Keep or Bin…?

The Care of Your Parish Records

Church of England Record Centre Records Management Guide No. 1

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1 INTRODUCTION

Since 1978 with the passing of the Parochial Registers and Records Measure, the long-term care of parish registers and other important parochial archives has been covered by law. The 1978 Measure was brought up to date by the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure 1992, which came into force on 1st January 1993. A Guide to the Parochial Registers and Records Measure has been published[1].

This revision of the 2006 Guide is intended to provide some brief, practical notes to be used by the various parish officers who find themselves involved in managing records on behalf of the parish. The information in this leaflet has been taken from a number of sources including the Advisory Group of the Church of England Record Centre, the Council for the Care of Churches, Cheshire Record Office, Kent Archive and Local History Service, the Legal Office of the National Church Institutions. The National Archives and the Society of Archivists.

It is to the Diocesan Record Office (The DRO), that parishes should look for advice and guidance on the care of record material, ancient or modern.

Further copies of these guidelines can be downloaded from our website, or a paper copy is available from the Church of England Record Centre and details of our website and postal address can be found in Section 11 at the end of this guide.

2 WHY BOTHER TO MANAGE YOUR RECORDS?

There are a number of reasons why parishes need to manage their records properly. Without proper organisation the sheer volume of records (whether stored in paper or electronic format) can easily become overwhelming. Many areas of parish activity are subject to external regulation; for example in areas of child protection, finance, and the preservation and maintenance of our historic buildings; which makes it essential to maintain proper records. Good record keeping, particularly in these areas, demonstrates the Church's wider accountability to Society in relation to its activities and reflect the true complexity and diversity of the Church's activities.

The Church also has theological reasons for managing its records as a testimony of its various activities as part of its continuing witness to Christians, those of other faiths and those of none.

The main purpose of managing your records is to ensure that:
"the right information is with the right people at the right time."[2]

If you have too many records then the important information can get buried; but if you can't find the information when you need it there is little point in keeping it in the first place. On the other hand, if records are destroyed before they need to be, then the parish may not have the information which is required to deal with issues that arise.

Managing the records detailed in the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978 is straightforward. These guidelines are designed to help parish officers to distinguish between the different kinds of records and decide how long and where they need to be kept.

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[1] Guide to the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978 (as amended at 1st January 1993). With practical suggestions for custodians and users. Church House Publishing, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BN. ISBN 0 7151 3747 6.
[2] Definition of records management by the Records Management Society of Great Britain

3 LOOKING AFTER YOUR ELECTRONIC RECORDS

3.1 General Advice

Whilst information technology has made parish administration much easier electronic records need to be subject to the same rules of management particularly in regard to retention and destruction as traditional paper records.

It is recommended that parishes routinely tackle the preservation of electronic records which are of permanent historical value. It is not recommended to store such records on magnetic media but only in hard copy format in the absence of a supported electronic archive or document management system. Magnetic media can be corrupted and it is better to capture the permanent copy early on in the life of the document (it is recommended that this is done as soon as the final document has been completed).

Even records stored on CD/R or DVD media can be subject to corruption although this is a better option than many.

It is recommended that all IT systems which are used to create and maintain electronic documents in the course of parish administration are backed up on a regular basis. The back ups should be stored securely away from the location of the machine or system on which they were created, ideally in another building or at the least, in a different room in the same building.

All applications should have appropriate virus checking software, especially if documents are transferred between a number of computers.

It is also advisable for parishes to ensure that compatibility of existing data is addressed when buying and installing new computer systems. Otherwise significant re-keying or loss of data may occur.

Many parishes now maintain web sites. If the technical expertise is available it is of value to take a snapshot of the parish web site twice or three times a year (depending on how frequently the web site is updated). All master documents made available via the web site should be captured in hard copy format in the same way as other records stored on magnetic media.

3.2 Document Management Advice

(a) Naming Files and folders

All documents (e.g. a report or spreadsheet or powerpoint presentation) in Microsoft Office are called “files” and are stored in “folders”. You should have a file plan - a documented arrangement of all your folders. You can give names to files and folders and the combination of file and folder name should clearly indicate the subject content. For example:

Minutes - name of the group or committee and meeting date in a recommended format (yyyymm or yyyymmdd) e.g. “PCC Minutes 200708.doc” or “Fabric Committee, Minutes 200805.doc”rather than “May.doc”. Having year then month in number format in the file title means any file list on screen will be in a helpful and logical order. Store minutes in appropriately named folders e.g. PCC Minutes 2007 or Fabric Committee Minutes 2008.

Reports – name of the report, date and version number if applicable e.g. “Fabric Committee Minutes 2007.doc.v1”

Filenames – add the filename and filepath to the footer of every document you create once it has been saved, to enable anyone with a paper copy to identify what it is and where the electronic copy can be found.

Folders should carry a readily identifiable name that indicates their purpose. The default should always be to put documents into global or shared folders and have a clear policy on folder names.

Consider:

- Is there a recognised term for the subject? Use this for preference.
- Is the term likely to be recognised in the future? Try not to use current buzz words which may have passed out of use in the future when the folders have not.

- Try not to use abbreviations unless they are very obvious.
- Can a complete newcomer understand the subject from the folder name and find the information quickly using the folder name?

