

**NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE****DESTRUCTION OF HOSPITAL RECORDS**

*Summary.*—This Memorandum transmits to hospital authorities a Schedule authorising the destruction of various types of hospital records after certain specified periods.

1. As was pointed out in paragraph 1 of H.M. (54) 47, all hospital records are subject to the provisions of the Public Record Office Acts and may be destroyed only in accordance with those Acts. In this connection the phrase "hospital records" should be taken in its widest sense as applying to all types of documents accumulated by hospitals, ranging from records of historic interest to printed acknowledgments. A Schedule has now been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Public Record Office Acts, authorising the destruction of various types of records after specified periods. A copy of the Schedule is enclosed and further copies may be obtained on request from the Ministry of Health, Savile Row, London, W.1.
2. The Schedule is in two parts comprising a Note which sets out those records which may not be destroyed at all, and a List and Particulars of those records which may be destroyed after specified periods of time have elapsed. The two lists are intended to be comprehensive and between them to cover all types of hospital records. In any case where a hospital wishes to destroy a document but there is doubt whether the Schedule gives authority for this to be done, the Ministry should be consulted before any action is taken.
3. It should be noted that the authority to destroy certain types of hospital records which is conveyed by the Schedule is permissive only. The List and Particulars merely sets out the minimum period at the expiry of which hospital authorities may, if they wish, destroy certain classes of records without contravening the law, but it places no obligation whatever upon hospitals to destroy them after this or any other period. It is, therefore, entirely for hospital authorities to decide whether or not the type of records set out in the List and Particulars should be destroyed or not; and if they are to be destroyed whether they should be kept only until the expiry of the period mentioned or for some longer time. In this connection attention is particularly drawn to paragraph 3 of H.M. (54) 47 in which it was suggested that medical records (item 27 in the List and Particulars) should, subject to one or two relatively minor exceptions, be kept for the longest possible time, and that the actual period of retention should be determined by medical considerations with particular reference to clinical and research requirements. It will be noted that there is no authority for the destruction of medical records in mental and mental deficiency hospitals.
4. Special care is needed in dealing with any former E.M.S. medical records which may still be in the possession of hospitals. For certain classes of patients, these records are of interest to the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance, and though they should have been sent to that Ministry soon after the end of the war, it may be that a few have remained with hospitals. The classes of patients affected are set out in Appendix A to this memorandum. E.M.S. medical records relating to such patients

*To: Regional Hospital Boards,  
Boards of Governors,  
Hospital Management Committees.*

should in no circumstances be destroyed; if any come to light, the hospital concerned should inform the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance (whose address is Norcross, Blackpool, Lancs.) so that their transfer can be arranged.

5. One of the main objects of the Schedule is to ensure the preservation of any documents which are, or may in future become, of historical interest. The Public Record Office Acts prohibit in any case the disposal of any documents of earlier date than 1660. But hospitals should consider very carefully before disposing of any old documents—dating from before, say, 1900—even though they may fall under one of the headings in the List and Particulars. Similarly, any more recent document contained in the List and Particulars should be preserved if there is any reason for supposing that it may be of historical interest now or in the future. The Public Record Office will be glad to advise in individual cases and attention is drawn to the last paragraph of the Note; a competent officer of a Board or Committee would generally be considered to be one who is fully familiar with the type of work which gave rise to the documents concerned.

6. Paragraphs 12 and 13 of H.M. (54) 47 referred to the micro-filming of medical records. Regarding hospital records in general, the position is that, as indicated in the Note to the Schedule, any document of which the Schedule authorises the eventual destruction may be micro-filmed after two years, the original then being destroyed and the micro-film retained for at least the remainder of the statutory period. Documents which may not be destroyed—i.e. those contained in the Note to the Schedule—must be preserved in the original and the same is true of any document which, though belonging to one of the classes in the List and Particulars, is to be kept permanently because it contains matter of historical interest.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH,  
SAVILE ROW, W.1.

5th December, 1956.

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#### APPENDIX A

The classes of patient referred to in paragraph 4 of the Memorandum are as follows:—

- (a) Civilian casualty, i.e.,
  - (i) a civilian who has sustained a war injury (broadly speaking, a physical injury caused by enemy action, or by action against the enemy, or by crashes of British, allied or enemy aircraft); or
  - (ii) a Civil Defence member who has sustained a war service injury (broadly speaking, a war injury or other physical injury sustained in the performance of duty as a member of a Civil Defence organisation).

