

Information Management Assessment

IMA programme strategy

2015-19

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Working with government
to raise standards in
information management

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The National Archives and the Information Management Assessment (IMA) programme

1 About the National Archives

- 1.1 The National Archives is the official archive and publisher for the UK government, and for England and Wales. It is the guardian of some of the nation's most iconic documents dating back more than 1,000 years.
- 1.2 The National Archives is also the government's expert in the management, preservation, use and re-use of information. It provides guidance and support in areas from records appraisal and selection to information assurance and security.
- 1.3 The National Archives is uniquely placed to provide trusted and independent advice and services across government and the wider public sector, setting standards in information and records management and monitoring them through the IMA programme.

2 About the IMA programme

- 2.1 The IMA programme was established in 2008 to provide assurance to government departments and to The National Archives' Chief Executive and Keeper that required standards for information and records management are being met.
- 2.2 The IMA process is designed to help organisations meet requirements set out in the Section 46 Code of Practice for the creation, keeping, management and destruction of records.¹
- 2.3 We champion a broader understanding of information risk, encouraging organisations to:
 - recognise the potential impact of poor records management
 - define and monitor risks to ensure oversight.
- 2.4 Our reports and recommendations promote the following core criteria:

¹ nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/manage-information/planning/records-management-code/

- good governance
- an enabling IT environment
- a supportive culture.

2.5 Our message is that good information management practices help ensure the government record is preserved and remains accessible. Robust processes and early identification of issues support the selection and transfer of records, now and in the future.

2.6 In addition, if an organisation knows what information it holds, understands its value and manages it as an asset, it is well placed to protect that information and to exploit it for the public benefit.

3 Recent achievements and milestones already reached

3.1 In 2013 we introduced a new report structure and performance framework. This incorporated digital continuity and information assurance considerations, together with key concepts promoted by the 2012 HM Government Information Principles.

3.2 In 2014, we conducted our first IMA reassessment, taking the programme into a new phase. We are now revisiting departments to ensure continued progress and to tackle new challenges that have arisen since their initial IMAs.

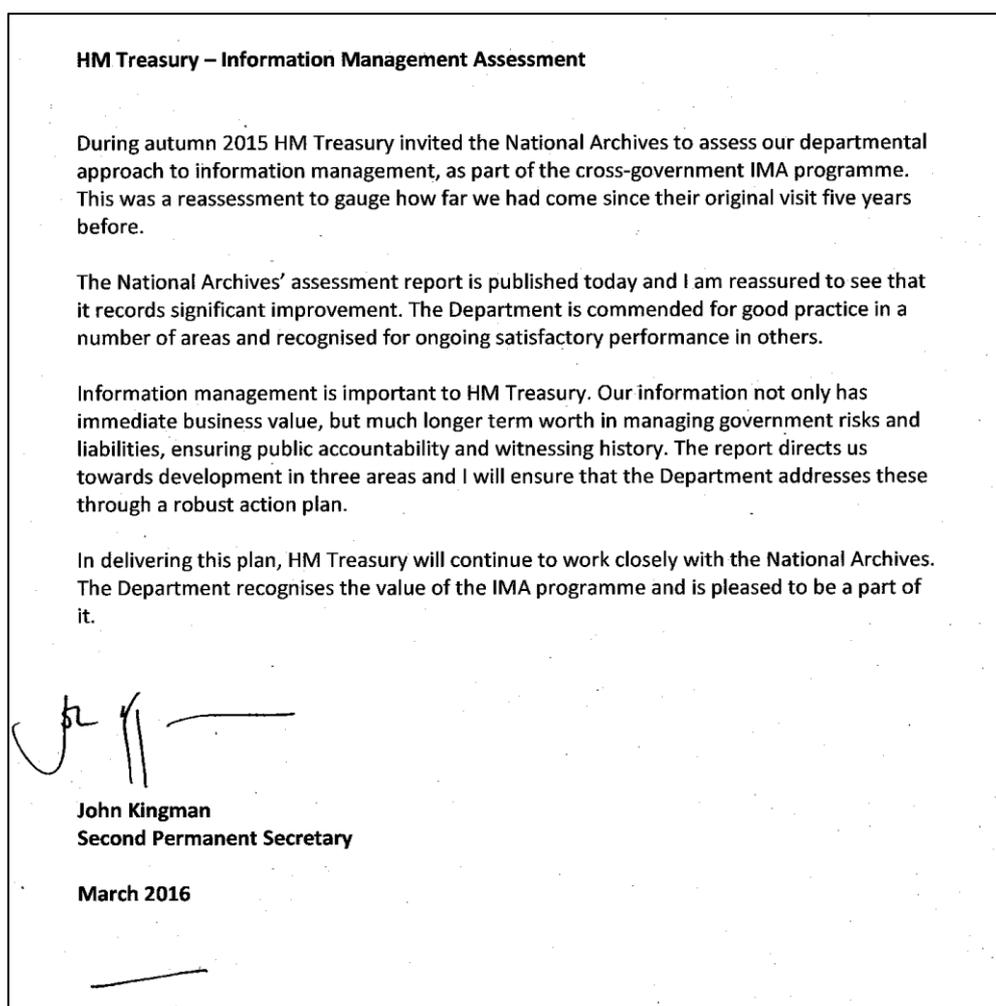
3.3 In response to recommendations made in Sir Alex Allan's 2014 *Records Review* report, we published two reports in Autumn 2014 and Spring 2015.² The first provided an overview of the good practice we have identified, while the second highlighted common problems and pitfalls.³

