

## 8 RETENTION GUIDELINES

This section sets out the retention advice given in Sections 7.1 – 7.9 in the form of a table and follows the same order of record groups.

The following retention guidelines give suggested minimum periods for keeping each type of parish record less than 100 years old. If you are in any doubt please seek advice from your Diocesan Record Office, which is usually your local Archives and Local History Service.

### Key:

**Deposit at the at the Diocesan Record Office/Registry:** Important material which needs to be kept permanently. It is acceptable to deposit originals with the Diocesan Record Office or Diocesan Registry.

**Destroy:** Ephemeral material which can be discarded once its purpose has been served. Do not destroy if there is any possibility that the document may be required as evidence.

**Review/Sample:** Material where a proportion needs to be kept, either by reviewing its value after an agreed period, or by taking a sample. Where it is appropriate transfer the whole record series to the Local Record Office to allow the archivists there to take an appropriate sample.

### 8.1 Church Services

Basic record description	Keep in parish	Final Action
Baptism, marriage, burial, and confirmation registers	Arrange phased transfer to the Archives and Local History Service	Permanent (deposit)
Banns registers	Arrange phased transfer to the Archives and Local History Service	Permanent (deposit)
Service Registers	Arrange phased transfer to the Archives and Local History Service	Permanent (deposit)
Orders of Service	Arrange phased transfer to the Archives and Local History Service	Permanent (deposit)
Baptism certificate counterfoils; marriage certificate counterfoils; copy burial and cremation certificates; applications for baptisms, banns and marriages	Last entry + 2 years	Destroy
Intercession lists	Last entry + 5 years	Review/Sample

### 8.2 Church Buildings and Property [see also Legal Documents]

Basic record description	Keep in parish	Final Action
<b>Church, furnishing and contents</b>		
Faculties, citations and accompanying records	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Terrier and inventory, logbook	Last action + 1 year	Permanent (deposit)
Architects' Quinquennial reports	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Minutes, accounts, specifications, tenders, contracts, plans, photographs, drawings and other papers relating to major works to the church	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Contracts, tenders and specifications for minor works	Last action + 6 years	Destroy
Organ specifications, contracts, papers	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)

<b>Parsonage House</b>		
Plans, photographs, drawings	Last action + 5 years	Review for possible deposit
Minutes, accounts, specifications, tenders, contracts, plans, photographs, drawings and other papers relating to major works to the parsonage house	Last action + 5 years	Review for possible deposit
Contracts, tenders and specifications for minor works	Last action + 6 years	Destroy
Quinquennial reports	Last action + 5 years	Review for possible deposit
<b>Churchyard</b>		
Plans, registers of graves, faculties, citations and accompanying records	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Agreements concerning maintenance of churchyard, graves and memorials	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Minutes, accounts, specifications, tenders, contracts, plans, photographs, drawings and other papers relating to major works to the churchyard	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Contracts, tenders and specifications for minor works	Last action + 6 years	Destroy
<b>Church Hall</b>		
Plans, architects' reports	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Music, dancing and P.R.S. licences	Last action + 5 years	Review/Sample
Agreements for use of hall	Current year + 6 years	Review/Sample
Minutes, accounts, specifications, tenders, contracts, plans, photographs, drawings and other papers relating to major works to the church hall	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Contracts, tenders and specifications for minor works	Last action + 6 years	Destroy

### 8.3 General Parish Administration

Basic record description	Keep in parish	Final Action
<b>Incumbent and other ministers</b>		
Institutions, admissions, licences	Current year + 6 years	Review for possible deposit
Correspondence concerning appointments	Last action + 5 years	Review/Sample
Union of Benefice papers, pastoral schemes and orders; plurality orders; documents establishing team or group councils; Joint PCCs or District Church Councils, and relevant papers and correspondence	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Ministers' papers relating to major parish developments or parish audits	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Ministers' correspondence and other papers on routine administration	Current year + 3 years	Destroy
Maps of parish boundaries, street lists	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Copies of replies to questionnaires or important circulars	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
<b>Parochial Church Councils, Team and Group Councils, District Church Councils, etc; Churchwardens and other parish officers</b>		
Minutes of Council and Committees, Parochial Church Meetings, and Meetings of Parishioners for Appointment of Churchwardens	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)

