PRONI Template for Retention and Disposal Schedules

This template has been prepared by PRONI to assist NI public authorities in the development of their Retention and Disposal Schedules. It should be used in conjunction with the guidance available on the PRONI website.

PUBLIC AUTHORITY CORPORATE LOGO TBA

Retention and Disposal Schedule

FULL NAME OF PUBLIC AUTHORITY

[and, if appropriate, the operational area whose records are covered by the Schedule]

Date Operational: DD MONTH YYYY

Review Date: DD MONTH YYYY (recommendation 3 years after date operational)

Contents

Section 1 - Introduction

1.1 Introduction to [Public Authority]

Public Authority to insert a couple of paragraphs to include:

- A brief administrative history of the Public Authority, including significant events (with specific dates if possible).
- A summary of the present-day functions of the Public Authority, noting its relationship with other public authorities.
- A list of the primary legislation under which the Public Authority carries out its functions.

1.2 Commitment to Records Management

[Public Authority] recognises that

- A record is defined as, "information created, received and maintained as evidence and as an asset by an organization or person, in pursuit of legal obligations or in the transaction of business" (BS ISO 15489 – 1:2016).
- Records are a vital, unique and irreplaceable resource.
- The proper management of records is necessary to satisfy its business processes, to meet accountability and legislative requirements, and to preserve the organisation's corporate memory.

[Public Authority] is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities under the Public Records Act (NI) 1923, the Disposal of Documents Order (Nos.167 and 170) 1925, and the following information legislation and regulations:

- Code of Practice on the Management of Records issued under section 46 the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (Published 2021)
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Data Protection Act 2018
- General Data Protection Regulation 2018

The [Public Authority] will take all measures to ensure that the records it creates, receives and inherits will be appropriately stored and maintained while they are in its custody until either destroyed or transferred to PRONI for permanent preservation.

The Code of Practice on the Management of Records issued under Section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, states that public authorities must define how long they need to keep records, should dispose of them when they are no longer needed, and should be able to explain why records are no longer held (Paragraph 2.3.1).

1.3 Purposes of the Schedule

The purposes of the Retention and Disposal Schedule are to:

- Provide the mechanism by which the [Public Authority] has the legal authority to dispose of its records,
- Support compliance with legislation and statutory guidance, including the Public Records Act (NI) 1923, the Disposal of Documents Order (1925), and the Information Acts,
- Identify all records, created, received and inherited by the [Public Authority], regardless of format (e.g. analogue, digital),
- Set out the minimum time periods for which the various records described should be retained (retention periods), for as long as required by statute, or for as long as they are needed for business purposes,
- Enable the disposal of records in a documented, timely and appropriate manner at the end of their retention period,
- Enable the identification and selection of records which have enduring historical/research value, for PRONI Permanent Preservation.

Note: Divergence from the Schedule may be appropriate in certain circumstances e.g. pending legal action or for a public inquiry. Any divergence will require liaison with the [Records/Information Manager (or equivalent)]. Consultation with PRONI may also be required.

The development and operation of this Retention and Disposal Schedule is central to the implementation of the [Public Authority] Records Management policy

1.4 Review and Amendments to the Schedule

[Public Authority] will formally review, revise and resubmit the Retention and Disposal Schedule to PRONI after an appropriate period; it is recommended that this takes place 3 years after the Operational Date specified above.

In the meantime, the Schedule will be kept under review to ensure that all classes of records are covered, and that the assigned retention periods, rationale, and disposal actions are appropriate. If amendments are required, the [Public Authority] will notify PRONI, to seek advice on whether an Addendum or re-drafting and resubmission of the Schedule is needed.

1.5 Roles and Responsibilities

The [Public Authority] has in place the following roles, which have specific responsibilities for records management in general, and retention and disposal in particular:

[Public Authority Job Title] (Organization Head)

The head of the organisation has overall responsibility for ensuring that it complies with the requirements of legislation affecting the management of records and with any supporting regulations and codes.

N.B. For some Public Authorities, the job titles/responsibilities for the two functions below may vary. Please amend as appropriate.

[Public Authority Job Title] (Senior Information Risk Owner, SIRO)

The Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) is an Executive Director or Senior Management Board Member who will take overall ownership of the [Public Authority's] Information Risk Policy. The SIRO implements and leads the Information Governance (IG) risk assessment and management processes within the organisation and advises the [Board] on the effectiveness of information risk management across the organisation.

[Public Authority Job Title] (Information Asset Owners, IAOs)

Information Asset Owners (IAO) are senior individuals involved in running the relevant business area. Their role is to understand what records are held, where those records are, how long they need to be held, how secure they are, what is added and what is removed, how records are moved, and who has access and why. They can understand and address risks to records and ensure that records are fully held and utilised within the relevant legislation for the public good. They will approve the implementation of the decisions set out in this Schedule, and its associated mechanisms, to ensure compliance within their business area.