(“Physical injury” in 1 and 2 above includes tuberculosis and any other organic disease, and the aggravation thereof).
- (b) Mercantile Marine casualty or sick, i.e., a seafaring person (of any nationality from a British ship or of British nationality from a foreign ship) suffering from any injury or sickness arising out of service at sea or from a war injury ashore (see (a) (i) above.)
- (c) Allied Merchant seamen (other than from British ships).
- (d) Police casualty or sick.
- (e) Service casualty or sick.
- (f) Allied and Overseas Forces.
- (g) Canadian Fire Fighters.
- (h) Canadian Forestry Corps personnel.
- (i) Australian Forestry Corps personnel.
- (j) New Zealand Forestry Corps personnel.
- (k) Enemy prisoners of war or detained enemy merchant seamen.

[As required by the Public Record Office Act, 1877, Section One, this Schedule has been submitted to both Houses of Parliament for a period of not less than four weeks, beginning 6 November 1956.]

Approved :

EVERSHED, M. R.  
ROBERT H. TURTON

## PUBLIC RECORDS

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## MINISTRY OF HEALTH

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## NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

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## EIGHTH SCHEDULE

(supplementing previous Schedules)

CONTAINING

## A LIST AND PARTICULARS

of certain Classes of Documents existing or accruing in HOSPITALS and Offices of HOSPITAL AUTHORITIES, which are not considered of sufficient public value to justify their preservation in the Public Record Office.

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Prepared as required by the Public Record Office Act, 1877, Section One, and the Public Record Office Act, 1898, Section One, and in accordance with Rules made pursuant thereto, approved by Orders in Council dated respectively the Thirtieth day of June, 1890, the Nineteenth day of May, 1899, the Seventeenth day of May, 1920, and the Twenty-eighth day of May, 1936.

## NOTE

1. By the National Health Service Act, 1946 (9 and 10 Geo. VI, c.81) the Minister of Health became responsible for the records of hospitals and hospital authorities so far as the records relate to interests transferred to the Minister by the Act or to matters for which he is responsible under the Act.
2. This Schedule, which supplements previous Schedules in the series of National Health Service Schedules, deals with certain classes of these records which are of only temporary importance.
3. Where the descriptions of classes of documents included in the Schedule refer to Form numbers or to Acts and Statutory Instruments, these references are the ones current at the time the Schedule is made ; they do not preclude the application of the Schedule to documents used for the same purpose but bearing a different, or no, reference number, or accruing under Acts or Statutory Instruments which supersede without substantially amending the ones named.
4. Any of the documents mentioned in the ' List and Particulars ' which are required to be kept for a period of more than two years may be microfilmed at the end of two years and then destroyed, provided that the microfilms are kept for the remainder of the retention period laid down.
5. The following classes of documents are excluded from the Schedule and will be preserved :
  - (a) Minute books, including minute books of governing bodies (and their sub-committees) of former voluntary hospitals.
  - (b) Title deeds, correspondence and other documents of permanent importance relating—to the transfer of hospital property to the Minister ; to the apportionment and vesting in the Minister of interests in premises used partly for hospital and partly for other purposes ; to the purchase, disposal and leasing of property ; to the grant of leases, easements, licences and other rights over property by or to the Minister ; and to the transfer and discharge of mortgages.
  - (c) Correspondence and other documents relating to town and country planning matters and having a permanent value.
  - (d) Accounts and statements prepared in pursuance of regulations 19 and 20 of the National Health Service (Hospital Accounts and Financial Provisions) Regulations, 1948 (S.I. 1948/1414).
  - (e) One set of annual reports of each hospital authority, including annual reports of governing bodies of former voluntary hospitals.
  - (f) Documents relating to building and engineering works :
    - (i) Contract documents, drawings, bills of quantities and other documents of permanent value (i.e. excluding those referred to in Class 12 of the List and Particulars).
    - (ii) Site plans, surveys, record drawings, etc., having a permanent value.
    - (iii) Record documents relating to projects which have been abandoned or deferred.

- (g) Central inventories of :
- (i) Permanent or fixed equipment.
  - (ii) Furniture and surgical, diagnostic and therapeutic equipment, not held on store charge, having a minimum life of five years.
- (h) Documents of permanent value relating to benefactions, special donations and memorials of any sort covered by sections 7(7), 59 and 60 of the National Health Service Act, 1946, and to trusts created since 5 July 1948.
- (i) Records relating to births and deaths.
  - (j) Registers of admissions and discharges.
  - (k) Registers of staff employed, if in book form.
  - (l) In mental and mental deficiency hospitals, the following documents, most of which are prescribed in the Lunacy and Mental Treatment Acts, 1890 to 1930, the Mental Deficiency Acts, 1913 to 1938, the Mental Treatment Rules, 1948, and the Mental Deficiency Regulations, 1948 :
    - Reception Documents.
    - Visitors' books.
    - General Registers.
    - Post-mortem records.
    - Medical records or patients' records (including cards for General Record Office and Nursing Record (non-statutory)).
    - Hospital Cards (non-statutory).
    - Patients' books.
    - Alphabetical register.
    - Register of mechanical restraint and seclusion.
    - Casualty books.
    - Day and night nursing report books.
  - (m) Superannuation records : Duplicate forms S.D. 55A, B, C and D and their successors for subsequent septennia.
  - (n) All documents of earlier date than 1660.