(b) Storing Files - Folders

Within shared drives create individual folders for each activity or function. If there are lots of files in a folder it can be hard to find specific information. Use additional folders to structure this as a hierarchy – general activities first, then more specific folders and files as you move down the hierarchy. If you already have a paper filing structure that people are familiar with then look at replicating that for your shared folders rather than trying to create something new. Put yourself in the shoes of someone trying to find a document in the future who is not familiar with the files: what folder and file titles will make it easiest for them to find the right document or file?

(c) Version Control

Where a document goes through a number of changes and earlier copies are kept, it is essential that version control be applied. This can be of two types.

- Version 0.1, 0.2 – where small changes are being made to an existing document.
- Version 2, Version 3 Final – where a major revision is made and a new revised version will replace an earlier version.

Doing this will make it easier to track changes as a document develops. The version information should appear in the file name and on the front page of the document (e.g. Mission Policy – Version 3 Final – 2006). Consider whether you want to retain or delete earlier versions. If a version represents a significant change in policy, thought or expression from its predecessor, and vice versa it should be retained.

(d) Templates and Styles

If you often have to produce the same type of documents it makes sense to have standard templates that new versions can be copied from - this saves time formatting documents and helps consistency. Structuring documents using Word styles also makes it easy to format documents and maintain consistency throughout them, particularly standard ones such as letters, reports, minutes etc.

(e) Security and Access

The greatest risk to your records is misplacement, loss and unauthorised access. Consequently it is vital that you properly control access to and use of your records. In an office or on shared computers store documents on shared drives so that they can be readily accessed by colleagues – better one copy in a shared drive than several all in personal drives or folders. Where necessary, access to shared folders can be limited to those who have a need to access the contents. This can be done on a folder by folder basis. Alternatively an individual document can be password protected; though if you forget the password, recovering the contents may be extremely difficult.

(f) Retention and Deletion

Shared folders just like filing cabinets – they take up space and cost money. The difference is that you cannot see the space – but you still need to clear them out and weed them in exactly the same way you would a filing cabinet. You need to have a clear policy on what you keep and for how long. For specific guidance about the retention or disposal of records not included in this guide and in the absence of a diocesan policy, please contact the Record Centre for further advice, Tel. 020 7898 1030 or e-mail: archives@churchofengland.org.

(g) Back Ups

It is essential to make regular back ups of files on you computer. One way of doing this is to buy an external hard drive - these are now cheap (well under £100), reliable and easy to use. Many broadband and email providers now also offer free or cheap online storage of documents including back ups. Avoid saving only onto memory sticks or flash drives – it isn't safe or secure! Obviously this will sometimes be unavoidable – so do transfer files to a computer as soon as possible.

(h) E-mails

Naming email – always use the "subject" box to give a proper title to the email that describes what it is about. Limit each email exchange to one clear subject wherever possible – do not reply to a previous email to start a new topic, instead start a new email with its own clear subject heading - it makes it easier to find them later.

Saving email – Parish related e-mails you need to keep as part of the corporate information of the parish should be treated in the same way as any other electronic or paper record and stored in a way that provides security and access to those who need it.

Saving emails can be done in two ways –
a) within Outlook as a "live" email. While this retains the flexibility of access and use - you can forward it, reply etc., and can store emails in various sub-folders; the disadvantage is this will over time clog up your email inbox making it harder to manager the information. Email is also not a satisfactory means of long term storage of important information.
b) Outside of Outlook. Content of emails that need to be saved longer term can be stored outside the email system by saving the email in message file (use the "save as" option and choose "Outlook Message Format" in the save as type field) in a shared folder under the appropriate subject heading – this saves the email text as a document with the to/from/date details intact and allows it to be stored with related documents. The actual email can then be deleted. In a Microsoft Windows environment, such e-mails can be simply dragged from Outlook to the appropriate folder.

(i) Dates

Always date documents. Do not use the "date" field option as it enters the current date and automatically updates every time the document is opened.

(j) Master Copies

The master copy of any document or file should be kept by the creator or the main contributor to its creation. If several people hold copies of documents then decide who is the master copy owner – they are responsible for ensuring a complete set of records e.g. of a series of meetings, so that the parish has a full set and everyone else can dispose of theirs and not have to keep their own duplicate copies. This applies to paper as well as electronic records. For example the master copy of the PCC Minutes would be usually be held by the PCC Secretary.

4 LOOKING AFTER YOUR PAPER RECORDS

4.1 Creating and storing your records

Taking trouble from the moment records are created is always important. It is useful to give some thought as to the length of time which a record will need to be retained. These guidelines together with the retention schedule in section 8 can be useful. If a record is likely to be retained permanently (for example, it is of historical or legal value) it may be appropriate to use an archival quality paper, to avoid the use of post-it notes on the text, to use brass paper clips or brass staples for securing papers, not to use self-adhesive tape to "mend" papers and not to use tippex on documents. All these precautions will extend the life of the record.

However, it would be an over-reaction (not to mention expensive) to apply these guidelines to routine financial information, for example, or general correspondence files which will be retained for much shorter periods of time.

Good Practice

Avoid using brown paper, envelopes or newspaper for wrapping up records. Coloured or recycled paper is not suitable for records which are likely to be retained as permanent archives, and good quality pen ink should be used in preference to pencil or ballpoint pen.

Avoid metals that can rust in all clips, pins, staples, tags and containers. Many metals corrode and cause damage to documents. Brass, plastic and other non-rusting paper clips can be used. When tying bundles use white tape rather than string, and string rather than rubber bands, which perish and damage paper. Wrap bundles in strong white paper before tying. Keep documents free from dust, grease and other substances.

