

Gloucestershire Archives @ The Hub

Appraisal Policy

1. Policy statement and purpose

This policy explains why and how we select records of evidential and historical value to the counties of Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire in order to preserve them as part of our collections.

2. Scope

This policy applies to both the non-current corporate records of Gloucestershire County Council and South Gloucestershire Council and records offered to us as potential archives by other organisations or individuals. It applies to records whatever their format – whether analogue or digital. It also applies to resources for family and local history relating to Gloucestershire that may be offered to us for our collections.

3. Terminology

Appraisal in this context means assessing and evaluating records in order to decide what is worth keeping permanently.

Archives are the record of everyday activities of governments, organisations, businesses and individuals. Archives may take many different forms – handwritten, typed, printed, photographic or electronic – and include audio-visual material such as video and sound recordings. As authentic and reliable records, they are preserved permanently because of their evidential and historical value.

Local and family history resources comprise published information about the history of local areas and their communities, for example, newspapers and locality-based books, pamphlets and journals covering a wide range of topics.

Public Records are defined by the Public Records Acts of 1958 and 1967. They include records created by coroners, magistrates courts, prisons and health authorities. Under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act, 2010, transfers of certain public records to approved places of deposit (such as Gloucestershire Archives) will be made once the records are 20 years old. Records which have been selected and formally transferred under the Act cannot lawfully be subsequently appraised, transferred elsewhere (including another place of deposit), weeded or destroyed without the permission of the Secretary of State.

4. Background

Gloucestershire Archives gathers archive collections and local and family history resources to ensure they are kept secure and made accessible.

We are an accredited archive service recognised by The National Archives as the place of deposit for Public Records relating to Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire.

We are a Gloucestershire County Council service. By agreement, we also provide an archive service for South Gloucestershire Council and are the appointed Record Office for the Diocese of Gloucester.

We are a lead partner in the Gloucestershire Heritage Hub, a network of local people and organisations created in 2017 with a common interest in our historic county's documented heritage. The network benefits from Hub facilities at Alvin Street, Gloucester and a Hub website, and its members support each other to gather, keep and share their personal and community archives.

5. Appraising corporate records

For Gloucestershire County Council, we liaise closely with our Information Management Service (IMS) colleagues and information asset owners to ensure that corporate records, both paper and digital, worthy of permanent retention, are added to the corporate archive of the County Council in our care. For South Gloucestershire Council we liaise with the Council's Modern Records Centre staff and the Deputy Head of Legal Services to identify material for their corporate archive, also in our care, and provide additional professional support when required.

All corporate records are subject to retention periods agreed with the record owner. If, when a retention period expires, permission to dispose of records is given by the record owner, we will then appraise the records to identify whether there is any material of value as historic evidence that should be retained permanently as part of either Council's corporate archive.

We identify some corporate records of enduring value in terms of accountability, transparency and democracy at the point they are created (for example, council minutes, and some born-digital classes of record such as policies).

For details of the appraisal criteria we apply, see section 7.

6. Appraising other records and resources offered to Gloucestershire Archives (either as long-term deposits, gifts or to purchase)

When records and other resources are first offered to us, depending on their size and complexity we may only be able to make a basic appraisal by

- assessing whether the material being offered fits with our Collecting Policy
- identifying and removing obvious ephemera
- removing duplicate or blank/unused material

We carry out a full appraisal when we examine, sort and list in detail (the cataloguing stage). We may re-appraise existing catalogued collections if we are aware that a full appraisal has not been done.

We keep a record of the appraisal work we carry out as part of our collections management data.

