1. **Information Management Principles**

1. **Information is a Corporate Resource** - *The Scottish Executive's information is a corporate resource.*

   The essence of this principle is that information is a resource that is "owned" by the Executive, while acknowledging that information is created or received by individuals within the Executive, and that the contribution of these individuals is essential in achieving its business objectives. In most circumstances, it is the Executive as a whole rather than an individual or area that is held accountable for any issues relating to its information.

   Thinking in terms of "my report" or "my correspondence" sometimes leads to records not being filed at all, or filed or stored where only I can find them. But if we think about "the Executive's report" or the "Executive's correspondence" we would ask ourselves "who should be able to have access this?" and "how do I make sure that it is accessible?". That means that the people who need to see the information, or have a right to see it, should be able to find it.

2. **Personal Responsibility** - *Everybody is personally responsible for the effective management of the information they create or use.*

   The Executive "owns" the information created and held in its name. However, responsibility for how this information is managed and used on a day-to-day basis lies with individuals within the Executive. Individuals are responsible for ensuring that the information they create or receive is properly managed. This does not in any sense stop people from delegating things, but it does make individuals responsible for what they do. For example, a person creating an e-mail that is part of the record of the Executive's business is currently responsible for ensuring that it is filed on the relevant paper file. Once we move to electronic working, that person will be responsible for ensuring the e-mail is kept as a record and that it is made accessible where appropriate.

3. **Information Accessibility** - *We make our information accessible to others in the Scottish Executive except where there is a specific and agreed reason not to.*

   Staff should make information they create or hold accessible to as wide an audience as possible, including to external clients or to citizens generally, where this is appropriate. Where information is held electronically, this means making the area where it is stored as open as possible and, for external clients, publishing the information on the SE website or other public source. Information sharing supports initiatives like better policy making and it ensures that staff can find the information they need to do their jobs quickly and easily, avoiding the need to reinvent the wheel.

   So, when we need to decide what to do with information, the first question to ask should be "is there a reason why should I restrict this?" rather than "why should I let anyone see it?".

4. **Keeping Records of What We Do** - *We retain details of all the decisions made on behalf of the Scottish Executive.*

   We are required to keep records of what we do. It is critical that records of decisions and actions are complete and accurate. The Executive must be able to provide a full history of its decisions and actions and these must be accessible to those within (and,
potentially, outside) the Executive who may reasonably require them. Full records might be needed for a number of reasons, such as: to demonstrate the chain of events and decisions that led to a particular course of action; or to respond to requests for information from within the Executive or outside (e.g. PQs). An example would be to ensure that all the details relevant to a decision or action, including e-mails and notes that are needed to complete the "story", are retained for an appropriate period and can be found if required.

5. **Ensuring Information is Accurate and Fit for Purpose** - *We ensure that the information we create on behalf of the Executive is accurate and fit for purpose.*

Executive staff have a responsibility to create and maintain information in a way that is appropriate for its intended purpose. We need to be able to rely on the information we hold to give us, Ministers, and our external audiences confidence that our decisions are based on accurate and up to date information. We need to provide factually accurate answers in responses to PQs and Ministerial correspondence. And it is important that information which is published by the Executive - for example on our website - is seen to be authoritative. There are two aspects to accuracy: the accurate capture of documents as a history of business activities (see Principle Number 4); and the accuracy of the content of an individual document, in other words, ensuring that the document is fit for purpose.

6. **Compliance with Statutory and Regulatory Requirements** - *We ensure that our information management practices comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements.*

This principle places a responsibility on Executive staff to comply with guidance relating to legislative and regulatory requirements. It is clearly important that the Scottish Executive sets a positive example by complying fully with such requirements. And it is in our own interests to do so since compliance will help us ensure that our information management practices are consistent and appropriate. Guidance that staff have to comply with includes Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Copyright legislation.