

Charity, Community and Art organisation records: guidance for the retention and transfer of records to archives

This document provides guidance for businesses wishing to transfer records (which are no longer required by the business for legal or administrative purposes) to the Wiltshire and Swindon Archives (WSA) for permanent preservation and public access as part of the county's historical record.

Record storage

- Charity, community and art organisations are required to keep certain records by law.
- The law also sets out minimum retention periods for particular classes of record; see <https://www.gov.uk/browse/business> for the legislative basis for these requirements.
- It is vital that Charity, community and art organisations records are kept safely and securely to ensure they can be accessed when needed.
- It is also important to keep the records in good storage conditions.
- When the records have reached the end of their administrative use, it is recommended that the retention guidelines (below) are consulted to see what needs to be kept and what should be destroyed.
- Wiltshire & Swindon Archives will safely store any records that are to be kept permanently and catalogue them where possible.
- Records can be held either on deposit (where the depositor retains ownership as well as copyright where applicable) or as a gift (where ownership is transferred to the History Centre).
- After appraisal, any items not selected for permanent preservation in the archive will be offered back to the depositor or securely destroyed as agreed at the deposit appointment.
- Wiltshire & Swindon Archives is not a records management service, so please ensure that where possible you only deposit items no longer required for legal or administrative purposes.

How to store paper records

Please try and store your paper records in as good condition as possible:

- Store records in a cool, clean and dry environment.
- Keep records out of direct sunlight.
- Avoid using files with metal parts, plastic bags, rubber bands, adhesive tape and metal staples/clips.
- Keep records in strong boxes and do not overfill them.
- Make lists of what is in each box so you can easily find what you need.
- Keep the storage area locked if possible.

How to store digital records

Digital records can be easily damaged or lost if proper care is not given to their storage.

- Keep digital records secure using passwords.
- Avoid storing digital records on tapes or disks as the ability to read these is quickly becoming obsolete.
- Back up records on a server or the cloud.
- Keep metadata with the records so other people can understand what it means (for example, noting the file format, date of creation, name of person creating).
- Keep more important digital records as PDFs rather than Word.

Personal data in archives

Where appropriate, it is completely acceptable to retain records permanently as archives to preserve our nation's memory and provide public accountability for decision-making. The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR do **not** mean that **all** records containing personal data should or need be destroyed, redacted or removed.

Articles 5 and 9 of the UK GDPR provide exemptions to certain elements of the Act for “archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes” provided that appropriate safeguards are in place.

In practice, this means that you do not need to remove, retain or destroy any items on the list below if they contain personal data. Our archivists will apply closure periods and redactions as appropriate when they catalogue the material and/or make it accessible to the public. If you believe that the material you are depositing contains personal data, please highlight this with the archivist taking your deposit who will then discuss it with you.

Please see <https://wshc.org.uk/data-protection/> for further details on how personal data in archival collections held at WSA is managed.

Record retention and transfer

The following table provides our guidance for the retention and transfer of business records to WSA.

Material marked “Destroy” should be securely disposed of by the depositor prior to transfer to WSA. Please sort through and list materials to be deposited, but do not package them into plastic wallets or add new paperclips (etc) – please see our [deposit guidance](#) for more information on how to prepare your material for deposit.

Any commercially sensitive records should be brought to the attention of WSA staff.

If the records you wish to deposit are not covered by the table below, please ask our archivists for advice.

Type of record	Minimum retention period	Final action	Notes
Organisational records			
Minutes	Long term/permanent	Transfer to WSA	
Agendas	End of administrative use	Destroy	
Annual accounts	6 years from end of current financial year	Transfer to WSA	
Annual reports	End of administrative use	Review	Transfer to WSA ONLY if copies are not included within the minutes
Strategy documents	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Correspondence	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	For appraisal
Funding and grants information	7 years from end of grant period	Discuss with WSA	Notification of award granted only
Charitable registration	Long term/permanent or 5 years after removal of Charity from the register	Transfer to WSA	
Constitution/Foundation Documents	Longterm/permanent	Transfer to WSA	
Questionnaires/user surveys and feedback	End of administrative use	Destroy	
Financial records			
Account books/year end accounts	6 years from end of current financial year	Transfer to WSA	
Receipt and payment books	6 years from end of current financial year	Transfer to WSA	
Precept books and contribution orders	6 years from end of current financial year	Destroy	
Financial returns to district auditors	6 years from end of current financial year	Transfer to WSA	WSA may destroy depending on quality of annual accounts
Rent books	6 years from end of current financial year	Destroy	Transfer to WSA ONLY if general accounts do not survive
Cash and petty cash books	6 years from end of current financial year	Destroy	Transfer to WSA ONLY if general accounts do not survive
Vouchers	6 years from end of current financial year	Transfer to WSA	WSA will weed the files for preservation of a representative sample
Receipt books	6 years from end of current financial year	Destroy	

