



<b>POLICY/PROCEDURE INFORMATION</b> (Policy no HR0007)	
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Use of Communication Policy</b> <i>(This policy is non-contractual and is subject to periodic review and will be amended according to service development needs).</i>
<b>Applicable to</b>	All staff and volunteers of Nottinghamshire Hospice
<b>Target Audience</b>	Others such as agents, consultants and other representatives of Nottinghamshire Hospice may be required to comply with the policy as a condition of appointment.
<b>Date issued</b>	Sept 2020
<b>Next review date</b>	Sept 2023
<b>Lead responsible for Policy</b>	Director of People Services
<b>Policy reviewed by</b>	Freeths Solicitors
<b>Notified to (when)</b>	Donna Roberts, Human Resources Manager
<b>Authorised by (when)</b>	Donna Roberts, Human Resources Manager
<b>CQC Standard if applicable</b>	
<b>Links to other Hospice Policies</b>	
<b>Links to external policies</b>	
<b>Summary</b>	This policy sets out Nottinghamshire Hospice's view on the correct use of the email system, and explains how this can be achieved, as well as Nottinghamshire Hospice's response to inappropriate use.
<b>This policy replaces</b>	

<b>VERSION CONTROL</b>		
<b>Status</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Reviewed date</b>
Original policy written by Angela Bloomfield, Head of HR	June 2015	June 2017
Policy reviewed by Corporate Management Team		
Policy ratified by The Quality & Safety Group	June 2015	
Policy reviewed by Donna Roberts, HR Manager	Nov 2017	Nov 2019
Updated control sheet and published on Policy Doc App	Dec 2018	
Updated staff and volunteers throughout policy	June 2020	
Policy reviewed by Donna Roberts, HR Manager	Sept 2020	Sept 2023
Logo updated and uploaded to website	March 2021	

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## 1. Introduction

The use of email and the internet within Nottinghamshire Hospice is encouraged. Used appropriately it facilitates communication and improves efficiency. Used inappropriately, it causes many problems, ranging from minor distractions to legal claims against Nottinghamshire Hospice. This policy sets out Nottinghamshire Hospice's view on the correct use of the email system, and explains how this can be achieved, as well as Nottinghamshire Hospice's response to inappropriate use.

## 2. Email and Internet Protocols

The email system and the internet are available for communication on matters directly concerned with the business of Nottinghamshire Hospice. Employees using the email system should give particular attention to the following points:

- The standard of presentation. The style and content of an email message must be consistent with the standards that Nottinghamshire Hospice expects from written communications. (Separate guidance on house style is available)
- The extent of circulation. Email messages should only be sent to those staff and volunteers for whom they are particularly relevant.
- The appropriateness of email. Email should not be used as a substitute for face-to-face communication. "Flamemails" (emails that are abusive) can be a source of stress and can damage working relationships. Hasty messages, sent without proper consideration, can cause unnecessary misunderstandings.
- The visibility of email. If the message is confidential, the user must ensure that the necessary steps are taken to protect confidentiality. Nottinghamshire Hospice will be liable for any defamatory information circulated either within Nottinghamshire Hospice or to external users of the system.
- Email contracts. Offers or contracts transmitted via email are as legally binding to Nottinghamshire Hospice as those sent on paper.

Any failure to follow these guidelines satisfactorily can result in disciplinary action, including summary dismissal.

## 3. Unacceptable use

Nottinghamshire Hospice will not tolerate the use of the IT system for any of the following:

- Any email that could constitute bullying or harassment on the grounds of gender, race, religion, disability, sexuality or age
- Excessive personal use for social invitations, trivial personal messages, jokes, cartoons, chain letters
- Playing games (other than those pre-installed on computers and during personal time).
- Online gambling.

- Accessing pornography
- Downloading and distributing copyright information and or any software available to the users
- Posting confidential information about other staff and volunteers, Nottinghamshire Hospice, its supporters, suppliers and Trustees
- Deliberately subverting the virus checker protocols

Any of the above will result in disciplinary action being taken against an employee and could lead to termination of an employee's contract of employment.

