

Staff Info-Mail

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Guidance on the use of portable computing equipment

Following recent concerns about public sector data protection and, in particular, the security of information being transferred between locations and organisations, the NHS Chief Executive, David Nicholson, has written to all NHS organisations with a list of requirements.

When using portable computer media such as solid state memory cards, memory sticks, pen drives, DVDs, CD-ROM, etc -

- Do not use them for bulk transfers (more than 50 individuals) of person-identifiable information without the express permission of the Caldicott Guardian (Matthew Fletcher) - these devices are insecure and can easily be lost.
- If you absolutely have to transport bulk personal information on them, it must be encrypted (256 bits). Use Winzip (Version 9 or later).
- Store them in a secure environment when not in use.
- Ensure that nobody else uses them (for example, members of your family).
- Keep them with you at all times when travelling (for example, inside a coat pocket or briefcase).

When using portable computers such as laptops, notebook computers, etc -

- Do not use them for bulk transfers (more than 50 individuals) of person-identifiable information without the express permission of the Caldicott Guardian (Matthew Fletcher).
- If you absolutely have to transport bulk personal information on them, make sure the hard-drive/data files are encrypted (256 bits). Use Winzip (Version 9 or later).
- Do not load them with any unauthorised software.
- Ensure any security features are switched on.
- Ensure other people cannot see any information on the screen, particularly when travelling on public transport.
- Store them in a secure environment when not in use.
- Ensure that no one else uses them (for example, members of your family).
- Do not write down any user names or passwords.
- Keep them with you at all times when travelling. Do not leave them unattended in your vehicle, or whilst you are fetching refreshments or visiting the cloakroom - particularly if you are attending conferences in hotels, conference venues, etc.
- Keep them out of sight when driving (for example, in the boot), to minimise the risk of anyone taking them while you are stationary.
- Remove any detachable media (which must be encrypted) and carry them separately (for example, inside a coat pocket or briefcase).

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