

Information Management Assessment

Action plan progress
review

Cabinet Office

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Working with government
to raise standards in
information management

Contents

Background	3
Progress to address recommendations and risk areas	4
Next steps	11



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Background

The Information Management Assessment (IMA) programme is the best-practice model for government bodies wishing to demonstrate commitment to the principles of good information management.

The Cabinet Office IMA took place in 2013. We conducted interviews at the department's Whitehall offices between 24 June and 8 August 2013. Cabinet Office produced a detailed action plan and we formally assessed progress against the plan in September 2015. The IMA report and action plan are published on The National Archives website.¹

This progress review summarises key developments since the 2013 IMA. Areas where continued attention is required are detailed in the 'Next Steps' section.

¹ <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/manage-information/ima/ima-reports-action-plans/>

Progress to address recommendations and risk areas

1 The value of information

Performance rating	IMA 2013	Review 2015
Communicating and realising value	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Managing information as an asset	Development Area	Satisfactory

Situation at the time of the IMA

Cabinet Office had developed an Information Strategy in February 2012 which embraced a key set of information related policies and strategies, but this was not embedded in practice throughout the department. There was a lack of consistency across the department, although pockets of excellence were noted. For instance, there was no consistency in information asset ownership. Cabinet Office had recently restructured its corporate governance at the time of the IMA and following this there was some confusion over the overlap of particular roles, including the Senior Information Risk Owner and the Chief Information Officer. There was also no longer a forum for information stakeholders to discuss information management policy and issues. Cabinet Office had done some exemplary work with What to Keep schedules, but this had not yet been extended to new policy areas.

Two high-level presentations were given to, and signed off by, Cabinet Office Board which set out the vision for information management in the digital age. The presentations also set out a governance structure, the steps needed to deliver a 'technology environment' and a means of measuring success.

Since the IMA Cabinet Office has established a network of information managers across the department. This network is being used to disseminate good practice - the core KIM team is, for instance, sending out hints and tips on good records management practice. This network is playing an important part in helping to drive consistency throughout the department.

The Assessment Team noted that further work on identifying information of value is taking place. Workflows are being put in place for each team to enable them to make decisions on 'What to Keep' and guidance on 'What to Keep' has been circulated to teams.

The Permanent Secretary has been a vocal and active supporter of the KIM agenda since the IMA. A note was circulated to all senior managers in early 2015 from the (then) Permanent Secretary stating that information management needs to be resourced properly and standards needed to improve. Following this, a league table has been introduced which shows progress against seven criteria such as whether teams are using a naming convention and whether they are saving information of value. Teams have to provide evidence to back up their scores. The core KIM team plan to write to directors setting out what they need to do to improve performance.

The planned review to assess the benefits obtained from the February 2012 information strategy has not been conducted. This review would allow Cabinet Office to learn lessons both in terms of what worked well and in identifying barriers to achievement of previous strategic goals that are still relevant today. We repeat our recommendation that it is carried out.

The Information Asset Registers are a useful tool in encouraging asset owners to value their information and also in managing risk. Cabinet Office has fully engaged with the Information Assurance and Cyber Security Engagement Programme training run by The National Archives on behalf of Cabinet Office and offered to Information Asset Owners, which is an essential step in understanding and managing risks to information assets.

In conclusion, Cabinet Office has developed its thinking and strategies for managing

its records, including digital information. It now needs to continue the work started on delivering these strategies.

2 Digital information and supporting technology

Performance rating	IMA 2013	Review 2015
Supporting information through technology	Development area	Progressing towards satisfactory
Digital continuity and IT change	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Situation at the time of the IMA

Cabinet Office digital information was captured through a number of systems which were not interoperable, including two electronic records management systems and the FLEX system for highly classified information. These were in addition to shared drives and email, which were often the systems preferred by staff. Growing volumes of digital records were being stored in these systems, which had no automatic retention schedules. Cabinet Office needed to establish clear business requirements for the management of digital records.

Since the IMA, a Knowledge and Information Manager in the Major Events and Operations Group has been appointed who is working alongside Government Digital Service to deliver a technology strategy and solution for the department. In 2015 Cabinet Office introduced Google Apps to replace its EDRM, Meridio. Relevant information from shared drives and Meridio was migrated into the new system. Information Technology provision and support has been brought back in-house since the assessment. Ongoing work on Google Apps includes incorporating retention

schedules which will build on the digital ‘What to Keep’ schedules that have been drawn up.

