Chapter 24: Records Management

1. About this Chapter

1.1. This chapter tells you about:

- records and records management in Parliament
- why records management is important
- what your responsibilities are
- where to go for further help and advice

2. Introduction

2.1. We all keep records as part of our work. Records are our corporate memory. They ensure information exists about what actions or decisions were taken and why, how things were done, and who was involved. Records need to be managed so they can be found easily when needed and assist Teams, and the House more widely, in operating effectively. This is particularly important as the amount of records being managed by Parliament increases every day.

3. What is a Record?

3.1 Whenever we create an email message, minute a meeting, draft a report, complete a training assessment form, schedule building works, order stationery and so forth, we are creating records. Records may be required for business purposes whenever there is a need to recall or prove what was done or decided in the past. The House also uses records to prove that it has met its obligations or complied with best practice.

3.2 “A record is information, irrespective of the format or media on which it is held, created, received and maintained as evidence and information by both Houses, in the transaction of business or in pursuance of legal obligations.” (Parliamentary Records Management Policy)

3.3 This definition refers to recorded information in any form, including (but not exclusive to):

- audio and video tapes
- computer data files
- correspondence (email or paper)
- completed forms
- plans and maps
- policy directives (including manuals)
- reports
- spreadsheets
- websites

3.4 The terms ‘record’, ‘data’, ‘document’, and ‘information’ are often used interchangeably to describe records. For practical purposes, the records management policy does not distinguish between these terms.
3.5 It is important to understand that the term ‘records’ refers to the documents which you create, edit, file and consult in your working day and not just historical documents which are preserved in the Parliamentary Archives. Word documents, spreadsheets, emails and other electronic documents also fall within the definition of records.

4. What is Records Management?

4.1 Records management provides a practical and common-sense solution for ensuring that work is properly supported and informed by relevant records. It is responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation/receipt, maintenance, use and disposition (for instance, destruction or transfer to the Parliamentary Archives) of records in all formats, including processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records.

5. Why is Records Management Important?

5.1 It is important to comply with records management policies to ensure the House:

- maintains adequate and proper documentation and evidence of its activities for the time required to meet business, legal and historical needs
- can access and retrieve information in a timely way
- maximises the usefulness of the records while active and allows for the sharing of records as appropriate
- safeguards records from loss, misuse, unauthorised access to or modification of information
- facilitates the identification and preservation of archives (such as permanent records)

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 The records you create and receive in the course of your work, including email correspondence, are the property of the House of Commons. They do not belong to you. The security and timely availability of information you hold is also your responsibility. All staff are responsible for creating and receiving, organising and maintaining records in line with House policy and procedures, including:

- **Parliamentary Records Management Policy**: This document sets out the practices which Parliament must follow in relation to the creation, maintenance, management and destruction of its records, regardless of the media on which they are held, and describes the arrangements for reviewing records and transferring them to the Parliamentary Archives.
- **Classification Scheme for Parliamentary Records**: The corporate file structure, which describes how files/folders, irrespective of media, are named and organised across both Houses.
- **Authorised Records Disposal Practice**: Linked to the Classification Scheme, this states how long records are retained and what should happen to them subsequently.
6.2 A short e-learning tutorial on your records management responsibilities is available on the Intranet at:

Records management responsibilities e-learning tutorial

6.3 Each Team, Office and Committee is responsible for ensuring that it manages its records in accordance with the Parliamentary Records Management Policy and guidance issued by the Parliamentary Records Management team.

7. Where to Go for Help and Advice

Record Officers

7.1 Each Team or office has a nominated Record Officer, responsible for liaising with the Parliamentary Records Management team to ensure that Parliamentary records management policy and procedures are being complied with in their area. A list of Record Officers can be found at the Intranet link listed in 7.3.

The Records Management team

7.2 The Records Management team is based in the Parliamentary Archives, which provides a shared service to both Houses. The team is responsible for developing, promoting and supporting the corporate records management policy and procedures across the administrations of both Houses and the Parliamentary Digital Service. For more information contact the team on ext. 8483 or by email at RMAdvisory@parliament.uk.

7.3 More information about records management in Parliament, including the records management policy, guidance, list of Record Officers and online tutorials is on the Intranet at:

Records management in Parliament

Return to the Staff Handbook.