

# Timescales

Data protection principles state that information must not be retained longer than needed for purpose (General Data Protection Regulation (Rec 39 Art 5)) and protects the rights for the individual to request their personal data is erased (Art 17) under certain circumstances, although the right to erasure is usually not applicable to health records.

Retention schedules for health records may be specified in your employer's local policies and guidance on record management. The retention schedules defined in the [Records Management Code of Practice for Health and Social Care Records \(2016\)](#) Appendix 3 are considered best practice in the absence of local policies. A summary is provided here. Please refer to the original document for full details.

## Care Records

| Record Type                | Retention starts               | Retention period      | Action at end of retention                                       | Notes                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Adult Health               | Discharge or patient last seen | 8 years               | Review and if no longer needed destroy                           | Includes X-rays, scans, video and other formats                                                                                                          |
| Adult Social Care          | End of care or date last seen  | 8 years               | Review and if no longer needed destroy                           |                                                                                                                                                          |
| Children's Records         | Discharge or patient last seen | 25th or 26th birthday | Review and if no longer needed destroy                           | 26th Birthday applies if patient 17 at conclusion of treatment.<br><br>Includes X-rays, scans, video and other formats                                   |
| Electronic Patient Records |                                |                       | Once records have reached the end of their retention period they | Retention periods same as for paper. Some electronic systems may do this automatically. Otherwise the record should be made inaccessible to users of the |

| Record Type                                                       | Retention starts               | Retention period                               | Action at end of retention             | Notes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                   |                                |                                                | should be destroyed.                   | system. A log or 'meta data stub' should be kept of records destroyed.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Mental Health Records</b>                                      | Discharge or patient last seen | 20 years or 8 years after death                | Review and if no longer needed destroy | Covers records made where the person has been cared for under the Mental Health Act 1983 as amended by the Mental Health Act 2007. This includes psychology records. Retention solely for any persons who have been sectioned under the Mental Health Act 1983 must be considerably longer than 20 years where the case may be ongoing. Very mild forms of adult mental health treated in a community setting where a full recovery is made may consider treating as an adult records and keep for 8 years after discharge. All must be reviewed prior to destruction taking into account any serious incident retentions. |
| <b>Record of long term illness or an illness that may reoccur</b> | Discharge or patient last seen | 30 years or 8 years after the patient has died | Review and if no longer needed destroy | Necessary for continuity of clinical care. The primary record of the illness and course of treatment must be kept of a patient where the illness may re-occur or is a life long illness.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

## Event and Transaction Records

| Record Type                       | Retention starts                     | Retention period               | Action at end of retention                        | Notes                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Clinical Audit</b>             | Creation                             | 5 years                        | Review and if no longer needed destroy            |                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Clinical Diaries</b>           | End of the year to which they relate | 2 years                        | Review and if no longer needed destroy            | Diaries of clinical activity & visits must be written up and transferred to the main patient file. If this information is not transferred retain diary for 8 years.                  |
| <b>Clinical Protocols</b>         | Creation                             | 25 years                       | Review and consider transfer to place of deposit. | Clinical protocols may have archival value. They may also be routinely captured in clinical governance meetings which may form part of the permanent record (see Corporate Records). |
| <b>Equipment Maintenance logs</b> | Decommissioning of the equipment     | 11 years                       | Review and if no longer needed destroy            |                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Referrals not accepted</b>     | Date of rejection                    | 2 years as an ephemeral record | Review and if no longer needed destroy            |                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Ward handover sheet</b>        | Date of handover                     | 2 years                        | Review and if no longer needed destroy            | This retention refers to the ward. Individual staff sheets must be confidentiality destroyed at end of each shift.                                                                   |

## Clinical Trials and Research

| Record Type                                                   | Retention starts          | Retention period       | Action at end of retention                        | Notes                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Research data sets                                            | Closure of research       | Not more than 20 years | Review and consider transfer to place of deposit. |                                                                                |
| Research Ethics Committee documentation for research proposal | End of research           | 5 years                | Review and consider transfer to place of deposit. |                                                                                |
| Research Ethics Committee minutes and papers                  | Year to which they relate | Before 20 years        | Research Ethics Committee documentation           | Committee papers must be transferred to a place of deposit as a public record. |

