



# File retention periods – Information & Communication Technology (ICT)

## Forward

The main aim of this document is to list Information & Communication Technology's (ICT) Information Assets and suggest suitable file retention periods for associated content. Retention periods follow current Agency guidelines as set out in Annex 1. Additionally, we have considered the approach taken by the Central DfT to similar records where applicable and aligned our retention periods to match where it seems appropriate to do so.

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## **Asset: Active Directory Records**

### **About the Asset:**

Active Directory (AD) is in effect a database that manages resources and users on a network, assigning access permissions to: devices like computers; application services like GeAR; mobile services such as BlackBerry and Remote Access VPN

A record within Active Directory will hold details of individual users including username, first name, last name, work phone number, work location. This is the minimum data set required to manage and deliver the IT services.

For security reasons, policies for handling Active Directory are maintained within the ECM knowledge base and ICT shared drives, not within Q-Pulse.

### **Retention:**

AD is an integral part of VCAs IT systems and services and as an asset will always exist. For individual records within AD, we have adopted the following retention period.

- Individual records within the database will only exist for:
  - the lifetime of an object (device, service)
  - up to one month after the user has left VCA.
- For a device this means a record will generally not exist for more than 7 years
- For a user, the retention period is clearly variable and dependent upon their VCA employment status

### **Reviewing and deleting files**

Responsibility for deciding the retention period of an AD record lies with the ICT Operations Manager, Departmental Security Officer (DSO) and SIRO

A review of individual records is only triggered by a change request

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## **Asset: E-mail service**

### **About the Asset:**

The e-mail database is linked to a user's AD user account and will hold the same basic information as an AD record plus the email address. This data is held in Exchange. In addition to Exchange, a copy of all emails is held in a 3<sup>rd</sup> party service for mail filtering.

### **Retention:**

Exchange is a repository of all emails received and sent by individual members of VCA staff. There are currently set retention periods for emails but deletion of expired emails is not activated

- User's are restricted to a default capacity of 2GB of data within their mailbox.
- Team mailboxes are restricted to a default capacity of 5GB
- A users mailbox will only exist while an individual is employed by VCA
- A team mailbox will exist while there is an operational need
- Data within mailboxes is managed by individuals and teams

- Individual email records are marked for archive after 3 years and moved to an archive file at that point.
- records are marked for deletion after 7 years **BUT no action** is currently taken to delete those records from the archive Therefore in practice, email records are retained for as long as an individual has an email account and as long as a team mailbox exists unless an individual chooses to manually delete an email.

All email sent to and from a mailbox is retained in a 3rd party mail filtering service for a period of 3 months.

This is to cater for recovery of deleted emails, to support FOI requests and to demonstrate accountability for any email related communications.

## Reviewing and deleting files

Retention periods must be agreed with the Information Governance team – Data Protection Manager, Information/Records Manager, DSO (Information Assurance) and SIRO.

A review will be undertaken by the Information Governance Group to agree policy.

## **Asset:** KACE Inventory and Service Desk system

### About the Asset:

The KACE system holds records of ICT assets and service desk requests. Service desk requests will include usernames and contact details of individuals raising tickets

### Retention:

ICT assets: information regarding an asset e.g. a laptop will be retained until the asset is decommissioned and disposed of. This will be between 3 and 7 years depending upon the asset.

Service desk tickets:

- service desk tickets are automatically archived 30 days after a ticket is closed
- currently there is no mechanism for deleting records from the archive.

## Reviewing and deleting files

Reviewing retention periods is the responsibility of the ICT Operations team.

A review will be undertaken as part of any upgrade to/replacement of the KACE system.

## **Asset:** ICT contracts database

### About the Asset:

ICT contracts are held both electronically and on paper. Those contracts include information regarding: the company delivering a service; contacts for account management, service desk and escalation; the value of the contract; details of the service being provided; service level agreements and where relevant technical details of the service being provided

ICT contracts are held within lockable file cabinets within the ICT secure area and electronically within the ICT ECM and shared drives.

