

## Protocol for the return of personal information and documents



## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 When applying for a specific service or benefit provided by Epping Forest District Council, it is often necessary for an applicant or claimant to supply particular personal information or personal documents to support an application or claim. This may be, for example, to provide evidence of identity, residence or financial status etc.
- 1.2 This protocol sets out minimum standards that the Council will apply in relation to the return of personal information and documents containing personal data, which are submitted by post or hand-delivered in connection with an application or claim for a service or benefit.

## 2. PERSONAL INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTS

- 2.1 In general, only original information and documents will be acceptable for the purposes of the Council's services or benefits. Copies of documents will not normally be accepted.
- 2.2 Support for an service application or claim, or to provide evidence of identity etc., might involve documentation of the following types that are likely to contain personal information, and which are considered by the Council to be 'valuable':
- Social security benefit book;
  - Bank books or statements;
  - Birth, marriage, civil partnership or death certificates;
  - Credit cards and statements;
  - Divorce or annulment papers;
  - Driving licence;
  - Grant of probate;
  - Home Office standard acknowledgement letter (acknowledging an asylum claim);
  - EC/EAA identity card;
  - Insurance policies;
  - Medical card;
  - National insurance card;
  - National Savings/Premium Bond certificates;
  - P45/P60;
  - Passport;
  - Share certificates; and
  - UK residence permit.
- 2.3 The classification of these various types of personal information and documents as 'valuable' reflects the nature and sensitivity of the personal data they might contain and the impact of its loss for the individual to whom it relates. The perceived 'value' of personal information in terms of potential fraudulent activities and the cost and inconvenience that might be experienced in replacing lost documents, has also been considered.
- 2.4 It may not always be appropriate for an applicant/claimant to send original documents of these types through the general post, as a result of the information that they contain or due to their perceived value. However, if such documents are sent to the Council through the post or hand-delivered to its offices, they will be dealt with in the following way:
- (a) the receipt of all information and documents will be recorded by the relevant service area when they are received by the Council;
  - (b) information and documents will be inspected, copied or scanned as appropriate and returned to the applicant/claimant using a method at least equivalent to that utilised by the applicant/claimant in originally sending the documents to the Council. This will mean for example, that documents submitted by 'normal' post will be returned at

minimum that way, and that information sent by recorded delivery etc. will similarly be returned by a tracked mail service as standard procedure;

- (c) if possible, documents will be returned to an applicant/claimant within two business days of the receipt of the information by the Council. This timescale cannot however be guaranteed;
- (d) personal information and documents of the types listed above that are hand-delivered to the Council, will always be returned by a secure mail service; and
- (e) personal information or documents of types that are not listed above will normally only be returned through the regular post.

2.5 To assist the Council to deal with personal documents and information promptly, applicants/claimants must ensure that they provide their name and address when sending in documents and information, so that these can be returned as soon as possible. Applicants/claimants must also ensure that documents and information are addressed to the correct directorate of the Council in the first place.

2.6 The Council cannot guarantee when personal documents and information will arrive back with an applicant/claimant. Documents needed urgently should not therefore be sent by to the authority by post.

2.7 This protocol only applies to personal information and documents submitted by post or hand-delivered in connection with an application or claim for a service or benefit. For many services or benefits, the Council will be able to inspect relevant documents and information that is brought in to the relevant office in person, on a 'while you wait' basis. In some circumstances, it may be necessary for an applicant/claimant to contact the relevant service in advance to make an appointment for the inspection. of documents and information.

### 3. DATA PROTECTION OFFICER

3.1 The Council's designated Data Protection Officer can be contacted as follows:

Data Protection Officer,  
Epping Forest District Council,  
Governance Directorate,  
Civic Offices,  
High Street,  
Epping,  
Essex, CM16 4BZ.

☎ (01992) 564180

✉ [performance@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:performance@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

### 4. DOCUMENT HISTORY

4.1 The Data Protection Officer is responsible for the maintenance of this protocol, which will be reviewed as considered necessary.

Prepared/Revised	Written by	Agreed/Authorised	Details of Change(s)
January 2014	S. Tautz (Data Protection Officer)	Corporate Governance Group (22/1/14)	Initial release of protocol. Published to website and intranet.

April 2014	S. Tautz (Data Protection Officer)	S. Tautz (Data Protection Officer)	Protocol updated as required to reflect new senior management structure. Republished to intranet and website.
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