All classes of documents to be destroyed in accordance with this Schedule will first be examined by competent Officers who will withdraw for preservation any documents containing matter likely to be of value as a precedent, or to be of historical, medical or legal interest, or to be useful for social or economic research.

#### LIST AND PARTICULARS

of Classes of Documents which it is proposed to destroy, as specified below.

Number and Class of Documents.	Period after which, or date on which, Documents may be destroyed.
1. Estimates : including supporting calculations and statistics.	Three years after the end of the financial year to which they relate.

Number and Class of Documents.	Period after which, or date on which, Documents may be destroyed.
2. Audit reports . . . . .	The same.
3. Principal Ledger Records : including such documents as cash book, ledgers, income and expenditure journals, etc., but excluding documents referred to in paragraph 5 of the prefatory Note to this Schedule.	Six years after the end of the financial year to which they relate, provided that in the case of records relating to the period before 5 July 1948 a separate summary of a hospital's accounts is retained in the hospital's annual reports or elsewhere.
4. Minor Accounting Records : (a) Pass-books, bank statements of accounts, paying-in slips, cheque counterfoils and cancelled and discharged cheques other than cheques bearing printed receipts ; accounts of petty cash expenditure ; travelling and subsistence accounts ; minor vouchers, including duplicate receipt books ; income records ; laundry lists and receipts ; forms A.P. 1, 2, 3 and 4 (used in connection with the supply of surgical appliances), etc.	Two years after the end of the financial year to which they relate.
(b) Debtors records . . . . .	Two years after the end of the financial year in which the accounts are paid or are written off.
5. Bills and receipts : including cheques bearing printed receipts.	Six years after the end of the financial year to which they relate.
6. Documents, other than those included in paragraph 5(h) of the prefatory Note to this Schedule, relating to benefactions, special donations and memorials of any sort covered by Sections 7(7), 59 and 60 of the National Health Service Act, 1946, and to trusts created since 5 July 1948.	The same.

Number and Class of Documents.	Period after which, or date on which, Documents may be destroyed.
7. Major Stores Records : stores ledgers and equivalents.	The same.
8. Minor Stores Records : requisitions, issues notes, transfer vouchers, goods received books, etc.	Two years after the end of the financial year to which they relate.
9. Agreements and simple contracts (and documents subsidiary to these) which are only of temporary or minor importance, i.e., short-term agreements and minor contracts ; papers preliminary or subsidiary to contracts ; documents relating to contracts for the supply of goods.	Six years after the end of the financial year in which the agreement or contract expires.
10. Engineers' inspection reports on boilers, lifts, etc.	When the plant to which they relate goes finally out of use.
11. Minor Supplies Records : including invitations to tender and unaccepted tenders, routine papers relating to catering and demands for furniture, equipment, stationery and other supplies.	Two years after the end of the financial year to which they relate.
12. Records (other than those included in paragraph 5(f) of the prefatory Note) relating to capital and other building works or improvements : including plans and specifications prepared for temporary purposes and papers relating to them.	Two years after they have ceased to be effective.
13. Inventories not in current use of utensils, instruments, bedding, etc., not held on store charge, having a life of less than five years. [Inventories included in paragraph 5(g) of the prefatory Note will be preserved.]	Two years after the end of the financial year in which the inventories were in use.
14. Any documents relating to legal actions or to complaints, including accident record sheets.	Six years after the end of the financial year in which the incident occurred ; or, where an action has been commenced, when legally advised.

Number and Class of Documents.	Period after which, or date on which, Documents may be destroyed.
<p>15. Documents relating to contractual arrangements with hospitals, etc., outside the National Health Service :</p> <p>(a) Documents relating to the contractual arrangements.</p> <p>(b) Documents relating to periodical financial settlements made under the contract.</p>	<p>Six years from the termination of the arrangement.</p> <p>Six years after the end of the financial year to which they relate.</p>
<p>16. Salaries and Wages Records (i.e., employees' pay cards and personal pay records).</p>	<p>Eleven years after the end of the financial year to which they relate.</p>
<p>17. Pay Sheets and Records of unpaid salaries and wages.</p>	<p>Six years after the end of the financial year to which they relate.</p>
<p>18. Major Establishment Records (other than those referred to in paragraph 5(<i>h</i>)) of the prefatory Note): including personal files, letters of appointment, contracts, references and related correspondence and records of sick leave.</p>	<p>Six years after the officer leaves the service of the hospital or on the date on which the officer would reach the age of 70, whichever is the later, provided that if an adequate summary of the personal and health record is kept for this period the main records may be destroyed six years after the officer leaves the service of the hospital.</p>
<p>19. Minor Establishment Records : including attendance books, annual leave records, time sheets, duty rosters, clock cards and other documents of ephemeral importance.</p>	<p>Two years after the end of the year to which they relate.</p>
<p>20. Documents relating to unsuccessful applications for posts.</p>	<p>One year after the vacancy was filled.</p>

