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East Dunbartonshire Council

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Structuring and managing the shared drive

Purpose of this guidance

As part of the Council's Information Management strategy we will be developing corporate filing protocols that can be applied to electronic files regardless of their location including shared network drives. This will be a long term project, implemented in priority-based phases. In the meantime, this guidance will help Services to improve information sharing within their teams and lay good practice foundations for this longer term information management improvement initiative.

What are shared drives for?

The electronic documents that you create and use while doing your job are Council records and need to be managed consistently and be retrievable to all those authorised to see them.

Shared network drives, like the 'H' and 'S' drives available in EDC, provide a controlled and secure environment for employees who work for a specific council service or team. They are used to store, retrieve and work on the electronic documents and records staff needs to do their job. A shared network drive is the equivalent of a central paper filing system, but has additional benefits over formal paper record collections:

- it is regularly backed up by ICT, protecting information from the risks of user errors, PC or laptop failures and data losses;
- it can be set up to provide required levels of access and security to enable access to those that need it, while protecting sensitive and confidential data;
- it enables efficient and effective information sharing and collaborative working;
- it supports consistent, compliant and quality working:
 - access to Council wide and service specific policies, procedures, guidance and standard templates and forms
 - direct access to service user/operational documentation;
 - access to another employees 'work in progress' if required, e.g. due to annual leave or sick leave;
- if best practice guidance on naming conventions and record management is followed, it reduces physical and electronic storage requirements. It also improves integrity of documents and records by providing a single point of access to master electronic records and current working documents to all users with the appropriate rights.

Structuring the shared drive

The shared network drive space of each service should be organised into a logical, structured, hierarchical filing system using appropriately named folders. A logically structured filing system on your shared drive will help teams to organise and access electronic documents you use and the electronic records that need to be retained.

This should:

- be as clear and simple as possible;
- be appropriate to the needs of users;

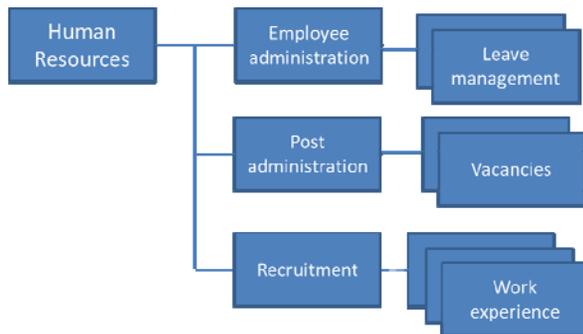
- use appropriate titles that indicate the folder's content and reflect logical elements, such as the business functions and activities which the records contained relate;
- limit the number of folder/subfolder levels in the hierarchy to avoid confusion and promote clarity and usability. It is good practice not to exceed five levels in the hierarchy.

The benefits of using an agreed and controlled filing system include:

- it provides a standard way to organise and save records across the department;
- electronic records can be organised in a way that matches any formal paper records collections;
- similar records are kept together for easier filing, retrieval, retention and disposal.

Activity based folder structures

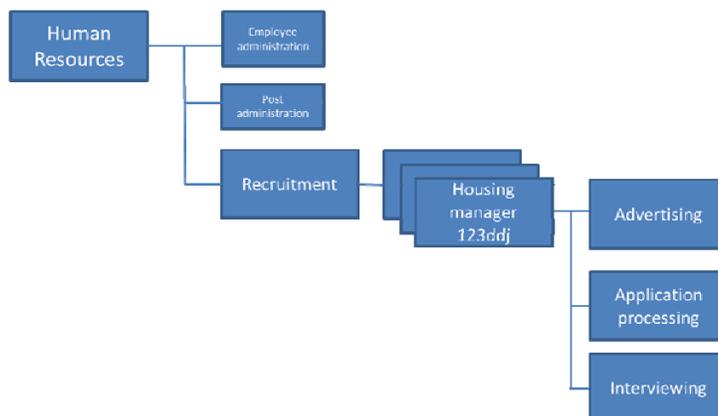
Documents and records should be stored in a hierarchical folder structure based on main business functions and associated activities and processes. This has the advantage of organising information based on the way in which work is carried out. The following diagram illustrates a logical structure based on some activities related to the HR function:



Subject and case files

In some cases it will make sense to organise information by subject, e.g. regular meetings, general correspondence with an external agency, guidance material on a specific work area.

