

Records Management retention scheduling

12. Parliamentary papers in departments and agencies

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1 Introduction

1.1 This guidance covers records in all media, although it points to more specialist advice on electronic records, particularly within the framework of the Modernising Government agenda.

1.2 The guidance is aimed at Departmental Record Officers, Parliamentary Clerks, Ministers Private Offices, departmental Legal Branches and other staff in government departments and agencies engaged in

- the formulation of policy
- the drafting of command papers, of primary and subordinate legislation and their presentation to Parliament
- advising ministers on responses to Parliamentary reports
- the giving of evidence to Parliamentary committees

1.3 This guidance complements:

- [Guidance on Management of Private Office Papers](#)
- [OSP12: Central direction and oversight of policy, 1970-2000](#)
- [Disposal scheduling](#)

1.4 It is unlikely that many Parliamentary papers in their final published form will be selected for permanent preservation in The National Archives.

Copies of all papers which are printed for Parliament are preserved in the House of Lords Record Office. The British Library also holds a complete set.

All Parliamentary papers (and all government publications) should be listed on the UK Official Publications Database – UKOP (see Annex).

1.5 The guidance forms part of a series on retention scheduling (see section 5).

For general information on the compilation of retention schedules see [Disposal scheduling](#).

2 Background and nature of the records

2.1 Papers printed for Parliament include:

- Order Papers
- Command papers
- Bills
- Public and General Acts
- Local and Personal Acts
- Statutory Instruments, General
- Evidence to and Reports of Committees
- Reports to Ministers Ordered to be Printed
- Hansard

2.2 Parliamentary papers are all still published in paper form even though they may have been created electronically.

Paper copies are likely to be selected for preservation in The National Archives only if within assemblies including other unique papers, or if significantly annotated as part of the policy re/consideration process.

The term assembly is used here with the sense it has at the Public Records Act 1958 s 10. In most circumstances in government departments and agencies the assembly will be the registered file.

2.3 In accordance with the Modernising Government agenda target that 'By 2004 all newly created public records will be electronically stored and retrieved', records created as part of the policy formulation and Parliamentary paper drafting processes in electronic forms must be brought within an electronic records management system.

The National Archives offers guidance on the [management of electronic information](#). See also section 5.

2.4 The publication of a bill is usually accompanied by the limited issue within the sponsoring department of a Notes on Clauses memorandum. Notes on Clauses are departmental not Parliamentary papers.

3 Effects of the Freedom of Information Act 2000

3.1 For records managers the main effects of the legislation are contained in the Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Management of Records under section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, revised July 2009¹. Published Parliamentary papers are exempt from disclosure by departments and agencies in response to individual requests, under s 21, information accessible to applicant by other means.

4 Model retention schedule

4.1 This schedule shows maximum retention periods for copies of Parliamentary Papers:

Item	Description	Disposal
1	Copies of Parliamentary papers of the following types, tagged within or filed as annexes to departmental policy files: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Order Papers • Command papers • Bills • Public and General Acts • Local and Personal Acts • Statutory Instruments, General • Evidence to and Reports of Committees • Reports to Ministers Ordered to be Printed • Hansard 	Incorporate in scheme for review of policy files ² .
2	Filed and unfiled reference and spare copies of papers as listed in 1 above	Destroy after two years

¹ www.justice.gov.uk/information-access-rights/foi-guidance-for-practitioners/code-of-practice

² Replace bulky enclosures or annexes to files selected for permanent preservation with dummy sheets citing the Parliamentary paper title, date and any serial number

5 Other publications and further information

- 5.1 See nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management for further records management standards and guidance promoting good practice in the management of public records throughout all stages of their life cycle. You can also contact us at

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The National Archives
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Richmond
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Annex

The United Kingdom Official Publications Database (UKOP)

The [United Kingdom Official Publications Database](http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukop/) (UKOP) catalogues all parliamentary and statutory publications and the publications of over 2500 official bodies including central government departments, the devolved administrations, agencies, quangos and other bodies. Selected output of international bodies such as the United Nations and the World Health Organisation is also included.

In 1989 a joint venture between HMSO and Chadwyck-Healey combined the complete bibliographic database of all of the titles published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO) and Chadwyck-Healey's Catalogue of British Official Publications (not published by HMSO). The result was the creation of the only complete catalogue of official publications. UKOP is the official authoritative catalogue of official government publications in the United Kingdom, and is now published jointly by ProQuest Information and Learning (formerly Chadwyck-Healey) and The Stationery Office Ltd (TSO).

Following the privatisation of the former HMSO's trading functions in 1996, ministers gave commitments to both Houses of Parliament that every government department and agency would ensure that their published titles were listed on UKOP.