



## SCARRS: Scottish Council on Archives Records Retention Schedules The Guidance

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# INTRODUCTION

From their launch in August 2011, the Scottish Council on Archives Record Retention Schedules for Scottish Local Authorities (SCARRS) were an instant success. The schedules served an immediately identifiable need, namely guidance on how local authorities might best manage records both received from outside and generated within. The sheer scale of present-day creation and exchange of information – in traditional paper format and electronically – means that action is essential if an organisation is to do two things:

- find what it needs when it needs it, and
- dispose of what it no longer needs

Achieving those two simple-sounding but challenging objectives cannot be divorced from the efficient use of resources. Records are a vital resource. They are used day in and day out to oil the wheels of administration and to inform decision making. In short, they are central to the efficient operations of an organisation.

Recognising the importance of how records are managed within local government, the Scottish Council on Archives has continued to invest in the schedules since the launch of the tool. The result of that effort – including contributions from users of the tool – has been its complete overhaul and re-launch in September 2014. Every entry has been revisited and references checked in a time-consuming but rewarding exercise. Further changes (for example, changes in legislation) will be included in regular updates to the present version. If and when the changes add up to something significant, a new version of SCARRS will be launched. Records management does not stand still and therefore SCARRS must reflect ongoing changes.

This is a quality-assured tool for local authorities (and other organisations too) but it must not be seen as a sort of magic wand that supplies the answer to every query and comfortably removes every doubt. No such tool will ever exist. Instead the schedules and accompanying guidance offer reference points for different functional areas within a local authority that can inform internal discussion and the weighing up of its particular administrative needs. No two local authorities are absolutely alike and therefore those needs may well vary.

Records management is something that should concern every organisation from the top down. Records are an information asset, and the creation, use and maintenance of information (whether in traditional paper format or electronically) has a cost. If you have records management expertise within your organisation (a records manager or an archivist) use it but do not regard records as something simply for that expert. Engage in a conversation. Involve those who use particular records every day. SCARRS provide an informed starting-point for that exercise.

Should anyone be tempted to shy away from putting in place robust retention schedules, they should reflect on the incisive words of the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop. When supporting (in January 2011) the then Public Records (Scotland) Bill before the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee, the Cabinet Secretary observed:

*One of the biggest challenges is to decide what to keep and what not to keep. In a situation in which everything is kept, it can be harder to find the stuff that is really needed. An effective records management plan would allow people not to keep some records. Once an overall strategy and the criteria are in place, people will be able to recognise which records they do not need to keep and get rid of them.*

The Scottish Council on Archives Records Retention Schedules offer a route map. How best to reach the necessary objective is down to those who use the tool.



Irene O'Brien (Dr)  
Chair, Scottish Council on Archives

# WHY HAVE A RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULE?

Every organisation needs a policy on how long it will retain records, so that:

- Records are kept or destroyed consistently, rather than relying on the best guess of staff
- Records are kept for as long as necessary to meet statutory, regulatory and business requirements
- Resources are not wasted on storing records longer than necessary
- The risks arising from holding documents and information are managed
- The organisation can confidently account for which records are no longer held (for example, in response to an FOI request).
- Staff working with records understand their responsibilities and are given clear information about when and how to destroy records

This is just as important for digital records as for paper. The principles governing the retention and subsequent disposal of records apply regardless of their format (although in practice the procedures used to manage digital and paper records will differ).

An appropriate records retention schedule helps you to comply with a range of statutory and regulatory requirements. It is particularly key for:

- The Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 (see the Model Records Management Plan, Element 5)
- Data Protection Act 1998 (particularly Principle 5 - that personal data is retained no longer than necessary)
- Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (see the Section 61 Code of Practice on Records Management)

A records retention schedule can also provide the basis for different strands of information governance:

- It can contribute to a corporate **information asset register**, useful for many aspects of information assurance and required by ISO27001
- It provides a structured approach to **information risk analysis**
- **Security classification** and **vital records identification** can be applied
- In many cases, the schedule will be linked to a **business classification scheme** (as is the case with SCARRS) which maps out an organisation's functions and activities

## Not an Exact Science

Many newcomers to records management expect there will be a clear legal requirement setting out the retention requirements for most records. In fact, very few record types are governed by statutory retention periods. In most cases, it is necessary to consider how long a document remains useful and balance that against the costs and risks of keeping it, in order to arrive at an appropriate retention period.

For that reason, it may be entirely appropriate for two different organisations to have different retention periods for the same or similar records. They may have a different approach to risk or a different analysis of the business requirement.

