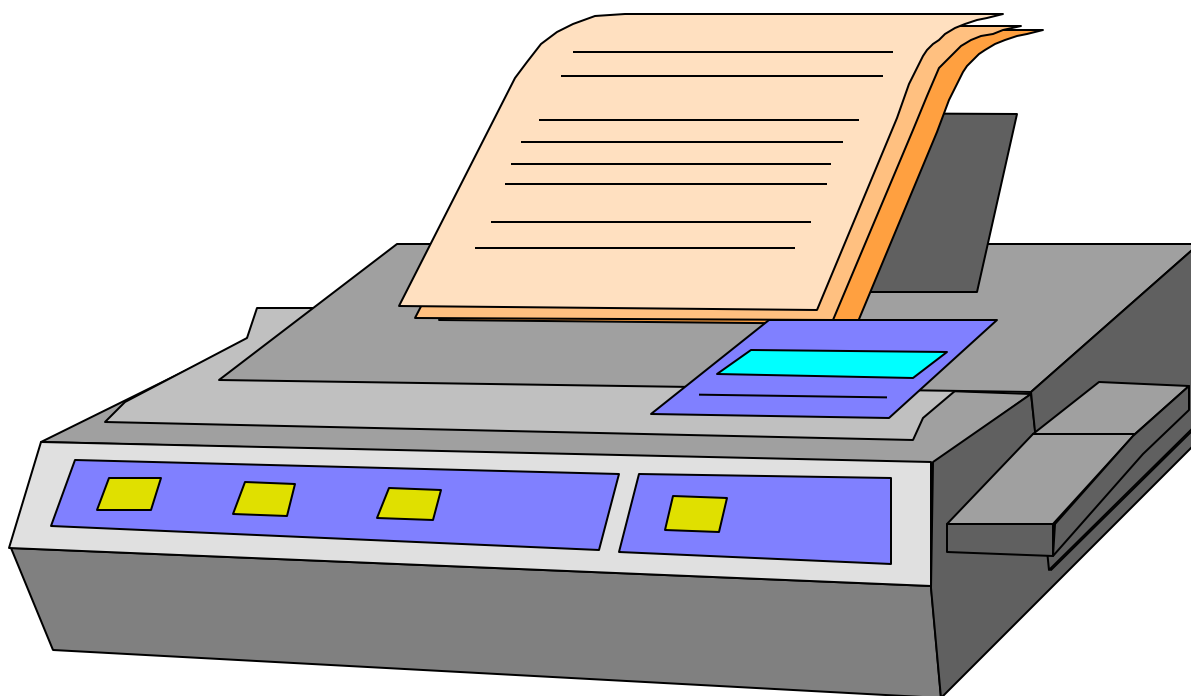




Wirral Hospital NHS Trust
Birkenhead & Wallasey Primary Care Trust
Bebington & Wirral Primary Care Trust
Cheshire & Wirral Partnership NHS Trust
Clatterbridge Centre for Oncology NHS Trust



Guidelines for the secure Transmission of Manual faxes

GUIDELINES FOR THE SECURE TRANSMISSION OF MANUAL FAXES

The Health Service holds large amounts of confidential information about you, members of your family, friends, and colleagues; but the vast majority of this information is about strangers you are probably unlikely to meet. The information belongs to them and we are merely the custodians. Their information should be treated with as much respect and integrity as you would like others to treat your own information. Handle with care, it is your responsibility to protect that information from inappropriate disclosure and to take every measure to ensure that patient identifiable information is not made available to unauthorised persons.

One of the most common breaches of confidentiality occurs when documents containing patient identifiable information are sent by fax machine. The fax machine you are sending your information to could be sited in an open office or even in a corridor, and may be shared by more than one department; thereby increasing the risk of the information being seen by unauthorised persons.

Whilst these guidelines deal with patient identifiable information, the procedure is also applicable when faxing any document that contains confidential information.

What is patient identifiable information?

Patient identifiable information is any one or more of the items listed below.

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| ➤ Surname | ➤ Forename |
| ➤ Initials | ➤ Address |
| ➤ Date of birth | ➤ Other dates (e.g. death, diagnosis) |
| ➤ Postcode | ➤ Occupation |
| ➤ Sex | ➤ NHS number |
| ➤ National Insurance Number | ➤ Ethnic group |
| ➤ Telephone number | |
| ➤ Local identifier (e.g. hospital or GP Practice Number) | |

Many NHS organisations are adopting the principle of Safe Haven fax machines and you should make every effort to ensure you use them wherever possible.

What is Safe Haven fax machine?

A Safe Haven fax is managed in such a way that you can be confident that information can be transferred to it in the knowledge that safeguards in place to ensure its security. These safeguards may include:

- The fax machine being sited in a secure room or cupboard
- The organisation have a written policy for handling faxes that staff have been informed about and understand, and
- Staff who are responsible for collecting and delivering the faxed information to the appropriate person.

How do I know if the fax machine I am sending information to is a Safe Haven fax machine?

A "Wirral Directory of Safe Haven fax machines, or fax machines kept in a secure room" has been prepared in conjunction with these guidelines. The information contained in the directory was provided from a recent survey. A questionnaire was sent to fax numbers in NHS organisations in Wirral. The fax numbers in this directory were indicated as being either a Safe Haven fax machine, or the fax machines were situated in a secure room.

Telephone the recipient first if you are in doubt regarding the security of their fax machine.

What sort of information do I need to know to ascertain whether or not it is a Safe Haven fax machine?

You could ask simple questions, for example:

- i. Is the fax machine sited in a secure office?
- ii. Does more than one department use the fax machine?
- iii. Are there designated people who collect faxes?

What shall I do if the fax machine is not a Safe Haven fax machine?

- Telephone the recipient of the fax (or their representative) to let them know you are going to send patient identifiable information by fax.
- Ask if they could wait by the fax machine whilst you send your message through.
- Ask if they could acknowledge receipt of the fax.
- Make sure you use a fax cover sheet that states that the information you are sending is confidential * **Please see below for a suggested form of words**

* The information contained in this fax is **STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL** and intended for the named recipient only. If you are not the named recipient you must not copy, distribute or disseminate this information, nor disclose its contents to any person. If you have received this fax in error, please notify the sender immediately. Thank you.

- Double check the fax number before you hit the “send” button to ensure that the correct number has been dialled.
- Request a report sheet to confirm that transmission is O.K.

Other safeguards for secure transmission of confidential information?

It is NOT advisable to:

- send faxes to a destination where you know they are not going to be seen for some time.
- send faxes to a destination outside office opening times (whenever possible).
- leave the information unattended whilst the information is being transmitted.
- Key in the full fax number if this is avoidable. If it is a number that is used regularly it can be stored in the fax memory.

If you find a confidential document has been sent to your fax machine in error, it is your responsibility to ensure it is given to the named recipient or securely returned to its source.

This guidance also covers personal information about staff as well as patients.

If your organisation has a Safe Haven fax machine(s), make sure you pass the number(s) on to your colleagues who regularly send confidential information to you.

Remember, if in doubt – check it out!
Take care of personal information – it could be yours