

Appendix 2 - Email Good Practice Guidelines

EMAIL ETIQUETTE

Who are you?

It is good practice to identify yourself and your position at the end of the email. This may not be apparent from your e-mail address alone. The email systems in use in NHS Fife allow the creation of Signature Files that can be attached to the end of each email message.

Email formatting and content

- NHS Fife email format is:-
 - Blank background
 - Font – Arial 10
 - Auto signature containing – name, job title, location, telephone number, fax number
- Always ensure the e-mail SUBJECT line is completed;
- Internal email can increase the effectiveness of interpersonal communications with colleagues and can improve efficiency in creating, editing and accessing written documents.
- Electronic communication outwith NHS Fife represents an outstanding opportunity to improve the speed and efficiency with which we communicate with our working partners. It also raises important issues in the areas of data security, confidentiality and interpersonal communications.

EMAIL GOOD PRACTICE

Email is our most often used form of communication and is a reflection of NHS Fife as an organisation. The format of one's e-mail should be professional in terms of signature and other formatting. Email signatures should follow certain guidelines to fit with the overall branding of NHS Fife. As such, the style of address, tone, spelling, grammar and punctuation of all signatures should reflect the standards of formal business communication. No quotations or images should be included (no matter how innocent that they may seem) that are personal, political, religious, racist, jokes, or other viewpoints that might be considered offensive by other individuals.

- Be careful about disclosing confidential information, remember that email can be easily copied and forwarded.

- Be vigilant when receiving files attached to email, especially from unknown sources, such files often contain viruses. If you are unsure, do not open the file and contact the Digital and Information Service Desk.
- NEVER disclose your password to anyone. Nobody has the right to know your personal password, and if you divulge it to another, both of you will be in breach of the Digital and Information Security Policy and may be liable to disciplinary action. Please refer to the NHS Fife Password Policy.
- Check email on each working day or arrange for a duly authorised person to do so.
- Advise people when you are not available. When out of the office and not able to log into your mail account, use the tools within the system to notify others of your inability to do so.
- Reply promptly to all email messages requiring a reply.
- Request confirmation of receipt on important emails sent, when requested recipient should acknowledge receipt.
- Notify your line manager or Human Resources department if email is received which is regarded as illegal or offensive.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING BUSINESS EMAIL MESSAGES

Subject Line

- Ensure the subject line gives a clear indication of the content of the message.
- Indicate if the subject matter is sensitive.
- Use flags to indicate whether the message is of high or low importance.
- Indicate whether an action is required or whether the email is for information only.

Subject and Tone

- Greet people by name at the beginning of an email message.
- Ensure that the purpose and content of the email message is clearly explained.
- Include a signature with your own contact details.
- Ensure that the email is polite and courteous.
- Make a clear distinction between fact and opinion.
- Proof read message before sending.
- Include original email message when sending reply.
- Ensure email messages are not unnecessarily long.

Structure and Grammar

NHS Fife is committed to the provision of a service that is fair, accessible and meets the needs of all individuals

- Try to use plain English.
- Check spelling before sending.
- Put important information at the beginning.
- Avoid abbreviations.
- Avoid using capital.
- Do not use emoticons.

Addressing

- Distribute email message only to the people who need to know the information.
- Think carefully before using reply all.
- Use 'To' field for people who are required to take further action and the 'cc' field for people who are included for information only.
- Ensure email message is correctly addressed.

General

- Be aware that different computer systems will affect the layout of an email message.
- Avoid sending messages in HTML format as if an email recipient is using an email system that does not support HTML the layout will be affected.
- Be aware that some computer systems might have difficulties with attachments.
- Observe the restriction of the attachment i.e. 2mb.
- Try not to forward messages unnecessarily.