# SCARRS: SOME FUNDAMENTAL POINTS

## What Do They Do?

SCARRS is a tool that:

- Maps the typical records generated in support of the business activities of Scottish local authorities
- Identifies statutory and regulatory retention periods for those records where these exist
- Suggests typical retention periods based on common practice and/or business requirements where statutory and regulatory periods do not exist

## Beyond Local Authorities

While the Schedules have a local authority focus, the Scottish Council on Archives hopes that it will be of wider use. Therefore, some suggested approaches to SCARRS for different types of organisations are set out in the [Sector 'Route Maps'](#) (page 13) over time.

## Realities of Records Retention

The uncomfortable and inconvenient reality is that records retention is not an exact science, and no tool can be *the* definitive authority. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' retention schedule to be applied 'out-of-the-box'. However, SCARRS offer a useful framework to assist your organisation as it assesses its recordkeeping requirements and risks. In short, it helps and can inform your organisation's judgement call(s). That call(s) will require internal analysis and understanding of an organisation's functions and records, including awareness of risk and how to mitigate it.

No-one should imagine that SCARRS points to the type of records that an organisation should or must have. The on-the-ground reality is that even Scottish local authorities will not necessarily have every record type set out in SCARRS. The purpose of SCARRS is to indicate the retention period where you do hold the specified record.

## Not Legal Advice

It must be emphasised that SCARRS offers general guidance that must not to be confused with legal advice. Individual organisations are always legally responsible for their own records retention decisions and that liability cannot be transferred (in whole or in part) to the Scottish Council on Archives or any other external organisation.

## Updating and Improving

While it would be wholly impractical for the Scottish Council on Archives to provide specific or case-by-case advice to users of SCARRS, the Council is committed to ensuring that the tool is regularly updated to reflect changes in laws and regulations as well as further improvements in records management and developments in business activities. Maintenance of SCARRS is essential for them to remain an effective tool. However, greater improvements are possible if SCARRS are effectively owned by the sector; that is practitioners are willing to comment on or otherwise contribute to SCARRS in the light of their 'hands-on' experience (see the [Help Improve SCARRS](#) section (page 12)).

## Other Tools

Finally, it is important to say that SCARRS are not 'the only game in town'. There are other resources which may be relevant to you, depending on the sector you work in and the country you are based in. Other potentially useful resources are noted in the [Sector Route Maps](#) section (page 13).

## Origins of SCARRS

Businesses and public sector organisations have for many years faced the challenge of analysing their business activities and records to identify robust and appropriate retention policies. There has often been ad hoc sharing of practice. But there had been no publicly available comprehensive attempt to draw together good practice and identified statutory requirements. This resulted in unnecessary duplication of effort and a wide range of approaches.

In particular, Scottish local authorities had been making attempts since the late 1990s to identify and share retention policies for common records, but with patchy success. In 2010, the Council commissioned Heather Jack and Claire Johnson to develop a comprehensive set of retention schedules for local government functions. This was developed together with a group of records practitioners and was peer reviewed. The initial schedules were published in two phases in 2010 and 2011. SCARRS was revised in 2013-14 and the current version (2.0) published in September 2014.

## Development of SCARRS

The SCARRS project initially reviewed relevant legislation and drew from retention schedules already in existence in Scotland and the UK, both generic and Scottish local government specific. Scottish local authorities were approached to provide their schedules, or parts of schedules that were current and approved. Generic schedules consulted included:

- Retention guidelines for local authorities, produced by the Local Government Group of the Records Management Society of Great Britain 2003 and mapped to the Local Government Classification Scheme in 2006
- ASLAWG (Association of Scottish Local Authority Archivists Working Group) and SOLAR (Society of Local Authority Lawyers and Administrators in Scotland) records retention discussion document
- Association of Chief Police Officers Scotland (ACPOS) Recommended Record Retention Periods
- Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) Records Retention Schedules for UK Higher Education and Further Education sector

Using the Local Government Classification Retention Schedule to provide a framework to ensure that all local authority functions and activities were covered, the records series and retention policies were checked against these schedules. Where there was broad consensus for a particular retention period, this was added to the draft. In some cases there was little or no consensus. For example, tenant file retention periods in councils ranged from three to 20 years. On these occasions, the range of periods suggested were included in the initial draft with questions and options provided to peer reviewers to ensure that they would particularly focus on those policies which had such wide ranging variance. Through this consultation process, consensus positions were found where there was no specific statutory requirement.

# USING SCARRS

The best way for you to make use of SCARRS depends on your own role and the type of organisation you work in.

## What is your role?

Are you tasked with records management in your organisation? If not, please talk to the person who has that role before going any further. Your organisation may already have an agreed records retention schedule. That should be your first port of call. SCARRS is really intended for the records manager in an organisation or someone carrying out that task.

