

Section Eleven

Maintaining the System

11. Maintaining the System

11.1 Security of Records

Normally, persons who do not work in the Records Office Section, with the exception of Archives and Records Management Programme staff, are not permitted access in the Records Office area. The files maintained by Records Office or by an office with delegated authority for maintaining Records Office files are for use by the Records Office, Governor, Ministers, Deputy Governor, Permanent Secretaries, Heads of Departments/Divisions and senior staff only. Access to and use of these files by staff who do not work in the department is not permitted, unless authorised in writing by the Head of Department. However, staff outside of the Central Administration in exceptional circumstances may borrow files if written authorisation has been obtained from one of the officials named above.

New staff members of Government departments who will be requesting files from the Records Office should be introduced to Records Office staff by the individual's immediate supervisor in order to ensure that the individual's name is added to the list of staff permitted access to the Records Services files and that the individuals receive proper instruction in the use of those files.

11.2 Confidential/Classified Files

Some files contain documents, which are sensitive and may be seen only by certain members of staff. Such files are often referred to as 'classified' and may be marked, for example, as Secret or Confidential. Personnel files relating to individual members of staff are also treated as confidential because of the personal information they contain and access to them will need to be strictly limited.

Procedures relating to the management, handling and storage of classified files and documents will vary between ministries. While all registered files should be stored securely and their movements and disposition

systemically recorded, confidential files will need to be even more carefully managed. For example, access to confidential files may need to be approved solely by the Chief Executive Officer. Storage arrangements for confidential files will also need to be strictly regulated. The very existence of particularly sensitive files should be known only to those members of staff who need to use them, and to whom appropriate security clearance have been given. The same file cover design is suitable for both regular and classified files. **CONFIDENTIAL** or classified files must be clearly marked with the appropriate classification. All ministries should maintain handling instructions for classified files.

11. 3 Electronic Records

The use of computers makes the management of records more complex. Some computerised records never appear on paper. Rules for the creation, maintenance and disposition of computerised records must be developed and records management practices modified to avoid the problems of unauthorised disposal of electronic records.

These practices must be designed to ensure that:-

- The integrity of records is maintained
- Records are retrievable
- Authorised records disposal occurs according to established rules only
- Records having long term value can be easily transferred to the Archival Institution.

11. 4 Security Precautions

The following security precautions must be in place at all times:

- Ensure that the entrance to the Records Office (or any other place where files are stored) is strictly controlled. Cabinets containing confidential records must be kept locked. The outer door of the Records Office must always be locked when no member of the

Records Office staff is present, and ground floor windows should have security grilles or bars. There should be a secure place where keys can be stored so that members of staff do not take them home.

- Measures should be taken to prevent and control outbreaks of fire. Do not allow smoking in any file storage areas. Adequate numbers of fire extinguishers must be provided and maintained. Electrical appliances should be switched off at the end of the day. Regular fire drills should be held.
- An emergency plan should be in place and tested regularly.

11.5 Good Housekeeping

Eating and drinking in the Records Office should not be allowed. Spilt drinks and food can cause serious damage to records.

The Records Office should be cleaned regularly and waste paper baskets emptied daily.

11.6 Replacing Covers

When a file transit ladder is full a new transit ladder should be pasted on to the front of the file cover. When a file cover has been badly damaged, it may be necessary to provide a new cover. If this is done, the front page of the old file cover must not be destroyed but kept on the file immediately before the first folio.

11.7 Monitoring Records Office Performance

Heads of Records Offices will initiate regular surveys of users' responses to the services provided and take immediate action to make improvements when problems are reported.

The Head will submit quarterly reports regarding the performance of the Records Office to the records and archives institution and to the line manager responsible for the Records Office. These reports should include details of:

- The number of files opened
- The number of letters received
- The service provided to action officers in terms of the best and the worst times it took for them to receive files, from when the letter was received
- The number of boxes transferred to the records centre
- The length of time it takes to clear circulation folders
- The number of records destroyed
- Any problems encountered in running the Records Office

From time to time, the records and archives institution will carry out inspections of Records Offices to measure performance and complete a monitoring exercise. The outcome of these inspections will be communicated to the line manager of the Records Office and the Head of the Records Office. It is the responsibility of the Head of the Records Office to ensure that any improvements or changes recommended in monitoring reports are implemented.

11.8 Symptoms of Difficulties in the Records Office

The Records Office and its procedures need attention when:-

- Mail folders take too long to circulate
- Papers are put on the wrong files
- There is lack of user trust because papers are not readily available
- Action officers keep files and documents in their own rooms, thus making information unavailable
- Action officers send files to the Records Office only when they need space in their rooms
- Files become so thick that covers and contents are damaged
- The Records Office staff are discouraged and frustrated
- There is a backlog of inactive papers in the Records Office that should have been transferred to the records centre
- The Records Office becomes untidy.

11.9 Overhauling Records Office Procedures

There are several reasons why the Records Office or its procedures may need overhauling:-

- Activities have increased and expansion is therefore required.
- New functions have been assigned to the agency.
- Functions have been withdrawn from the agency.

- There is a re-organisation of the area served by the Records Office.
- The present system is ineffective through neglect or faulty design.

Where the Head of a Records Office or the line management feels that a Records Office is in need of attention it should be drawn to attention of the Head of the Records and Archives Institution.



Reorganizing the filing system at the Water and Sewerage Department.



Property Rights Records at the Land Registry Department