

RMS file tracking and tracing missing files procedure

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Approvals

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| V0.1 | Corporate Information Manager | March 2015 |
| V1.0 | Information Governance Steering Group | April 2015 |
| V2.0 | Records Manager | July 2019 |

1. Introduction

Managing information correctly ensures that the council can serve its customers, including protecting some of the most vulnerable people in our society; can defend its actions and decisions; is transparent and provides value for money. Ensuring that paper files, especially those containing personal/sensitive customer information, are managed securely is paramount.

The file tracking and tracing missing files procedure is intended to provide a consistent approach and help on the correct way to manage and track paper files, and actions to take if a file cannot be found.

This procedure applies to files held in archive by the WCC Records Management Service. A separate procedure applies to files held locally by service teams.

This procedure is **mandatory** and must be followed by all staff as part of the council's [Information Governance Framework](#) the standard for managing information in the council and is one of the linked procedures in the [Information Compliance policy](#) aimed at all staff

This procedure is subject to regular review by the Information Management service to improve handling from user feedback, learning from incidents and application of new technology.

2. Procedure

Recording missing files

- Within 4 hours of an individual becoming aware of a potential *or* actual incident report the missing file(s) in line with the [WCC Incident Procedure](#). Do this by phoning the incident number (01926 73 8881 – WCC Legal Services).
- Inform a line manager or supervisor. This must not delay the incident being reported.
- In line with the WCC Incident Procedure where missing files containing health and social care data, where there is a risk to any individuals, must be reported to the relevant Caldicott Guardian.
- In line with the WCC Incident Procedure it is important to notify key senior staff of the more serious incidents. Human Resources should be notified in the event of disregard for policy or Facilities Management in the event of building security. See the procedure for full details.

- If possible, before 4 hours (the timeframe the incident must be reported to Legal Services within), the RMS are to attempt to trace the missing file as detailed in Tracing Missing Files section of this guide. Do not delay reporting the incident if tracing the file takes longer than 4 hours.
- The requesting team (and owning team if different) are to be informed:
 - The file is missing and directed to inform RMS if the missing file is found again
 - If the RMS staff plan to undertake further work to locate the file and they are to be questioned if necessary by the RMS.
 - They need update file tracking systems and any other business system (e.g. Carefirst/Mosaic) to reflect the file or files are missing.
 - In line with the WCC Incident Procedure they need to ensure any vulnerable individuals are informed if put at risk as a result of any missing confidential information held within the file(s) in question.

Tracing missing files

- Do not delay reporting the incident if tracing the file takes longer than 4 hours.
- If the whereabouts of the file has been traced and the file is therefore located, within 4 hours there is no need to report the file as a security incident.
- An entry should be logged on the RMS Missing File Log and all columns completed.
- Establish whether the file(s) or part of the file was transferred to RMS. Check with that team and check original transfer forms and the RMS transfer log.
- Establish whether the file has been booked out on loan and if so is there evidence it was returned.
- Establish whether the file has been destroyed.
- Establish whether the file was checked out on permanent loan.
- Establish whether the file has been scanned by the owning team and not returned.
- Establish whether the item(s) were mis-filed in a different box.
- Establish how many files or how many volumes within a file are missing.
- Check whether the loss has coincided with a paper file housekeeping day held either by the requesting/owning team or the RMS themselves and whether the files have mistakenly been placed in confidential waste.
- If the file was checked out on loan and has not been returned, check if the file has been passed to another member of the requesting team and therefore whether RMS hasn't been updated with new borrower's details or the new borrower had simply taken the file.

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- If the file was checked out on loan and has not been returned check if the file has been shared legitimately with another colleague, team or Service.
- If the file was checked out on loan and has not been returned check if the file has been legitimately taken out of the office by an authorised requestor working from home?

When files are not found

- Record the fact that the file(s) is permanently missing on the file tracking log and on the RMS file inventory.
- Where missing files have not been found, notify the lead officer investigating the Information Security incident that the file has been found along with details.
- Note any lessons learned and implement.

When files are found

- The RMS are to note the date and if necessary time the file(s) was found RMS Missing File Log
- The RMS are to return the file(s) to storage and record the return on IMC and the in-out log.
- The RMS are to inform the requesting (and owning team if different) that the file has been found and ask for relevant systems (including local file tracking system and business systems e.g. CareFirst/Mosaic)
- Note how long the files were missing (hours, days, months, years)
- Note who found the file(s) and where they were found
- Where missing files have been found, notify the lead officer investigating the Information Security incident that the file has been found along with details.
- Where known, note down the reason the files were lost and returned
- Note any lessons learned and implement

Further advice

If you need clarification, please look on the Information Management staff webpages or contact the Records Management Service. Report urgent incidents/breaches to the ICT Service Desk.

www.warwickshire.gov.uk/im

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