3.4 With the assessments of the Home Office (June 2015) and the Northern Ireland Office (February 2016), we completed assessments of all major government departments. This was both a strategic milestone for 2015-16, established in The National Archives' business plan, *Archives Inspire* (see page 6), and a commitment made in response to recommendations in Sir Alex Allan's 2014 *Records Review*.

² www.gov.uk/government/publications/records-review-by-sir-alex-allan

³ nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/manage-information/ima/ima-reports-action-plans/

- 3.5 With the assessment of the Houses of Parliament (March 2016), we expanded our traditional reach by conducting our first assessment of a wider public sector organisation not subject to the Public Records Act. By this point we had conducted 30 IMAs, published 24 IMA reports, closed 20 action plans and published 13 progress review reports.
- 3.6 In 2015, the Department for Education became the first department to publicly publish a statement of commitment to our process in advance of its IMA.⁴
- 3.7 The provision of statements to accompany published reports has highlighted the continued priority attached to information management and improving standards by government departments. With the publication of the statement from the HM Treasury Permanent Secretary, John Kingman, over half of our reports are positioned in this way.



⁴ www.gov.uk/government/news/dfes-commitment-to-information-management-assessment

How we will support The National Archives' business plan

4 *Archives Inspire, 2015-19*

- 4.1 *Archives Inspire* is The National Archives' business plan for 2015-19. It is structured around four key audience groups – government, public, archives sector, research – and the overarching theme of digital.
- 4.2 By working to deliver the IMA programme strategy, we will support The National Archives in its duty under the Public Records Act to:
- 'provide guidance and supervision to public record bodies on the safekeeping and selection of public records'.
- 4.3 The IMA programme will also work to support *Archives Inspire*, with a particular focus on the following priorities and goals:

Government
We will provide expert advice and scrutiny to government, ensuring the record survives and thrives.
Key underlying goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Hold government departments to account for their record handling, to keep the transition to the 20-year rule on track.▶ Enable greater government transparency, an increasingly open record and innovation in the use, re-use and sharing of data.

Digital
We will become a digital archive by design.
Key underlying goal: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Lead a transformation in how digital records are managed at scale, from creation to presentation.

5 Key considerations for the future

- 5.1 The departments with which we work are required to either transfer their records to The National Archives within scheduled timescales or ensure that they are retained under necessary legal cover.
- 5.2 As a result of the ten-year transition period to the 20-year rule, government departments are required to process two years' worth of records instead of one each year until 2023.
- 5.3 As they address increased volumes, departments also need to address the challenge raised by a shift in format from paper to digital records.
- 5.4 Departments will need to have the right skills in place to deliver new required ways of working and, more than ever, ensure that strong links are made between information management and ICT strategies. They will need to ensure that they do not fall behind on processing their records, and that any legacy records are dealt with.
- 5.5 The existing position across government on managing digital records was established by Sir Alex Allan in his 2015 *Government digital records and archives review* report. The National Archives is playing a leading role in researching and developing solutions to the digital challenge and is working with Cabinet Office on the cross-government response.

