



Records Retention and Disposal policy

Reviewed: 4 June 2024

Next Review: August 2026

1. Introduction

This policy sets out the retention and disposal arrangements for records and documents held by Healthwatch Shropshire (HWS). This policy applies to both paper and electronic records (files and emails).

The purpose of this policy is firstly to ensure HWS adheres to the requirements of the Data Protection Act, Principle 5 that:

Personal data processed for any purpose or purposes shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose or those purposes.

Secondly, the policy also aims to ensure that for all other information, a practical balance is struck so that sufficient information is kept but consideration is given to the constraints of physical and server space.

Staff and volunteers are responsible for completing and maintaining accurate records relating to their own delivery activity and must maintain good practice in the management of their working papers and records.

Staff are responsible for the organisation, maintenance, storage, archiving and disposal of records relating to their area of work. The Chief Officer is responsible for personnel records, financial records and official documents.

2. Retention periods

Type of document	Period that they should be retained
Personnel records	
Unsuccessful job applications	Six months after date of application
Ex-staff personnel files	Seven years
Appraisal reports	Seven years
Staff references	Seven years
Verbal warning	Personnel file for 12 months
Written warning	Personnel file for 12 months
Final written warning	Personnel file for 12 months or in exceptional circumstances this may be longer
Disclosure & Barring records	Refer to 'Policy for DBS Secure Storage, Handling, Use, Retention & disposal of Disclosures and Disclosure Information'
Unsuccessful volunteer applicants	Six months after date of application
Ex-volunteer files	One year after leaving
Associate Membership records	For the duration of an individual's or organisation's membership

Company Information	
Finance records	Seven years or longer under certain circumstances, as described here: Running a limited company: your responsibilities: Company and accounting records - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
HWS Board & Committee Minutes	In perpetuity
Restricted/unrestricted charitable activities including offer letters and contract information	Seven years after completion, unless otherwise specified by contract, SLA or funding arrangements
HWS Evaluations, monitoring and questionnaires for external organisations	Results to be kept as restricted/unrestricted charitable activities i.e. seven years or longer if specified by funding. Original documents, such as questionnaires to be kept for 12 months unless advised otherwise in funding agreement.
Insurance records including policies, schedules and claims	
Employers Liability	In perpetuity
Public Liability	Seven years
All other insurance policies	Seven years
Research grant records	
Unsuccessful applicants	Six months after date of application
Successful applicants	Seven years
Final reports	In perpetuity
HWS service data	
Survey & questionnaire original responses	One year
Survey & questionnaire final reports	In perpetuity
Comments received	Personal data deleted six months after initial contact unless communication is still ongoing or there are exceptional circumstances. Anonymised form of the record kept in perpetuity.
Independent Health Complaints Advocacy records	Personal data (service user records) deleted a minimum of six years after expiry of this contract. Anonymised form of the record kept in perpetuity.
Enter & View Planning meeting records	7 years after report published
Enter & View Visit notes	7 years after report published
Enter & View records Draft reports	7 years after report published

Enter & View records Final reports	In perpetuity
External meetings – HWS individuals' notes	Two years
External meetings - Official papers and minutes	One year
External organisations' communications e.g. newsletters, updates, etc	Six months, except Healthwatch England in perpetuity.

3. Disposal of records

When disposing of paper records containing personal or confidential data, HWS individuals will use a crosscut shredder. When disposing of PCs or laptops, HWS will take necessary steps to ensure personal data is no longer accessible.

Disposal of other paper and electronic records should be managed by the Information Officer.

4. Termination or transfer of the existing contract

Upon termination or transfer of the existing contract, appropriate measures to ensure security of records will be put in place.