- Providing institutional memory; and
- Protecting the Group's assets.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- 5.1 For records management to embed successfully, clearly defined roles and responsibilities require to be assigned, Records Management Champions in each area appointed and all staff trained on how data should be handled. It is essential that **all** management and staff take on an appropriate level of responsibility.
- 5.2 It is incumbent upon **all teams and employees** to:
- Manage records effectively throughout their lifecycle from creation until disposal;
 - Familiarise and adhere to all relevant records management procedures, practices and guidance;
 - Achieve and demonstrate an adequate level of general awareness of records management;
 - File items promptly and accurately;
 - Ensure records are complete, accurate and up-to-date when they create, use or store records;
 - Identify final versions and exercise version control of documents;
 - Ensure records can be accessed as needed;
 - Be familiar with any specific role or responsibility assigned to them;
 - Follow records retention procedures; and
 - Participate actively in records management training, including data protection training, and exercises when required.
- 5.3 **Group Directors** have overall responsibility for records management within their business division.
- 5.4 **Directors and Managing Directors** will provide the Director of Assurance with an annual statement confirming that retention schedules in their area have been followed.
- 5.5 All **Board and Committee Members** who, during the course of their duties, deal with records and must comply with this Policy.
- 5.6 The **Director of Assurance** has responsibility for maintenance and implementation of this Policy to ensure that the Group complies with its legal and regulatory duties.
- 5.7 The **Information Governance Team** can provide advice and guidance on the requirements of data protection legislation and information governance queries.

6. Records Management

- 6.1 Records management places efficient and systematic controls around each stage of a record's lifecycle.

- 6.2 It is the responsibility of Business Leads and individual staff members to manage records from creation until ultimate disposal in an effective and efficient way in accordance with the **Records Management Protocol** (Appendix 1).

7. Equal Opportunities Statement

- 7.1 This Policy complies fully with the Group's Equal Opportunities Policy. We recognise our pro-active role in valuing and promoting diversity, fairness, social justice and equality of opportunity by adopting and promoting fair policies and procedures.
- 7.2 We are committed to providing fair and equal treatment for all our stakeholders including tenants and will not discriminate against anyone on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, language, religion, belief, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender re-alignment, disability, marital status, pregnancy or maternity. Indeed we will positively endeavour to achieve fair outcomes for all.
- 7.3 We carry out Equality Impact Assessments, where required to do so, when we review our policies. We check policies and associated procedures regularly for their equal opportunity implications. We take appropriate action to address inequalities likely to result or resulting from the implementation of the policy and procedures.

8 Legal and Regulatory Framework

- 8.1 The management of the Group's records is carried out in line with, statutory and regulatory requirements. Legislation and guidance relevant to this approach and Policy includes (but is not limited to):-
- Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulations;
 - Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002;
 - The Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004; and
 - Human Rights Act 1998.
- 8.2 We adopt and regularly review best practice in records management. The Group aims to operate in accordance with best practice guidelines for managing records, such as may be in place from time to time. This includes (but is not limited to):-
- Code of Practice on Records Management issued under Section 61 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.;

9. Performance Monitoring

- 9.1 Compliance with this Policy, related standards and guidance will be monitored by the Director of Assurance and Business Leads attending the Records Management Community of Excellence. Any issues arising from the Records Management Community of Excellence that would benefit from a specific audit review will be added to the rolling internal audit plan for consideration by the Group Audit Committee.

10 Policy Review

- 10.1 We will review this Policy every three years and on changes to the Group. More regular reviews will be considered where, for example, there is a need to respond to new legislation/policy guidance. Reviews will consider legislative, performance standard and good practice changes.

11. Links with other policies

- 11.1 This Policy links other policies and strategies including (but not limited to):

- Wheatley Group Records Retention Schedules;
- Wheatley Group Data Protection Policy;
- Wheatley Group Clear Desk Policy;
- Wheatley Group Business Continuity Policy; and
- Wheatley Housing Group Risk Management Policy.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROTOCOL

1. Record Creation

- 1.1 Each business division must maintain a record keeping system to document its activities. This must take account of the legislative and regulatory environment in which the Group operates.
- 1.2 All records held by the Group must be complete, up-to-date and accurate to:
 - Facilitate an audit or examination of the business;
 - Protect the legal and other rights of the Group, its customers and any other person affected by its actions;
 - Provide proof of authenticity of the record; and
 - Provide a true and accurate record of policies and activities of the Group for reasons of public accountability and, in certain circumstances, of historical interest.

