

Security Report: guidance for departments

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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at GovernmentHelpPoint@nationalarchives.gov.uk

Introduction

Each year The National Archives provides to government departments a list of records and extracts where the closure is due to expire¹. This is referred to as the Security Report, which is run from The National Archives' online catalogue, [Discovery](#). It contains all the records that are due to open on 1 January the following year.

This guidance describes how records should be handled following review by government departments, and the handling of records for that review. Careful consideration should be made as, in accordance with TNA's [Procedures for closure on transfer](#), when an exemption has ceased to apply under section 63 of the FOIA the records will become automatically available to members of the public at the date specified in the finalised schedule.

The report contains **all** files that are due to open and can be filtered by the lettercodes of the creating organisations, within three worksheets.

- Pieces which are closed under Freedom of Information (FOI) or before 2005 on Extended Closure Lord Chancellors Instruments (LCIs),
- Items which are closed under FOI or on LCIs,
- 'Normal' (30 year) closures – those records under 30 years, transferred before 2005.

The report also contains worksheets with details of digital records due to open.

- there are two tabs for Datasets – both the datasets themselves and their documentation,
- born-digital records.

Queries regarding access to the datasets and their documentation should be sent to DigitalPreservation@nationalarchives.gov.uk

Checking records and reviewing the security report

The report needs to be checked to see if your departments' records are included. If departments have absorbed functions and responsibilities from any of the listed organisations you are advised to check those records as well as those listed for your own department.

¹ Section 3.3.1 - [Code of practice on the management of records under section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act](#).

The records then need to be reviewed to confirm that no exempt information is present when they are to be opened.

If you wish to extend the closure of any information, please ensure that applications are made to the Advisory Council on National Records and Archives **that year** so that the access is changed and the Discovery entry is updated before 1 January.

If you would like to see the report earlier it can be generated through a search of Discovery: restricting an Advanced Search to your department's records with the appropriate opening date. Alternatively, requests and queries should be sent to: scheduleapplications@nationalarchives.gov.uk.

Open records

Once records have been reviewed, and it has been confirmed they contain no sensitivities and they are to be opened, there is no further action. The records will open and be orderable by the public from 1 January. Confirmation of this should be sent to: scheduleapplications@nationalarchives.gov.uk.

If there are exceptional circumstances, for example review overlaps with an FOI request, please contact: scheduleapplications@nationalarchives.gov.uk. Records can be opened before 1 January if the circumstances are explained.

Closed records

If records have been reviewed, and sensitivities remain, an application for continued closure should be made as soon as possible.

The Discovery entry will be updated with the new closure information once agreed.

Redacted records

If on review it is decided that records can be opened with redaction, contact scheduleapplications@nationalarchives.gov.uk and ensure the open parent can be marked up according to TNA instructions.

Once redacted, parent files will be treated the same as open records, and will open on 1 January.

Departments should make an application for closure of any extracts as soon as possible. New closed extracts will be created on Discovery, on agreement, not before.

Retention of records

Records which have been at The National Archives closed should not subsequently be retained, unless the level of sensitivity has changed and the current classification of the information is above that which can be held by The National Archives. An

application for return to department should be made as soon as possible, return of the record to a department can only be arranged after retention has been approved.

Consultation with a third party

If the contents of records need referral with another government department, it is the transferring department's responsibility to contact them and arrange for consultation.

Arranging to review records

Arrangements should preferably be made to view records onsite at The National Archives. Alternatively, digital copies can be provided, at cost. Please contact Government@nationalarchives.gov.uk to arrange either of these options for access.

Original records may only be recalled under exceptional circumstances and at the request of the responsible Permanent Secretary or Accounting Officer, with the approval of the Chief Executive and Keeper of The National Archives. Please contact GovernmentHelpPoint@nationalarchives.gov.uk with any questions.

Closed descriptions

When records open on 1 January, if they have a closed description held by The National Archives, these will be released on Discovery. Departments may be contacted if The National Archives does not hold a description.