



RECORDS MANAGEMENT AND DATA RETENTION POLICY

This document sets out the policy for records management and data retention of data within Bracknell Forest Council

Version control

Version	Date	Author	Approver	Reason
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Next formal review: Two years after issue,

Or in the in the event of a recommended improvement,
a change in legislation,
or a change of Council wide policy.

The audience of this policy should be aware that a physical copy may not be the latest version. The latest version, which supersedes all previous versions, is available on DORIS. Those to whom this policy applies are responsible for familiarising themselves periodically with the latest version, and for complying with the policy requirements at all times.

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1. ABOUT THIS POLICY

- 1.1 The corporate information, records and data of Bracknell Forest Council (the Council) is important to how we conduct business and manage employees.
- 1.2 There are legal and regulatory requirements for us to retain certain data, usually for a specified amount of time. The Council also retains data to help our business operate and to have information available when we need it. However, we do not need to retain all data indefinitely, and retaining data can expose us to risk as well as be a cost to our business.
- 1.3 This Data Retention Policy explains our requirements to retain data and to dispose of data and provides guidance on appropriate data handling and disposal.
- 1.4 Failure to comply with this policy can expose us to fines and penalties, adverse publicity, difficulties in providing evidence when we need it and in running our business.
- 1.5 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and the Council may amend it at any time.

2. SCOPE OF POLICY

- 2.1 This policy covers all data that the Council hold or have control over. This includes physical data such as hard copy documents, contracts, notebooks, letters and invoices. It also includes electronic data such as emails, electronic documents, audio and video recordings and CCTV recordings. It applies to both personal data and non-personal data. In this policy we refer to this information and these records collectively as "data".
- 2.2 This policy covers data that is held by third parties on our behalf, for example cloud storage providers or offsite records storage.
- 2.3 This policy explains the differences between our formal or official records, disposable information, confidential information belonging to others, personal data and non-personal data. It also gives guidance on how we classify our data.
- 2.4 This policy is applicable to all Council staff whether permanent, contract and temporary employees, Members and to all third parties who handle the Council's data.

3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 Through this policy, and our data retention practices, the Council aims to meet the following commitments:
 - We comply with legal and regulatory requirements to retain data.

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- We comply with our data protection obligations, in particular to keep personal data no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which it is processed (storage limitation principle).
- We handle, store and dispose of data responsibly and securely.
- We create and retain data where we need this to operate our business effectively, but we do not create or retain data without good business reason.
- We allocate appropriate resources, roles and responsibilities to data retention.
- We regularly remind employees of their data retention responsibilities.
- We regularly monitor and audit compliance with this policy and update this policy when required.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 **Corporate Management Team.** The Corporate Management Team has overall responsibility for ensuring our compliance with this policy and with Data Protection legislation.
- 4.2 **Responsibility of all employees.** The Council aims to comply with the data protection legislation including the General Data Protection Regulation (2016/679), the Data Protection Act 2018, other laws including the Freedom of Information Act 2004 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, rules, and regulations that govern the organisation and with recognised compliance good practices. All employees must comply with this policy, the Council's Retention Schedule, any communications suspending data disposal and any specific instructions from your relevant Assistant Director or Delegated Officer(s). Failure to do so may subject the Council, our employees, and contractors to serious civil and/or criminal liability. An employee's failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary sanctions, including suspension or termination. It is therefore the responsibility of everyone to understand and comply with this policy.
- 4.3 Assistant Directors or delegated officer(s) are responsible for identifying the data that the Council must or should retain, and determining, the proper period of retention. It also arranges for the proper storage and retrieval of data, co-ordinating with outside vendors where appropriate.
- 4.4 Assistant Directors or delegated officer(s) are is responsible for:
- Administering the data management programme;
 - Helping department heads implement the data management programme and related best practices;
 - Planning, developing, and prescribing data disposal policies, systems, standards, and procedures; and
 - Providing guidance, training, monitoring and updating in relation to this policy.
- 4.5 **Data Protection Officer.** The Data Protection Officer (DPO) is responsible for advising on and monitoring our compliance with data protection legislation which regulate personal data. The DPO works with the Assistant Directors or delegated officer(s) on the retention requirements for personal data and on monitoring compliance with this policy in relation to personal data.

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5. TYPES OF DATA AND DATA CLASSIFICATIONS

5.1 **Formal or official records.** Certain data is more important to us and is therefore listed in the Council's Retention Schedule. This may be because the Council has a legal requirement to retain it, or because we may need it as evidence of our transactions, or because it is important to the running of our business. Please see paragraph [REDACTED] below for more information on retention periods for this type of data.

