



## **Operational Paper File Management Procedure**

This procedure is part of North Yorkshire Police policy to which all Chief Constable personnel and the functions provided by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner are required to adhere.

This procedure sets out how operational paper records should be managed. It covers responsibilities in relation to the creation, storage, retention, retrieval and disposal of operational paper records, and supports effective records management.

As progress is made with digital case filing, and electronic creation and storage of documents, the requirement to manage paper records has reduced significantly in recent years and will continue to do so. Where possible and practicable, records should be generated and managed electronically, with paper records scanned to Niche and disposed as soon as they are no longer needed, taking into account any statutory or evidential requirements. Electronic records added to Niche will fall into an electronic review and retention process, which will be managed centrally.

This procedure should be followed when it has been necessary to produce or work with paper documents as part of a file.

### **Operational paper records can include:**

- Records which must be retained in paper form (as well as on Niche) for the purposes of a National Operation or Inquiry
- Crime Files including Major Crime where paper documents need to be retained in their original form to support the Criminal Justice process
- Paper records produced as a result of a non-crime occurrence, including Major Incidents
- Paperwork produced for the purposes of issuing a warning or other out of court disposal

Effective Records Management supports compliance with legislative requirements, including Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation, improves accountability, and increases efficiency and cost effectiveness by ensuring records are disposed of when no longer needed. It enables more effective use of resources: space within buildings, networks and databases, and staff time spent searching for and accessing records.

**Overarching Policies:**

Records Management Policy  
Data Protection Policy

**Procedures:**

Protective Marking Procedure  
Review, Retention and Disposal of Information Procedure  
Security Incident Reporting Procedure

**Other Documents:**

College of Policing Management of Police Information Authorised Professional Practice  
Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the management of records issued under s.46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000  
The Source - NYP Retention Schedule  
The Source - Information Security Subsite  
Front Counter & Exhibits - Operational Filing  
NYP - Operational Paper File Register (search/report)

**Process**

All staff have a responsibility to ensure that paper records are created, collated and stored appropriately and consistently, to ensure that information is preserved, and can be found and accessed when required.

**File creation**

Ensure paperwork is protected in an appropriate file or folder, and sheets are securely attached to avoid accidental separation.

For large/heavy files, make sure any additional folders are clearly labelled with the relevant case/occurrence reference number and file number, for example '1 of 2' or '2 of 2'.

From creation, and at all times, all records should be kept in line with Information Security requirements, procedures and legislation.

**File preparation**

Once it is deemed that a file is complete and requires retention, it must be submitted to the relevant team for storage in a timely manner.

The submitting officer should ensure that only information relevant to the case and required for a policing purpose is retained on the case file.

Ensure that all the information is gathered and submitted (where practicable) at the same time. Records generated during an investigation, e.g. statements of attending officers, major incident

books etc, should be forwarded to the Officer in Charge (OIC) to ensure that all relevant material is kept together.

Remove any unnecessary information and duplicate records from the file.

Remove any exhibits and submit to the relevant property store as per the Property and Exhibits procedure.

Where possible scan paperwork on to Niche, naming this clearly for future reference. Once a clear and legible scan has been successfully added to Niche, **most** paperwork can be disposed. Consideration should be given to whether or not long term retention of the paper original is required for any legislative, evidential or business purpose.

**Records that *must* be retained in paper form:**

- All paper records required for a National Inquiry
- Original MG11s (see Guidance on the retention of MG11s )
- Material not suitable for scanning (see Guidance notes - unsuitable for storage on Niche)

Photographs can be scanned, unless unsuitable. If a file contains photographs of a distressing nature, ensure it is marked or named as such.

Further guidance on the retention requirements for different types of records can be found on the NYP Retention Schedule.

**File submission for storage**

See Front Counter & Exhibits current Operational Filing Guidance on The Source for business processes for different types of files.

Please note that any case-related records retained outside of Niche, in paper or electronic form, must be appropriately referenced on Niche, to ensure they are searchable, and retention can be managed consistently.

**Physical storage environment for paper records**

All records must be stored in an environment that protects them from damp, mould or pest damage.

For long term storage, remove any unnecessary bindings, covers and elastic bands, as they can stain or damage documents over time.