Electoral Rolls	Last complete review + 6 years	Review/Sample
Parish profiles on vacancy in benefice	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Visitation papers	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Copies of replies to Articles of Enquiry	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Sequestration records	Current year + 6 years	Review/Sample
Visitors' books	Last entry + 3 years	Destroy
Routine correspondence	Current year + 3 years	Destroy
Copies of circulars sent by other organisations, non-local material	Current year + 1 year	Destroy

## 8.4 Parish Finance

Basic record description	Keep in parish	Final Action
Annual audited accounts	Current year + 6 years	Permanent (deposit)
Cash books, bills, vouchers, bank statements, other subsidiary financial records	Current year + 6 years	Destroy
Planned giving schemes	Current year + 6 years	Destroy unless anonymised
Gift Aid Declarations	Keep as long as they are valid + 6 years	Destroy
Insurance policies – employers' liability	Current year + 40 years	Destroy
Insurance policies – other than employers' liability	Current year + 6 years	Destroy
Church Copyright Licence information	Current year + 6 years	Review/Sample

## 8.5 Pastoral Care, Safeguarding and Health and Safety

Basic record description	Keep in parish	Final Action
Accident reporting sheets or book – if relating to adults	Date of incident + 20 years	Destroy
Accident reporting sheets or book – if relating to children	The date when a child became an adult + 20 years	Destroy
A clear Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) certificate or disclosure letter of confirmation.	Within 6 months of the recruitment decision	Destroy
Risk assessment recommendations and management plan in the event of an unclear or blemished CRB disclosure.	100 (increased from 50) years after appointment/employment ceases	Destroy
Records of other safeguarding adult or child protection incidents either within the parish or within a family/ by an individual where the Parish was the reporting body or involved in care or monitoring plans. That is, any sex offender risk assessments and monitoring agreements.	100 (increased from 50) years after the conclusion of the matter.	Destroy
Records of any children's activities, Sunday school/ junior church/youth club registers and related general safety risk assessments. Any communication from parents or other parties in relation to the above.	100 (increased from 50) years after the activity ceases.	Destroy
Personnel records relating to lay employees not working with children and vulnerable adults: including annual performance assessments, disciplinary matters, job descriptions, training and termination documentation.	6 years after employment ceases	Destroy

Personnel records with contact with children and vulnerable adults including all documentation concerning any allegations and investigation regardless of the findings.	100 (increased from 50) years after the conclusion of the matter.	Destroy
Parish agreement with the diocese on Obtaining CRB Disclosures.	Last action + 5 years	Permanent

## 8.6 Legal Documents

Basic record description	Keep in parish	Final Action
Deeds, Local Ecumenical Partnership agreements, statutory documents etc; title deeds, other documents relating to title, acquisition, disposal, or rights over a property; statutory notices, orders etc, including Orders in Council for closure of churchyard; and relevant correspondence	For all documents in this category, consult the Diocesan Registrar	Permanent (deposit)
Charities: deeds, schemes, orders, minutes, accounts, distribution lists, benefactions	Consult Trustees' Solicitor	Permanent (deposit)

## 8.7 Other Parish Records

Basic record description	Keep in parish	Final Action
Public Notices	Current year + 5 years	Consider sampling
Rota Duty Lists	Current year + 2 year	Destroy
Routine Correspondence	Current year + 6 years	Destroy

## 8.8 Parish Organisations

Basic record description	Keep in parish	Final Action
<b><i>Parish organisations - M.U., Youth Clubs, choir, bell-ringers etc</i></b>		
Minutes, reports, accounts	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Membership lists	Last action + 5 years	Destroy
Correspondence and contracts	Current year + 6 years	Review/Sample
Choir register	Current year + 3 years	Review for possible deposit
Music lists	Current year + 3 years	Review/Sample

## 8.9 Publications

Basic record description	Keep in parish	Final Action
Bibles, Communion Books, Hymn Books, Prayer Books, Psalters and Service Books.	Replace with new versions	Consider keeping one sample copy on replacement
Altar and desk editions of the Bible, Common Book of Prayer and Common Worship.	Replace with new versions	Permanently retain in the parish.
Church Guides and Parish Histories	Replace with new versions	Permanent (deposit)
Parish magazines	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)
Scrapbooks, newspaper cuttings, brochures, record of gifts, photographs	Last action + 5 years	Permanent (deposit)

## 7 DECIDING WHAT THE PARISH NEEDS TO KEEP

When the majority of older parish registers and records have been deposited in the Diocesan Record Office, most parishes will only be responsible for records of current administrative value. Although many of these will be of little or no historical value, it is important to be able to distinguish between these records and those which will be of historical value.