If you are an experienced records manager, we recommend you look at the section [SCARRS: Some Fundamental Points](#) (page 5) to understand the scope of the resource.

If you do not have a background in records management, we suggest you start with the [Why have a records retention schedule?](#) Section (page 4) to understand what we are trying to achieve with SCARRS. You may also find other records management resources described in the [Sector Route Maps](#) (page 13) useful.

## What type of organisation do you work in?

SCARRS is designed around the functions of Scottish local government. However, several of the more general functions (for example finance and human resources) are likely to be broadly compatible with a wide range of Scottish and UK-wide organisations.

And other functions, even where they do not map directly to another organisation's business activities, can still provide examples or analogous retention guidance which may be of use.

Even where the functions are not those relevant to your organisation, the approach to certain business activities and records types may serve as a useful analogy or precedent to help you benchmark your retention policies. So, for example, if your organisation has a regulatory function, you may want to look at the Consumer Affairs schedule to see the approach taken there to investigatory records.

In Appendix One you will find a selection of [Sector Route Maps](#) (page 13) to help you get the best from SCARRS.

# GETTING HANDS-ON WITH SCARRS

SCARRS has two elements: the Business Classification Scheme which maps out the functions and activities of local authorities, and the Records Retention Schedules which identify records series generated within those activities, the recommended retention period and the justification.

## Formats

SCARRS is available from the Scottish Council on Archives website (<http://www.scottisharchives.org.uk/scarrs>) in two formats:

- Individual MS Excel spreadsheets for each of the 26 Functions, with both the Business Classification Scheme and the Records Retention Schedule for each
- A single PDF document to facilitate easy printing and basic text search.

## The Parts of the Business Classification Scheme

The columns within the Business Classification Scheme are as follows:

Reference	A reference code created for the project to uniquely identify the function or activity.
Function/Activity	Description of business functions and its supporting activities based on the Local Government Classification Scheme.
Alternative terms/keywords	The additional terms in this column seeks to reflect the range of terms in usage across Scottish local authorities.
Scope Notes	A description of the function or activity.
Scottish Services/Internal Services List Mapping	A link to the reference codes defined in the Scottish Services List for public facing functions or to the Internal Scottish Services list for corporate functions.

The Business Classification Scheme is adapted from the English Local Government Classification and Retention Schedule. It is designed to provide a high-level hierarchical structure of the business functions and activities of Scottish local authorities. As well as providing the logical structure for SCARRS, the Business Classification Scheme is a resource in its own right, offering a possible model and starting point to organisations in developing their own scheme and file plan. This is highly relevant for authorities subject to the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011, particularly with regard to element four of the Model Records Management Plan.

Remember, it is a functional map and will not reflect any single corporate structure.

## The Parts of the Records Retention Schedule

The columns in the Records Retention Schedule are as follows:

Reference	A reference code specific to SCARRS uniquely identifies the function, activity or record series. The codes reflect the hierarchy of the business classification scheme. The first two digits represent the functional heading, the second group of three digits after the point reflect the Activity subheading, with the final group of three digits after the second point representing the individual record series or type. For example:
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	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>26</td> <td>WASTE MANAGEMENT</td> <td>← Functional heading</td> </tr> <tr> <td>26.001</td> <td>Waste Strategy</td> <td>← Activity Subheading</td> </tr> <tr> <td>26.001.001</td> <td>Partnership plans and Area Waste Plans</td> <td>← Record series</td> </tr> </table>	26	WASTE MANAGEMENT	← Functional heading	26.001	Waste Strategy	← Activity Subheading	26.001.001	Partnership plans and Area Waste Plans	← Record series
26	WASTE MANAGEMENT	← Functional heading								
26.001	Waste Strategy	← Activity Subheading								
26.001.001	Partnership plans and Area Waste Plans	← Record series								
Activity / Records Series	Summary descriptions of the functional area and business activity based on the Local Government Classification Scheme, and of the individual records series.									
Description / Example Record Types	A description and examples of likely records typical of the activity or records series.									
Trigger	<p>The Trigger is the event that prompts the start of the retention period. It tends to be based on either a defined point in the business process it supports (for example, termination of a contract or project, closure of a service user case file) or on a calendar date, often the end of the current year to which the record relates. Where this is the end of the current financial year, this has been stipulated in SCARRS. Where the trigger given is ‘end of current year’, the definition of what constitutes ‘end of year’ may need to be defined locally or by individual functions or series of records. For example, calendar year, financial year or academic year depending on what makes most sense operationally.</p> <p>As triggers are so tied into business processes, an important step in the implementation of SCARRS will be to map the trigger to a specific business process step. For example, within the staff termination process or project closure process.</p>									
Retention Period	The period in years (unless otherwise stated) for which the record should be retained after the trigger event, before disposal action is carried out.									
Disposal Action	<p>The disposal action (sometimes called “fate”) indicates what should happen to the records when they have reached the end of the retention period. The following disposal actions are used in SCARRS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Destroy</b>  The process for the destruction of records should be documented and should seek to ensure that all copies of a record are destroyed, taking account of records dispersed across different locations in the organisation or network, and records within line-of-business applications. It should also cover both paper and digital records. For authorities subject to the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011, see also the Model Records Management Plan, Element 6: Destruction Arrangements. </li> <li> <b>Retain for business or historical value</b>  Retention of records beyond their immediate administrative value for archival purposes is normally achieved by transfer to an archive. The term archive here refers to a professionally managed facility to preserve and make accessible historical records. Your authority may have its own in-house service (particularly if you work in a local authority or university) or you may have an arrangement with a public archives service. In adapting SCARRS for your organisation, you should take advice from your own archivist on whether the records series designated in this way match their acquisition policy or their Memorandum of Understanding or similar </li> </ul>									