[Public Authority Job Title] (Records/Information Manager)

The [Records/Information Manager (or equivalent)] will work with the Business Areas / nominated Information Asset Owners to maintain best practice records management in the organisation. This role includes setting policies and standards, and establishing and implementing procedures and guidelines, to ensure records are managed appropriately by all staff. They will provide guidance on the principles of retention and on the preparation of Retention and Disposal Schedules and will ensure the Schedule is submitted to PRONI for laying before the Northern Ireland Assembly.

All Staff

All members of staff are responsible for documenting their actions and decisions by creating appropriate records and for maintaining these in accordance with the [Public Authority's] agreed policies and procedures, including the Retention and Disposal Schedule.

Section 2 - Operation of the Retention and Disposal Schedule

2.1 Schedule Section Numbers, Functions and Description of Records held by [Public Authority]

The arrangement of records within this Schedule reflects the business functions, activities and transactions of [Public Authority] rather than the organisational structure.

Schedule Section	Function	Description
1	*Sample text: Accommodation and Services*	*Sample text: This function covers records relating to the management of land and buildings owned, rented or leased, as well as the provision of related services.*
2	*Sample text: Strategic Management*	*Sample text: This function covers records relating to the development of medium to long-term organisational strategies and objectives.*
3	*Sample text: Financial Management*	*Sample text: This function covers records relating to the management of financial resources across the [Public Authority].*
4	*Sample text: People Management*	*Sample text: This function covers records related to the managing all personnel.*

Note: If a Public Authority proposes to deviate from a functional approach, for example by organising the Schedule according to business areas or file plan structure, please contact PRONI to discuss at the early stages of development.

2.2 Retention Period

The retention periods listed in this Schedule specify the minimum length of time for which each record type should be kept. The retention periods apply to master sets of records only. Duplicate and back-up copies should be destroyed when no longer needed, and should not be retained any longer than the master copies.

[Public Authority] acknowledges that it is responsible for ensuring that the retention periods listed in the Schedule are appropriate for business, legislative and regulatory purposes.

2.3 Categories of Disposal – Final Actions

[Public Authority] acknowledges that all records will be subject to disposal by one of the four Final Actions below.

Final Action	Explanation
Destroy	Records identified for Destruction are of no lasting administrative/legal value to the [Public Authority] and of no long-term historical/research value to PRONI. It is the responsibility of the [Public Authority] to arrange for the destruction or permanent deletion of this material.
Permanent Retention by [Public Authority]	Records identified for Permanent Retention by the [Public Authority] should be appropriately stored and maintained by it. Note, this includes taking account of digital continuity to ensure long term access and usability of digital records. This Final Action should be used by exception. It is important to note that there is no legal basis to subsequently destroy such records unless this Final Action is revised by a subsequent Retention and Disposal Schedule.
PRONI Permanent Preservation	Records identified for PRONI Permanent Preservation should be retained by the [Public Authority] and transferred to PRONI.
PRONI Appraisal	Records identified for PRONI Appraisal are those which may be of future historical/research value. This will be determined by the PRONI Appraisal process.

2.4 Public Authority Business Area Review Process

At the end of their retention period, Business Area Managers / Information Asset Owners (IAOs) should review all records (both paper and electronic), within their business area to ensure no records are likely to be required for business continuity reasons.

When the Business Area confirms there is no longer an enduring business need for records, the Final Action should be triggered accordingly. If there remains a business need to retain records, the reviewer should state a further retention period, after which the Final Action will be triggered.

2.5 Records Disposal - Applying the Final Actions

Once the retention period has passed, and the relevant business area has confirmed there is no longer a business need for the records, the [Records/Information Manager (or equivalent)] should apply the relevant Final Action(s) for disposal. This should fall into one of four categories below.

Disposal should be built into digital systems where possible. Records disposal should be approved by the [INSERT JOB TITLE e.g. most senior official in your organisation with responsibility for Records Management] and an audit trail, including a disposal log, should be kept.

2.5.1 Destroy

Records with this Final Action should be destroyed in a manner commensurate with the sensitivity of their content.

2.5.2 Permanent Retention by Public Authority

Records with this Final Action should be retained permanently, and the [Public Authority] shall take adequate steps to ensure the on-going preservation and accessibility of these records, in both paper and electronic/digital formats. This includes taking account of digital continuity, to ensure long term access and usability of digital records. It is important to note that there is no legal basis to destroy records in this category. If the authority subsequently decides to apply a different Final Action for records in this category it may only do so following consultation with PRONI and a revision to the Retention and Disposal Schedule.

2.5.3 PRONI Appraisal

Records with this Final Action are those which may be of future historical/research significance. Public Authority will implement systems/processes to ensure that PRONI Appraisal takes place at the appropriate times, as outlined below.

PRONI First Appraisal

At the end of the retention period, when the Public Authority Business Area Review, has confirmed that the Public Authority has no ongoing administrative need for the record, a PRONI First Appraisal should take place.