The purpose of this leaflet is to give parish officers the confidence to distinguish between the records which ought to be kept permanently and those which may safely be thrown away when they are no longer, required for administrative purposes. This advice applies equally whether the records are traditional paper records or have an electronic format.

For ease of reference records have been grouped into separate subject categories. The guidance about the retention or otherwise of records has been divided into three categories:

**The parish must keep:** This section contains the records which parishes are legally required to maintain whilst the records are in use and then to transfer to the Diocesan Record Office when the records have ceased to be of use in the parish.

**The parish may keep:** This section contains the records, which parishes may keep or may not; parishes are advised to consider keeping these records that may be of permanent interest, however the Diocesan Record Office may not be able to accept deposits of such records.

**The parish should dispose of:** This section relates to records, which may be safely disposed of at the end of their administrative life.

For ease of reference records have been grouped into separate subject categories.

### 7.1 Church Services

The parish **must keep**:

- Registers of baptisms, marriages and burials - Permanent (deposit at the Diocesan Record Office)
- Registers of banns, confirmations and services - Permanent (deposit at the Diocesan Record Office)

The parish **may keep**:

- Registers of marriage blessings
- Registers of funerals/interments
- An archive copy of any service sheets for special services or any surveys of church attendance.
- Photographs of special services, church events, clergy and congregation

The parish **should dispose of**:

- Baptism certificate counterfoils, marriage certificate counterfoils, copies of burial and cremation certificates, copies of banns certificates and applications for banns, baptisms and marriage services

### 7.2 Church Buildings and Property

Churchwardens are required by the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991 (which came into force on 1st March 1993) to compile and maintain (in the form recommended by the Council for the Care of Churches) a terrier and inventory and a logbook giving details of alterations, additions and repairs to, and other events affecting the church or the articles or land belonging to it, and with a note of the location of any other relevant documents.

The churchwardens must send a copy of the inventory to the person designated by the bishop as soon as practicable after it has been compiled, and it would be wise also to send a copy to the Diocesan Registrar if they are not the designated recipient. They must notify the designated recipient of any alterations at intervals laid down by the bishop.

The terrier and inventory and the logbook must be presented by the churchwardens to the parochial church council at the beginning of each year, together with a signed statement to the effect that the contents are accurate. Mention should be made of new items, losses or disposals.

The parish **must keep**:

- Former terriers, inventories and logbooks - Permanent (deposit)
- Faculties, and accompanying papers, photographs, plans and drawings - Permanent (deposit)

- Plans, correspondence, accounts and photographs relating to major repairs or alterations - Permanent (deposit)
- Reports by Council for the Care of Churches, English Heritage and other conservation organisations - Permanent (deposit)

The parish **may keep**:

- A logbook or scrapbook recording parish events

Note 1 These are very valuable records for ecclesiastical and social historians. It is strongly recommended that all parishes maintain some similar type of document, and the form of logbook published by the Council for the Care of Churches allows space for this.

### 7.3 General Parish Administration

The core documents are the minutes of the parochial church council and its committees.

If these are still paper documents, but no longer written by hand in bound volumes, it is important that the signed copies of minutes are properly kept. It is recommended that PCC secretaries maintain minutes, produced by a word processor and kept in folders, by the standards outlined in the Company Secretaries Handbook<sup>4</sup>. Advice about this can be obtained from your Diocesan Record Office.

Note 2 The Company Secretary's Handbook A Guide To Statutory Duties and Responsibilities, 5th Edition, 2008 by Helen Ashton, publisher Kogan Page, ISBN 0749453214. See sections 5 – 6 which give guidance about good record keeping practice.