	<p>arrangement with your organisation. For authorities subject to the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011, see also the Model Records Management Plan, Element 7: Archiving and Transfer Arrangements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Review for business or historical value</b> Records series with this suggested disposal action should be considered for potential transfer to an archive. It may be that only a sample of the records are considered worthy of preservation; possibly a random sample or selected examples of particular significance or interest. Seek advice from an archivist. For authorities subject to the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011, see also the Model Records Management Plan, Element 7: Archiving and Transfer Arrangements.</li> </ul>
Authority / Citation	<p>Description of the justification for the retention period: where available, a statutory or regulatory driver will be cited.</p> <p>Where there is no specific statutory or regulatory retention period for a records series, SCARRS cite the justification for the retention period as 'business requirements'. This is a wide-ranging term which will tend to reflect common or best practice. Drivers for the retention recommendations here can include audit cycles, business re-use or corporate knowledge, evidence for reporting purposes, stakeholder requirements or conditions of funding.</p> <p>You can find out more about what the original authors of SCARRS said about the concept of Business Requirements at <a href="#">Appendix 5</a> (page 21).</p> <p>Where no such clear requirement is available, this will be described as 'business requirement'.</p>
Notes	<p>This column provides additional information on the records series. For example, further detail on statutory or regulatory requirements or supporting explanation of more complex triggers or retention periods.</p>
Edit history	<p>This column contains descriptions of any amendments or additions made to the schedule since the initial release of the SCARRS. It is removed from some 'clean' versions, such as the PDF rendition.</p>

## Challenges in Applying SCARRS

In using SCARRS as a resource to develop retention schedules for your own organisation, you may face some specific challenges.

Language can be a barrier where different organisations (or even different teams or individuals within an organisation) use different terms for the same or similar activities or records. While SCARRS attempt in places to reflect differences in nomenclature, they can never cover all the potential variations. Occasionally, you may come across colleagues who argue that they simply do not recognise or understand some of the terms used in SCARRS for activities and records within their area of responsibility. We would suggest that you generally accept the terminology used locally. Using the preferred terms and language used within your organisation is an important part of making your retention schedule relevant to the organisation and more accepted and 'owned' by your colleagues. It may also simply be the case that, while your organisation carries out a function identical or similar to one in SCARRS, it does not happen to receive or create some of the records series within SCARRS. That is fine. As noted above, SCARRS is not here to dictate what records you should have – they simply offer recommended retention periods for the records you do have.

You may also find that current record-keeping practice does not support an easy application of SCARRS. For example, there could be records series with different retention periods in SCARRS which, in local practice, are held together on the same paper file or network folder, making it difficult to apply different retention periods.

In that case you may have to discuss with colleagues whether it is practical to change their filing practice, or it may be simpler to rationalise your retention schedule – merging records series as they are merged in practice, and using the longer retention period. That is a judgement call for the organisation. Or you may have parts of the core record for a given business activity which are held within a line-of-business application – such as a database or case management system – which does not have the functionality to purge expired records. In such instances, you might choose to annotate your retention schedule, maintaining the policy position that the records should be destroyed at the end of the retention period, but acknowledging the current difficulty in applying the policy. Ideally, this would help inform decisions on the future development or replacement of the line-of-business application.