## **Retention:**

Contract records are retained until the contract has expired and where relevant a new contract for a replacement service has been let. Contracts will be let for between 2 and 7 years.

Some contract information regarding the service or solution may be retained for a longer period to form a knowledge base to inform future requirements but all personal and contact information will be deleted.

## **Reviewing and deleting files**

Contract retention periods will be reviewed by the ICT Head of Service and Operations Manager.

Reviews are carried out at the end of a contract and when a new contract is being let.

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## **Asset: ICT policies and procedures**

### **About the Asset:**

ICT policies and procedures will include:

- All processes for building and configuring IT systems
- User guides
- Policies regarding use of the IT systems
- VCA IT security policies

The documentation is held in Microsoft Office format e.g. Word, Excel and PowerPoint

All policies and procedures pertaining to the running of the IT operation are held within ICT ECM and shared drives.

### **Retention:**

Policies and procedures are retained for as long as they are relevant. There is not set retention period. For example:

- The Internet and email access policy will exist as long as there is are Internet and email services usage policy
- Client build procedures will exist as long as a specific type of asset e.g. a laptop is in use.

## **Reviewing and deleting files**

Reviewing a policy or procedure is the responsibility of any members of the ICT team authorised to deliver a change.

Review of a specific policy or procedure will be triggered by: a change request; a technology change that enforces new ways of working; changes in Government security policy.

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# Annex 1 Retention Guidance

How long records should be kept

The period during which the contents of an electronic folder or paper file need to be kept can vary from just one year to over thirty.

This is known as the **retention period** which is shown in the disposal agreement for your division. This should be long enough to meet legislative and business requirements.

Remember that records can be in any format.

General guidance about retention periods

Subject of record	Suggested retention period
resource management	2 to 5 years unless needed for operational purposes
policy development and legal	20 years, especially if of public interest: see 'all 20-year-old records'
routine casework	5 years, longer if there is a business need
public inquiries	to go on completion for 'accelerated opening' to the National Archives
contractual including tendering	minimum of 12 years
financial, including invoice payment	minimum of 7 years
technical records	retention for the life-time of asset: see 'retention past 20 years'
personnel	retention until employee's 100th birthday or later if special case
health and environmental/property	retention for the minimum to cover any related personnel impact
All 20 year old records. (Usually primary policy records)	Changes introduced in 2013 by the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act has changed the 30 year rule to 20 years so that records of 'historical interest' will be transferred to The National Archives (TNA) 20 years after they were created. There will however be a 10 year transition period ending in 2023.
Retention past 20 years	Permissible only if the Advisory Council on

	National Records and Archives gives approval to the Agency Records Manager to retain records for operational purposes for more than 20 years. The Agency Records Manager must be made aware of any such records in existence.
Special retentions, issues and questions.	Contact Agency Records Officer.

Disposing of out-of-date records and files

Out-of-date records can get in the way of finding useful ones and users are encouraged to delete records that are no longer required either because they are of short-term interest or their usefulness has expired and they are not part of a decision-making process.

In making a decision to delete a record care must be taken to ensure that no records are destroyed or deleted that relate to an ongoing FOI or a DPA request, including those that have yet to complete the appeals process (if done knowingly, this would constitute a criminal offence). If you are in any doubt about this, contact the Information Rights Unit.

All the files/folders opened under a sub-theme should have the same retention period (although a different retention period can be assigned to individual files/folders if unavoidable).

In some instances the retention period can be applied at theme level, so all the sub-themes and the files/folders opened under each of them are all kept for the same length of time. If this is not possible, a retention period can be assigned at the sub-theme level so that all files/folders under that sub-theme are kept for the same length of time.

It is important that Records Management has an up to date record of all retention periods for both paper and electronic records. The retention period must be the same for a hybrid file so that an electronic file folder and its paper equivalent will both be destroyed at the same time.