

Records Management Retention Scheduling

8. Press and public relations records

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This guidance is aimed at Departmental Record Officers and staff in press offices or public relations/communications units of government departments and agencies. It covers records in all media generated by press offices and related functional areas. It also points to more specialist advice on electronic records and audiovisual records, both of which are increasingly the products of this particular government function.
- 1.2 The guidance assumes that parliamentary questions and similar issues are dealt with separately, usually by parliamentary units within departments. However it recognises that there is a close connection between these and press office/public relations issues. For example the parliamentary question process may be used for particular announcements by the department or agency and there is often close cooperation between the two areas over such matters as timing and response.
- 1.3 The guidance forms part of a series on retention scheduling - see section 4, Other publications and further information. [Complaints records](#) may be particularly relevant in managing press and public relations records.
- 1.4 For general information on the compilation of retention schedules see [Disposal scheduling](#).

- 1.5 It is very unlikely that any records from press offices or public relations units will be selected for permanent preservation. Selected departmental working records will provide adequate evidence on major issues and events.

Guidance on the selection of records for permanent preservation is available in [Acquisition and disposition strategy](#). The relevant [operational selection policies](#) (OSPs) cover policy records relating to the use of government press offices and relations between central government and the media.

2 Scope and nature of the records

- 2.1 Records of press offices and public relations units cover three broad areas:

- dealing with the media on the work of the department or agency
- internal administrative arrangements on media relations
- special events, such as exhibitions or campaigns

The latter might include the issuing of press releases, organisation of interviews and general media access.

- 2.2 While many of these records are maintained in paper form, they are often created electronically; press cuttings are increasingly downloaded from websites or can be scanned easily.

Rationalise the two sets of records, giving emphasis to managing records electronically.¹ The National Archives produces electronic records toolkits offering practical implementation strategies for managing digital records

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/projects-and-work/electronic-records-toolkits.htm

and see section 4, Other publications and further information.

¹ White Paper Modernising Government (Cm 4310, 1999, p 49): ‘...by 2004 all newly created public records will be stored and retrieved electronically’

- 2.3 Many records created by press offices and public relations units, particularly those relating to major issues, are duplicated and placed on registered policy or procedure files. These files will be retained, appraised and reviewed in accordance with normal departmental practice. The papers in the press office and public relations unit can be destroyed after a relatively short time (see the model schedule in section 3).
- 2.4 Audiovisual records need careful handling in view of their physical format. Generally their content should be treated in the same way as that of more conventional material. An added dimension, as far as retention is concerned, may be the artistic nature of the records.

3 Model retention schedule

- 3.1 The retention of press office records should take business requirements into account, allowing for the cost of retention and how records might be put to use in the future. Few of these records are likely to be selected for permanent preservation.
- 3.2 This schedule shows recommended maximum periods for the retention of various types of press office records:

| Type | Item | Description | Disposal |
|---------------------------------------|------|--|--------------|
| | | | |
| Dealing with the media and the public | 1 | Press releases | Seven years |
| | 2 | Press cuttings | One month |
| | 3 | Operational notes (notices to press about forthcoming events or conferences) | Three months |
| | 4 | Press conference reports/ previews | Three years |
| | 5 | Press reports digests | Seven years |

| Type | Item | Description | Disposal |
|------------------|------|--|--------------------------|
| Internal records | 6 | Correspondence with branches of the media | Seven years |
| | 7 | Policy and administrative records | Second review (25 years) |
| | 8 | Handbooks and guides to media/public relations | Destroy when superseded |
| | 9 | Reports on media/public relations | Seven years |
| | 10 | Image library records | When no longer required |
| Special events | 11 | Correspondence and papers | Seven years |
| | 12 | Reports | Seven years |
| | 13 | Visitor books | Three years |
| | 14 | Calendars | Three years |
| | 15 | Brochures and guides | Three years |

4 Other publications and further information

4.1 The National Archives produces several sets of records management standards and guidance which aim to promote good practice in the management of public records throughout all stages of their life cycle.

The following titles are likely to be relevant to the management of press office and public relations records:

4.1.1 Records management

[RMS 2.2 Documentation of Records Work](#)

[RMS 3.2 Business Recovery Plans](#)

4.1.2 Appraisal and retention

[Acquisition and disposition strategy](#)

[RMS 5.1 Disposal Scheduling](#)

[Retention Scheduling: 7. Complaints Records](#)

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4.1.3 Access

[Access to Public Records](#)

4.1.4 Further information on these and other aspects of the management of public records is available at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/.

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