Existing policies or practices in your organisation may also differ from those in SCARRS for the same or similar records series. It is worth exploring such situations further to establish whether the local policy is based on a robust business justification, which may be entirely appropriate. Where the retention period in SCARRS has a statutory basis, it may be necessary to draw this to the attention of colleagues who are operating a different practice. As noted in the Authority/Citation section above, records retention periods citing ‘business requirement’ are recommendations, and it may be reasonable for organisations to take a different position.

Remember that your organisation is responsible for its own analysis of your recordkeeping environment and identification of appropriate records retention periods. SCARRS may serve as a starting point but you should have your own approved retention schedule.

# HELP IMPROVE SCARRS

SCARRS is never a truly finished product. Business processes change, technologies evolve, new law and regulations emerge, and gaps inevitably come to light.

The Scottish Council on Archives has invested resources in updating SCARRS, but is also reliant on the wider community – regulators, practitioners and users – to help make SCARRS as robust and complete as possible. If you have been using SCARRS within your organisation and have noted any errors, required amendments or additions, we want to hear from you.

## How to Submit Feedback:

Please submit your feedback via email to [contact@scottisharchives.org.uk](mailto:contact@scottisharchives.org.uk).

If you are commenting on an existing record series, please provide the reference number from the schedule.

If you are suggesting an amendment to SCARRS, please describe your proposed change and provide the justification (for example, citing the relevant legislation or regulation, or outlining the business rationale behind the suggested change).

The Scottish Council on Archives will submit the change request to reviewers and you will hear of the outcome within six weeks.

# APPENDIX ONE: SECTOR ROUTE MAPS

SCARRS was developed specifically for Scottish local government. However, we believe they offer a useful resource across the Scottish public sector and beyond. The following short notes give suggestions as to how SCARRS might be approached by organisations in different sectors. Please do get in touch with your own tips and experiences in using SCARRS in your authority. Email: [contact@scottisharchives.org.uk](mailto:contact@scottisharchives.org.uk).

## Sector Route Map: Scottish Local Authorities

Of course, SCARRS are designed to reflect the business functions of Scottish local government and most elements should be broadly useful to Scottish local authorities. However, as noted in the guidance, it will not be a perfect fit without adaptation to your corporate requirements and culture. You will need to match your own schedules to local naming conventions and recordkeeping. Your authority also has to make its own risk assessment and judgement on retention policy, although SCARRS should serve as a fruitful starting point and bench-marking tool.

### Case Study: Highland Council

Work has been ongoing in Highland sporadically for the last four or five years to create corporate retention schedules. This had mainly focused on work with services to determine customer facing processes and the records generated by them. It was decided that this was taking too long and the most logical way forward was to utilise the Scottish Council on Archives' Schedules model which already existed and subsequently incorporate any local changes based on business needs.

This policy was approved by the Highland Council's Information Management Governance Board and involved the records manager carrying out review meetings with services to create meaningful retention schedules which would fulfil our needs by being user friendly and would also meet the requirements of the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011. Services have found these review meetings useful as it has alerted them to the importance of retention schedules in the management of records.

Given that office rationalisations have been going on at the same time within the council area which involves some departments moving to smaller premises, the need to slim down their record holdings has never been more pressing. The application of SCARRS has greatly assisted in that process.

## Sector Route Map: National Health Service (NHS) Scotland

The primary guidance for NHS Scotland boards can be found in the NHS Scotland Code of Practice on Records Management which includes retention periods for a range of corporate records as well as health records: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/01/10143104/0>.

NHS boards are also likely to find the schedules for common corporate functions are useful and largely transferrable to their own situation. These are as follows and can be accessed from the website (<https://www.scottisharchives.org.uk/resources/scarrs/>):

- (6) Council Property
- (12) Finance
- (13) Health & Safety
- (15) Human Resources
- (16) ICT
- (17) Information Management
- (18) Legal Services
- (20) Management
- (24) Risk Management

Territorial health boards may also wish to refer to parts of the following schedules (accessed via the website at <http://www.scottisharchives.org.uk/scarrs/schedules>) with regard to their vehicle fleet management and waste disposal functions:

- (25) Transport Infrastructure
- (26) Waste Management

Given ongoing health and social care integration, it is potentially the case that NHS boards will become responsible for areas of social care, or that retention schedules may have to be developed for new bodies corporate. In such cases, the following schedules (accessed via the website at <https://www.scottisharchives.org.uk/resources/scarrs/>) will prove relevant:

- (1) Adult Care Services
- (3) Children & Family Services

### Case Study: NHS Education for Scotland

NHS Education for Scotland (NES) is the national special health board responsible for training and education within the NHS. Although NES had its own comprehensive records retention policy in place before SCARRS was published, we have since used them to sense-check reviews of our records retention approach – particularly in the common functions such as finance and human resources.