Storage

Registers and other vital documents should be stored in a safe which should be located in a secure, cool and dry place. Avoid basements and attics for this purpose as these are likely to suffer from dampness or high temperatures. However, the records should not be stored in the same place as stationery and general office supplies but in clearly designated areas from where they can be easily retrieved and which they can be safeguarded from fire, flood, theft or unauthorised access.

Make sure that documents are protected from immediate contact with metal, in cupboard walls, shelves, trays and the like. Make sure that the records are packed in boxes rather than plastic bags. Plastic bags prevent air circulation and can also give off gases harmful to paper.

Do not place documents at floor level or where leaking water pipes could cause damage. If the area is prone to floods, store well above the known highest flood level.

Check all electrical circuits have been tested during the last two years. Keep a carbon dioxide fire extinguisher nearby. Use a liquid fire extinguisher only in the last resort.

If you need advice about storing parish records or about the environmental conditions in which your records are currently stored please contact your local DRO.

As part of the business continuity planning it may be worth considering have a contract with a document salvage company for the recovery of records in the aftermath of a major incident such as a flood or fire.

Faxes on thermal image paper fade rapidly and the chemicals present in many fax papers cause discolouration in adjacent papers- these should be replaced if not on plain paper then with photocopies at the earliest opportunity.

Advice about appropriate conditions for the storage of records can be found on the University of Edinburgh Records Management Section website:
http://www.recordsmanagement.ed.ac.uk/infostaff/rmstaff/recordstorage/recordstorageareas.htm.

4.2 Protection and repair of your documents

Records face deterioration through the direct impact of fire and flood, but usually much more so from more indirect causes such as aging of their component materials and from inappropriate handling. This section sets out the steps you can take to protect your records and if necessary where you can seek advice and help.

If the documents are in a poor condition, or in case of damage by fire or flood, get in touch with the Diocesan Record Office (the "DRO") as soon as possible, where they will be able to offer advice and assistance. Protect damaged documents first with white blotting paper, and then place them within folders. Do not bring any abrasive material such as metal bulldog clips into immediate contact with a fragile document. Do not attempt to dry sodden documents. Store them in a plastic bag in a domestic freezer until advice is available from the DRO or document salvage company.

Do not attempt any type of repair. Repairs need to be carried out under the direction of those with professional expertise. Materials likely to be at hand, such as mass-produced gum or glue, and the transparent self-adhesive strips intended for packages and parcels, and also said to be suitable for repairing printed books, must not be used on any documents, for they themselves in time cause damage.

If a document is damp and smells of mould, isolate it and place it in a natural current of cold dry air. Seek advice as soon as possible, as the mould may still be active. For general advice on conservation see the National Archives web site: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/preservation

4.3 Allowing use of records

To avoid blots and smudges which can obscure the original text, make sure that no-one who uses core records for research purposes uses anything but a soft-leaded pencil. It is also important that no one using core records for research purposes eats, drinks or smokes whilst anywhere near your records and that any notebook, laptop or writing paper is not put on top of the records. Encourage the use of reading aids such as foam wedges and weights. Researchers need to be directly supervised to avoid the risk of damage or loss.

5 DATA PROTECTION

The purpose of the data protection legislation is to prevent wrong decisions about people being based on inaccurate data and unauthorised use of personal information. The Data Protection Act 1998 ("the 1998 Act" give individuals the right to know what information is held about them and provides a frame work to ensure that personal information is handled properly.

All parishes collect personal information and are subject to the 1998 Act. A statutory requirement is that every organization that processes personal information electronically must notify the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), unless it is exempt. Failure to notify is a criminal offence. Notifications are required to be renewed annually and this can be done online and a fee of £35 is charged. Most PCCs will be able to claim the exemption from notification for small not for profit organisations (Further details of which are available on the Information Commissioner's website).

Dioceses are subject to the eight data protection principles and must manage all personal data against these principles:

1. Personal data shall be obtained and processed fairly and lawfully.
2. Personal data shall be obtained only for specified and lawful purposes and shall not be used for any other purpose.
3. Personal data should be adequate, relevant and not be more than is necessary to complete the task for which it was collected for. However, keeping records for historical and research purposes are a legitimate reason for keeping records.
4. Personal data shall be accurate and, where necessary, kept up-to-date.
5. Personal data should not be kept for longer than is necessary for completion of the task it was collected for.
6. Personal data shall be processed in accordance with the rights of data subjects under the Data Protection legislation.
7. Personal data should be kept securely and safely with appropriate technical and organisational measures being taken against unauthorised or illegal processing, accidental loss or destruction of personal data.
8. Personal data shall not be transferred to a country or territory outside the European Economic Area, unless that country ensures an adequate level of protection of the rights of data subjects.

The implication of these principles is that organisations should have procedures in place to cover the review of personal information held on files and databases. This means organisations must assess how long they need to keep information for, the purpose for which they are holding it and when it will be destroyed.

The 1998 Act also provides individuals with important rights, which include the right for individuals to find out what personal information is held on computer and in most paper records.

Should an individual or organisation feel they're being denied access to personal information to which they are entitled, or feel their information has not been handled according to the eight principles, they can contact the Information Commissioner's Office for help. Complaints are usually dealt with informally, but if this isn't possible, enforcement action can be taken. Further information can be found on the Information Commissioners web site: http://www.ico.gov.uk

6 COPYRIGHT

Copyright protects the physical expression of ideas, in general, and it protects the maker of a work from appropriation of their labours by another. As soon as an idea is given physical form, e.g. a piece of writing, a photograph, music, a film, a web page, it is protected by copyright. There is no need for registration or to claim copyright in some way, protection is automatic at the point of creation. Both published and unpublished works are protected by copyright for a specified period, typically 70 years from the date of publication or death of the author.