The [Records/Information Manager (or equivalent)] should contact PRONI to arrange a First Appraisal and must provide a detailed list of all the records due for appraisal.

The purpose of a PRONI First Appraisal is to identify records which have potential long term historical/research value, in line with PRONI's acquisition strategy and appraisal guidance.

Any records selected at PRONI First Appraisal must be retained by the Public Authority until they reach the PRONI Second Appraisal stage.

PRONI Second Appraisal

All records selected at PRONI First Appraisal (and any records with the Final Action PRONI Appraisal which may have missed the PRONI First Appraisal stage) should be brought forward for PRONI Second Appraisal in a timescale appropriate to ensure their transfer to PRONI by the time they reach 20 years old.

The [Records/Information Manager (or equivalent)] should contact PRONI to arrange a First Appraisal and must provide a detailed list of all the records due for appraisal.

The purpose of a PRONI Second Appraisal, is to identify records which have long term historic/research value, in line with PRONI's acquisition strategy and appraisal guidance.

Following the PRONI Second Appraisal, the Client Manager will issue a Warrant listing all records selected at PRONI Second Appraisal for PRONI Permanent Preservation. The Public Authority is then required to prepare the records for transfer to PRONI. The Public Authority must sensitivity review all records selected by PRONI and provide appropriate access decisions. All access decisions must be signed off by the [Records/Information Manager (or equivalent / other more senior official)].

2.5.4 PRONI Permanent Preservation

Records with this Final Action should be retained by the [Public Authority until they are approaching 20 years old. At this point, the [Records/Information Manager (or equivalent)] should contact PRONI to request a Warrant, and must provide a detailed list of all the records for PRONI Permanent Preservation. The PRONI Client Manager will check the list and issue a Warrant confirming that are destined for PRONI Permanent Preservation. The Public Authority is then required to prepare the records for transfer to PRONI. The Public Authority must sensitivity review all records selected by PRONI and provide appropriate access decisions. All access decisions must be signed off by the [Records/Information Manager (or equivalent / other more senior official)].

2.5.5 Retention of historical records selected for PRONI Permanent Preservation

If [Public Authority] identifies a need to retain records which have been selected for PRONI Permanent Preservation after they reach 20 years old it may be necessary to complete a certificate to the DfC Minister, as Keeper of the Records, on an annual basis for these records. This may also need also be completed for any other records which are over 20 years old which remain in the custody of the Public Authority, in accordance with s.3(d) of the Public Records Act (NI) 1923.

Section 3 – Retention and Disposal Schedule

3.1 Using the Retention and Disposal Schedule

A Retention and Disposal Schedule is a document that identifies and describes all records created, held and maintained by an organization to perform its functions. It provides details of how long the records should be kept for, the reasons for this, and details of actions to be taken at the end of the records lifecycle. It applies to all records regardless of format (digital or analogue).

Layout

1. Function: TBA

Unique Ref. No.	**Class**	**Description of records series**	**Retention Period**	**Retention Rationale**	**Final Action**
Each record listed should have its own reference number e.g. ***1.1***	*Groups together records of similar content and life cycle e.g.* *Business Planning*	*Brief description e.g. Corporate Plans and Annual Business Plans*	*The length of time a record must be kept; calculated from the date of file closure e.g. 3 years*	*The reason(s) behind a retention period e.g. relevant legislation, Code of Practice, business requirement*	*Recommended action at the end of the Retention Period. N.B. subject to final sign off by the [IAO / IM or equivalent]* *Can only be one of the four options:* *Destroy* *Permanent Retention by Public Authority* *PRONI Appraisal* *PRONI Permanent Preservation*

Notes/ Guidance

If you have any queries, please contact the [insert details of the Public Authority records management team]

3.2 Retention and Disposal Schedule

Function No. and Heading TBA

Unique Reference No	Class	Description of Records Series	Retention Period	Retention Rationale	Final Action

Section 4 - Signatories

[NAME OF ORGANISATION] Retention and Disposal Schedule

Prepared as required by the Public Records Act (Northern Ireland), 1923 and in accordance with the Rules made pursuant thereto, approved by Order in Council dated 20th January 1925.

[Signature] **[date]**

Wesley Geddis, Acting Head of Records Management, Cataloguing and Access, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, DfC

[Signature] **[date]**

David Huddleston, Director, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, DfC

[Signature] **[date]**

Grainia Long, Permanent Secretary, Department for Communities

[Insert Organisation's logo here]

For some Public Authorities some of the below roles will not be relevant. Amend as appropriate.

[Signature] [date]

[NAME], [ROLE – Records/Information Manager (or equivalent)] [Public Authority]

[Signature] [date]

[NAME], [ROLE – Head of Corporate Services etc] [Organisation]

[Signature] [date]

[NAME], [ROLE – Chief executive] [Organisation]

Abbreviations

Public Authority to insert list of abbreviations if applicable.

Glossary

Public Authority to insert a glossary of terms if it is thought that they would be helpful aids to understanding the text.