Achieve UK Training Safe Storage of Documents Policy

Effective Date: March 2025
Review Date: December 2027

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this Safe Storage of Documents Policy is to ensure that all physical and electronic documents held by Achieve UK Training are stored securely, efficiently, and in compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. This policy aims to protect sensitive and confidential information from unauthorized access, loss, or damage.

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2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, and stakeholders of Achieve UK Training who handle, store, or access documents in physical or digital formats. It covers all types of documents, including but not limited to training records, employee records, financial documents, and client information.

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3. Definitions

- **Documents**: All physical and electronic records maintained by Achieve UK Training, including contracts, employee files, client records, financial statements, training materials, correspondence, and any other official records.
- **Confidential Information**: Any information that is protected by legal, regulatory, or organizational rules, including personal data, client details, and financial records.

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4. Document Storage Guidelines

4.1 Physical Document Storage

- **Secure Storage**: Physical documents containing sensitive or confidential information will be stored in locked filing cabinets or secure rooms. Only authorized personnel will have access to these storage areas.
- **Organized Filing**: Documents will be organized in a logical manner, such as by category, date, or department, to facilitate easy retrieval and minimize handling.
- **Fire and Flood Protection**: All physical records will be stored in areas that are protected from fire, water damage, or any other potential hazards. Fireproof cabinets and secure storage rooms may be used where appropriate.

- **Access Control**: Access to physical storage areas will be restricted to authorized personnel. Records containing sensitive information will be further protected by limiting access to those who need the information to perform their duties.

4.2 Electronic Document Storage

- **Digital Security**: Electronic documents will be stored on password-protected, encrypted systems that are regularly backed up to prevent data loss.
- **Cloud Storage**: Where appropriate, cloud-based storage solutions will be used to store documents, ensuring compliance with data protection laws. Cloud services should be secure and meet industry standards for confidentiality and integrity.
- **Access Control**: Electronic documents will be accessible only to authorized personnel based on their role and the need-to-know principle. Access to sensitive documents will be restricted and monitored.
- **Regular Backups**: All electronic documents will be regularly backed up to secure, off-site locations to prevent data loss. Backups will be conducted in compliance with the organization's data retention policies.

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5. Confidentiality and Security of Documents

Achieve UK Training is committed to maintaining the confidentiality and security of all documents in its possession. The following measures will be applied:

- **Encryption**: Sensitive electronic documents, especially those containing personal data or financial information, will be encrypted both in transit and at rest.
- **Access Control**: Only authorized personnel will have access to confidential documents. A record of all access to sensitive documents will be maintained.
- **Monitoring**: Physical and electronic access to documents will be regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure compliance with security standards.
- **Regular Audits**: Periodic audits will be conducted to ensure that the document storage practices are in compliance with this policy and to identify any potential vulnerabilities.

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6. Document Retention and Disposal

6.1 Retention Periods

- Documents will be retained according to the retention guidelines set forth by relevant legislation, industry standards, and Achieve UK Training's internal policies.
- **Employee Records**: Retained for a minimum of 6 years after an employee leaves the company.
- **Training Records**: Retained for at least 3 years after course completion or as long as needed for compliance purposes.
- **Financial Records**: Retained for 7 years in compliance with accounting regulations.
- **Client Records**: Retained for the duration of the client relationship or as required by law.

6.2 Secure Disposal

- Once documents have reached the end of their retention period, they will be securely disposed of.
    - **Physical Documents**: Shredding or incineration will be used for paper records containing confidential information.
    - **Electronic Documents**: Digital files will be permanently deleted using secure methods that prevent recovery, such as secure erasure software or physical destruction of storage media (e.g., hard drives).
- A record of the disposal of sensitive documents will be maintained for audit and compliance purposes.

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7. Access to Documents

Access to documents will be governed by the following guidelines:

- Employees will only be granted access to the documents necessary for the performance of their job functions.
- Requests for access to sensitive documents will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and granted only when necessary and appropriate.
- Requests for access to client or employee records must be approved by management and are subject to legal and privacy considerations.

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8. Training and Awareness

Achieve UK Training will ensure that all employees involved in the handling, storage, or access to documents receive appropriate training. This will include:

- Understanding the importance of document security and confidentiality.
- Familiarity with the company's document storage and retention policies.
- Knowledge of secure storage and disposal practices.

Training will be refreshed periodically to ensure employees remain aware of the latest practices and legal requirements.

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9. Compliance

This policy will be implemented in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and industry standards, including:

- Data Protection Act 2018
- GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation)
- The Freedom of Information Act (where applicable)

- Any other relevant legal requirements governing document storage, retention, and disposal.

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10. Policy Review

This Safe Storage of Documents Policy will be reviewed annually or whenever there are significant changes in legal, regulatory, or organizational practices.

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