

NORTHERN IRELAND PRACTICE AND EDUCATION
COUNCIL FOR NURSING AND MIDWIFERY



Records Management Policy

July 2018

Review date: July 2021

Any request for the document in another format or language will be considered

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1. Introduction

All Health and Social Care (HSC) records are public records under the terms of the Public Records Act (NI) 1923. The Act sets out the broad responsibilities for everyone who works with such records, and as such, NIPEC has a statutory duty to make arrangements for the management and safekeeping of its records, and for their retention, storage, and eventual disposal.

Records Management is the term used to describe an administrative system by which an organisation seeks to control the creation, retrieval, storage, preservation or disposal of its records.

A record can be described as: “recorded information, in any form, created or received and maintained by an organisation or person in the transaction of business or conduct of affairs and kept as evidence”. This policy covers all records in all formats: electronic or paper; created, collated, processed, used, stored and/or disposed of in the course of NIPEC business - this includes emails, and additional guidance on the use of emails can be found in Appendix 1.

This policy should be read in conjunction with related NIPEC documents and policies including its:

- Information Governance Strategy
- Data Protection Policy
- Clear Desk and Screen Policy
- FOI Request Procedures
- ICT Security Policy
- IT Ethical Code and Computer Usage Guidelines
- Operational Procedure for NIPEC’s filing system
- Disposal Schedule

There are also a number of pieces of legislation which impose the need for effective records management:

- Public Records Act (NI) 1923 sets out the procedures both for the destruction of records deemed to have no long-term value and for the preservation and transfer to PRONI of records selected for permanent preservation.
- Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI) provides a statutory right of access to information held by public authorities (subject to exemptions). Public authorities are obliged to comply with The Lord Chancellor’s Code of Practice on Records Management which is intended to support the objectives of the FOI legislation by outlining the management practices that should be followed by public authorities in relation to the creating, keeping, managing and disposal of their records.

- The Data Protection Act 2018, incorporating General Data Protection Regulation 2016, entitles individuals to access their personal information, which is being processed by another on request. Records therefore need to be managed effectively to enable NIPEC to respond to requests for access to information.
- Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) provide the public with a statutory right of access to environmental information held by public authorities.

Records should meet NIPEC's legal and operational requirements and support accountability in decisions taken by its officers and Council. It is therefore vital that management of information is treated as an administrative discipline, which controls all aspects of the record from creation through to disposal, in an appropriate manner.

2. Policy Statement

Information is a corporate asset and NIPEC's records are vital in both its current and future work, for the purposes of accountability and for an awareness and understanding of its history. Essentially, they are the corporate memory of NIPEC and its business.

In consultation with organisations that may be concerned with the management of its records, NIPEC will create, use, manage and destroy or retain/preserve its records in accordance with statutory requirements.

Systematic records management is fundamental to organisational efficiency. It ensures that the correct information is:

- captured, stored, retrieved and destroyed or retained/preserved according to need
- fully utilized to meet current and future needs and to support change
- accessible to those who need to make use of it.

All NIPEC staff who create, use, manage or dispose of records have a duty to protect them and ensure that any information they add to the record is necessary, accurate and complete. The confidentiality of client and staff records must always be of primary concern to NIPEC staff.

Records management is a specific part of NIPEC's Information Governance Strategy and NIPEC's Information Governance Group are responsible for maintaining the accuracy and relevance of this policy and providing assurance to NIPEC's Business Team and Council as to its implementation and effectiveness.

3. Aims and objectives of Records Management

The aim of this policy is to ensure the quality of NIPEC's records; to maintain, retain or dispose of these records in accordance with NIPEC's need and legislative requirements

and to ensure the permanent preservation of appropriately identified records. The detailed objectives are to:

- ensure that the record is present, accurate and complete
- maintain effective records control systems
- improve information retrieval methods by maintaining effective filing systems
- ensure the record provides a reliable and accountable representation of business activity and, if relevant, provides the rationale behind the decision-making process
- maintain procedures for retention and disposal of records.

4. Accountability

The **Chief Executive** and **Business Team** will oversee the effective record management within NIPEC, and with **designated NIPEC staff**, have a duty to ensure that NIPEC complies with the requirements of legislation affecting the management of records and with supporting regulations and codes.

The **Head of Corporate Services** and members of the **Information Governance Group** will work closely with all staff to ensure that there is consistency in the management of records and that advice and guidance on good records management practice is provided throughout the organisation.

All members of staff are responsible for documenting their actions and decisions in the records and for maintaining records in accordance with good practice and professional guidelines. All staff are responsible for:

- ensuring they have a clear understanding of records management and demonstrate commitment to duties relating to record keeping
- creating records which are consistent, reliable, accurate and complete
- capturing records which authentically document activities in the course of which they were produced
- filing records correctly in the appropriate area of NIPEC's filing system on the server
- applying security and access controls to records where appropriate
- identifying and applying appropriate disposal and retention periods to records.

5. Record Filing Structure

NIPEC's records are stored electronically on a central server. In the past NIPEC maintained a dual manual and electronic filing system, however, in April 2017, it was agreed NIPEC would move to a paper-lite system and as a first step, cease creating paper based/manual folders in which to store records. Historical manual folders have been retained and will be managed and disposed of as per NIPEC's Disposal Schedule.

The **Corporate IT and Information Officer** will monitor the storage and retention of NIPEC's records and, through the **Information Governance Group**, ensure NIPEC's

Operational Procedure for its filing system and guidance within GMGR is being followed by all staff.

6. Retention and Disposal of Records

All records should be retained and disposed of in accordance with NIPEC's Disposal Schedule, adapted from the Department of Health's Good Management, Good Records (GMGR).

A regular quality check of NIPEC's filing system will be undertaken by the Corporate IT and Information Officer. In liaison with NIPEC's Business Team and approval of the Chief Executive, relevant manual and electronic files will be archived, disposed of, and, where relevant, forwarded to PRONI for permanent preservation.

7. Monitoring Compliance

Monitoring of compliance with this policy will be undertaken by NIPEC's Information Governance Group, reporting any issues to NIPEC's Business Team in order to agree any changes required or action to be taken.

8. Equality

This policy has been screened for equality implications as required by Section 75 and Schedule 9 and of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Equality Commission guidance states that the purpose of screening is to identify those policies which are likely to have a significant impact on equality of opportunity so that the greatest resources can be devoted to these.

Using the Equality Commission's screening criteria and NIPEC's Human Rights screening template no significant equality or human rights implications have been identified. The policy will therefore not be subject to equality impact assessment.

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____
Chief Executive

NIPEC guidance on the use of emails

NIPEC staff are reminded of their responsibility to protect NIPEC records and treat all sensitive and personal information as confidential. This applies to information held in all formats, including emails.

The following guidance should be followed:

- Be aware that all work emails are organisational records
- Remember that an email is not a secure form of communication
- Remember that all emails may be open to scrutiny and are discoverable under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Only send information to those who need to receive that information
- Only copy (cc) or 'forward' emails when it is necessary
- Always check you have the correct recipient / email address before sending the email
- Avoid sending excessive amounts of confidential information by email
- Do not include names in the subject line of an email
- When attaching sensitive or personal information, use passwords and encryption for an extra level of protection
- Personal or sensitive information should not be emailed either to or from any staff member's personal computer or personal email account
- Exercise the same degree of care and professionalism in regard to the content of email messages as you would with a letter - think of an email as an open 'post card'
- Delete unwanted emails as soon as they are no longer required, ensuring these items are deleted permanently from your system.