Model Plan Review
Stakeholders Forum
03 October 2018
North Lanarkshire Council, Motherwell

Gillian Mapstone, Head of Archives and Records Engagement, welcomed the Stakeholders and explained the purpose of the meeting as to catch-up and to debate several elements which had been highlighted as needing particular consideration during the review process.

Hugh Hagan, Senior Public Records Officer and Project Officer, described the process so far and indicated how the current review would lead to a public consultation this winter. He opened the floor to general comments about the Objective Connect system which the Stakeholders have been using to mark-up their comments against particular elements.

Key comments from this section of the discussion were:

The requirement to explain the layout of the elements. It was not necessarily clear what the bullet points represented. If they are 'what good looks like' it should explicitly explain that in the document. It was suggested that the bullet points should be moved up to immediately under the 'headline' text. It was also suggest that the word 'facets' should be used to describe them.

It was noted that the Objective Connect system seems to time-out very quickly. A Stakeholder member who had previous experience of Connect noted that it works better if you download/upload documents rather than add comments to the webpage. NRS committed to investigate how the time-out period can be extended.

NRS also agreed to send out a follow-up e-mail encouraging Stakeholders to take part in the Objective Connect element review.

On that subject, the group was asked how much longer the Connect pages should be kept open for comment. It was agreed that a further three weeks should suffice and a closure date of 24th October was decided on. This would allow a consultation beginning mid-November (this will have to have the approval of the Cabinet Secretary which should be easily forthcoming but which may delay the process). The consultation will have the revised Model Plan, a set of questions and an introductory explanation. It will be open to all interested parties, including Stakeholders, if they wish to comment further.

On the Model Plan it was pointed out that the new version should be checked to make sure that it is in a font and layout that would comply with all relevant disability access regulations.

The group then considered the following elements using Objective Connect:

Element 15 – Third party compliance

After a general discussion the key points regarding this element were:

The word statutory in 'statutory functions' is a tricky one as there may be things that an authority does as part of its core business, and contracts out, that are not statutory. The Model must apply to small authorities whose statutory functions may not be familiar to the Keeper.

The Keeper has always proceeded on the understanding that the functions of an authority are for that authority to determine. It is unlikely that the Keeper would question what he is told in this matter. It was agreed by the group that this should be spelled out in detail in the guidance document (which will follow the adoption of the Model Plan), but also be explicitly noted in the text of the element in the Model Plan.

The Stakeholders also considered that, as this is a new element, it would be useful to remind users of the Model Plan that there is a very clear connection between the contracting out of functions and the origins of the PRSA on the back of the Shaw Report.

Element 11 – Audit Trail

It was generally considered that this element was difficult for authorities to comply with. In fact it was suggested that, despite islands of good practice, it was 'not done well anywhere'. Key issues regarding the Model Plan text were:

Even for an authority operating entirely within an EDRMs the retention of amendment logs may be limited. Examples were given.

It was suggested that a definition of 'a record' might be useful.

The importance of version control should be emphasised.

It was pointed out that despite difficulties with software packages, paper records should be well controlled. It was suggested that the Keeper might insist that withdrawal slips, file registry etc. must be in place for a paper file store.

It was asked if the text of element 11 adequately explains the difference between audit and tracking. Is there room for saying what audit is <u>not</u>?

It was suggested that the sentence about how long audit information is kept should be removed.

It was suggested that the element name 'Audit Trail' should be retained as it was a familiar term although the expanded name 'Records Location and Audit Trail' might be considered.

It was suggested that the Stakeholders should do more work on this element to determine what can reasonably be expected of authorities. There was a proposal that workshops could be convened during the consultation process and results fed back through the consultation. NRS have committed to investigate this further.

Element 4 – Business Classification

Key issues on the text of this element were:

In the 'headline' of the element, the plan should make sure it is understood that it is the scheme that is founded on function not the records.

Generally there should be clarity about the word 'function' here as differentiated from its use in element 15.

More should be made of the movement to Information Asset Registers as in many cases the IAR does the job of a business classification scheme. However, for some, the term 'information asset' could be problematic as it might refer to a system (or to software/hardware) rather than the record. Equally the term 'business classification' may be confused with the more readily understood 'security classification'.

The reference in the text to a 'structure diagram' could be removed as no authority has supplied one of these in evidence of compliance so far.

The draft has a difficult bullet point (#3). While the principle of seeding GDPR throughout the plan was agreed to at the first Stakeholders Forum, the group were not convinced by its inclusion here.

Elements 2 + 12

There was a lengthy debate about these two elements and what should appear in each. Where they overlap and why they were originally created. It was noted that the PRSA Assessment Team has been using Element 12 to recognise good practice in staff training (the Act is silent on that point, but many authorities have used evidence of staff training as an indicator of good RM provision).

Key points from this discussion were:

5 years ago element 12 was specifically designed by the Stakeholders to demonstrate the framework for training the individual named at element 2 if they were not a professional records manager.

Element 12 could be changed to explicitly include all staff/organisational training procedures.

Element 12 could omit the individual at element 2 and only focus on the rest of the staff.

The group agreed that the second of two 'headlines' available on Objective Connect for element 12 was the better one.

Could the plan use element 2 to evidence all aspects of the training qualifications etc. of the individual named under that element? Expanding it and limiting 12 to 'other training'.

The person named at element 1 is responsible for the whole plan and therefore the training explained in that plan.

It was suggested that the section on the use of contractors could be reduced. It was pointed out by the NRS team that the use of outside professional records management experts in the creation of the plan had, in fact, been quite rare.

It was generally agreed that the individual named at element 2 should remain part of element 12, with what is expected under that element made clearer.

There followed a few minutes for general comments on the plan as a whole and on other elements that the Stakeholders considered of interest:

General Comments about the Model Plan:

There should be a Glossary.

There might be a general GDPR statement at the beginning of the Plan thus allowing the removal of some of the bullet points. However, it was pointed out that Stakeholders had suggested seeding GDPR throughout. This might be particularly useful when trying to raise board level awareness.

With this in mind the Model Plan could be branded as being helpful for the delivery of GDPR compliance. Although it was pointed out that we should avoid giving the impression that an agreed plan signified compliance with GDPR (or any legislation other than PRSA).

Comments about specific elements:

There is still a need for element 10 with perhaps more focus on vital records, however the term 'vital records' would need to be explained (see glossary suggestion above). The Keeper should endeavour to ensure that provision of recovery of records must be in a business continuity plan. The name of Element 10 should not be changed, but the headline might be refined.

However, the phrase 'vital records' should be retained. The suggestion that the phrase 'record recovery' should be in the headline was rejected.

It was reiterated that element 9 must be retained in the current climate. However, it was suggested that a 'waiver' should be added making it clear that the Keeper's opinion on the element could not be taken as the opinion of the ICO.