Copyright is normally owned by the creator(s) of the work, e.g. an author, composer, artist, photographer etc. If the work is created in the course of a person's employment, then the copyright holder is usually the employer.

Copyright is a property right and can be sold or transferred to others. Authors of articles in academic journals, for example, frequently transfer the copyright in those articles to the journal's publisher. It is important not to confuse ownership of a work with ownership of the copyright in it: a person may have acquired an original copyright work, e.g. a painting, letter or photograph, but unless the copyright in it has expressly also been transferred, it will remain with the creator.

Copyright is regulated by law, the principal statute in the UK being the Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 (CDPA). (amended on a number of occasions since coming into force on 1 August 1989). In addition the law relating to copyright has been affected by various statutory instruments. Including the Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2003 which incorporated into UK law the changes required by the EU Copyright Directive.

Copyright law grants to copyright holders certain exclusive rights in relation to their works. They have the right to: copy a work, issue copies to the public, perform show or play it, make adaptations or translations. They also have the right to prevent:

- others communicating a work to the public by electronic transmission, e.g. broadcasting it or putting it on a website.
- others making available to the public a recording of a performance by electronic transmission, e.g. putting it on a website.

The law provides certain ways in which copyright works may be used without the need to first obtain permission from the copyright holder(s) - these include, fair dealing, library privilege, copying for examinations and copying for instruction. Copyright licenses permit copyright works to be copied and used in various ways. Otherwise, written permission must first be obtained from a copyright holder before their work is used or copied. Infringing the rights of copyright holders may be a criminal offence and/or cause them to sue for damages.

As a result of certain international treaties and conventions, works produced in many other countries have the same copyright protection in the UK as those created here. For further information, see Intellectual Property Office website: http://www.ipo.gov.uk

7 DECIDING WHAT THE PARISH NEEDS TO KEEP

When the majority of older parish registers and records have been deposited in the Diocesan Record Office, most parishes will only be responsible for records of current administrative value. Although many of these will be of little or no historical value, it is important to be able to distinguish between these records and those which will be of historical value.

The purpose of this leaflet is to give parish officers the confidence to distinguish between the records which ought to be kept permanently and those which may safely be thrown away when they are no longer, required for administrative purposes. This advice applies equally whether the records are traditional paper records or have an electronic format.For ease of reference records have been grouped into separate subject categories. The guidance about the retention or otherwise of records has been divided into three categories:

The parish must keep: This section contains the records which parishes are legally required to maintain whilst the records are in use and then to transfer to the Diocesan Record Office when the records have ceased to be of use in the parish.

The parish may keep: This section contains the records, which parishes may keep or may not; parishes are advised to consider keeping these records that may be of permanent interest, however the Diocesan Record Office may not be able to accept deposits of such records.

The parish should dispose of: This section relates to records, which may be safely disposed of at the end of their administrative life. For ease of reference records have been grouped into separate subject categories.

7.1 Church Services

The parish **must keep**:

- Registers of baptisms, marriages and burials - Permanent (deposit at the Diocesan Record Office)
- Registers of banns, confirmations and services - Permanent (deposit at the Diocesan Record Office))

The parish **may keep**:

- Registers of marriage blessings
- Registers of funerals/interments
- An archive copy of any service sheets for special services or any surveys of church attendance.
- Photographs of special services, church events, clergy and congregation

The parish **should dispose of**:

- Baptism certificate counterfoils, marriage certificate counterfoils, copies of burial and cremation certificates, copies of banns certificates and applications for banns, baptisms and marriage services

7.2 Church Buildings and Property

Churchwardens are required by the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991 (which came into force on 1st March 1993) to compile and maintain (in the form recommended by the Council for the Care of Churches) a terrier and inventory and a logbook giving details of alterations, additions and repairs to, and other events affecting the church or the articles or land belonging to it, and with a note of the location of any other relevant documents.

The churchwardens must send a copy of the inventory to the person designated by the bishop as soon as practicable after it has been compiled, and it would be wise also to send a copy to the Diocesan Registrar if they are not the designated recipient. They must notify the designated recipient of any alterations at intervals laid down by the bishop.

The terrier and inventory and the logbook must be presented by the churchwardens to the parochial church council at the beginning of each year, together with a signed statement to the effect that the contents are accurate. Mention should be made of new items, losses or disposals.

The parish **must keep**:

- Former terriers, inventories and logbooks - Permanent (deposit)
- Faculties, and accompanying papers, photographs, plans and drawings - Permanent (deposit)
- Plans, correspondence, accounts and photographs relating to major repairs or alterations - Permanent (deposit)
- Reports by Council for the Care of Churches, English Heritage and other conservation organisations - Permanent (deposit)

The parish **may keep**:

- A logbook or scrapbook recording parish events[3]

7.3 General Parish Administration

The core documents are the minutes of the parochial church council and its committees.

If these are still paper documents, but no longer written by hand in bound volumes, it is important that the signed copies of minutes are properly kept. It is recommended that PCC secretaries maintain minutes, produced by a word processor and kept in folders, by the standards outlined in the Company Secretaries Handbook[4]. Advice about this can be obtained from your Diocesan Record Office.