7. Appraisal criteria

We assess the overall evidential and historical value of records according to:

- guidelines published by The National Archives to appraise Public Records

- guidelines published by lead professionals (the Archives and Records Association and the Information and Records Management Society) to appraise records created by local government, schools and businesses
- other nationally recognised best practice guidelines, such as The Church of England's records management guides for parish and diocesan records
- guidelines developed in-house for appraising records created by private individuals, groups and organisations

We consider the following criteria when appraising records:

- whether certain records have an extraordinary quality about them and therefore are more likely to be requested in the future - for example major surveys and projects; major legal cases and investigations; major controversies
- the value of draft and working papers - for some types of collection, such as literary archives, we will keep early drafts as evidence of a writer's creative development. For administrative and business archives it may be sufficient to preserve a final report only
- whether a record is an original or unique copy - for example sealed orders and agreements and signed minutes of major committees
- whether the records reveal a significant change in policy or the structure of an organisation or business, for example, papers relating to major local government reorganisation; local business mergers; changes in an organisation's constitution
- whether similar records have had a major impact on research and investigations in the past, for example, social care records relating to children and vulnerable adults
- whether the records fill significant gaps in our collections - for example from under-represented communities
- whether the records give insight into how an issue of national importance impacted at a local level, for example, local measures to deal with Foot and Mouth outbreaks in 1967 and 2001; the fuel shortage crisis of 2000; Brexit; coronavirus pandemic.
- whether any personal bias is affecting our decision to keep or destroy particular records, we will consult other staff and other archives services to reach a considered judgement

- the overall quality of the unique information held by the records
- whether any national legislation is in place which prevents us from appraising and disposing of identified types of records - for example, certain Public Records (see section 3 Terminology) and the legal hold imposed by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (see Appendix)

8. Roles and responsibilities

Appraisal is carried out by qualified archivists as part of their collections management duties. In some cases, it may be appropriate for basic appraisal to be done by other Archives staff or volunteers having been trained by, and under the supervision of, an archivist.

9. References

This policy should be read alongside our other policies, in particular our Collecting, Digital Preservation and Disposal Policies, to be found at
<https://www.goucestershire.gov.uk/archives/policies>

Further guidance on appraising different types of record can be found at
<https://www.goucestershire.gov.uk/archives/collecting-and-caring-for-archives/adding-to-goucestershire-archives-collections>

Gloucestershire County Council's Information and security policies can be found at
<https://www.goucestershire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/strategies-plans-policies/information-management-and-security-policies/>

Specific information on the information lifecycle of Gloucestershire County Council's corporate records can be found at
<https://www.goucestershire.gov.uk/media/14303/information-and-records-management-policy-v4-0.pdf>

Guidance drawn up by The National Archives on appraising Public Records can be found at
<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/manage-information/selection-and-transfer/appraising-records/>

10. Review and revision

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years.

Document control

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Version History

Version	Version date	Summary of Changes
1.0	2008	New policy created
2.0	Jan 2013	Policy redrafted to remove procedural elements and align with recent service policies.
3.0	June 2013	Added sentence on further appraisal in Section 5, para 2. Updated cross-references to other policies in Section 7. Minor re-wording in other sections.
3.1	Sept 2014	Brief review and minor re-formatting
4.0	Dec 2017	Major review and revision to reflect changed structure of service, new legislation and restrictions on appraising children's records; to include the family and local history resources we hold; and to reflect the creation of the Heritage Hub
4.1	Oct 2020	Updated job roles, examples of records of national importance added, treatment of born digital material, and reference to South Gloucestershire corporate records.

Date of next revision: 2023

Appendix: Retention of corporate records relating to children

We comply with the legal hold imposed in July 2015 by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA)¹ which prevents the destruction and appraisal of the following types of record.

- a. Any material, including reports; reviews; briefings; minutes; notes and correspondence in relation to allegations (substantiated or not) of individuals, organisations, institutions, public bodies or otherwise who may have been involved in, or have knowledge of, child sexual abuse, or child sexual exploitation
- b. Any material, including reports; reviews; briefings; minutes; notes and correspondence in relation to allegations (substantiated or not) of individuals having engaged in sexual activity with, or having a sexual interest in, children
- c. Any material, including reports; reviews; briefings; minutes; notes and correspondence in relation to institutional failures to protect children from sexual abuse or other exploitation
- d. Any material relevant to statutory responsibilities for the care of children in public or private care
- e. Any material relevant to the development of policy on child protection
- f. Any material relevant to the development of legislation on child protection
- g. Any material relating to the determination of the award of Honours to persons who are now demonstrated to have had a sexual interest in children or are suspected of having had such an interest.

¹ Due to be reviewed in 2023.