

## THE METHODIST CHURCH - NORTHAMPTON DISTRICT

### RETENTION OF RECORDS AND DOCUMENTS

*This paper is a first attempt at defining a district policy for the retention, archiving and destruction of records produced by district bodies and committees.*

*It does not attempt to address the area of Safeguarding records. Guidance for this area will follow in due course.*

Across the District a very wide range of records and documents are held both in the district office and by many and various district officers and committees.

This paper is an attempt to set out some guidelines for their effective storage both to ensure their availability when needed and also to comply with legal requirements such as the Data Protection Act, to which all records are subject. See Appendix One for details. It should be read in conjunction with *-Guidance of Best Practice in Retaining Records*, which can be found at - <http://www.methodist.org.uk/ministers-and-office-holders/archivists>.

The Connexional guidance defines a record as :-

A Record is information created or received by the Methodist Church that provides evidence of, and information on our activities. In some cases this will be legal evidence. Each individual **document** is not necessarily a **record**. Traditionally, records were held in paper format but are now increasingly created in electronic systems such as word processing, spreadsheets, databases and email software.

Records are also essential for good pastoral care and safeguarding practice and for vital transmission of information to others.

A record will have been used also to form the basis of a decision and are often if practical information and intended for use otherwise we should question the need for retaining it. Examples of useful information likely to be reused: Name/Address/Date of Birth/Health/Qualifications/experience/Salary/NI No/etc. some of which is personal and sensitive especially if relating to employment: progress review/performance/financial/and for a Church can be very sensitive i.e. for management and use e.g. children/safety.

"The main point in having records is not that 'they will be interesting to posterity' but that they are of administrative, financial and/or legal relevance to what has been decided; or what has been done in carrying out a decision; or what has been the united exercise of a meeting in attempting to deal with a subject." *"Your meeting's records"* Quaker Books, 2004.

These guidelines apply equally to paper and electronic records unless indicated.

There is also a need to ensure that multiple copies of the same document are not retained. The main principle is that the chair/secretary of the body or another nominated person should maintain the original record with all other copies being destroyed when they are no longer needed for operational reasons.

When a recruitment exercise is being carried out, a number of people may have need to have a copy of all or part of the documentation during the interview process. Once an appointment is made only the chair or secretary of the group should retain application forms etc. All other copies should be destroyed. The retained copy should be destroyed after 12 months to ensure compliance with Data Protection best practice.

When records are being destroyed this should be done in a way to preserve confidentiality and ideally by shredding.

The key places in which district records are maintained are :-

<b>Location/Organisation</b>	<b>Record</b>	<b>Retention</b>
<b>District Office</b>		
	District Directory/Database.	Ongoing, continuously updated.
	Staff Files/Employment records.	Retain for 3 years after end of employment then destroy.
	Ministers Files – These are created for each minister to contain information of use to the District Office and Chair.	To be destroyed 12 months after the minister leaves the District.
	Staff Recruitment Files.	Retain for 12 months after appointment then destroy.
	Copies of all Manse Quinquennials.	Retain whilst needed, then destroy. Originals should be held and archived by circuits.
	Manses Visitors reports – Schedule J.	Retain until next report received and then destroy.
	Correspondence re manse visits.	Retain whilst needed. Archive anything of significance or destroy.
	Signed Synod Minutes (Representative and	Retain indefinitely.

	Presbyteral).	
	District Executive Minutes and Reports.	Retain as necessary then destroy. Original archived by Executive Secretary.
	Copies of Circuit Plans.	Retain whilst needed, then destroy. Originals should be held and archived by circuits/Connexional five yearly collection.
	District Prayer Diary.	Retain whilst needed, then destroy. Ensure original is filed with Synod Secretary to be archived with Synod Minutes.
	District Manses Committee Minutes.	Retain whilst needed, then destroy. Copy submitted to District Executive and filed as part of those minutes.
	Sundry Correspondence and Administrative files.	Retain whilst needed (usually 3 years). Archive anything of significance or destroy.
	Safeguarding Records.	To Follow.
<b>Synod Secretary</b>		
	Signed copy of Synod Minutes.	Retain 6 years and then archive.
	Sundry Correspondence and Administrative files.	Retain whilst needed (usually 3 years). Archive anything of significance or destroy.
<b>District Treasurer</b>		
	Vouchers and records relating to all District Bank accounts.	Retain 6 years then destroy.
	Bank Statements.	Retain 6 years then destroy.
	Annual Accounts/Standard Form of accounts (signed copies).	Retain 6 years then archive.
	Sundry Correspondence and Administrative files	Retain whilst needed (usually 3 years). Archive anything of significance or destroy.