5.2 **Disposable information.** Disposable information consists of data that may be discarded or deleted at the discretion of the user once it has served its temporary useful purpose and/or data that may be safely destroyed because it is not a formal or official record as defined by this policy and the Council's Retention Schedule. Examples may include:

- Duplicates of originals that have not been annotated.
- Preliminary drafts of letters, memoranda, reports, worksheets, and informal notes that do not represent significant steps or decisions in the preparation of an official record.
- Books, periodicals, manuals, training binders, and other printed materials obtained from sources outside of [ORGANISATION NAME] and retained primarily for reference purposes.
- Spam and junk mail.

Please see paragraph 6.2 below for more information on how to determine retention periods for this type of data.

5.3 **Personal data.** Both formal or official records and disposable information may contain personal data; that is, data that identifies living individuals. Data protection legislation require us to retain personal data for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which it is processed (principle of storage limitation). See paragraph [REDACTED] below for more information on this.

5.4 **Confidential information belonging to others.** Any confidential information that an employee may have obtained from a source outside of the Council, such as a previous employer, must not, so long as such information remains confidential, be disclosed to or used by the Council. Unsolicited confidential information submitted to us should be refused, returned to the sender where possible, and deleted, if received via the internet.

5.5 **Data classifications.** Reference should be made to the Council's Information Classification Policy

6. RETENTION PERIODS

6.1 **Formal or official records.** Any data that is part of any of the categories listed in the Council's Retention Schedule contained in the Annex to this policy, must be retained for the amount of time indicated in the Retention Schedule. A record must not be retained beyond the period indicated in the Record Retention Schedule, unless a valid business reason (or notice to preserve documents for contemplated litigation or other special situation) calls for its continued retention. If you are unsure whether to retain a certain record, contact your Assistant Director, or delegated officer.

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- 6.2 **Disposable information.** The Council's Retention Schedule will not set out retention periods for disposable information. This type of data should only be retained as long as it is needed for business purposes. Once it no longer has any business purpose or value it should be securely disposed of.
- 6.3 **Personal data.** As explained above, data protection legislation requires the Council to retain personal data for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which it is processed (principle of storage limitation). Where data is listed in the Retention Schedule, the Council have taken into account the principle of storage limitation and balanced this against our requirements to retain the data. Where data is disposable information, you must take into account the principle of storage limitation when deciding whether to retain this data.
- 6.4 **What to do if data is not listed in the Record Retention Schedule.** If data is not listed in the Council's Retention Schedule, it is likely that it should be classed as disposable information. However, if you consider that there is an omission in the Retention Schedule, or if you are unsure, please contact your Assistant Director, or delegated officer.

7. STORAGE, BACK-UP AND DISPOSAL OF DATA

- 7.1 **Storage.** Our data must be stored in a safe, secure, and accessible manner. Any documents and financial files that are essential to our business operations during an emergency must be duplicated and/or backed up at least once per week and maintained off site. Please refer to your service area's business continuity plan in the first instance and where applicable the Council's corporate business continuity plan.
- 7.2 **Destruction.** Your Assistant Director or delegated officer is responsible for the continuing process of identifying the data that has met its required retention period and supervising its destruction. The destruction of confidential, financial, and employee-related hard copy data must be conducted by shredding if possible. Non-confidential data may be destroyed by recycling. The destruction of electronic data must be co-ordinated with the Council's ICT department.
- 7.3 The destruction of data must stop immediately upon notification from Legal Services or another service area within the Council that preservation of documents for contemplated litigation is required (sometimes referred to as a litigation hold). This is because the Council may be involved in a legal claim or an official investigation (see next paragraph). Destruction may begin again once Legal Services lifts the requirement for preservation.

8. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- 8.1 **Preservation of documents for contemplated litigation and other special situations.** The Council require all employees to comply fully with its Retention Schedule and procedures as provided in this policy. All employees should note the following general exception to any stated destruction schedule: If you believe, or Legal Services or another service area within the Council informs you, that certain records are relevant to current litigation or contemplated litigation (that is, a dispute that could result in litigation), government investigation, audit, or other event, you must preserve and not delete, dispose, destroy, or change those records, including emails and other electronic documents, until Legal Services or another service area within the Council determines those records are no longer needed. Preserving documents includes suspending any requirements

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in the Record Retention Schedule and preserving the integrity of the electronic files or other format in which the records are kept.

- 8.2 If you believe this exception may apply, or have any questions regarding whether it may apply, please contact Legal Services or the relevant service area within the Council.
- 8.3 In addition, you may be asked to suspend any routine data disposal procedures in connection with certain other types of events, such as our merger with another organisation or the replacement of our information technology systems.