Number 10 continues to use SharePoint 2010 for digital records management. The system was working well at the time of the IMA, with good compliance.

A new Information Strategy for Cabinet Office Technology Transformation has been approved since the assessment. A major focus of this strategy and the work following on from it is the introduction of Google Apps. Google Apps is being tailored to ensure that it meets Cabinet Office needs as an electronic records management system. Google Docs is currently being piloted in a number of teams and issues addressed as they arise through these pilots. Cabinet Office should continue to work closely with The National Archives as it implements Google Apps.

3 Information risk, governance and oversight

Performance rating	IMA 2013	Review 2015
Recognising information risk	Development area	Development area
Establishing control	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Providing guidance	Satisfactory	Progressing towards Good practice
Measuring impact	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Situation at the time of the IMA

Cabinet Office demonstrated a core strength in ensuring the security of information. However, the wider information risks were not clearly defined, documented or managed. The IMA report recommended that existing structures and policies be extended to give this control and oversight. Further recommendations included the need for KIM training to be included in induction training, and that wider information-related risks be tracked and mitigated.

A statement on records management performance has been added to corporate compliance statements. It is planned that progress will also be tracked through a traffic light system. This will be an important development that will highlight levels of performance, enable consistency and drive improvement. We urge that this is progressed as a priority.

A governance structure was established that included regular reporting to the SIRO. This did lapse following internal reorganisation but a new working group has been established to support the SIRO in reviewing current activities and advising on future work. The group forms part of the wider governance for Information Management, which is led by the Permanent Secretary. The working group has the potential to provide direction for information and records management as well as information assurance. To address the gap in governance identified in our original report we recommend that records management is added to the terms of reference for this body.

Since the IMA, the role of Departmental Records Officer has been split between teams, with the creation of the new Knowledge & Information Manager in the Major Events & Operations Group. It is important that there is a joined-up approach to records management irrespective of format. A clear governance structure would achieve this.

Any new Cabinet Office project now needs to get approval from the SIRO. In each

project, data protection risks are flagged. In addition, the new SIRO working group reviews risks on a regular basis. The identification of common information standards, against which performance of business areas can be measured, has allowed the department to better assess its exposure to levels of risk from records management performance. Cabinet Office is reviewing its risk appetite and this will be expanded to include information management risks. This work was put on hold pending the appointment of a new SIRO. We urge Cabinet Office to give this priority.

Information management training is now included as part of the corporate induction programme.

4 Records, review and transfer

Performance rating	IMA 2013	Review 2015
Oversight of records and selection	Good practice	Good practice
Implementing disposal decisions	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Situation at the time of the IMA

Cabinet Office was meeting its obligations under the Public Records Act. It demonstrated some good practice, for instance in holding history days to actively promote interest and understanding of its records. Paper records were well managed and the department was up to date with reviewing files ready for transfer to The National Archives. The department has worked closely with The National Archives to resource the release of records, and to meet its obligations under the 20-year rule. Cabinet Office was encouraged to maintain this level of performance by drawing up

firm plans across all records formats.

Cabinet Office has recruited additional resources in two important areas: reviewers, and updates to the inventory of information assets. This is a positive step. There is also a need to plan for future requirements, and Cabinet Office has agreed with The National Archives to draw up an in-year, resourced plan.

Cabinet Office holds many legacy digital records. There are significant challenges to address here and the Cabinet Office is working closely with The National Archives to tackle these. Issues include helping reviewers prepare for the scale and complexity of digital and hybrid records and ensuring the digital continuity of the records.

Next Steps

The National Archives will continue to work closely with Cabinet Office so that the department is supported as it continues its work on information and records management. Outstanding recommendations will be reviewed at the time of the department's IMA reassessment. It is recommended that Cabinet Office focus on the following:

- Engage with The National Archives' Digital Transfer team to ensure that Cabinet Office is prepared for its first digital transfers.
- Review its risk register to ensure the risk of not capturing and keeping the right records is given the priority it needs.
- Enact the agreed new governance structure to oversee information management.
- Progress the introduction of the traffic light system to monitor KIM performance
- Continue to work closely with The National Archives as Google Apps is implemented.
- Carry out a review of the 2012 strategy to ensure effective strategy can be established for the management of information in all formats in the future.