Photographs and negatives should be kept in paper folders/envelopes to protect them from dust and light.

Containers / boxes should not be overloaded. They should be closed/lidded and should only be stacked one on top of the other in containers designed for this use.

- Keep handling of paperwork to a minimum; always have clean, dry hands; and try to avoid the use of gloves where possible
- Be mindful of any hygiene/health issues when handling older records (e.g. dust, rusty staples etc)
- Always comply with Manual Handling guidance

Ensure all boxes/containers are referenced appropriately and clearly labelled, to ensure they can be located easily.

### **Retrieving paper records from storage**

See Front Counter & Exhibits current **Operational Filing Guidance** for business processes for the retrieval and return of paper records from storage. Records retrieved must be returned in a timely manner, and clearly labelled for re-filing. The receiving team will record the return date and re-store as appropriate.

### **Historical records**

Historical paper files identified for retention by the Review Retention and Disposal Teams/MMI project have been scanned, and paper copies disposed, unless there was an instruction to retain for a public inquiry at the time of scanning. These can be found by searching Niche and the Operational Paper File Register.

**Paper files with a related Niche Live record** should be scanned and attached in PDF format to the reports tab in the relevant Niche record.

**Paper files with no related Niche Live record** should be logged on the Paper File register, scanned and stored in PDF format in the Operational File Library on Sharepoint.

*NB: permissions to create and edit within the Paper File Register and library are limited. Please seek advice from Niche RRD/Records Compliance if you need to add a record but do not have access, or if you are unsure of the process.*

If no Legacy record is found to link the record, an intel report should be submitted, giving a summary of the record, advising the reader to refer to the Paper File Register for record location, and giving as much detail as possible on the persons involved, so relevant person records can be identified and linked, or new person records created as necessary.

### **Major Crime**

Major Crime Unit (MCU) are responsible for the storage and management of all homicide related and other Major Crime case records.

### **Retention and Disposal**

Paper records that need to be retained in their original form which relate to a Niche record should be retained in line with their Niche record. Retention periods for Niche records will then be managed centrally through the application of MoPI gradings to person records, occurrences and

intel records, and in line with the College of Policing Management of Police Information Authorised Professional Practice.

Retention periods for other records and links to further relevant guidance can be found on the NYP Retention Schedule and the Review, Retention and Disposal of Information Procedure.

Disposal of paper records (copies that have been digitised and are no longer required in their original form, or original records that have reached their disposal date) should take place in line with security procedures set out in the Government Security Classification (GSC) and other force procedures.

### **Information Security reporting**

If it is identified that any paper record has been lost, or there has been unauthorised access/disclosure of a paper record this must be reported in line with the Security Incident Reporting Procedure

### **Responsibilities**

#### **Operational Officers/Police Staff**

All staff have the responsibility to ensure that information collated and retained is of a high standard and is compliant with the relevant legislation, such as the Data Protection Act 2018. All staff are responsible for following the guidance set out in this document to ensure the effective management, security and preservation of operational information.

#### **First Line Supervision**

As Operational officers/police staff. Also to ensure staff under their supervision receive appropriate training to fulfil their role effectively, and that they are fully aware of the need to manage operational paperwork appropriately, and the potential impacts of not doing so. Provide appropriate feedback and take necessary action where legislation and guidance are not complied with.

#### **Commanders/Heads of Department**

Encourage and support the effective management of operational paperwork and compliance with force procedures. Promote the benefits of good records management practices.

#### **Training Services**

Ensure that relevant training packages support effective record management. Promote the benefits of good records management.

#### **Command Team**

Promote the benefits of effective records management. Overall responsibility for ensuring staff adhere to best practice in relation to the information collated, submitted and stored.

## **Definition of Special Terms**

NYP - North Yorkshire Police

APP - Authorised Professional Practice

NCRS - National Crime Recording Standard

NSIR - National Standard Incident Recording

OIC - Officer in Charge/Case

HOCR - Home Office Counting Rules

PT - Prosecution Team

BAS - Business Administration Services

PNLD - Police National Legal Database

RRD - Review Retention and Disposal

HO - Home Office