

FRAMEWORK OF STANDARDS FOR ARCHIVES

Summary of responses

We received 83 consultation responses from archivists, professional bodies, associations, user groups and regional agencies. A summary of responses is as follows:

- Respondents were in favour of a “framework of standards”
- TNA is the appropriate body to establish such a framework
- The framework should be developed from existing, accepted standards
- The framework should cover records and archives in all formats
- Management of current records should be included in the framework

A summary of respondents’ views on the use of such a framework:

- The framework should be flexible, and useful to all types of archive service
- The framework should be useful to archive creators and owners
- The framework should allow for validation by both internal self-assessment and external assessment by interested bodies
- TNA inspections and visits should remain an essential part of the validation process

The list of standards which will inform all TNA’s archival inspection and advisory services has now been published on our website. This list of appropriate standards and best practice guidelines has been derived from respondents’ suggestions. Additionally, we have revised the existing HMC *Standard for Record Repositories*, which will refer to each of the standards and guidelines on that list, and will become TNA’s main archival standard publication. These two products will together be known as “TNA Framework of Standards”. We are in the process of confirming the acceptability of the revised *Standard* with relevant archival bodies.

Next steps

We discussed our plans with the Audit Commission on 14 May, and with the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) on 15 June. MLA have indicated their willingness to refer to the Framework where archival standards are concerned, for example in the application of their *Benchmarks for Collections Care* assessment tool.

Respondents indicated that TNA should have a single, appropriately skilled advisory and inspection team to implement and maintain the Framework. We are now in the process of establishing a new advisory service within TNA which will carry out these roles.

TNA is beginning to implement the Framework, with one of the first phases being a series of pilot test inspection visits. Particular attention will be given to the applicability of the Framework to all archive services, and to private sector archive custodians to the extent that they would find this helpful. In order that

the Framework is sufficiently flexible to apply across the board, care is being taken not to set the standards of acceptability at too low a level. Respondents were clear that a “minimum standard” would not help to drive up levels of provision in offices which had only basic facilities. Instead, the Framework incorporates the concepts of broad approval and excellence.

Existing “PRO” and “HMC” recognition of archive services will remain valid on an interim basis until a further review is undertaken of individual cases under the new Framework.

Related work on the development of a methodology for auditing records management functions will be taken forwards during the current year.

Further information

For further information on progress with the development of the Framework of Standards please contact steven.jones@nationalarchives.gov.uk