

**THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES INFORMATION MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT
OF THE BRITISH COUNCIL (AUGUST 2007)**

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Introduction

In August 2007, a team from The National Archives undertook an Information Management Assessment of the British Council. The aim of the assessment was to look at records and information management practices and identify risks, make recommendations to help address areas of concern and recognize good practice. This document summarizes the key findings from the assessment.

Summary of good practice

1. The British Council has a well established risk management framework and it is agreed that information management should be included in this
2. Recruitment is planned to improve staffing levels and expertise in the area of records and information management
3. Some individual departments have been proactive in the management of their records on shared drives
4. The British Council has a strong knowledge management programme

Summary of challenges and recommendations

1. A number of different systems and repositories are being used to manage records and information, not linked together. The majority of information is stored on shared drives, with little control over authenticity. This poses a number of risks including a lack of reliable information, security issues and cost implications in terms of time spent looking for information and the cost of storing information, sometimes unnecessarily. The BC records system (British Council's bespoke Electronic Records Management System) has limitations and is not widely used. Action needs to be taken to provide staff with a tool which manages documents and records. This may be done by further developing BC records or considering an alternative EDRMS package.
2. A culture of information management needs to be fostered at the British Council to raise awareness and understanding amongst staff. The promotion of records and information management through training would reinforce positive messages over time and could be integrated with the promotion of knowledge management. This needs to be supported at a senior level and requires a long term commitment.
3. Current staffing levels are inadequate and two information management posts are vacant. Resources for records and information management need to be reviewed and it should be recognized that improving the existing arrangements will have resource implications, both in terms of staffing levels and operational costs.

An action plan has been created and agreed with The National Archives and is published on The National Archives website.