We have also used the education schedule alongside resources from higher education and further education to benchmark our retention policies for training and educational records.

## Sector Route Map: Scottish Government Agency or Department

Divisions, agencies and non-departmental public bodies who use the Scottish Government electronic document and records management system (EDRMS), should refer to the related guidance on the Scottish Government intranet *Freedom of Information & Information Management* pages: <http://intranet/InExec/SEAndMe/FoI-InfoMgmt/RM-Manual>. From there staff can access guidance on records management principles, EDRMS use, the Records Management Manual, advice links and contacts, and guidance on email management and computer data management.

The 2005 Scottish Executive Records Management Handbook also remains as current records management guidance for the Scottish Government at the time of writing (July 2014): <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/08/15152416/24284>. It provides a short resource on retention of central government departmental records. However, it assumes the use of traditional paper-based policy and operational files.

Agencies are also likely to find the schedules (accessed via the website at <https://www.scottisharchives.org.uk/resources/scarrs/>) for common corporate functions are useful and largely transferrable to their own situation. These are:

- (6) Council Property
- (12) Finance
- (13) Health & Safety
- (15) Human Resources
- (16) ICT
- (17) Information Management
- (18) Legal Services
- (20) Management
- (24) Risk Management

Depending on the role of the agency, other core functions covered in SCARRS may provide useful benchmarks.

## Sector Route Map: Scottish Leisure Trust

Records management has become all the more critical for Scotland's leisure trusts since they became subject to Freedom of Information (FOI) in April 2014.

The (19) Leisure & Culture schedule should be particularly applicable to many of the core functions of leisure trusts. Leisure Trusts are also likely to find the schedules (accessed via the website at <https://www.scottisharchives.org.uk/resources/scarrs/>) for common corporate functions are useful and largely transferrable to their own situation.

These are:

- (6) Council Property
- (12) Finance
- (13) Health & Safety
- (15) Human Resources
- (16) ICT
- (17) Information Management
- (18) Legal Services
- (20) Management
- (24) Risk Management

In some areas leisure trusts may provide archives and records management services to the local authority, or the local authority may be in a position to provide records management advice. A collaborative approach is recommended.

For leisure trusts carrying out functions on behalf of authorities subject to the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011, the Keeper of the Records of Scotland requires evidence to be submitted under the authorities' records management plans of contractual agreements with third parties where the creation and management of public records is involved.

The Scottish Council on Archives website hosts two documents that provide guidance on this aspect of public authority business:

- Guidance for Contractors and Records Management Clauses for Contractors are both available under the Guidance tab at: <http://www.scottisharchives.org.uk/projects/toolsstandards/arms/tour>

## Sector Route Map: Scottish Third Sector Organisations

Voluntary organisations are likely to find the schedules (accessed via the website at <http://www.scottisharchives.org.uk/scarrs/schedules>) for common corporate functions are useful and largely transferrable to their own situation. These are:

- (6) Council Property
- (12) Finance
- (13) Health & Safety
- (15) Human Resources
- (16) ICT
- (17) Information Management
- (18) Legal Services
- (20) Management
- (24) Risk Management

Depending on the nature of the organisation, other elements of the schedules may be very useful. For example, social care organisations may find useful material in the following:

- (1) Adult Care Services
- (3) Children & Family Services

Similarly, if a voluntary organisation is involved in cultural or heritage activity, there may be useful material in:

- (19) Leisure & Culture

SCARRS does not contain guidance on records series specific to the governance of charities. Third sector organisations should also have regard to any relevant guidance provided by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator or the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations.

For voluntary organisations carrying out functions on behalf of authorities subject to the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011, the Keeper of the Records of Scotland requires evidence to be submitted under the authorities' records management plans of contractual agreements with third parties (including third sector organisations) where the creation and management of public records is involved. The Council website hosts two documents that provide guidance on this aspect of public authority business:

- Guidance for Contractors and Records Management Clauses for Contractors are both available under the Guidance tab at:  
[http://www.qpathway.com/ARMS2/resources/Armsimages/ARMS\\_videotour.mp4](http://www.qpathway.com/ARMS2/resources/Armsimages/ARMS_videotour.mp4)



## Sector Route Map: Housing Association or Social Landlord

The (14) Housing schedule is likely to prove particularly useful for social landlords and housing associations outwith local government. In addition, they are likely to find the schedules (accessed via the website at <https://www.scottisharchives.org.uk/resources/scarrs/>) for common corporate functions are useful and largely transferrable to their own situation. These are:

- (6) Council Property
- (12) Finance
- (13) Health & Safety
- (15) Human Resources
- (16) ICT
- (18) Legal Services
- (20) Management
- (24) Risk Management

Another potentially useful source of guidance is provided by the National Housing Federation in England in their briefing note *Document Retention for Housing Associations*: <http://www.housing.org.uk/publications/browse/document-retention-for-housing-associations/>. While the briefing does not reflect Scots law, for many of the non-statutory retention periods, it may offer a useful benchmark.