Case files should be used where records relate to a specific entity or time-limited event, e.g. property or service user file, recruitment for a new post, processing of a planning application, a client complaint investigation. In these cases the lower folders will identify the activities related to the process with a top level folder identifying the specific case, e.g. by case number and entity title. The following diagram is an example of a folder structure for organising records related to a recruitment campaign.



Developing the structure

The goal is to find a way to organise the information that makes sense to everyone who needs access to it. All employees need to be involved in this process and to receive awareness training on how to classify their documents using the system once it has been put in place.

The first step to developing the structure is to identify the different sets or series of records that are created and captured as part of the work of the service. This can be done by looking at strategic plans and operational policies and procedures as well as existing paper index lists and case file guidance. Discussion within service areas is helpful to find out what types of records they create, capture and need to access to do their jobs. The filing system should be reviewed and tested by relevant employees two or three times during the development process to ensure it makes sense to them and to find out if anything has been missed. Try to avoid creating too many layers of folders in the structure. The retrieval of files can be more difficult if the file path is too long.

The Local Government Classification Scheme has been issued to support local authorities in the development of classification schemes for local government business. Its objective is to promote improved records management practices within local government, particularly (but not exclusively) with the development of electronic document and records management solutions. Follow the link below to access the LGCS.

http://cmssql.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/Intranet/content/business_hub/information_management/local_government_classification.aspx

Access and security

Some information held on shared drives will be considered sensitive or confidential, either on business grounds or through being personal information. Such information needs to be held securely and access to it strictly limited to those employees who need to refer to it as part of their work.

Electronic information must be protected from unauthorised access and use. An important task when developing the folder structure is to identify the records to which access should be limited. Decisions regarding access rights cannot be made in an ad hoc fashion. They should be based on an analysis of record content and user needs. They should be based on job categories, and not on individuals, so that all of the employees who are in a certain job category have the same rights to use these areas of the shared drive.

Appropriate access levels and read/write permissions to use shared drive folders should then be established so that users cannot view confidential or personal information that does not pertain to them or that they do not require to do their jobs.

Implementing the new structure

Once agreed and set up on the shared drive, a decision will need to be made on what existing electronic files will need to be moved to the new filing structure. There are a number of options here, the choice of which will depend on the work activities covered and existing electronic filing practice. These options include:

- Migrate all files.
- Migrate the current year plus an agreed number of previous years.
- Migrate agreed “key” records
- Migrate on a go-forward basis, i.e., migrate files from the legacy structure only when they are needed for current business purposes.
- No migration i.e. use the new system for all new information and leave legacy files in their current repositories.

Managing the shared drive

Controlling the folder structure

Once developed, agreed and built on the drive, a control process should be put in place to restrict the ability to add, delete or modify the filing system. If this doesn't happen, the logical structure will soon give way to one of

ad hoc chaos and individual rather than collective need. Changes to the structure, including access rights, must be documented, and all users made aware of these changes.

The responsibility for controlling the folder structure lies with individual services. ICT can help to manage the structure by creating restrict drives for services.

This is an example of a poorly designed and managed filing structure. It leaves users confused about where to file or retrieve records.



This is an example of a clearly designed and managed filing structure organised in a hierarchy of folders. The names of the folders use a simple structure and basic semantics so that all users can interpret it.



Personalising the folder structure

By using folder shortcuts on your desktop and in Windows Explorer you can “personalise” the folder structure to give you direct access to your main working areas. The following link will explain the process which allows you to carry out this task.

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-gb/word-help/demo-add-a-folder-shortcut-to-open-and-save-files-faster-HA001200478.aspx?pid=CL010072934&CTT=1&origin=EC001022722>

Managing “work in progress” files

By creating a “work in progress” subfolder within sections of the folder structure, you can separate draft from finalised records. This will help to identify the master record - the master record is the most complete record of an action, transaction or decision. It is the record that you rely on to take actions and make decisions. However it is very important that the use of “work in progress” folders is controlled to ensure that finalised versions are actually moved to the proper final filing location and obsolete working documents are deleted. The use of the terms ‘final’ and ‘draft’ can be found in the *Naming electronic records and version control* guidance on the *Information Management* section of the Hub.