## Corporate Governance

| Record Type                   | Retention starts | Retention period                      | Action at end of retention     | Notes                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Board Meetings                | Creation         | Before 20 years/ as soon as practical | Transfer to a place of deposit |                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Board Meeting (Closed Boards) | Creation         | Up to 20 years                        | Transfer to a place of deposit | Although they may contain confidential or sensitive material they are still a public record and must be transferred at 20 years with any FOI exemptions noted or duty of |

| Record Type                                                                                                                       | Retention starts                     | Retention period                             | Action at end of retention                                           | Notes                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                   |                                      |                                              |                                                                      | confidence indicated.                                             |
| <b>Committees/ Groups/ sub committees not listed in the scheme of delegation</b>                                                  | Creation                             | 6 years                                      | Review and if no longer needed destroy                               | Includes minor meetings/ projects/ departmental business meetings |
| <b>Destruction Certificates or Electronic Metadata destruction stub or record of information held on destroyed physical media</b> | Destruction of record or information | 20 years                                     | Consider transfer to a place of deposit and no longer needed destroy |                                                                   |
| <b>Incidents</b>                                                                                                                  | Date of incident                     | 20 years (serious)<br>10 years (non serious) | Review and consider transfer to place of deposit.                    |                                                                   |
| <b>Policies/ strategies/ operating procedures/ business plans</b>                                                                 | Creation                             | Life of organisation + 6 years               | Review and consider transfer to place of deposit.                    |                                                                   |

## Communications

| Record Type                                | Retention starts | Retention period | Action at end of retention                        | Notes |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Intranet site                              | Creation         | 6 years          | Review and consider transfer to place of deposit. |       |
| Patient information leaflets               | End of use       | 6 years          | Review and consider transfer to place of deposit. |       |
| Press releases and internal communications | Release date     | 6 years          | Review and consider transfer to place of deposit. |       |
| Website                                    | Creation         | 6 years          | Review and consider transfer to place of deposit. |       |

## Staff Records

| Record Type                            | Retention starts    | Retention period                          | Action at end of retention             | Notes                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Exposure monitoring information</b> | Monitoring ceases   | 40 years/ 5 years from date of last entry |                                        | A) Where the record is representative of the personal exposures of identifiable employees, for at least 40 years or B) In any other case, for at least 5 years |
| <b>Occupational Health Reports</b>     | Staff member leaves | 6 years or until 75th Birthday            | Review and if no longer needed destroy | 75 years for staff member under surveillance                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Staff training records</b>          | Creation            | 6 years or until 75th Birthday            | Review and if no longer needed destroy | 10 years for statutory/ mandatory training.                                                                                                                    |

## Finance

| Record Type      | Retention starts        | Retention period | Action at end of retention             | Notes |
|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------------|-------|
| <b>Accounts</b>  | Close of financial year | 3 years          | Review and if no longer needed destroy |       |
| <b>Donations</b> | Close of financial year | 6 years          | Review and if no longer needed destroy |       |
| <b>Expenses</b>  | Close of financial year | 6 years          | Review and if no longer needed destroy |       |

| Record Type            | Retention starts        | Retention period | Action at end of retention             | Notes |
|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------------|-------|
| Petty Cash             | Close of financial year | 2 years          | Review and if no longer needed destroy |       |
| Salaries paid to staff | Close of financial year | 10 years         | Review and if no longer needed destroy |       |

### Legal, Complaints and information rights

| Record Type                             | Retention starts       | Retention period                                | Action at end of retention               | Notes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Complaints case file                    | Closure of incident    | 10 years                                        | Review and if no longer needed destroy   | <a href="http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/sched_complaints.pdf">http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/sched_complaints.pdf</a><br><br>The incident is not closed until all subsequent processes have ceased including litigation. The file must not be kept on the patient file. A separate file must always be maintained. |
| Freedom information requests/ responses | Closure of FOI request | 3 years<br>(6 years if after subsequent appeal) | Review and if no longer needed destroy   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Litigation records                      | Closure of case        | 10 years                                        | Review and consider transfer to place of |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |



| Record Type                    | Retention starts | Retention period                                | Action at end of retention             | Notes |
|--------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------|
|                                |                  |                                                 | deposit.                               |       |
| <b>Subject Access Requests</b> | Closure of SAR   | 3 years<br>(6 years if after subsequent appeal) | Review and if no longer needed destroy |       |

Other relevant guidance includes:

- Department of Education (2013) [Disposal of school records](#) Northern Ireland
- Gov.UK (2018) [Record Retention and Disposition Schedules](#) Ministry of Justice
- IRMS (2016) [Record Management Toolkit for Schools](#)

**Due to recent changes in data protection legislation you should be aware information may still be under review.**

**Speech and language therapists should always refer to their employer's local policies and guidance on record retention and disposal, where available.**