2. Record Keeping

- 2.1 Each business division must implement a record keeping system that allows records to be identified, located, retrieved, presented and interpreted.
- 2.2 An index of all records should be maintained.

3. Record Maintenance

- 3.1 The record keeping system must be maintained so that records:
 - are properly stored and protected from unauthorised access; and
 - Can be easily tracked, located and retrieved.
- 3.2 Current paper records should be stored in clean, tidy and lockable filing cabinets to prevent damage. When paper records are no longer required for current business purposes, it is best practice that they are securely stored in the off-site storage facility provided by our secure storage provider in line with the records retention schedules. No other off-site storage should be used. A log of all records held off-site must be maintained and kept up-to-date.
- 3.3 Current electronic records must be stored in such a way that they cannot be accessed other than by authorised persons.

4. Record Closure

- 4.1 Records must be closed as soon as they have ceased to be of active use.
- 4.2 Once a record has been closed a decision must be made about whether it must be retained or disposed of. All decisions about whether to retain or dispose of a

document must be made in accordance with the **Records Retention Protocol** (Appendix 2) and the relevant **Records Retention Schedules**.

- 4.3 When a file is closed, this should be marked on the paper file, electronic file and in the index of records.

The Records Retention Protocol sets out the process that must be followed before a decision can be made about whether to dispose of a document.

- 4.4 The records retention schedules set out the main categories of document within the Group together with a minimum or suggested retention period for each. Where there is a minimum retention period then the document must not be disposed of before the expiry of that period.

5. Record Disposal

- 5.1 There are a number of options for disposal of records and documents:

- Secure destruction by our secure destruction provider;
- Hard deletion of electronic records; and
- Secure destruction of records held at storage by our off-site secure storage provider once the retention period has been reached.

- 5.2 All records and documents containing personal, business and confidential information must never be disposed of in an ordinary waste bin. When disposing of records and documents, the services of our secure destruction provider must be used. You must also use the secure destruction consoles. Group Facilities Management should be immediately notified if your office does not have a secure console.

- 5.3 Copies of records may be disposed of according to operational needs, as long as the original is maintained in accordance with this Policy.

- 5.4 A document must never be disposed of where it is the subject of:-

- A live subject access request under the Data Protection Act 2018;
- A live request under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 or the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004;
- An internal audit investigation; and
- Court proceedings which includes a court order for information.

- 5.5 The Group may retain records for longer than the prescribed retention period in certain specific circumstances, namely:

- Destruction requires the contractual consent of someone outside the Group and that consent has not yet been provided;
- The records are relevant to actual or possible legal proceedings, or to an internal investigation; and
- The records relate to an outstanding debt owed to the Group.

RECORDS RETENTION PROTOCOL

1. Document retention

- 1.1 This must be carried out by an officer who has sufficient operational knowledge of the document and its function and purpose within the Group. An informed decision about whether to retain or dispose of a document should be undertaken in accordance with applicable Retention Schedules.
- 1.2 A document must never be disposed of where it is the subject of -
- A live subject access request under the Data Protection Act 2018;
 - A live request under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 or the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004;
 - An internal audit investigation; and
 - Court proceedings which includes a court order for information.
- 1.3 If clarification is required, advice should be sought from the Information Governance Team.

2. Documentation relating to disputes

- 2.1 There are occasions when the Group becomes involved in disputes with third parties. On these occasions it is essential that the Group has access to all documentation and correspondence that is relevant to the dispute. This will assist the Group to assess the merits of the dispute and to progress the dispute as necessary, whether through the court process or by negotiation. If the documentation relevant to the dispute has not been retained then this will affect the Group's ability to pursue / defend the case.
- 2.2 However, not all media are admissible as evidence in court. In some cases (e.g. contracts or an employer's records of PAYE deductions) only original hard copy records will be acceptable for this purpose. In others, computer printouts or even photocopies may be admissible as evidence in court if records are normally kept in that form or if the original is no longer available. For this reason, advice is available from the Information Governance Team if required.
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3. Legal requirement for retention

- 3.1 There are some statutory provisions that require records to be retained for a fixed period of time. The Group must comply with legal requirements. These are contained in the records retention schedules.