### Case Study: Glasgow Housing Association Ltd.

In 2011, the Glasgow Housing Association Limited (GHA), Scotland's largest registered social landlord, developed records management tools to address the operational requirements and demands of current legislation, corporate governance and compliance in a 21st century housing association.

Retention schedules were developed for the main functions of the Association modelled on the suite of retention schedules provided by the Scottish Council on Archives. Business areas were asked to consider the Council's retention schedules in light of their processes, the records they held, and the language used by them. These model schedules were then amended to suit the needs of the organisation.

The schedules are living documents and are always subject to review. GHA is now part of the Wheatley Housing Group. As such, work is being undertaken to build the group's capability in managing knowledge and information which includes reviewing the retention schedules taking account of the needs of the group.

## APPENDIX TWO: LIST OF THE SCHEDULES

These are available in two formats via the website at <https://www.scottisharchives.org.uk/resources/scarrs/>. You can download MS Excel spreadsheets, with both the Business Classification Scheme and the Records Retention Schedule for each. Alternatively, a single PDF document to facilitate easy printing and basic text search is also available.

1. Adult Care Services
2. Children & Family Services
3. Community Safety
4. Consumer Affairs
5. Council Property
6. Cemeteries & Crematoria
7. Criminal Justice
8. Democracy
9. Economic Development
10. Education & Skills
11. Environmental Protection
12. Finance
13. Health & Safety
14. Housing
15. Human Resources
16. ICT
17. Information Management
18. Legal Services
19. Leisure & Culture
20. Management
21. Planning & Building Standards
22. Procurement
23. Registrars
24. Risk Management
25. Transport Infrastructure
26. Waste Management

# APPENDIX THREE: TRICKY CONCEPTS

## Archival Value

A record or series of records which have an enduring (social or cultural) value beyond the business requirement that created them. These records may detail the important historical background to an organisation or the area that it represents, or to historically significant events or people, and provision should be made for their permanent preservation.

## Business Requirements

Where there is no specific statutory or regulatory retention period for a records series, SCARRS cite the justification for the retention period as 'business requirements'. This is a wide-ranging term which will tend to reflect common or best practice. Drivers for the retention recommendations here can include audit cycles, risk analysis, the potential application of Prescription and Limitation in case of legal challenge, or precedent from non-statutory guidance or other authority.

You can find out more about what the original authors of SCARRS have said about the concept of Business Requirements at [Appendix Five](#).

## Destruction

Destruction means the disposal of records through incineration, pulping, shredding, deletion or another method, so that it is impossible to reconstruct the records. For paper, that is likely to entail the use of an in-house shredder or outsourced confidential waste contractors. For digital records, destruction should apply to all copies of a record. Simple deletion from a network does not mean that a document is irrecoverable and there are technical solutions to ensure deletion of electronic records where this is considered critical.

Do not forget back-ups. Documents may have been deleted from the main network, but unless back-ups are regularly over-written or disposed of, records and data may linger there.

## Prescription and Limitation

The Prescription and Limitation (Scotland) Act 1973 (c.52) & 1984 (c.45), has wide implications for the retention of records relating to contracts, land, property and personal injury, amongst others. A guidance note prepared for the Higher Education Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), provides a useful summary of the main features of this act and includes comparisons with its equivalent in England and Wales, the Limitation Act 1980. The guidance note can be accessed at: <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B6psyHRq0wqPSDNQdUx2S2dY1E/edit?pli=1>. Simply put, the legislation sets out the time limits for raising claims or litigation: for breaches of contract this is five years from the person becoming aware of the breach, for personal injury three years. The long prescription period of 20 years means it should be exceptional for a court to hear any claim after that time.

## Review

For a number of records series, SCARRS suggest that organisations may wish to review their ongoing value at the end of the retention period. In these cases it is not clear cut that the record series should be preserved for its archival value, but typically some or all of the records may be worth considering for preservation. Such a review will normally require input from a professional archivist but need not be on a file by file basis. It is usually possible to identify criteria for review and selection which can be broadly applied.

## Trigger Points

In applying retention periods, it is important to be clear on when that period starts. Otherwise, different colleagues may interpret schedules inconsistently. For example, if a case record is live and open for five years, the retention of all documents on that record for 10 years from its closure would be quite a different outcome to retaining documents for 10 years from their creation.