[3] These are very valuable records for ecclesiastical and social historians. It is strongly recommended that all parishes maintain some similar type of document, and the form of logbook published by the Council for the Care of Churches allows space for this. [4] The Company Secretary's Handbook A Guide To Statutory Duties and Responsibilities, 5th Edition, 2008 by Helen Ashton, publisher Kogan Page, ISBN 0749453214. See sections 5 – 6 which give guidance about good record keeping practice.

[5] The Archbishops' Council's Finance Department has produced a parish account book entitled Parochial Church Accounts, in a loose-leaf format which provides for the inclusion of audited accounts.

[6] Where 'personnel' files are kept on volunteers or employees they will be in principle entitled to see personal data on their file (subject to making a written request and paying a fee of up to £10) but there are various statutory exceptions and also particular rules relating to third party communications. If you have concerns about whether information should be disclosed in a particular case, advice should be sought from the diocesan Registrar.

Pasting or sticking typed copies in bound volumes is not recommended because of the generally unsound archival quality of glues and adhesives as well as the risk of breaking the spine of the binding. Care must be taken, too, with ring binders because of the metal parts, which may rust. Loose minutes should either be properly bound into volumes or kept in an archival box, in which case the pages should be consecutively numbered. For legal reasons it is strongly recommended that pages of minutes are not kept loose but are filed in meeting order in files which comply with the standards outlined in the Company Secretaries Handbook.

The parish **must keep**:

- The signed copies of the PCC minutes and its committees and any accompanying papers and reports - Permanent (deposit)

The parish **may keep**:

- Letters and reports relating to major developments in the parish if they contain important information
- An archive copy of questionnaire returns
- Any statement as to the conditions, needs and traditions of the parish (a 'parish profile') produced by the parochial church council under the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986 on a vacancy in the benefice, as well as other documents held for or on behalf of the parochial church council or churchwardens in relation to the vacancy and the appointment of the new incumbent
- Maps of the parish specially prepared for church purposes
- Church electoral rolls and parish audits
- An archive copy of all printed items, such as booklets, produced by the parish
- An archive set, preferably bound, of all parish magazines
- An archive set of the weekly notice sheets if the parish does not produce a parish magazine or if the weekly notice sheets contain information of long-term interest
- All these documents should be dated.

The parish **should dispose of**:

- Correspondence and other records relating to routine parish administration

7.4 Parish Finance

Most parishes generate a considerable quantity of financial records, but not all of these need be kept permanently.

The parish **must keep**:

The annual accounts of all parochial church council funds – Permanent (deposit)[5]

The parish **should dispose of**:

- Other supporting documents, including cash books, bank statements, wages records, vouchers and routine correspondence (more than 7 years old)
- Planned giving and gift aid records (more than 7 years old)

However, where Gift Aid Declarations are open-ended in the form 'all my past and future donations', these need to be kept for as long as they are still valid, plus 6 years. Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs have the right to audit them whilst tax claims are still being made and for 6 years thereafter.

7.5 Pastoral Care, Safeguarding and Health and Safety

Personnel files relating to the clergy kept by bishops and their staff fall outside the scope of this guide. For such guidance see "Confidential Files On Ministers - Guidance Notes for Bishops and Bishops Secretaries". The most recent edition was issued by Lambeth Palace in June 2008 and is published on the Lambeth Palace Library website: http://www.lambethpalacelibrary.org/content/recordsmanagement

In most parishes the clergy will keep records dealing with pastoral matters many of which are likely to be highly confidential. It is recommended that these are disposed of once the matter has been resolved in line with data protection recommendations. Where the subject of the information gives expressed informed permission, it can be very important to pass on the information to another incumbent or another church minister if they move. (This would usually be to their benefit in that subsequent care will be continued).

If these records are being retained for research purposes, such a purpose should be included in the Data Protection notification, if there is one and if deposited in the Diocesan Record Office a closure period of at least 85 years must be applied to the records from the date of the most recent document on the file.

Permission is not required, unless it can be safely obtained, if failing to pass the information on would mean there is a likely potential risk to a child or vulnerable adult, or such failure would prejudice the detection or prevention of a criminal offence.

The same rules should be applied to any confidential papers relating to the selection of any new incumbent for the parish. Your diocese will be the 'Registered Body' for processing applications to the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) on behalf of the Parish. CRB certificates will normally be held at diocesan level by the Registered Body (for up to 6 months). The Parish Child Protection or Safeguarding Representative should keep all their documentation relating to recruitment or other child or vulnerable adult protection securely. Such records must be passed on to subsequent representatives and incumbents. It is strongly recommended a file is kept for each lay employee and volunteer and that this should be kept for a minimum of 50 years after their appointment ceases.

These files should be kept in a locked filing cabinet by the incumbent or in the parish office. It is essential to keep accurate records of any concerns, disclosures and allegations relating to children and vulnerable adults.

Facts observed or disclosed should be accurately recorded, signed and dated. If records are being kept without the knowledge of the subject, it should be clearly recorded why this is so, for instance if there is a pattern of behaviour which needs to be monitored or third party information, such as a letter of complaint or police information. Actions taken and decisions made should be noted. Who is party to the information, for example, the subject of the report, the child's parent etc, 'a need to know' monitoring group for a sex offender, should be recorded.

