

THE NORTHCOTT SOCIETY

POLICY ON RECORDS MANAGEMENT

VOLUME: 2 **Management & Organisational Issues**
SECTION: D **Administration**
SUB-SECTION: B **Records Management**
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BOARD APPROVAL: Not Applicable

Policy

It is Northcott policy to maintain records (other than active client records) within a single centralised system. Records must be maintained for all functions, processes, activities and transactions that directly or indirectly relate to the operation of the organisation.

Definitions

Access: The terms and conditions of availability of information contained in Northcott's central records system.

Archive: Any record that is deemed to have continuing value because of either its historical significance; interest to the community; legal nature; or relevance to the disability sector.

Record Management System (RMS): The range of activities that Northcott carries out in order to manage its records and which facilitate the systematic capture, maintenance, access and disposal of these records.

Capture: A deliberate action which results in the registration of a record into Northcott's RMS.

Disposal: The criteria used to determine whether records are retained, deleted or destroyed in or from Northcott's RMS. This may include the transfer of records between central records and archives and the transfer of custody or ownership of records.

Keyword: Is a descriptive word chosen from the Northcott RMS list, which is used to broadly categorise the type of information contained in the file. It is used in conjunction with a file title to aid in retrieval.

Records: Any material or item officially kept by the organisation, including documents, photos, films, videos, audio tapes and computer data.

Registration: The act of giving a record a unique identity in Northcott's RMS.

Objectives

1. To capture complete, accurate and reliable information needed for quality decision-making and service delivery.
2. To facilitate the identification, storage and retrieval of relevant information.
3. To allow authorised access on one hand and the protection of confidential information and client privacy on the other.
4. To comply with legal, evidential and accountability requirements.
5. To support regulated records disposal involving destruction of information no longer needed and the survival of information of continuing value.
6. To provide the means of accounting for Northcott's activities and service delivery to consumers, funding bodies, donors and other people affected by its actions and decisions.

Procedures

A General

The creation and maintenance of accurate and complete records is necessary to meet the needs and protect the interests of Northcott, its consumers and other people affected by its actions and decisions.

The decision to create a record should be made in line with the objectives listed in this policy and approved by a manager, who should sign the "File Opening Memo".

Records should be full and accurate to the extent necessary to:

- a) facilitate action by employees;
- b) make possible a proper scrutiny of the conduct of business;
- c) protect the financial, legal and other rights of Northcott, its consumers and any other people affected by its actions and decisions.

All documents and records must:

- a) be accurately dated
- b) acknowledge authorship as appropriate
- c) be numbered and referenced so that if it forms part of a series of related documents the correct ordering of the records is possible.

B Registration

The purpose of registration is to provide evidence that a record has been created in Northcott's Record Management System and alert other staff as to its existence and allow for its retrieval in the future.

1. When registering a new file the following must be recorded:
 - a) a unique identifying number;
 - b) date of registration;
 - c) the name of the person opening and managing the file;
 - d) a descriptive title, which ensures that records are titled in a consistent manner;
 - e) a keyword;
 - f) an appropriate retention period.
2. Each record is marked with the date it is received into the Record Management System.

C Maintenance

Maintenance includes all actions that ensure the safe-keeping of the physical record, and the systematic review of the status of files.

1. All central records are to be stored in an adequate space and in secure, clean and temperate conditions.
2. The schedule attached to this policy is to be used by managers as a guide in designating retention periods for records.
3. An annual examination of all open files to review their status will be undertaken by the managers who have responsibility for the files.
4. A review of files will be conducted when they reach their retention period by the delegated manager to either:
 - a) extend the retention period
 - b) transfer to archives
 - c) transfer custody or ownership
 - d) organise secure disposal and deletion from the system.

D Access

Northcott makes available items in its Records Management System to its staff, while protecting the material from theft, damage or rearrangement.

1. Access to the central records (RMS) is administered by one nominated staff member.
2. Material may be borrowed from central records by individual staff, however all details must be recorded in the Loans Book kept in the central records area.
3. Long term loans will be recorded in the Records Management database.

4. To maintain client confidentiality access by staff to closed client files is only allowed for client-related purposes. Procedures for access by clients to their own files are set out in the "Policy on Writing and Management of Consumer Files".

E Disposal

Northcott determines which records are deleted and destroyed or transferred to archives. This also includes the process of transferring ownership or custody.

1. Authority to dispose of records ultimately resides with the Chief Executive Officer. This authority can be delegated to the Executive Manager whose department is responsible for the record.
2. Once disposal is authorised the librarian/records manager will undertake security disposal of those records.
3. Following physical destruction of records they must be deleted from the Records Management System. A separate record listing all destroyed files will be maintained.
4. Once a year all records reaching the end of their retention period will be reviewed by the delegated Manager, who either authorises disposal; further retention in RMS or transfer.
5. Transfer of custody or ownership can only be authorised by the Chief Executive Officer.

ATTACHMENTS

(available on the Common Drive/Policy Manuals/Policy Attachments)

Keyword list
File opening memo
Retention Schedule

Supporting Policies:

1. Policy on Archives
2. Policy on Writing and Management of Consumer Files

Authorised by:



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Chief Executive Officer