#### **4. Implementation of the Policy**

The IT Consultant is responsible for the management of the IT systems and will provide advice on all aspects of the policy for users.

A training programme, to familiarise new staff and volunteers with the email system and its uses, will be available in-house. Line Managers are required to ensure that all new staff and volunteers are familiar with the requirements of this policy and have received training in the use of the system.

Regular monitoring and recording of email messages and telephone conversations may be carried out on a random basis. This will be carried out by Departmental Managers and the IT Consultant. Hard copies of email messages and recordings of telephone conversations may be used as evidence in disciplinary proceedings. Email messages may be retained by Nottinghamshire Hospice for a period of 5 years.

All email users must use a unique individual password which must be changed at regular intervals and is confidential to the user. Access to the email system using another employee's password without prior authorisation is likely to result in disciplinary action, including summary dismissal.

Users must ensure that critical information is not stored solely within the email system. Copies should be kept separately on the IT network. Where necessary, documents must be password protected.

Users are required to be familiar with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and to ensure that they operate in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

#### **5. Complaints**

Staff and volunteers who feel that they have cause for complaint as a result of email communications should raise the matter initially with their immediate Line Manager and/or the Human Resources Manager. If necessary, a complaint can then be raised through the Grievance Procedure.

#### **6. Personal Use of Communication Facilities**

- Personal use of the internet facilities is acceptable in the employee's own time within normal working hours provided that there is no cost to Nottinghamshire Hospice, including that of lost time.
- Personal address lists are not to be kept on Nottinghamshire Hospice's system and personal circulars are not permitted.

- Urgent personal emails can be sent in your own time, but you are not expected to spend more time on this than the relevant guidance on urgent personal phone calls. All personal emails will be accompanied by the Nottinghamshire Hospice disclaimer.
- Please remember that no email sent or received using Nottinghamshire Hospice systems can be considered private, and may be viewed at any time to comply with monitoring regulations.
- No software is to be downloaded or installed without the permission of your Line Manager or a member of the Senior Management Team. Users should be aware that the downloading of material may interfere with network performance.
- Users are expected to take the necessary steps needed to ensure that viruses do not spread on the network from downloaded material.

## 6. Monitoring

Monitoring of emails and internet use may be carried out according to the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000. Nottinghamshire Hospice will monitor emails and internet use at random across the organisation. If we find high use of personal emails or unauthorised use of the internet for personal reasons; or access to unacceptable sites we reserve the right to investigate and make use of the disciplinary policy, including up to dismissal for gross misconduct.

## 7. Telephone

Staff and volunteers are permitted reasonable private use of the telephone during normal working hours, for example, to arrange a medical appointment, or tell family that you are working late.

- Lengthy personal phone calls may not be made or received except in exceptional circumstances.
- Personal international calls may not be made under any circumstances.
- A pay phone, based at the Hospice, is available for the use of staff, volunteers and visitors.

Lengthy mobile phone calls should not be made during working hours.

At times emails and files held on computer may be accessed if an employee is away from the office, this is likely to be in relation to the following list (this is not exhaustive):

- Confirming whether an email or correspondence to a particular organisation has been sent
- Retrieval of work related emails that need action
- Retrieval of work related files or correspondence as required to ensure work progress

## 8. Media

Any potential communications with the media that might arise out of your work at

Nottinghamshire Hospice or has reference to Nottinghamshire Hospice must be authorised in advance by the Chief Executive or the Deputy Chief Executive. Unauthorised contact with the media may give rise to disciplinary action by Nottinghamshire Hospice under its formal Disciplinary Procedure and that action may result in dismissal.

To participate in any form of media must be agreed in writing by the Chief Executive.

Any media queries should be referred to the Chief Executive or the Deputy Chief Executive.

UNDER REVIEW