

MANAGEMENT OF CORRESPONDENCE POLICY
Official



**SUFFOLK
CONSTABULARY**

MANAGEMENT OF CORRESPONDENCE

Owning Department: Information Management Department

Department SPOC: Senior Records and Data Quality Manager

Risk Rating: Low

Legal Sign Off: N/A

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Legal Basis

Relevant legislation which you must check this document against (required by law)

- Human Rights Act 1998 (in particular A.14 – Prohibition of discrimination)
- Equality Act 2010
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated Regulations
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- The Civil Contingencies Act 2004

Other documentation which you must check this document against:

- College of Policing – Code of Ethics
- Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies' Standards of Professional Behaviour
- College of Policing – Authorised Professional Practice
- Review, Retention and Disposal of Crime and Non-Crime Related Information Schedule

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy aims to provide guidance on correspondence handling and management within Suffolk Constabulary to ensure all correspondence is managed and dealt with efficiently and consistently across the Constabulary.

2. Statement of Policy

2.1 This policy sets out Suffolk Constabulary's approach in identifying correspondence received in to the Constabulary via external or electronic means which will require registration and acknowledgement of receipt, where appropriate, ensuring that that approach supports the Equality and Diversity Strategy and Vision Statement.

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- 2.2 This policy has been formally agreed via the approved policy development/review process. It will be maintained by the Information Management Department in conjunction with the Central Policy Unit.
- 2.3 The policy is intended to promote equality, eliminate unlawful discrimination and actively promote good relations regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, economic or family status.
- 2.4 Managers have a responsibility to ensure this policy is applied fairly, and unless otherwise stated, all policies and procedures are non-contractual.

3. Timeframe for Acknowledging and Responding to Correspondence

- 3.1 The Constabulary will send an acknowledgement within 24 hours of receipt for any correspondence requiring an acknowledgement. This will be done at the point of initial receipt/booking in.
- 3.2 The Constabulary will endeavour to send a reply within 20 working days of the date of the acknowledgement letter for any correspondence requiring a response.

4. Correspondence Tracking System

- 4.1 TranSearch is the computerised correspondence tracking system used by Suffolk Constabulary where correspondence can be logged, registered, allocated to the appropriate person/team to deal with, tracked and monitored.
- 4.2 All personnel requiring use of this system will receive appropriate training or guidance and should refer to the TranSearch User Guides for the Correspondence inputter and recipient as necessary. These can be found on the intranet via the Records Management page.

5. Registering Correspondence onto TranSearch

- 5.1 All correspondence received will be logged onto, and scanned into TranSearch at the administrative point of receipt, with the exception of the following types, which **do not** require registering:
 - Items handled by Finance and Shared Services Transaction Centre.
 - Requests for previous convictions, antecedent histories, PNC/LEDS/DBS reports and papers.
 - Subject Access Requests and other requests to the Data Protection Unit.
 - Freedom of Information requests.
 - Trade circulars, 'junk mail', journals brochures and technical bulletins, including Home Office Publications and Circulars.
 - HO/RT forms.
 - Acknowledgements.
 - Requests for housing repairs and maintenance.

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- Correspondence concerning liquor licensing.
 - Court Lists.
 - Aliens registration cards and certificates.
 - Forensic Science Laboratory reports and doctor's reports.
 - Employment reference requests, and job applications.
 - Internal correspondence / reports / memoranda.
 - Normal correspondence relating to offence reports.
 - National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Guidance Documents.
 - Draft Legislation and Enquiry Reports.
- 5.2 The TranSearch system is located and accessed via the 'Official - Sensitive' network, therefore all correspondence that is received which has a protective marking higher than 'Official - Sensitive' will not be scanned into the system; only a record of the receipt and movements of the said correspondence will be recorded.
- 5.3 During registration of the correspondence onto TranSearch, the inputter will need to allocate the correspondence to an appropriate person/team to deal with. The allocated person/team will then receive an email, which will contain a hyperlink to the correspondence file within TranSearch, which will contain the scanned image of the communication.
- 5.4 Each piece of correspondence is logged onto the system separately and each record is given a unique barcode reference.
- 5.5 When inputting records onto the system, staff should be aware that TranSearch is accessed by a number of users throughout the Constabulary and as such, details of a sensitive nature should be registered accordingly.
- 5.6 If the correspondence meets one of the below criteria, the recipient is responsible for ensuring the correspondence is allocated to the Records Management and Data Quality Department on TranSearch and that any original documentation is also forwarded to them at PHQ:
- Correspondence from Members of Parliament or other public figures or bodies of similar standing.
 - Matters relating to policy including requests concerning disposition of police strength or police coverage.
 - Any matter where legal action may be taken against the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
 - Chief Constable or member of the Constabulary in an official capacity.
 - Correspondence with Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority.
 - Subjects that are the responsibility of Heads of Departments.
 - Any other matter, the nature of which makes it desirable that a reply is sent by the Chief Constable.