Postage and telephone books	6 years from end of current financial year	Destroy	
Bank statements, including deposit and saving accounts	6 years from end of current financial year	Destroy	
Bank paying in books	6 years from end of current financial year	Destroy	
Cheque book stubs	1 year from last complete audit year	Destroy	
VAT records	6 years from end of current financial year	Destroy	
Paid invoices	6 years from end of current financial year	Destroy	
Employee and pension records			
Wage books	12 years from end of current financial year	Destroy	To comply with Statute of Limitations
Time sheets	1 year from last complete audit year	Destroy	
Members' allowance registers	6 years from end of current financial year	Destroy	
General personnel files	6 years from end of employment	Transfer to WSA	For appraisal. Data protection safeguards will be applied by WSA.
Individual employee's records	6 years from end of employment	Review	If employee has left through ill health or industrial tribunal, keep until person is 65 then destroy. Otherwise destroy.
Lists of staff		Transfer to WSA	For appraisal. Data protection safeguards will be applied by WSA.
Procedures	End of administrative use	Destroy	
Volunteer/member details	6 years from end of employment	Destroy	
Contracts	6 years from end of employment	Destroy	
Premises and property records			
Plans	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Inventories	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Fixture/fittings	6 years from end of current financial year	Destroy	To comply with Statute of Limitations
Sale and purchase	6 years after end of loan	Destroy	To comply with Statute of Limitations

Rent and lease	End of charge period	Destroy	
Title deeds	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	If deeds are still required to prove title, organisation must retain
Contracts, wayleaves, agreements or other legal documents	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Insurance policies	40 years from end of policy	Destroy	
Events and publicity			
Organisation magazines and newsletters	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	These will be added to Wiltshire Local Studies if copies not already held, otherwise destroyed
Photographs (annotated with dates and places)	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	Copyright decision
Photographs (not annotated with dates and places)	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	WSA may dispose of any photographs not labelled or identified
Programmes	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	Only one copy
Flyers	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	Only one copy
Posters	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	Only one copy
Event planning documents	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	Weeded summary file
Oral history recordings	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	With recording agreements and appropriate metadata
Cast/participant lists	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	One copy per event with copyright decision
Recording of performance/event	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	Produced at an organisation-led event. With recording agreements and appropriate metadata
Original artwork	End of administrative use	Discuss with WSA	
Other records			
Press cuttings books	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Condolence books	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Ephemera	End of administrative use	Destroy	

Reports, guides and handbooks received from other organisations	End of administrative use	Destroy	
Scrapbooks	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Membership books	End of administrative use	Destroy	
Visitor books	End of administrative use	Destroy	
Circulars from national and regional bodies	End of administrative use	Destroy	
Material objects such as banners, quilts, tablecloths etc.	End of administrative use	Destroy	
Risk assessments	Life of the risk assessment plus 6 years	Destroy	

What we do not collect

Wiltshire & Swindon Archives has a collecting policy and an acquisition and disposal policy. Material that we take in must fit with these policies and must represent Wiltshire or Swindon. Because space is at a premium in our climate-controlled strongrooms we do not accept material that does not fit our collecting policy or that has limited historical or informational value.

We do not generally accept the following classes of record:

- Items with no significant link to Wiltshire or Swindon
- Three-dimensional objects, including works of art, trophies, plaques, banners, quilts, tablecloths etc
- Multiple copies of the same record (including draft versions, unless no final copy survives)
- Copies of records that are available online or in another publicly available collection (original items of material available online will be accepted)
- Financial records which are less than seven years old (these are legally required to be retained by the depositing organisation)
- Receipts, bank statements, chequebook stubs, invoices, VAT records, paying-in books or other ephemeral financial records beyond final accounts
- Insurance records
- Risk assessments
- Tender documents or other quotations for work
- Circulars from regional or national bodies
- Staff files of an ephemeral nature, including timesheets or personnel records (not including staff lists or employee registers, which should be deposited with WSA)
- Research notes

Please ensure that any records from the classes in this list are removed from the collection prior to transfer. We reserve the right to charge for the disposal of any material from this list which is transferred to WSA without prior agreement.

Unwanted items

As part of the accessioning and cataloguing process, our archivists will appraise the material you bring in to select items for permanent preservation. When you transfer the material to us, the form you fill out will allow you to specify what you would like done with anything we decide not to keep. We can:

- Dispose of unwanted items responsibly as confidential waste
- Return unwanted items to you
 - We will contact you to let you know how much there is and what it is. We will retain these items for one month after notifying you that they are ready to collect. If they are not collected within that time they will be disposed of confidentially, and we reserve the right to charge for this disposal.
 - If any items in the deposit are legally required to be retained by the depositor (for example financial records that are less than seven years old), you will be asked to collect them within one calendar month. As these items cannot be destroyed, we will charge for their continued storage after one calendar month.
- Transfer unwanted items to another service
 - This is relevant to items that may be more suitable held elsewhere. Usually this applies to out of county material but could sometimes apply to material that would be better suited in a specialist archive, library or museum.

Contact details:

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