



Cymorth Llywodraethu Gwybodaeth
ar gyfer Gofal Sylfaenol
Information Governance Support
for Primary Care

IGDC • DHCW

IG Guidance on Safe Haven Faxing



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INTRODUCTION

The term ‘Safe Haven’ is used to describe the arrangements in place within the NHS to ensure the safe and secure communication of patient information. For the purpose of this guidance, it refers to a secure fax environment to allow the transmission of sensitive or confidential information to be both received and stored in a secure manner.

The use of communicating information via fax is **strongly discouraged** in NHS Wales, as a method of transferring confidential health related information, due to the risks involved. However, where no other alternative is available, their use may be considered, providing the ‘Safe Haven’ rules are followed.

The preferred option for transferring between NHS Wales organisations is via the NHS Wales email network, as it is considered secure to transfer any information, including sensitive and confidential data. For example, both the sender and receiver must have an email address ending in “@wales.nhs.uk”.

Where staff are required to send information to colleagues in NHS England, they may do so providing their email address ends with “nhs.net”.

The [NHS Wales Email Use Policy for Primary Care Service Providers](#) is supplementary to the All Wales Email Use Policy issued under the All Wales Information Governance Policy Framework, it sets out the responsibilities of all users when accessing the NHS Wales email service. The NHS Wales Email Use Policy for Primary Care Service Providers should be read in conjunction with relevant organisational procedures.

PROCESS FOR SENDING FAXES

Sensitive or confidential information must only be sent by fax when absolutely necessary and no other secure methods of transfer are available.

When sending information via fax, the following rules **MUST** apply:

- The fax machine must be sited in an area that is restricted to those who need to access the information.
- The recipient is notified that the fax is being sent and are requested to verify the fax number and acknowledge receipt;
- The sender is certain the correct person will receive it and the fax number is correct;
- Care is taken when dialling the correct fax number;
- Any frequently used fax numbers must be pre-programmed into the fax machine to minimise the risk of misdialling;





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- Where possible the NHS number should be used for identification in preference to the patients name and address;
- Only the minimum amount of personal information should be sent;
- All confidential faxes sent must be clearly marked "Private and Confidential" on a fax cover sheet;
- The cover sheet must contain a confidentiality statement, for example, "The information contained in this fax is strictly confidential and intended solely for the person or organisation to whom it is addressed. If you have received this fax in error, please notify us as soon as possible".
- If the fax number is not pre-programmed the cover sheet should be sent first, only when confirmation of receipt is received should the confidential information be sent using the re-dial function for the same number, receipt should again be confirmed.
- If confirmation is not received, telephone the recipient to ensure the fax was safely received.
- Wherever possible the personal details should be faxed separately to the confidential/clinical information.
- The sender of confidential information has total responsibility for the process.
- The confirmation of receipt should be checked to ensure the fax has been transmitted to the intended recipient. Where possible this should be attached to the original document.
- If the sender is in any doubt about the receiver's safe-haven facility or security arrangements, they **MUST NOT** fax the document.

PROCESS FOR RECEIVING FAXES

- The fax machine must be sited in an area that is restricted to those who need to access the information.
- When receiving information via fax, recipients **MUST**:
- Encourage senders to use the NHS Wales Email Network for communicating such information rather than faxing;
- Ensure all senders understand that they must notify the recipient that a fax will be sent to them.
- Confirm the sender is using the correct fax number to reduce the risk of misdirection.
- Ask for the sender to send a test fax first and wait for your confirmation before send the personal information, to help prevent mis-direction.
- Wait at the fax machine for the fax when notified that a fax is on its way.
- Confirm the fax has been received or not been received with the sender.
- Make sure all documents are removed from the fax machine as soon as possible.
- Encourage the sender to only provide the minimum information required.





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POSITION AND ACCESS CONTROLS

- Fax machines must be sited in areas where the general public, or those without a ‘need to know’, do not have physical access, either to the machine or to the documentation.
- Frequently used numbers should be identified and pre-programmed into the “memory dial” facility to reduce risk of misdialling, ideally restricting these to ‘Safe Haven’ numbers.
- Fax machines must only be operated by users authorised by the Practice Manager and these users must fully understand their responsibilities for maintaining confidentiality.
- Arrangements must be made for the handling of confidential information that may be received outside of normal working hours.
- the fax machine storing information overnight without it being printed out (messages are received and stored in memory, either the fax machine or computer, which requires a controlled password to access the message).
- nominating a member of staff to be responsible for checking the machine each morning (e.g. Practice Manager), and who is responsible for collecting, holding and delivering the faxed information to the appropriate person;