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5.7 If correspondence is received by the Executive Services Team, which is addressed to Chief Officers, it is the department's responsibility to ensure that the correspondence is entered onto the TranSearch system and allocated to the appropriate person to draft a response. The response will need to be approved and signed by the appropriate Chief Officer before being sent out.

6. Acknowledgement

6.1 Any correspondence received, which requires a response, will also require an acknowledgement letter to be sent. This will be undertaken at the point of receipt by return of post or via e-mail within 24 hours of receipt.

6.2 An appropriate acknowledgement letter template will be used, and the letter will be signed off by a suitably authorised member of the Constabulary. The person completing the letter should ensure that the letter is given the appropriate Government Security Classification on the top right, and bottom left of the acknowledgement letter.

6.3 In the case of correspondence relating to matters relevant to other Constabularies or outside agencies, no further action will be taken once the acknowledgement has been sent advising the author that the correspondence has been forwarded elsewhere. The TranSearch record can then be closed.

7. Responding

7.1 A response needs to be sent within 20 working days of the date of the acknowledgement letter. The owner of the correspondence is responsible for the reply.

7.2 If a response cannot be achieved within the 20-working day timescale, the owner of the correspondence is responsible for sending a letter explaining the delay.

7.3 If within 15 days of receipt, the TranSearch record has not been closed, a reminder email will be sent to the owner.

7.4 If within 20 days of receipt, the TranSearch record has still not been closed, a second reminder email will be sent to the owner.

7.5 All responses will contain a contact name and telephone number.

7.6 If the correspondence clearly states that it is requesting the information under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000, it should be forwarded directly to the FOI Team, PHQ to respond accordingly.

7.7 Officers and staff are asked to refer to the FOI procedure for the exact definitions of what other requests fall into the Freedom of Information Act legislation or, if they require advice and/or guidance as to how best to proceed, contact the FOI team on ext. 3919.

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8. Completed Correspondence Records

- 8.1 The owner is responsible for closing the record on TranSearch when a response has been sent. The response should be printed to PDF format and added to the correspondence record before it is closed.
- 8.2 If the original correspondence and/or the response contain a wet signature, the original documents must be sent to Records Management for filing (if not already done so). If the correspondence does not contain a wet signature, the scanned electronic copy will be a sufficient record.

Please Note: Original documents must not be retained by staff unless in current use.

- 8.3 Files will be reviewed and retained for the periods specified within the Review, Retention and Disposal of Crime and Non-Crime Related Information Schedule.

9. Transit of Correspondence

- 9.1 If not done wholly electronically via the TranSearch system, correspondence will be transported by police vehicle internal mail. The postal service (external mail) will only be used in exceptional cases. In cases where external mail is used then Protective Marking Procedures in relation to the Information should be adhered to.

10. Signatures

- 10.1 In cases where a wet signature is required in the response, e.g. an MP's letter, a suitably designated member of staff will be able to sign the response on behalf of the Chief Constable or on behalf of a suitably designated member of the Constabulary using per procuracy (p.p.).
- 10.2 Rubber signature stamps will not be used.

11. Correspondence in other Languages and Formats

- 11.1 Should the occasion arise when correspondence is received in a language other than English, or in an alternative format i.e. Braille, text, audio, the appropriate department should be contacted for advice.

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12. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Senior Records and Data Quality Manager	<p>The Senior Records and Data Quality Manager is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ownership of the TranSearch asset tracking system • Ownership and continuing review of the Review, Retention and Disposal Schedule • Ensuring the records within the TranSearch Correspondence module are reviewed and retained or marked as destroyed, where required, in accordance with the Review, Retention and Disposal Schedule
Business Records Section, Records Management and Data Quality Department	<p>The Business Team are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a TranSearch helpdesk function and training, where required • Producing guidance documentation
All staff with a TranSearch “Correspondence Admin” user profile	<p>Staff with a TranSearch “Correspondence Admin” profile are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registering details of correspondence that has been received on to TranSearch, where applicable • Generating and dispatching an “Acknowledgement of Receipt” letter to the correspondent • Uploading an electronic version of the correspondence to the relevant TranSearch record’s Associated Document Archive (ADA) Store • Initially allocating the correspondence record to an Information Holder
The Correspondence Current Information Holder	<p><u>If they are going to action the correspondence</u>, the Current Information Holder is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a reply to the correspondent within 20 working days, where required • Providing an interim reply to the correspondent, if a full reply cannot be achieved within 20 working days • Uploading a copy of any reply to the Correspondence record’s ADA Store, or updating the record, via the free text “Comments” field, of actions that may have been taken with the correspondence where no written reply has been made or is necessary. • Closing the correspondence record when all actions with it have been finalised <p><u>If they feel the correspondence initially allocated to them needs to be dealt by another officer or member of staff</u>, the Current Information Holder is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-allocating the record to another Holder, as outlined in the Correspondence Receipt guidance notes.

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