

CONFIDENTIAL 1

PUBLIC RECORDS ACT 1958/PUBLIC RECORDS (NI) ACT 1923

The following brief outline is for ready reference by divisional officers at EO grade or above who are concerned with the reviewing of files.

OPEN GOVERNMENT 1993

Officers should be aware of the recommendations in the White Paper on Open Government published in 1993 which include consideration of public release of files earlier than 30 years old.

When action is complete and the file is PA (ie put away in RMU)

The officer concerned writes, in the appropriate box on the front of the file cover, a destroy or review date and his/her signature or uses the form supplied inside the file. In this way he/she gives to RMU staff one of the following three instructions.

- (1) in ? years' time destroy or review the file (0 to 4 years).
- (2) in 5 years' time refer the file to the Division for First review.
- (3) 20 years after the file's last paper refer the file to the Division for Second Review.

An officer deciding on instructions (2) or (3) must insert in the file a note explaining why that course is necessary.

Whenever a file in PA is brought out for further action and is later PA again a further decision on its destruction or review must be made and this will supersede the original instruction.

AT FIRST REVIEW (at the latest 5 years from date of last paper).

The Divisional Officer to whom a file is passed for first review completes the appropriate form in accordance with Records Management Procedures and recommends either:-

- (1) Destruction.
- (2) Retain. The file is still required for work purposes, it should be kept for a further ? (max 5 years) for destruction, a further review or until second review.

AT SECOND REVIEW (20 years from date of last paper)

The divisional officer to whom a file is passed for second review completes the appropriate form in accordance with records management procedure and recommends either:-

- (1) Destruction
- (2) Retention for a further period on administrative grounds. *
- (3) The file be preserved and offered to either Public Record office.

* Course 2 is open, for retention normally up to 5 more years, only in respect of those records (a) to which the Division will need constant access, or (b) further retention for a period is desirable on administrative but not historical grounds.

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