The parish **must keep securely**:

- A file for each lay member of staff and volunteer
- Parish agreement with the diocese on obtaining CRB Disclosures
- Letters and other correspondence pertaining to disclosures from the diocese should be kept for as long as those volunteers and employees are in the particular role for which Disclosure was obtained. CRB certificates must never be duplicated and must be destroyed within 6 months of a recruitment decision being made.
- A dated register of those who have been CRB cleared, for administrative purposes (such as ensuring renewals, or to provide a quick reference). However, any copies of actual CRB disclosures should be kept for no longer than 6 months.
- Any communication from third parties, e.g. complainants on any matter, the police or Social Services and a factual record of the actions taken.

7.6 Legal Documents

The parish **must keep**:

- Title Deeds
- Local Ecumenical Partnership Agreements
- Pastoral Schemes
- Orders in Council for the closure of a churchyard
- Charity Schemes

7.7 Other Parish Records

In most cases the parish records fall clearly into a category in which they either have to be retained or may be destroyed after they cease to be current. However, there are is a small number of records where historical value is limited but the bulk is considerable. In such cases it is permissible to retain a representative sample of records to be determined by the parish in consultation with the Diocesan Record Office.

The parish **may keep**:

- Public notices
- Rota duty lists
- Routine correspondence

Some of these are records which have been outlined for destruction in the advice given above. If it is decided to sample these records then the basis for the sample must be determined at the outset and rigidly adhered to. A good basis for sampling is to keep all records in the sample categories for a fixed period, eg one month in every year, or one year in every ten. Where doubt exists your Diocesan Record Office will be able to advise. It may be appropriate to transfer the whole series to the Diocesan Record Office in order to allow the archivist to take an appropriate sample.

7.8 Parish Organisations

Where separate organisations in the parish maintain their own records they should manage their records against the guidelines outlined in 7.1-7.4 above.

7.9 Publications

The service books used by a parish form part of its liturgical history and consideration should be given to keeping a representative sample in the parish. Publications produced by the parish such as parish magazines and church guides for visitors and parish histories should be kept and copies offered to the Diocesan Record Office and to the appropriate local reference library.

- A copy of all printed service books, communion booklets, Bibles etc. as they are replaced by new versions
- Finely bound altar and desk editions of the Book of Common Prayer and of the Bible[7]
- One copy of hymn and prayer books and psalters, service sheets and communion booklets (these are of value for the study of liturgy in the parish)
- A copy of each edition of the church guide

[7] Since the coming of Common Worship and more versions of the scriptures, some are no longer in regular use. They are, however, of value and should be kept safely in the vestry. Some dioceses have a repository for them.

8 RETENTION GUIDELINES

This section sets out the retention advice given in Sections 7.1 – 7.9 in the form of a table and follows the same order of record groups.

The following retention guidelines give suggested minimum periods for keeping each type of parish record less than 100 years old. If you are in any doubt please seek advice from your Diocesan Record Office, which is usually your local Archives and Local History Service.

Key:

Deposit at the at the Diocesan Record Office/Registry:
Important material which needs to be kept permanently. It is acceptable to deposit originals with the Diocesan Record Office or Diocesan Registry.

Destroy:
Ephemeral material which can be discarded once its purpose has been served. Do not destroy if there is any possibility that the document may be required as evidence.

Review/Sample:
Material where a proportion needs to be kept, either by reviewing its value after an agreed period, or by taking a sample. Where it is appropriate transfer the whole record series to the Local Record Office to allow the archivists there to take an appropriate sample.

8.1 Church Services

Basic record description	Keep in parish	Final Action
Baptism, marriage, burial, and confirmation registers	Arrange phased transfer to the Archives and Local History Service	Permanent (deposit)
Banns registers	Arrange phased transfer to the Archives and Local History Service	Permanent (deposit)
Service Registers	Arrange phased transfer to the Archives and Local	Permanent (deposit)
Orders of Service	Arrange phased transfer to the Archives and Local History Service	Permanent (deposit)
Baptism certificate counterfoils; marriage certificate counterfoils; copy burial and cremation certificates; applications for baptisms, banns and marriages	Last entry + 2 years	Destroy
Intercession lists	Last entry + 5 years	Review/Sample

8.2 Church Buildings and Property [see also Legal Documents]

Basic record description	Keep in parish	Final Action
Church, furnishing and contents		
Faculties, citations and accompanying records	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Terrier and inventory, logbook	Last action + 1 year	Permanent (deposit)
Architects' Quinquennial reports	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Minutes, accounts, specifications, tenders, contracts, plans, photographs, drawings and other papers relating to major works to the church	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Contracts, tenders and specifications for minor works	Last action + 6 years	Destroy
Organ specifications, contracts, papers	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)

Parsonage House		
Plans, photographs, drawings	Last action + 5 years	Review for possible deposit
Minutes, accounts, specifications, tenders, contracts, plans, photographs, drawings and other papers relating to major works to the parsonage house	Last action + 5 years	Review for possible deposit
Contracts, tenders and specifications for minor works	Last action + 6 years	Destroy
Quinquennial reports	Last action + 5 years	Review for possible deposit
Churchyard		
Plans, registers of graves, faculties, citations and accompanying records	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Agreements concerning maintenance of churchyard, graves and memorials	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Minutes, accounts, specifications, tenders, contracts, plans, photographs, drawings and other papers relating to major works to the churchyard	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Contracts, tenders and specifications for minor works	Last action + 6 years	Destroy
Church Hall		
Plans, architects' reports	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Music, dancing and P.R.S. licences	Last action + 5 years	Review/Sample
Agreements for use of hall	Current year + 6 years	Review/Sample
Minutes, accounts, specifications, tenders, contracts, plans, photographs, drawings and other papers relating to major works to the church hall	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Contracts, tenders and specifications for minor works	Last action + 6 years	Destroy

