

Retention schedule for the records of inquiries

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Retention schedule

We recommend that this retention schedule is used for inquiries set up under the [Inquiries Act 2005](#) and that all other inquiries adopt this retention schedule as best practice. This is to ensure the preservation of a full public record of the work of an inquiry so that people in the future may review the conclusions reached in a properly informed manner.

	Type of information	Retention period
1.	Inquiry report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the final published version 	Permanent
2.	Inquiry report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the initial draft report subsequent drafts in which substantial changes were made 	Retain seven years after the final report
3.	The entire contents of the inquiry website	Permanent
4.	Audio records (not transcribed in full) of interviews of potential witnesses (both redacted and unredacted)	Permanent
5.	Transcripts of interviews of potential witnesses (both redacted and unredacted)	Permanent
6.	Court transcripts of evidence which were relevant to the terms of reference (both redacted and unredacted)	Permanent

Please note: Retain 7 years after the final report would be undertaken by the sponsoring department

	Type of information	Retention period
7.	All minutes of the inquiry panel or meetings held during the course of the inquiry by the panel. Both redacted and unredacted	Permanent
8.	Correspondence (format blind), redacted and unredacted, between the inquiry team and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • members of the general public • relatives • other government bodies 	Permanent
9.	Legal opinion and related correspondence	Permanent
10.	Witness preparation files	Permanent
11.	Witness statements and expert reports, whether or not they were signed. Both redacted and unredacted	Permanent
12.	Restriction notices and rulings on such notices which were made public and given under section 21 of the Inquiry Act 2005	Permanent
13.	Evidence of steps taken to secure the attendance of witnesses	Retain seven years after the final report
14.	All written submissions and transcripts of oral submissions, unless a restrictions notice applies	Permanent
15.	Indices of documents copied and provided to the panel during the course of the hearing	Permanent
16.	All documents provided to the inquiry which were relevant to the terms of reference (evidence used by the inquiry) from the general public and relatives and government bodies (format blind) redacted and un-redacted	Permanent

Please note: Retain 7 years after the final report would be undertaken by the sponsoring department

	Type of information	Retention period
17.	Establishment documentation including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • terms of reference • protocols created by the inquiry to regulate its conduct • policies concerning the conduct of the inquiry • advice given by counsel to the inquiry in relation to its conduct • certificates of full disclosure by those who provided documents to the inquiry • work plans • internal procedures • criteria used for deciding relevant and irrelevant material presented to the inquiry from all sources • overall costings • copyright and licensing • notebooks of inquiry team (format blind) 	Permanent
18.	Counsel's reports and notes	Permanent
19.	Litigation records	Permanent
20.	Schedules of witnesses	Retain 7 years after the final report
21.	Research gathered by the inquiry team	Retain 7 years after the final report
22.	Financial records	Retain 7 years after the final report
23.	Cost solicitor's records	Retain 7 years after the final report
24.	Parliamentary questions	Retain 7 years after the final report

Please note: Retain 7 years after the final report would be undertaken by the sponsoring department

Issues to be resolved before winding up an inquiry

See also [The National Archives' public inquiry guidance](#)

1. Set up the [website](#), following best practice guidelines
2. Establish a retention and disposal schedule
3. Ensure that the copyright status of records, post-inquiry, will not prevent the archiving or publication of material by The National Archives
4. Identify sensitive information or material that will be covered by Freedom of Information exemptions (post-inquiry) as it is received. See [The National Archives' guidance on filing structures](#)
5. Ensure the file structure and metadata of the material can be exported to the sponsoring department or to The National Archives
6. Establish a robust, secure mechanism for the destruction of agreed material (including electronic backups). A record of what has been destroyed should be given to the sponsoring department
7. Agree with The National Archives the steps required for the transfer of open material to The National Archives. (at least, a three month lead-in time)
8. Agree with the sponsoring department the steps required for the transfer of closed material (classified at RESTRICTED or below) to The National Archives
9. Agree with the sponsoring department the steps required for the retention of remaining material at the sponsoring department. This includes closed material, selected for permanent preservation but classified above RESTRICTED and records required for use by the sponsoring department.

Please note: Retain 7 years after the final report would be undertaken by the sponsoring department