Top ten tips for better Records Management

The documents we create and the records we keep are vital for every aspect of Council working. The right information must be available to the right person at the right time to conduct business efficiently, make fully informed decisions, collaborate effectively with the Council's partners and deliver first-class services to the residents of East Dunbartonshire.

All employees are responsible for the proper management of the information they work with. This guidance provides some common sense tips to achieve this and points to others that provide more detailed guidance to help improve the management of records across the Council.

These rules apply to all documents and records regardless of format or location.

1. **Capture and create adequate records to meet the Council's needs**
   When documenting work, ensure you capture and create quality records to support current and future working and provide sufficient evidence for internal and external audits and inspection. Quality records are ones that can be trusted as full, reliable, consistent, accurate, secure and accessible.

2. **Use a risk-based approach when deciding to scan paper documents**
   It makes sense to prioritise and scan paper documents that are frequently accessed or are business critical and therefore need protected from the risks of loss, damage, flood, fire etc. In other circumstances the costs and effort of scanning clearly outweigh the benefits. Weigh up the pros and cons before deciding to scan. Refer to the Scanning Guidelines when choosing to scan.

   http://cmssql.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/Intranet/pdf/CROD%20Cust%20Serv/CROD-WT%20Scanning%20Guidelines.pdf

3. **Name your electronic documents and folders consistently**
   Develop naming conventions and standard terminology to make the retrieval of information faster and simpler. For more information, refer to 'Naming Electronic Records' guidance;

   http://cmssql.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/Intranet/pdf/CROD%20Cust%20Serv/Naming%20Electronic%20Records%20V1-0.pdf

4. **Do not store Council records on your "P" and "C" drive**
   Keep council information in the shared drive and personal information in your P or C drive. Further guidance on acceptable use of ICT facilities can be found in the 'Corporate ICT Security Policy'.

   http://cmssql.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/Intranet/content/business_hub/ict/corporate_it_security_policy.aspx

   No Council records should be saved to a C: drive, which includes your desktop. Information on these drives are only available to you and are not automatically backed up so there is a greater risk of loss due to equipment failure.

5. **Manage your emails by content, not format**
   Significant emails and attachments should be filed with related records on the shared drive. All others should be deleted once actioned. Where appropriate, save the full email thread (incoming and sent emails) and ensure it has an appropriate title. Follow the link below to view guidance on 'Saving an email'.

   http://cmssql.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/Intranet/pdf/CROD%20Cust%20Serv/CROD-CS%20Saving%20an%20email.pdf

6. **Share information appropriately**
   Store information to which other members of staff require access on the shared drive following a logical folder structure so that your department can operate efficiently. The folder structure should be based on activities and not on employee name.
   For more information refer to guidance on 'Structuring and Managing the Shared Drive'.

   http://cmssql.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/Intranet/pdf/CROD%20Cust%20Serv/Information%20managment%20strategy%20employee%20guidance.pdf

7. **Keep personal and confidential information securely**
   Restrict access to network folders containing confidential records to those staff that need to access them. Do not leave PC's or laptops unattended when logged-on, change your passwords at regular intervals, and use encrypted devices (such as council laptops or pen/USB drives supplied by ICT) to store records where appropriate. Do not attempt to use personal storage devices such as USB or portable disc drives. Store confidential paper records in locked cabinets or drawers when not in use. Further advice on Smart Working – Security can be found in 'Guidance Note 1 – Information & Technology Security'.

   http://cmssql.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/Intranet/PDF/CROD%20Corp%20Comms/Crod.cc%20SMART%20WORKING%20GUIDANCE%20NOTE%201%20ICT.pdf

8. **Regularly clear out files of unnecessary documents**
   Take time to regularly weed files (both paper and electronic) and destroy/delete unwanted working copies, trivial emails and out-of-date reference material. This will save time looking for the information you need and reduce both physical and digital storage space.

   For more information, please refer to the File Housekeeping guidance note.

9. **Close down folders at appropriate intervals**
   Close down electronic folders (and paper files) at appropriate intervals. To keep them at a manageable size, review at a time appropriate to your service, e.g. End of calendar or financial year, project close, completed application process, completed service user case etc. This will make it easier to apply retention periods and keep folders at a manageable size for searching and browsing.

10. Make sure you know how long to keep your major categories of records
Check your department's retention schedule, if available, or look at the generic records retention schedules on the Scottish Council on Archives website.

http://www.scoarch.org.uk/projects/retentionschedules/retentionschedules This will assist services to work out how long records should be kept for and dispose of (or delete) records accordingly and in the most appropriate manner.