Pasting or sticking typed copies in bound volumes is not recommended because of the generally unsound archival quality of glues and adhesives as well as the risk of breaking the spine of the binding. Care must be taken, too, with ring binders because of the metal parts, which may rust. Loose minutes should either be properly bound into volumes or kept in an archival box, in which case the pages should be consecutively numbered. For legal reasons it is strongly recommended that pages of minutes are not kept loose but are filed in meeting order in files which comply with the standards outlined in the Company Secretaries Handbook.

The parish **must keep**:

- The signed copies of the PCC minutes and its committees and any accompanying papers and reports - Permanent (deposit)

The parish **may keep**:

- Letters and reports relating to major developments in the parish if they contain important information
- An archive copy of questionnaire returns
- Any statement as to the conditions, needs and traditions of the parish (a 'parish profile') produced by the parochial church council under the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986 on a vacancy in the benefice, as well as other documents held for or on behalf of the parochial church council or churchwardens in relation to the vacancy and the appointment of the new incumbent
- Maps of the parish specially prepared for church purposes
- Church electoral rolls and parish audits
- An archive copy of all printed items, such as booklets, produced by the parish
- An archive set, preferably bound, of all parish magazines
- An archive set of the weekly notice sheets if the parish does not produce a parish magazine or if the weekly notice sheets contain information of long-term interest
- All these documents should be dated.

The parish **should dispose of**:

- Correspondence and other records relating to routine parish administration

### 7.4 Parish Finance

Most parishes generate a considerable quantity of financial records, but not all of these need be kept permanently.

The parish **must keep**:

- The annual accounts of all parochial church council funds – Permanent (deposit)

Note 3 The Archbishops' Council's Finance Department has produced a parish account book entitled Parochial Church Accounts, in a loose-leaf format which provides for the inclusion of audited accounts.



The parish **should dispose of:**

- Other supporting documents, including cash books, bank statements, wages records, vouchers and routine correspondence (more than 7 years old)
- Planned giving and gift aid records (more than 7 years old)

However, where Gift Aid Declarations are open-ended in the form 'all my past and future donations', these need to be kept for as long as they are still valid, plus 6 years. Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs have the right to audit them whilst tax claims are still being made and for 6 years thereafter.

## 7.5 Pastoral Care, Safeguarding and Health and Safety

Personnel files relating to the clergy kept by bishops and their staff fall outside the scope of this guide. For such guidance see "Confidential Files On Ministers - Guidance Notes for Bishops and Bishops Secretaries". The most recent edition was issued by Lambeth Palace in June 2008 and is published on the Lambeth Palace Library website: <http://www.lambethpalacelibrary.org/content/recordsmanagement>

In most parishes the clergy will keep records dealing with pastoral matters many of which are likely to be highly confidential. It is recommended that these are disposed of once the matter has been resolved in line with data protection recommendations. Where the subject of the information gives expressed informed permission, it can be very important to pass on the information to another incumbent or another church minister if they move. (This would usually be to their benefit in that subsequent care will be continued).

If these records are being retained for research purposes, such a purpose should be included in the Data Protection notification, if there is one and if deposited in the Diocesan Record Office a closure period of at least 85 years must be applied to the records from the date of the most recent document on the file.

Permission is not required, unless it can be safely obtained, if failing to pass the information on would mean there is a likely potential risk to a child or vulnerable adult, or such failure would prejudice the detection or prevention of a criminal offence.

The same rules should be applied to any confidential papers relating to the selection of any new incumbent for the parish. Your diocese will be the 'Registered Body' for processing applications to the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) on behalf of the Parish. CRB certificates will normally be held at diocesan level by the Registered Body (for up to 6 months). The Parish Child Protection or Safeguarding Representative should keep all their documentation relating to recruitment or other child or vulnerable adult protection securely. Such records must be passed on to subsequent representatives and incumbents. It is strongly recommended a file is kept for each lay employee and volunteer and that this should be kept for a minimum of 50 years after their appointment ceases.

These files should be kept in a locked filing cabinet by the incumbent or in the parish office. It is essential to keep accurate records of any concerns, disclosures and allegations relating to children and vulnerable adults. Facts observed or disclosed should be accurately recorded, signed and dated. If records are being kept without the knowledge of the subject, it should be clearly recorded why this is so, for instance if there is a pattern of behaviour which needs to be monitored or third party information, such as a letter of complaint or police information. Actions taken and decisions made should be noted. Who is party to the information, for example, the subject of the report, the child's parent etc, 'a need to know' monitoring group for a sex offender, should be recorded.

