



Paper Criminal Investigation File Retention Policy (1116/2025)

Abstract

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for a consistent, efficient, and effective process for the retention of recordable and notifiable paper crime investigation files only.

Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy ensures that paper investigation files are only retained in accordance with the specific guidelines detailed within this policy which will significantly reduce storage and costs.

1.2 This policy is not to be confused with retention of crime files under the 2023 Code of Practice on Police Information and Records Management it only concerns the paper copies that are duplicated on Niche. Any paperwork that is not duplicated on Niche will need to be retained in line with the Management of Police Information (MoPI) grading of that offence. Any requests for early deletion of records will need to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Data Protection Officer (DPO).

2. Scope

2.1 This policy covers the paper file retention periods for all recordable and notifiable offences only and includes what organisational risk the Force considers acceptable.

3. Statement

3.1 Sussex Police will ensure that paper investigation files are properly safeguarded and protected for the term of retention after which they will be disposed of securely and appropriately.

Procedure

1. Legal Requirement / Framework

1.1 A paper investigation file will continue to be used, where required, for the duration of an active investigation until such time as it has run its course and is finalised.

1.2 The electronic Crime Record is retained in accordance with Authorised Professional Practice (APP) Information Management - retention, review and disposal periods in relation to Criminal Investigations, Criminal Procedures and Investigation Act (CPIA) Code of Practice and Information Management Policy (Surrey and Sussex) (1187).

1.3 The paper file can therefore be disposed of in accordance with the retention periods outlined in this policy.

2. Organisational Risk

2.1 The organisational risks are that operational and impactful decisions will be made on legacy data that Forces should not be retaining. This could have a detrimental impact on the human rights of the data subject as well as financial penalties imposed by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Although the retention periods for paper files will be reduced, the risk posed in these areas are considered proportionate given the period of time in which current records of investigation are recorded within existing Force electronic systems.

2.2 The potential to re-record primary evidence where necessary from those investigations where the original file has been purged still exists. The likelihood of such issues arising outside the retention period for the levels of crime involved is considered minimal.

3. Retention Periods for Paper Files

3.1 Information must ONLY be retained if it is for a legitimate policing purpose. Sussex Police retention policy is referenced in line with the Information Management Policy (Surrey and Sussex) (1187).

3.2 Paper crime files will be stored at the Centralised Crime Management Unit (CMU), the Records Management Unit (RMU) or at a Force approved storage facility where required.

3.3 It may be more practical to retain electronic records than paper ones. Provided the reviewing officer is satisfied that all relevant information contained in the paper records is also held electronically in a searchable format, the paper records can be destroyed (APP - Information Management - MoPI).

3.4 All paper files for detected crime investigation files (charge, summons, caution, community resolution etc) will be retained for a minimum of six years from the year of recording the crime on Niche. Following this six-year period (10 years for MoPI 1 and 2 offences), a MoPI review will be implemented to determine retention / deletion of any duplicated information.

3.5 All paper files for undetected crime investigation files will be retained for a minimum of six years. This includes Enhanced Crime Related Incidents (ECRIs), other force area crimes and those files which have been determined to be "No Crime". Following this six-year period, a MoPI review will be implemented to determine retention / deletion of any duplicate information.

3.6 Paper files must be retained for a minimum of 6 years and the paper file duplicated electronically on Niche. All duplicate information in the crime file will be destroyed in line with MoPI unless it has a unique evidential value that requires its retention in physical form (documentary evidence, original statements etc.). Any information that is not duplicated will be held at a Force approved storage facility and reviewed as required.

3.7 Current retention periods (for paper and electronic) crime files are as follows:

- MoPI 1 – retained for 100 years (reviewed every 10 years)

- MoPI 2 – retained for 10 years (reviewed every 10 years)
- MoPI 3 (Including 3+) – retained for 6 years (can be destroyed without review)
- MoPI 4 (Serious) – this is the same as MoPI 1 (but no suspect)
- MoPI 4 (Other) – this is the same as MoPI 2 and 3 (but no suspect)

3.8 The College of Policing APP has removed the MoPI 4 category and replaced it with 'Undetected Crimes'. However, as Niche still uses MoPI groups 1 to 4 and archived files will still reference MoPI 4 (Serious and Other), this will remain in policy until Niche is upgraded.

3.9 All wanted files will be retained in accordance with local Divisional arrangements, until the suspect is arrested, or the circulation is cancelled in line with the review arrangements for the file subject to paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 above.

3.10 Before deleting duplicate paper files, the case must be completed and filed; paper files must be held for a minimum of 6 years and the paper file duplicated electronically on Niche.

3.11 This is not applicable in all situations and can be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

3.12 "Legacy" paper crime files (recorded between 1991 and 2013 on pre-NICHE crime databases CIS) will be subject to Time Based Disposal. Any files not in MoPI Group 1 or Group 4 Serious will be destroyed without Review. MoPI Group 1 / 4 Serious files will be retained in accordance with 3.7 above.

Team: Information Management