8.3 General Parish Administration

Basic record description	Keep in parish	Final Action
Incumbent and other ministers		
Institutions, admissions, licences	Current year + 6 years	Review for possible deposit
Correspondence concerning appointments	Last action + 5 years	Review/Sample
Union of Benefice papers, pastoral schemes and orders; plurality orders; documents establishing team or group councils; Joint PCCs or District Church Councils, and relevant papers and correspondence	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Ministers' papers relating to major parish developments or parish audits	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Ministers' correspondence and other papers on routine administration	Current year + 3 years	Destroy
Maps of parish boundaries, street lists	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)

Copies of replies to questionnaires or important circulars	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Parochial Church Councils, Team and Group Councils, District Church Councils, etc; Churchwardens and other parish officers		
Minutes of Council and Committees, Parochial Church Meetings, and Meetings of Parishioners for Appointment of Churchwardens	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Electoral Rolls	Last complete review + 6 years	Review/Sample
Parish profiles on vacancy in benefice	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Visitation papers	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Copies of replies to Articles of Enquiry	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Sequestration records	Current year + 6 years	Review/Sample
Visitors' books	Last entry + 3 years	Destroy
Routine correspondence	Current year + 3 years	Destroy
Copies of circulars sent by other organisations, non-local material	Current year + 1 year	Destroy

8.4 Parish Finance

Basic record description	Keep in parish	Final Action
Annual audited accounts	Current year + 6 years	Permanent (deposit)
Cash books, bills, vouchers, bank statements, other subsidiary financial records	Current year + 6 years	Destroy
Planned giving schemes	Current year + 6 years	Destroy unless anonymised
Gift Aid Declarations	Keep as long as they are valid + 6 years	Destroy
Insurance policies – employers' liability	Current year + 40 years	Destroy
Insurance policies – other than employers' liability	Current year + 6 years	Destroy
Church Copyright Licence information	Current year + 6 years	Review/Sample

8.5 Pastoral Care, Safeguarding and Health and Safety

Basic record description	Keep in parish	Final Action
Accident reporting sheets or book – if relating to adults	Date of incident + 20 years	Destroy
Accident reporting sheets or book – if relating to children	The date when a child became an adult + 20 years	Destroy
A clear Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) certificate or disclosure letter of confirmation.	Within 6 months of the recruitment decision	Destroy

Risk assessment recommendations and management plan in the event of an unclear or blemished CRB disclosure.	50 years after appointment/employment ceases	Destroy
Records of other safeguarding adult or child protection incidents either within the parish or within a family/ by an individual where the Parish was the reporting body or involved in care or monitoring plans. That is, any sex offender risk assessments and monitoring agreements.	50 years after the conclusion of the matter.	Destroy
Records of any children's activities, Sunday school/ junior church/youth club registers and related general safety risk assessments. Any communication from parents or other parties in relation to the above.	50 years after the activity ceases.	Destroy
Personnel records relating to lay employees not working with children and vulnerable adults: including annual performance assessments, disciplinary matters, job descriptions, training and termination documentation.	6 years after employment ceases	Destroy
Parish agreement with the diocese on Obtaining CRB Disclosures	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)

8.6 Legal Documents

Basic record description	Keep in parish	Final Action
Deeds, Local Ecumenical Partnership agreements, statutory documents etc; title deeds, other documents relating to title, acquisition, disposal, or rights over a property; statutory notices, orders etc, including Orders in Council for closure of churchyard; and relevant correspondence	For all documents in this category, consult the Diocesan Registrar	Permanent (deposit)
Charities: deeds, schemes, orders, minutes, accounts, distribution lists, benefactions	Consult Trustees' Solicitor	Permanent (deposit)

8.7 Other Parish Records

Basic record description	Keep in parish	Final Action
Public Notices	Current year + 5 years	Consider sampling
Rota Duty Lists	Current year + 2 year	Destroy
Routine Correspondence	Current year + 6 years	Destroy

8.8 Parish Organisations

Basic record description	Keep in parish	Final Action
Parish organisations - M.U. Youth Clubs, choir, bell-ringers etc		
Minutes, reports, accounts	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Membership lists	Last action + 5 years	Destroy

Correspondence and contracts	Current year + 6 years	Review/Sample
Choir register	Current year + 3 years	Review for possible deposit
Music lists	Current year + 3 years	Review/Sample

8.9 Publications

Basic record description	Keep in parish	Final Action
Bibles ,Communion Books, Hymn Books, Prayer Books, Psalters and Service Books.	Replace with new versions	Consider keeping one sample copy on replacement
Altar and desk editions of the Bible, Common Book of Prayer and Common Worship.	Replace with new versions	Permanently retain in the parish.
Church Guides and Parish Histories	Replace with new versions	Permanent (deposit
Parish magazines	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Scrapbooks, newspaper cuttings, brochures, record of gifts, photographs	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)

1. Glossary of Administrative and Record Terms

Archive – (1) To permanently retain records that are of value for legal, constitutional or historical purposes.

(2) A place for keeping records permanently.

Benefice – is the church office held by the clergy and by reason of its historical origins or the result of statutory provisions can be termed a rectory or vicarage.

Data Protection – The law protecting the privacy of individuals by regulating access to confidential information held on them by both private and public organisations. The current Legislation is the Data Protection Act 1998. See Section 5.

