

Background

The National Archives carried out an Information Management Assessment (IMA) of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in September 2009. A report of the findings was published in September 2010 containing 36 recommendations. This formed the basis of the departmental action plan.

Summary

FCO continues to demonstrate ongoing commitment to and support for, good records and information management (RIM). There is recognition of its benefits within FCO. Since the assessment, FCO has made good progress against the recommendations. This is particularly evident with the structural and governance changes that have been introduced to support RIM. FCO has a new records and information management governance structure that includes an Information Management Steering Group, chaired by the Chief Operating Officer (COO). The COO is the new Board level champion for knowledge and information management (KIM). In addition, a Knowledge Excellence Programme is being set up. This aims to strengthen the links between IT and information management.

FCO is also in the process of redefining information management support roles and increasing understanding of its information assets. Other positive progress includes work on the KIM pages on FCONet, with links to information and guidance, and the development of the Knowledge Excellence Programme to support the drive for better information management across the department.

IMA Review 2009

Information is critical to the business of FCO. In 2009 The National Archives found that FCO had started to make changes regarding the use of its information. Positive changes included the development of a KIM strategy as well as policy and guidance. FCO had begun assessing itself against Her Majesty's Government Information Assurance Maturity Model and Assessment Framework. As with other departments assessed in the course of the IMA programme, FCO was found to have focused its efforts on protecting and safeguarding personal data. Paper-based information was found to be well handled, with thorough audit trails. FCO was also implementing a change programme that included a new electronic document records system called i-Records.

The assessment highlighted areas where FCO could improve so that it would be able to handle, store and process its information consistently and efficiently. These were:

- FCO needed to have a formal structure for information management and establish a high-level body with strategic responsibility for its direction and governance. A knowledge and information management champion at board level was also required.
- FCO needed to give clear direction and guidance on the appropriate use of shared areas within its electronic systems, and conduct audits to ensure that guidance is followed. This is also a requirement for any future systems that may be introduced.

- Emphasis was on the immediate or short-term use of information. FCO needed to use the information it held more effectively if its value to the department was to be maximised.
- To effectively raise the profile of information management across the department, the Information Management Group (IMG) would have to be at the heart of development of any new IT systems, related training programs and ongoing support.
- FCO's internal information audits had a low profile and their scope was limited. They needed to be expanded to include wider information management practice. Examples of good practice and lessons learned from the information audits also needed to be shared.
- Although FCO was a core funder of The National Archives' digital continuity project, the department still needed to embed the digital continuity strategy within its KIM strategy. This would aid a simpler structure for action and maximise management support. FCO had also not agreed how its strategy would be resourced or prioritised.
- Sensitivity reviewers, although experienced, lacked formal training in the application of Freedom of Information (Fol) exemptions. FCO also needed to assess how it would conduct sensitivity review of its digital information.

Progress against recommendations

FCO has created its own internal information management audit process. These 'health checks' are seen as a good way to reinforce good practice and assess progress on records and information management.

The COO is the board-level champion for information management and chairs an Information Management Steering Group. The Knowledge Excellence Programme has the potential to further embed good KIM practices. Terms of reference are due to be agreed in March 2012.

The information change management requirement is now determined as a business engagement process which is led by the IT Engagement department. This group now includes Knowledge and Information Advisers (KIAs) who support frontline FCO staff and work closely with them on information management.

FCO has worked to extend coverage of its Information Asset Registers (IARs) with an initial focus on enabling oversight of information held on unaccredited systems. FCO have begun to factor in digital continuity considerations and work is ongoing to expand the information asset registers further to take on wider information risk.

FCO have recruited for a role specifically to take the lead on digital continuity, and are working closely with The National Archives to ensure that FCO are leading on the implementation of digital continuity guidance.

The assessment team are pleased to note that data security training and a new information management course are now compulsory for all new entrants to the department.

Next steps

FCO has continued to work hard towards improving records and information management within the department. The Head of IMD is also the Departmental Records Officer, and has worked hard to create an organisation and structure that will achieve these objectives. Changes to the reporting structure of KIM have really helped establish the priority and momentum needed to improve records management within FCO. The Information Excellence Programme will be a great step in enabling FCO to meet its objectives.

The next steps are as follows:

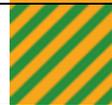
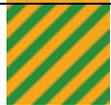
- FCO to continue to work in conjunction with The National Archives on its information asset registers.
- FCO recognises that they have a lot more work to do regarding sensitive review of digital records. FCO should continue to work closely with The National Archives on developing solutions for a process to review digital records.

Once KIM governance changes are in place, FCO will position itself to better understand and meet its information management needs. Working through the outstanding recommendations will enable FCO to have the components to be a leading department in information management in government.

It is agreed that all outstanding actions on the action plan will now be closed and reviewed again in 2013 at the time of the next FCO IMA. In the interim, The National Archives will be working closely with FCO in order to make sure that the department continues, with ongoing support, to raise the profile of KIM.

Performance management framework

Risk Matrix

Governance and leadership	IMA 2009	February 2012
Strategic management		
Business objectives		
Management controls		
Resourcing		
Risk management		

Records management		
Creation		
Storage		
Appraisal, disposal and transfer		
Sustainability of digital records		
Management		
Access to information		
FOI/Data Protection		
Re-Use		
Security		
Compliance		
Staff responsibilities and delegations		
Policies and guidance		
Training		
Change management		
Culture		
Commitment		
Staff understanding		
Knowledge management		

Key to Colour Coding	
	Best practice
	Good
	Satisfactory
	Development needed
	Priority attention area