



Suffolk Constabulary Policies & Procedures

PROCEDURE

**Document
Classification:**

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Title: Management of Correspondence

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1 Purpose

1.1 This procedure 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 Timeframe for Acknowledging and Responding to Correspondence

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 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.

3 Correspondence Tracking System

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 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 under Records Management, Information Management.

4 Registering Correspondence onto TranSearch

- 4.1 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.

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- Requests for previous convictions, antecedent histories, PNC/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.
 - Claims for allowances.
 - Correspondence concerning liquor licensing.
 - Court Lists.
 - Aliens registration cards and certificates.
 - Forensic Science Laboratory reports and doctor's reports.
 - Character reference requests, mortgage 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.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 Each piece of correspondence is logged onto the system separately, and each record is given a unique barcode reference.

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- 4.5 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.
- 4.6 If the correspondence meets one of the below criteria, the recipient is responsible for ensuring the correspondence is allocated to the Records Management Unit 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.
- 4.7 If correspondence is received by the Corporate Services Department, 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.

5 Acknowledgement

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 An appropriate acknowledgement letter template will be used and the letter will be signed off by a suitably authorised member of the Constabulary. A template acknowledgment letter can be found on the 'W' drive here: Collaboration > Corporate Communications > Org > Guidance and Templates. 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.
- 5.3 In the case of correspondence relating to matters relevant to other Constabularies or outside agencies, no further action will be taken once the

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acknowledgement has been sent advising the author that the correspondence has been forwarded elsewhere. The TranSearch record can then be closed.

6 Responding

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 If within 15 days of receipt, the TranSearch record has not been closed, a reminder email will be sent to the owner.
- 6.4 If within 20 days of receipt, the TranSearch record has still not been closed, a second reminder email will be sent to the owner.
- 6.5 All responses will contain a contact name and telephone number.
- 6.6 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.
- 6.7 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.

7 Completed Correspondence Records

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 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. **NB:** Original documents must not be retained by staff unless in current use.
- 7.3 Files will be reviewed and retained for the periods specified within the Retention and Disposal schedule.

8 Transit of Correspondence

- 8.1 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

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used then Protective Marking Procedures in relation to the Information should be adhered to.

9 Signatures

9.1 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.).

9.2 Rubber signature stamps will not be used.

10 Correspondence in other Languages and Formats

10.1 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 Records Management Unit will contact the Diversity Unit for advice.

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| Department: | Records Management Unit, Information Management Department |
| See Also: | Data Protection Part 1 Freedom of Information Records Management Procedure TranSearch User Manual |

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| Authorised By: | DCC and Records Manager |
| Author: | KB – Senior Business Records Administrator |
| Next Review Date: | June 2021 |
| Date Reviewed: | June 2017 |
| Date Created: | May 2010 |
| APP Checked: | N/A |
| JNCC Approved: | 07/06/2017 |
| Code of Ethics Checked: | June 2017 |

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