6 Objectives for the IMA programme through to 2019

- 6.1 To support The National Archives in this work and help deliver *Archives Inspire 2015-19* we have identified three core goals. Achieving these will ensure that the IMA programme is best positioned to support The National Archives in its leadership role.

6.2 Goal 1: Ensure the right organisations participate in the right way

There is a range of organisations that would benefit from participating in the IMA programme; there are also organisations that we could – and, in some cases, should – bring within it. The IMA programme needs to have the right scope and direct and use its resources to best effect. To enable this we must:

- 6.2.1 Define who needs assessment by prioritising organisations from a core target list based on defined risk factors, which is reviewed and updated regularly.
- 6.2.2 Carry out assessment activity in line with a published schedule that incorporates both IMAs and IMA reassessments, aiming to revisit organisations every three to five years according to risks identified.
- 6.2.3 Use self-assessment and any other appropriate methods to complement and extend the reach of the programme, supporting the identification of risk outside our core target list.
- 6.2.4 Seek additional opportunities to share our experience and expertise, and to promote key messages.

6.3 Goal 2: Ensure our reports are effective, and make the right recommendations

Assessments are based on the documents we review and staff we interview at a specific point in time. IMA reports need to be proportionate, targeted and robust, highlighting the right threats and opportunities and correctly identifying the steps departments need to take. To enable this we must:

- 6.3.1 Maintain our understanding of good practice and the common challenges that government organisations face.
- 6.3.2 Develop and increase our own expertise and knowledge through training, networking, horizon-scanning and monitoring developments within the government KIM and IT professions.
- 6.3.3 Maintain procedures that support clear communication of risk and the delivery of helpful, unbiased, proportionate and timely reports and recommendations.
- 6.3.4 Base our reports on an IMA performance framework that codifies good-practice principles – such as the Section 46 Code of Practice – together with current information policy and legislation.

- 6.3.5 Pay particular attention to digital continuity principles and culture together with governance- and technology-related considerations that support the effective safekeeping and transfer of records in digital and paper form.
- 6.3.6 Ensure that reports are subject to appropriate internal and external scrutiny and clearance processes.
- 6.3.7 Ensure that we continue to promote and share the good practice and lessons learned that we identify through our assessments.

6.4 **Goal 3: Ensure that organisations implement their action plans in the right way**

IMA action plans are developed and owned by departments. We need to work with and support departments to ensure that:

- action plans are targeted and effective
- the right steps are taken to mitigate risk and improve performance.

To enable this we must:

- 6.4.1 Maintain senior-level engagement within the organisations that we assess and obtain concrete commitments to develop and deliver action plans.
- 6.4.2 Work with colleagues in The National Archives and across government to deliver a joined-up, consistent approach and ensure that organisations receive the support and guidance they need to progress.
- 6.4.3 Review and feedback on departmental action plans to ensure that proposed actions are appropriate; establish fixed timetables for action plans with clearly-communicated milestones.
- 6.4.4 Publish progress reviews that reflect work done to address our recommendations and the extent to which risks are being managed.
- 6.4.5 Define the action that we will take if organisations do not engage or undertake required work, including establishing clear escalation routes.

7 Impact indicators and milestones against which our progress will be assessed

- 7.1 The following 2016-17 milestone has been identified for the IMA programme in relation to The National Archives' strategic priority: 'hold government departments to account for their record handling, to keep the transition to the 20-year rule on track'.

Milestone for 2016-17

- ▶ Strengthen and develop the Information Management Assessment programme by a formal review process, including published reports and actions plans.

- 7.2 The IMA programme contributes to the following impact indicator adopted by The National Archives:

- Records and information management services used across government.

:Impact indicator outcomes for 2016-17

- ▶ Number of Information Management Assessments (IMA) reports published
- ▶ Action plans and annual review reports published.

8 How our progress will be measured and reported

- 8.1 Progress on achieving these milestones will be reported internally through scheduled reporting in person and by exception to The National Archives' Executive Team and Board.

- 8.2 Impact indicator outcomes will be published in the Annual Report and Accounts of The National Archives.
- 8.3 This strategy will be formally reviewed in March 2017.
- 8.4 The strategy and IMA process will be regularly examined in the interim to ensure alignment with The National Archives' business plan and with current information legislation and policy within government.