



Arms Length Bodies Reform: Managing Data Legacy

Managing the transfer of information, records and knowledge is a key element of Arms Length Bodies reform. Ensuring that data continues to be publicly available for those bodies that are being dissolved or transferred is a priority for the Department for Communities and Local Government. This must be compliant with legislation, information security and reflect the *Principles on the Transfer of Information, Records and Knowledge* (see Annex A).

In managing data legacy the Department and its Arms Length Bodies will have regard to:

- **The National Archives** guidance *Dissolution and Privatisation of Public Bodies*. This is available at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/dissolution-and-privatisation-guidance-v1.pdf> ; and
- **Local Public Data Panel** guidance on Quango data. This is available at <http://data.gov.uk/blog/guidance-from-the-local-public-data-panel-on-quango-data>

Information Assets for dissolved bodies will be transferred to the Department.

For further advice and access to Information Assets please contact the Departmental Records Officer - David Smith 0303 444 2516.

Annex A

Principles on the transfer of information, records and knowledge

Making arrangements for the transfer of information, records and knowledge is a key part of any machinery of government change. However, all too often this aspect is not properly planned for, inadequately resourced and left until it is too late to do everything that needs to be done. Listed below are the 8 basic principles that should be followed for a successful transfer. Further detail on all these areas can be found in The National Archives' *Machinery of Government Changes: Guidance on the Transfer of Records, Information and Knowledge*.

http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/machinery_of_government.pdf

Reinforce Senior Management support

Ensure that senior management understand what needs to be done (including setting an appropriate budget) and the risks to the business if the transfer is not carried out successfully. Failure to transfer information and knowledge effectively between departments can make it impossible to maintain business continuity and can result in the loss of vital information, loss of functionality of digital information, inability to be transparent and accountable and meet legal obligations, inefficiency and substantial additional costs.

Plan in advance

Start planning for the transfer of information as soon as notification that the organisation/function is to be abolished or transferred has been received. Identify desired outcomes - especially the usability of information (or digital continuity requirements after transfer) and test progress against these.

Clarify who is responsible

Establish as early as possible who is going to do the work and form a joint Information Transition Team. Ensure that transferring and receiving bodies and any contractors employed in information related activities (for example, an IT service partner) have a clear understanding of their separate and joint roles and responsibilities.

Decide what to transfer

Decide what information needs to be transferred and to where, for example, information of continuing business or legal value will need to be identified and transferred to the department that is inheriting responsibility for the function/s. Information of archival value may be transferred to The National Archives. Consider information/records in all forms, for example, paper files, information within an electronic records management or email system, websites, intranets, shared drives, databases AND accompanying information such as finding aids, information asset registers or retention/disposal information.

Make provision for the continuity of digital information

Define the usability requirements for information to be transferred, and test against them throughout the transfer process. The receiving organisation needs to ensure the information can be found, opened, used, understood and trusted as required and will need to ensure it receives both files and necessary contextual metadata and has the technology to enable the usability requirements to be met.

Ensure continued compliance with legislation and information security

Clarify responsibilities for Freedom of Information and Environmental Information requests and related complaints and appeals and ensure that handover or guidance notes are prepared. Comply with rules on information security when transferring information and records and conform to the Security Policy Framework for protectively marked material.

Capture knowledge and communicate to staff and stakeholders

Capture the knowledge of staff from the transferring organisation, particularly if they are not transferring with the function and make as much information as possible about the changes available to staff in both organisations. Plan communication with customers and end-users.

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