Note 4 Where 'personnel' files are kept on volunteers or employees they will be in principle entitled to see personal data on their file (subject to making a written request and paying a fee of up to £10) but there are various statutory exceptions and also particular rules relating to third party communications. If you have concerns about whether information should be disclosed in a particular case, advice should be sought from the diocesan Registrar.

The parish **must keep securely:**

- A file for each lay member of staff and volunteer
- Parish agreement with the diocese on obtaining CRB Disclosures
- Letters and other correspondence pertaining to disclosures from the diocese should be kept for as long as those volunteers and employees are in the particular role for which Disclosure was obtained. CRB certificates must never be duplicated and must be destroyed within 6 months of a recruitment decision being made.
- A dated register of those who have been CRB cleared, for administrative purposes (such as ensuring renewals, or to provide a quick reference). However, any copies of actual CRB disclosures should be kept for no longer than 6 months.
- Any communication from third parties, e.g. complainants on any matter, the police or Social Services and a factual record of the actions taken.

## 7.6 Legal Documents

The parish **must keep**:

- Title Deeds
- Local Ecumenical Partnership Agreements
- Pastoral Schemes
- Orders in Council for the closure of a churchyard
- Charity Schemes

## 7.7 Other Parish Records

In most cases the parish records fall clearly into a category in which they either have to be retained or may be destroyed after they cease to be current. However, there are a small number of records where historical value is limited but the bulk is considerable. In such cases it is permissible to retain a representative sample of records to be determined by the parish in consultation with the Diocesan Record Office.

The parish **may keep**:

- Public notices
- Rota duty lists
- Routine correspondence

Some of these are records which have been outlined for destruction in the advice given above. If it is decided to sample these records then the basis for the sample must be determined at the outset and rigidly adhered to. A good basis for sampling is to keep all records in the sample categories for a fixed period, eg one month in every year, or one year in every ten. Where doubt exists your Diocesan Record Office will be able to advise. It may be appropriate to transfer the whole series to the Diocesan Record Office in order to allow the archivist to take an appropriate sample.

## 7.8 Parish Organisations

Where separate organisations in the parish maintain their own records they should manage their records against the guidelines outlined in 7.1-7.4 above.

## 7.9 Publications

The service books used by a parish form part of its liturgical history and consideration should be given to keeping a representative sample in the parish. Publications produced by the parish such as parish magazines and church guides for visitors and parish histories should be kept and copies offered to the Diocesan Record Office and to the appropriate local reference library.

- A copy of all printed service books, communion booklets, Bibles etc. as they are replaced by new versions
- Finely bound altar and desk editions of the Book of Common Prayer and of the Bible

Note 5 Since the coming of Common Worship and more versions of the scriptures, some are no longer in regular use. They are, however, of value and should be kept safely in the vestry. Some dioceses have a repository for them.

- One copy of hymn and prayer books and psalters, service sheets and communion booklets (these are of value for the study of liturgy in the parish)
- A copy of each edition of the church guide
- One copy of a parish history



## APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL RETENTION ADVICE

The official Church of England advice does not cover a limited number of additional types of data, mainly related to church employees and suppliers. In addition to the information detailed above (see particularly sections 8.2 Church Buildings and Property and 8.5 Pastoral Care, Safeguarding and Health and Safety), St Pancras PCC will hold information in line with the data retention periods set out below:

TYPE OF DATA	GUIDELINE RETENTION PERIOD
<b>EMPLOYEE RECORDS</b>	
Details of references of successful applications	Duration of employment
Records of unsuccessful applications, including references	Six months after notifying the unsuccessful candidate
Wages, expenses and overtime records	Six years plus the current year
Statutory maternity pay records	Six years after employment has ceased
Sickness records	Six years after employment has ceased
Payroll documentation	Six years after employment has ceased
Pension records	Three years after the end of the tax year for statutory sick pay purposes
<b>SUPPLIER AND CONSULTANT RECORDS</b>	
Name and contact details	Six years after contract ends
Copies of contracts (other than contracts related to property)	Six years after expiry or termination of contract