9. WHERE TO GO FOR ADVICE AND QUESTIONS

- 9.1 **Questions about the policy.** Any questions about retention periods relevant to your service area should be raised in the first instance with your Assistant Director or delegated officer who may refer you to the Council's DPO/Information Governance Lawyer. Any questions about this policy should be referred to Mandy Byfield, Data Protection Officer/Information Governance Lawyer. Telephone: 01344 352628. Email: mandy.byfield@bracknell-forest.gov.uk, who is in charge of administering, enforcing, and updating this policy.

10. BREACH REPORTING AND AUDIT

- 10.1 **Reporting policy breaches.** The Council is committed to enforcing this policy as it applies to all forms of data. The effectiveness of our efforts, however, depend largely on employees. If you feel that you or someone else may have breached this policy, you should report the incident immediately to your manager. If you are not comfortable bringing the matter up with your immediate manager, or do not believe the manager has dealt with the matter properly, you should raise the matter with your Assistant Director or delegated officer. If employees do not report inappropriate conduct, the Council may not become aware of a possible breach of this policy and may not be able to take appropriate corrective action.
- 10.2 No one will be subject to and we do not allow, any form of discipline, reprisal, intimidation, or retaliation for reporting incidents of inappropriate conduct of any kind, pursuing any record destruction claim, or co-operating in related investigations.
- 10.3 **Audits.** The Information Management Group will periodically review this policy and its procedures (including where appropriate by taking outside legal or auditor advice) to ensure we are in compliance with relevant new or amended laws, regulations or guidance. Additionally, the Council will regularly monitor compliance with this policy, including by carrying out audits.

11. RECORDS CLOSURE

- 11.1 Records should be closed as soon as they have ceased to be in active use, according to standards set by the respective service areas within the Council.
- 11.2 An indication that the record has been closed should be shown on the record itself.
- 11.3 An indication that a file of paper records or folder of electronic records has been closed, together with the date of closure, should be shown on the record itself as well as noted in the index or database of the files/folders.

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12. OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES

12.1 This policy supplements and should be read in conjunction with our other policies and procedures in force from time to time, including without limitation our:

- IT, security and data related policies, which are available on the intranet or from ICT.
- IT acceptable use policy.
- Data Protection Policy.
- Information Classification Policy
- The Council's Business Continuity Plans
- And other IT, security and data related policies, which are available on the intranet or from ICT.

DEFINITIONS

Corporate Management Team: The Corporate Management Team consists of the Chief Executive, 2 Executive Directors (Delivery and People) and 3 Directors (Finance, Organisational Development, Transformation and HR and Place, Planning and Regeneration)

Data: all data that we hold or have control over and therefore to which this policy applies. This includes physical data such as hard copy documents, contracts, notebooks, letters and invoices. It also includes electronic data such as emails, electronic documents, audio and video recordings and CCTV recordings. It applies to both personal data and non-personal data. In this policy we refer to this information and these records collectively as "data".

Data Protection Officer: The Data Protection Officer is responsible for advising on and monitoring compliance with data protection legislation.

Data Retention Policy: this policy, which explains our requirements to retain data and to dispose of data and provides guidance on appropriate data handling and disposal.

Disposable information: disposable information consists of data that may be discarded or deleted at the discretion of the user once it has served its temporary useful purpose and/or data that may be safely destroyed because it is not a formal or official record as defined by this policy and the Record Retention Schedule.

Formal or official record: certain data is more important to us and is therefore listed in the Record Retention Schedule. This may be because we have a legal requirement to retain it, or because we may need it as evidence of our transactions, or because it is important to the running of our business. We refer to this as formal or official records or data.

Non-personal data: data which does not identify living individuals, either because it is not about living individuals (for example financial records) or because it has been fully anonymised.

Personal data: any information identifying a living individual or information relating to a living individual that we can identify (directly or indirectly) from that data alone or in combination with other identifiers we possess or can reasonably access. This includes special categories of personal data such as health data and pseudonymised personal data but excludes anonymous data or data that has had the identity of an individual permanently removed. Personal data can be factual (for example, a name, email address, location or date of birth) or an opinion about that person's actions or behaviour.

Assistant Directors: each Assistant Director or delegated officer(s) is responsible for administering the data management programme, helping department heads implement it and related best practices, planning, developing, and prescribing data disposal policies, systems, standards, and procedures and providing guidance, training, monitoring and updating in relation to this policy.

Bracknell Forest Council's Retention Schedule: sets out retention periods for our formal or official records.

Storage limitation principle: data protection legislation requires us to retain personal data for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which it is processed. This is referred to in the GDPR as the principle of storage limitation.

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Document owner

This document is owned by the Lawyer – Information Management and Security/Data Protection Officer

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Related documents:

- The Information Commissioner's Section 46 Code of Practice – Records Management
- Incident reporting policy and management procedure
- Information Classification Policy

The Council will also have regard to:

- The ICO Guide to the General Data Protection Regulation