Number and Class of Documents.	Period after which, or date on which, Documents may be destroyed.
21. Superannuation Records :	
(a) Original forms S.D.56. . . . .	Two years after the end of the financial year in which the officer left the service of the employing authority.
(b) Original forms Prem (P) 5A . . . . .	The same.
22. Cost accounts prepared in accordance with regulation 21 of the National Health Service (Hospital Accounts and Financial Provisions) Regulations, 1948, or any similar or amending regulations.	Three years after the end of the financial year to which they relate.
23. Statistical and other returns which were required for ephemeral purposes only and have ceased to be effective.	One year after the end of the period to which they relate.
24. Annual statistical returns required by the Ministry of Health.	Six years after the end of the period to which they relate.
25. Mass miniature radiography records :	
(a) Normal large films and their cards . . . . .	Five years after the date on which the film was taken.
(b) Abnormal large films and their cards. . . . .	Ten years after the date on which the film was taken.
<p>['Large films' are taken in special cases where the original radiograph, which is on microfilm, is unsatisfactory in quality or an abnormal condition in the subject is suspected. The microfilms themselves will be kept for research purposes for the present.]</p>	
26. Blood Transfusion Service : laboratory records relating to donors.	One year after the resignation or death of the donor.

Number and Class of Documents.	Period after which, or date on which, Documents may be destroyed.
<p>27. Medical records and allied documents in hospitals other than mental and mental deficiency hospitals :</p> <p>(a) Medical records, including :</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Clinical Notes (which includes reports from pathological, radiological and other special departments, X-rays, electro-cardiographic and electro-encephalographic records) ;</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Blood Transfusion records ;</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Records of all types of special departments (including almoners' records) ;</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Consent forms of all types ;</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Operation books ;</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Casualty notes ;</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Appliance Order Forms Nos. 1, 2 and 3 ;</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">Day and night nursing report books.</p> <p>(b) Ancillary records, including prescriptions, department registers, appointment sheets, attendance registers, etc.</p> <p>(c) Four-hourly temperature charts, provided that they reveal no abnormal conditions and that no notes are written on them.</p>	<p>Six years after the conclusion of the patient's treatment at the hospital, provided that where the patient dies in hospital the records may be destroyed three years after death.</p> <p>Two years after the conclusion of the patient's treatment at the hospital.</p> <p>Upon discharge of the patient.</p>
<p>28. Records relating to dangerous drugs and poisons :</p> <p>(a) Registers, record books, prescriptions and other documents kept, issued or made under the Dangerous Drugs Regulations, 1953 :</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">(i) Registers, books or records . . . . .</p> <p style="padding-left: 2em;">(ii) Other documents . . . . .</p> <p>(b) Non-statutory records relating to dangerous drugs.</p> <p>(c) Records of medicines included in the First Schedule to the Poisons Rules, 1952, and supplied to out-patients.</p>	<p>Two years from date of last entry.</p> <p>Two years from date on which issued or made.</p> <p>Two years from date on which issued or made.</p> <p>Two years from the date of the last entry relating to the supply of such a medicine.</p>

Number and Class of Documents.	Period after which, or date on which, Documents may be destroyed.
29. Documents prescribed in the Lunacy and Mental Treatment Acts, 1890 to 1930, the Mental Deficiency Acts, 1913 to 1938, the Mental Treatment Rules, 1948, and the Mental Deficiency Regulations, 1948 : (a) Dispensary book or medicine card or sheet. (b) Register of dysentery and diarrhoea. (c) Caution cards .. .. . (d) List of patients in wards .. .. (e) Diary for Visiting Medical Officers ..	Two years after the last entry. Two years after the last entry. Two years after patient's discharge, removal or death. One year after the last entry. Two years after the last entry.
30. Undertakings signed by patients admitted to beds designated under section 4 or section 5 of the National Health Service Act, 1946.	Six years.
31. Records of patients' property handed in for safe custody.	Six years after the end of the financial year in which the property was disposed of.
32. Correspondence and other papers of minor or ephemeral importance, not covered by the foregoing classes : including—advertising matter ; covering letters ; reminders and letters making appointments ; anonymous or unintelligible letters ; drafts ; duplicates of documents known to be preserved elsewhere (unless they have important minutes on them) ; indexes and registers compiled for temporary purposes ; routine reports ; punched cards ; and other documents which have ceased to be of value on settlement of the matter involved.	Forthwith.

Settled as above :—

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 of the  
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M. REED

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8 October 1956.