

THE USE OF ELECTRONIC MAIL

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This policy is written to describe how Electronic mail (Email) should be used within DRH and defines policies and procedures which should be applied by DRH staff when sending and receiving Email using DRH equipment. The policy applies to all DRH staff.
- 1.2 Email can be of great benefit to DRH and all staff are encouraged to use Email for communication particularly within DRH. However it is important that a policy on the use of Email accompanies widespread use within DRH.
- 1.3 Service user access to email systems is to be encouraged within the remit of their care plans.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 This policy covers all Email sent via DRH equipment through any Internet provider.

3. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

- 3.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that DRH and its staff are enabled to make best use of the Email systems and to ensure that all staff and DRH are protected from the consequences of potential misuse of the Email systems.

4. POLICY AND PRACTICE ON THE USE OF EMAIL

Personal Use

- 4.1 Email systems are provided for the business of DRH. However personal Emails may be sent via DRH Email systems, providing that all other aspects of this policy are adhered to. Personal use must be within reasonable limits, which will be decided through normal line management procedures. No personal Emails should be sent to 'ALL' staff, or other groups of staff using DRH distribution lists.

Multiple Copies

- 4.2 Copies of Emails should be sent to those users who need to see that Email. The use of 'ALL' as a recipient should be used only for communications which require to be seen by all staff. Use should be made of restricted distribution lists to minimise unwanted Email.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

- 4.3 The content of Email is covered by the Data Protection Act 1998 and personal data included in Emails must be protected in accordance with the Act. Personal data may include the Email address of an individual external to DRH.
- 4.4 The following aspects of the Act must be complied with:
- **Fair and Lawful Processing:** Personal information in Emails may be inspected by a data subject, on request, and should only be included when necessary. The provision of the Act apply to Email as much as any other computer systems.
 - **Processing for Specified Purposes:** The relevant purposes of DRH are those registered under the Data Protection Act 1998.
 - **Data must be adequate, relevant, and not excessive.**
 - **Data must be accurate and up-to-date:** Care must be taken to ensure that obsolescent information is not treated as current. Out of date Emails must be deleted.
 - **Processing for no longer than is necessary:** E mails should be deleted when no longer required.
 - **Rights of data subjects:** Data subjects will have the same rights of access to personal data contained in Emails as in other computerised systems.
 - **Security of Data:** Appropriate security measures must be taken to protect personal data contained in Emails and confidentiality of all staff and service users details must be considered.
 - **Protection of external Email addresses:** External Email addresses must be treated as personal data when they belong to individuals outside DRH

Passwords

- 4.5 Password access to Email systems must be used and passwords must be kept secure.

Use of Internet Email

- 4.6 Internet Email can be sent from and received by DRH Email system. Emails including identifiable confidential information relating to staff or service users must not be sent through the Internet.

Liability and Email

- 4.7 Emails represent DRH in the same way as letter sent through the post. Although Email is generally less formal than printed mail, the same legal consideration of breach of confidence, copyright infringement, defamation and contractual commitments may still apply. Emails sent to outside users represent official communications from DRH.
- 4.8 Email carries the same legal status as other written documents and should be used with the same care.

The unacceptable use of Email

- 4.9 DRH Email must not be used for any of the following:
- transmission of unsolicited commercial or advertising material;
 - transmission of pornographic material;
 - corruption or damage to other users data, or the transmission of a computer virus;
 - mail which amounts to bullying, harassment or defamation
 - communications which are aggressive in nature
 - conducting private transactions in pursuit of commercial or business interests
 - violation of the privacy or the disruption of the work of other users.

5 MONITORING OF EMAIL

- 5.1 Although Email will not normally be monitored some monitoring may still take place to ensure that this policy is adhered to. This will only be done where there is good reason to believe DRH policies have not been adhered to or for other compelling or time critical reasons.

6 USE OF ANTI VIRUS SOFTWARE

- 6.1 It is essential that all attachments (for example Word and Excel files) sent via Email are virus checked before opening. Message will be virus checked by software on the PC itself.

7 USE OF STANDARD WARNINGS AND DISCLAIMERS

- 7.1 When Emails is sent external to DRH a standard warning should be included in the Email headers, as follows:

"This Email may contain confidential information and/or copyright material. This Email is intended for the use of the addressee only. Any unauthorised use may be unlawful. If you receive this Email by mistake, please advise the sender immediately by using the reply facility in your Email software."

8. CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE USE OF EMAIL WITHIN DRH

1 Protect Personal Information

- Do not allow anyone else to use your homes Email ID;
- Do not leave your Email program open and unattended - its quick and easy to log off even in an emergency;
- Do not send service user identifiable information outside DRH;
- Make sure you comply with the Data Protection Act.

2 Make sure you don't get a virus

- Make sure that all attached files transmitted via Email are virus checked before opening.

3 Make sure that DRH is protected

- Make sure your Email identity is protected;
- Make sure that any Email you send will not reflect badly on DRH.

4 Make sure you are protected

- Don't use DRH Email systems for attachments for personal purposes;
- Don't use Email for any purposes which might be considered pornographic, offensive, intimidatory or considered as harassment;
- Don't use Email for any private commercial purpose.

5 Housekeeping and Good Practice

- Check your Emails at least once in a working day;
- Delete Emails as soon as they are out of date or no longer required;
- Delete Emails with attachments when the attachments have been downloaded;
- Print a hard copy (on paper) if the Email contains information which you may need to recall or reuse in the future.

July 2000

Policies&Proc/UseEmail

Updated October 2002

Reviewed July 2006