You are not allowed to keep information indefinitely. By answering this question you will understand:  
  
- how to decide whether or not to keep different types of information  
- how to dispose of information safely  
You will also be reminded to check again for any information you may already hold.

**We are all responsible**

Thinking about when and how to archive or delete information is your responsibility.

Personal information should not be kept “just in case”. You should keep personal information for only as long as you need it to deliver your service.

You should consult the Council’s retention schedules ([External](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1FIvRFGnVjqL46xcSnaBvcrZu7huJ1o1knRIFEV4gH8k/edit#gid=88414824) and [Internal](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1aG6kAc3vXriF909zKfwsv1gfHIhEnPvmVXKOJq4zSAY/edit#gid=417777779)) which has already considered factors such as business need, legal requirement and historical interest. You must obtain Head of Service and Information Management sign off before destroying the master versions of records, as explained in the LBH Records Management Policy.

You can make day to day decisions about copies and ephemeral content, for example your notebooks and any print outs of documents or records that you have for your convenience.

**Why not keep information indefinitely?**

The law is clear that any personal information must not be kept for longer than is necessary, for the purpose it was originally gathered in the first place.

Also:

* there is an increased risk that the information will go out of date, and that outdated information will be shared, by mistake or inappropriately.
* as time passes it becomes more difficult to ensure that information is up-to-date.
* you must be willing and able to respond to give people access to the information you hold about them. So, the more information you retain about people, the more difficult this can be.
* duplicates of information are a particular risk, because no-one is able to keep track of all the different records.

For example, keeping a print-out or offline copy of a document that contains personal information will mean that even when the official record of that information has been deleted in line with the Council’s policy, the separate copy will still have to be declared if requested by individuals whose data is in the document.

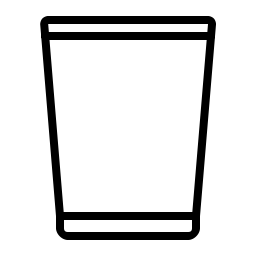
Local copies of information, for example printed papers for a meeting, should be destroyed or deleted as soon as you no longer need them.

Notebooks with information recorded from meetings and visits should also be destroyed, once any important content has been transferred to whichever online records management tool you are using.

**Disposing of information**

Tips for safe disposal of information:

1. place documents in one of the special red bins marked ‘confidential waste’.
2. emails should be deleted in the normal way, but you must also make sure that ‘deleted emails’ folder in your inbox is emptied at the same time.
3. likewise, when you delete a document on your computer, you should make sure that the ‘trash’ folder is completely empty.
4. if you are responsible for a member of staff who is leaving the Council, it is your job to ensure their work-issued phone, laptop or any other device is returned to IT. You must also make sure that a leavers form is completed.



Make sure folders of deleted emails and computer trash files are emptied

Tasks

**Basic**

Describe 3 risks associated with keeping information longer than is necessary

**Intermediate**

Imagine you have a folder of names and addresses on your computer and in hard copy. How can you ensure these are properly disposed of?

**Advanced**

Share an example of when you regularly delete information. How do you ensure the information is properly disposed of?