

REGISTRATION MODERNISATION

A position and consultation paper on the delivery of the local registration service in England and Wales

RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION FROM THE NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ARCHIVES (NCA)

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The National Council on Archives was established in 1988 to bring together the major bodies and organisations, including service providers, users, depositors and policy makers, across the UK concerned with archives and their use. It aims to develop consensus on matters of mutual concern and provide an authoritative common voice for the archival community.

1. Do you agree that a new governance framework is needed for the delivery of the local registration service?

Yes, providing that a consistent level of service is provided by all local authorities with adequate staffing, housing, resourcing and access for all users. The NCA realises that some local services, whose track record is poor, will incur further expense to meet the accepted code of practice, once agreed. This is not, in the NCA's opinion a bad thing, because local authorities will be judged on the provision and priority they allocate to these records.

Original local registers are, and will remain, extremely important historical documents. The current wording of the proposals does not make it entirely clear with whom the responsibility for finding adequate storage for, legal ownership of and access to them lies, and clarification on these points would be very welcome, especially in tackling those services who have not cared for their records in an adequate manner in the past.

2. Do you agree with the proposed revised framework?

In principle, yes. The National Council on Archives understands the need for modernisation of the procedures of delivery of the service. New technologies and expectations provide enormous scope for added value to the historic records, and the NCA would support the GRO in any efforts to realise this potential, to the benefit of all historians.

It would be helpful if the GRO could indicate the procedures for the secure and certified amendment of registrations where these are shown to be incorrect.

It would also be helpful if the GRO could share the procedures whereby the clergy will submit marriage returns, and what support and training will be provided to them.

3. Do you have any comments on the draft model scheme or code of practice?

Further indications, once developed, on how codes of practice will be agreed and with whom and to what timescale would be welcomed by the archives and their users.

4. Do you have any other comments or views on this subject?

The National Council on Archives notices that, under paragraph 3.4, concerning the increased flexibility of storage, preservation and access to registers and records, the consultation document states that "the development of guidance on the preservation of records will be taken forward together with the National Council on Archives and the Association of Chief Archivists in Local Government".

The National Council on Archives looks forward to being involved with the development of guidance and providing assistance to the GRO in their efforts to increase public value of historic records.