While the trigger events in SCARRS try to be as explicit as possible, it may be necessary to re-define them against your own organisation's business processes and terminology so they are clear to your colleagues.

## APPENDIX FOUR: SOME DEFINITIONS

Archives	Those records that are appraised as having permanent value for evidence of ongoing rights or obligations, for historical or statistical research, or as part of the corporate memory of the organisation.
Archival Value	The ongoing usefulness or significance of records, based on the administrative, legal, fiscal, evidential, or historical information they contain, justifying their continued preservation.
Destruction	The process of eliminating or deleting records beyond any possible reconstruction (BS ISO 15489-1:2001(E)).
Disposition or Disposal	A range of processes associated with implementing records retention, destruction or transfer decisions which are documented in disposition authorities or other instruments (BS ISO 15489-1:2001(E)).
File	An accumulation of records maintained in a predetermined physical arrangement. An organised unit of documents grouped together either for current use by the creator or in the process of archival arrangement, because they relate to the same subject, activity or transaction. A file is usually the basic unit within a records series.
Records	Information created, received and maintained as evidence and information by an organisation or person, in pursuance of legal obligations, or in the transaction of business (BS ISO 15489.1). A record of an organisation is anything which contains information (in any medium) which has been created or gathered as a result of any aspect of the work of its employees – including consultants, agency or casual staff.
Records Management	Field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records, including processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records (BS ISO 15489-1:2001(E)).
Record Series	<p>A series is the main grouping of records with a common function or subject. Documents arranged in accordance with a filing system or maintained as a unit because they result from the same accumulation or filing process, or the same activity, because they have a particular form, or because of some other relationship arising out of their creation, receipt or use (International Council on Archives (ICA) General International Standard Archival Description or ISAD(G)).</p> <p>A series comprises the record of all the activities that are instances of a single process. A series may be large or small, it is distinguished not by its size, but by the fact that it provides evidence of a particular process. If an activity takes place that is unique, rather than an instance of a process, its records form a series in their own right (Elizabeth Shepherd and Geoffrey Yeo, Managing Records: a handbook of principles and practice (Facet 2003)).</p>
Transfer of Records	Transfer (custody) – Change of custody, ownership and/or responsibility for records. Transfer (movement) – Moving records from one location to another (BS ISO 15489-1:2001(E)).

## APPENDIX FIVE: BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS – ORIGINAL GUIDANCE

This section quotes from the original guidance for SCARRS in 2010 to illustrate the thinking behind the business requirements rationale for retention periods and the initial development of the schedules.

### **Rationale for Triggers Based on Business Requirements**

The first step in drafting SCARRS was to review appropriate legislation and regulations that stipulated records retention periods. Some of these were function specific for example, Planning, finance regulations, while others were cross functional for example, Data Protection and Prescription and Limitations Act.

It was hoped that national regulatory, inspection and representational bodies related to the functions delivered by Scottish local authorities (SLAs) would be able to provide records retention guidance but this did not appear to be the case, beyond those already provided in the legislation and regulations already reviewed. This may change with the advent of the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 and increased awareness of the impact of poor records and information management in an age of both economic recession and increasing drive towards electronic working.

While the existence of legislation and regulation implies the need to retain records to provide evidence of compliance and fulfilment of statutory obligations, few either explicitly mention records retention and still less provide explicit periods of time. Even here, in the majority of cases, the period provided is a minimum recommended period and in some cases there may be legitimate operational requirements to retain the records for longer.

### **Decision to Include Retention Based on Business Requirement**

This meant that retention policies for the vast proportion of records series related to functional activities had to be based on business requirement for example, to support service delivery, comply with local authority policy or for audit purposes. The consultants and project focus group recognised that these would often need to be based on local policy and practice. However, it was felt that it would be possible to come to some kind of consensus on periods based on business requirements and that this would make SCARRS a far more valuable resource.

It was also agreed that it should be made clear to those using SCARRS that the resource was generic guidance and would require SLAs to engage in internal review to identify and amend periods and triggers where their local circumstance and business processes required it. The review would also enable the inclusion of additional localised information such as records custodians and locations, key information for the practical implementation of retention schedules.

### **Categorisation of Business Requirement**

There was some discussion around whether or not the business requirement justification should be broken down into categories. However, it was agreed that this could be too prescriptive and was too hard to pin down, especially since details justifying the business requirement were rarely included in existing schedules. It was recommended that any categorisation of business requirement should be considered at a later phase in SCARRS development.

*SCARRS Project, 2010*



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