Diocesan Record Office (DRO) – A Record Office which is an agreed place of deposit for diocesan records and usually parish records as well. This will usually be the local authority archive service.

Electronic Records – Any recorded information created, received and maintained in electronic format by an organisation or individual in the course of its activities.

Electronic Records Management - A digital environment for capturing electronic records and applying standard records management practices. Electronic Records Management supports the medium to long term information management needs of business.

Faculties – A document issued by the Bishop's Chancellor or Archdeacon, authorising additions or alterations to consecrated buildings and lands and their contents. A faculty is normally issued after consultation with the Diocesan Advisory Committee.

Finding Aids –Indexes, schedules, subject thesauruses and referencing systems which structure and identify information to enable its easy retrieval.

FOI (Freedom of Information) –The law regulating public access to official information held by public bodies as defined in the schedule of the Act. This law generally does not apply to the Church of England, except marriage registers dated after 1837, which technically belong to the Registrar General of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

Functions –The activities of the record creator and for which the records were created to support. It is important to establish the functions which records are created to support particularly as in most institutions organisational change is common and can lead to records and records creators being split.

Incumbent – The priest in charge of a parish whether as Rector, Vicar or Priest in Charge.

Institution/Induction – The first is admission of a new incumbent into the "spiritualities" or pastoral responsibilities of a benefice. Followed by the induction which is admission of a priest into the possession of the "temporalities" of a benefice including the church.

Interregnum – The period between the resignation of an incumbent and the admission of a successor.

LEP - Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) a formal agreement under Canon B44 between the bishop and the appropriate authority of the participating Christian denomination to operate a joint ministry in a parish or part of a parish.

Parish – Is the geographical area entrusted by a bishop to a priest who has the responsibility for the care of the souls within it.

Parochial Church Council – A body of lay persons, elected at the Annual Parish Meeting, who together with the incumbent, licensed clergy, the churchwardens, ex offico and co-opted members (if any), are responsible for the initiation, conduct and development of the Church's work within the parish, and outside, whereby the whole mission of the Church is promoted.

Parochial Registers and Records Measure – Is the legislation which regulates the care of parish registers and parochial archives. The 1978 Measure was amended by the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure, 1992. A Guide to the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978 (as amended at 1st January 1993) with practical suggestions for custodians and users is obtainable from Church House Publishing, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BN. ISBN 0 7151 3747 6.

Records – Recorded information (documents) regardless of form or medium created, received and maintained by an agency, institution, organisation or individual in pursuance of its legal obligations or the transaction of business.

Quinquennial Inspection – The survey of the church fabric undertaken every 5 years by an architect or surveyor approved by the Diocesan Advisory Committee. The report will make recommendations categorised in varying terms of urgency and cost.

Records Management - The procedures and practices employed to structure control and regulate records whatever their medium, electronic, paper or microform. The management of records ensures efficiency and economy in their use, storage and disposal and the selection of those of value for permanent preservation.

Register – Formal record of a transaction or right for example the Register of Patrons created by the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986.

Retention Schedules/Instructions – A retention schedule is an analytical list of record series, arranged either under the functions carried out by the creating organisation or under structural headings of a departmental organisation. The main purpose of the schedule is to record and implement the appraisal decisions which have been made, so that these decisions can be routinely put into effect. A secondary purpose may be to set out a list of the records series in a way which will illustrate the organisation's activity.

Series – A basic unit of the administrative control of records and an organised group of records that are created to serve a common function derived from a particular administrative process. Series can be any size. Some are very large such as a series of PCC minutes or just a few files relating to Visitations.

Sequestration – The financial management of the parish during an interregnum including the staffing of Sunday and other services, collecting the fees which would have been payable to the incumbent or benefice and the care and maintenance of the parsonage house. The sequestration accounts are submitted to the diocese at the end of the interregnum.

Terrier/Inventory – The detailed list of land, goods and ornament belonging to the parish church.

Visitation – The periodic visit to inspect the temporal and spiritual affairs of the parish carried by the Bishop or the Archdeacon. Records created by a visitation for example include the Articles of Enquiry.

1. Contact details:

Church of England Record Centre	15 Galleywall Road South Bermondsey London SE16 3PB Tel: +44 (0)2078981030 Fax: +44 (0)2078981043 email: archives@churchofengland.org website: http://bit.ly/1oIdVEg
Catholic Archives Society	Honorary Secretary Sarah Maspero c/o 12 Justin Close Fareham Hampshire PO14 1SY The Society has published a series of Archive Advice Leaflets including retention concerning financial records and a glossary of basic archival terms: http://www.catholic-history.org.uk/catharch/advicepams.htm
Information Commissioner	Information Commissioner's Head Office Wycliffe House Water Lane Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF Tel: 01625 545 745 Fax: 01625 524 510 DX 20819 email: mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk website: http://www.ico.gov.uk
Church of England, link to individual diocesan websites	http://www.churchofengland.org

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Records Management Guides from the Church of England
The Libraries and Archives of the National Church Institutions have produced a number of Records Management guides. All are freely available to download from the Church of England Website: www.churchofengland.org or the Lambeth Palace Library website: www.lambethpalacelibrary.org

Others in the series are:
Save or Delete - The Care of Diocesan Records
Cherish or Chuck… ? The Care of Episcopal Records
Confidential Files on Clergy - Guidance Notes for Bishops and Bishops' Secretaries