<b>Executive Secretary</b>		
	Minutes of District Executive, including reports	Retain 6 years and then archive.
	Sundry Correspondence and Administrative files.	Retain whilst needed (usually 3 years). Archive anything of significance or destroy.
<b>District Property Secretary</b>		
	Copies of Quinquennial Inspections for all churches.	Retain whilst needed. Originals should be held and archived by circuits.
	Minutes of District Property Panel and visit reports.	Retain whilst needed, then destroy. Copy submitted to District Executive and filed as part of those minutes.
	Sundry Correspondence and Administrative files.	Retain whilst needed (usually 3 years). Archive anything of significance or destroy.
	Majority of information is now all on Online Consents System.	
<b>District Safeguarding Group</b>	To Follow.	
<b>District Executive Officer for Safeguarding</b>	To Follow.	
<b>Candidates Committee</b>		
	Copies of Candidates' applications.	Destroy after interview meetings.
	Sundry Correspondence and Administrative files.	Retain whilst needed (usually 3 years). Archive anything of significance or destroy.
<b>Finance &amp; Grants Committee</b>		
	Minutes of Meetings.	Retain whilst needed, then destroy. Copy submitted to District Executive and filed as part of those minutes.
	Grant Applications.	Retain whilst grant in existence and then archive.

	Grant monitoring reports.	Retain whilst grant in existence and then archive with grant application.
	Sundry Correspondence and Administrative files.	Retain whilst needed (usually 3 years). Archive anything of significance or destroy.
<b>Probationers Committee</b>		
	Reports on probationers.	Retain until 12 months after satisfactory completion of probation and then destroy.
		In cases where a probationer appointment does not complete in the normal way, then the key information about the case should be collated and sent to the District office for long term retention to assist in handling any future enquiries that might arise.
	Sundry Correspondence and Administrative files.	Retain whilst needed (usually 3 years). Archive anything of significance or destroy.
<b>District Lay Employment Officer</b>		
	Sundry Correspondence and Administrative files.	Retain whilst needed (usually 3 years). Archive anything of significance or destroy.
<b>District Sabbaticals Officer</b>		
	Sundry Correspondence and Administrative files.	Retain whilst needed (usually 3 years). Archive anything of significance or destroy.
		Ministers are encouraged to retain their prospectus and any subsequent reports until their next sabbatical.
<b>District Ecumenical Officer(s)</b>		
	Sundry Correspondence and Administrative files.	Retain whilst needed (usually 3 years). Archive anything of significance or

		destroy.
	Copies/Records of LEPs, Sharing Agreements etc. and related reviews/renewals.	Retain for duration of LEP and then archive.
	Records of Ministers who are Recognised and Regarded and/or Associated Ministers (Reported to Executive annually).	Retain for duration of appointment and then archive.
<b>Other District officers</b>		
	Minutes of Meetings	Retain six years and then archive.
	Sundry Correspondence and Administrative files.	Retain whilst needed (usually 3 years). Archive anything of significance or destroy.

Approved by District Executive  
August 2015.

## **APPENDIX ONE**

### **DATA PROTECTION**

TMCP has registered with the Information Commissioner on behalf of all Methodist Districts, Circuits and Churches and all such should have in turn registered with TMCP.

The Data Protection Act has eight main principles that everyone should follow :-

1. Personal data shall be processed fairly and lawfully.
2. Personal data shall be obtained only for one or more specified and lawful purposes, and shall not be further processed in any manner incompatible with that purpose or those purposes.
3. Personal data shall be adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purpose or purposes for which they are processed.
4. Personal data shall be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date.
5. Personal data processed for any purpose or purposes shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose or those purposes.
6. Personal data shall be processed in accordance with the rights of data subjects under this Act.
7. Appropriate technical and organisational measures shall be taken against unauthorised or unlawful processing of personal data and against accidental loss or destruction of, or damage to, personal data.
8. Personal data shall not be transferred to a country or territory outside the European Economic Area unless that country or territory ensures an adequate level of protection for the rights and freedoms of data subjects in relation to the processing of personal data.

Personal data is defined as any information that might identify any individual whether living or dead.

This means that for paper records, suitable levels of security should be in place, including if necessary locked filing cabinets or cupboards.

For electronic records it may involve the use of password protection if there is access by several people to a computer. In addition suitable virus protection should be in place and kept up to date.

Electronic records should also be backed up at a suitable frequency to ensure that they are not lost and can be available in case of computer failure.

Stronger requirements exist in relation to safeguarding records.

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