

## Protecting information in transit – ensuring the security of e-mailed customer records.

Social care functions – whether serving adults or children – involve a lot of personal information, much of it of a sensitive nature.

Legally, the Council is obliged to ensure that personal information on our Service Users is kept as secure as we can – which is why we deploy secure means of communication wherever possible, such as secure networks and/or secured e-mail services.

Where these facilities are not available, we try wherever possible to send and receive personal info in encrypted form, to make sure it stays as secure as we can make it.

It's important to note that the obligation to secure personal data applies equally to all companies and organisations (including residential / care homes) that processes personal information – the actual requirement is in the Data Protection Act, which says –

*“Appropriate technical and organisational measures shall be taken against unauthorised or unlawful processing of personal data and against accidental loss or destruction of, or damage to, personal data.”*

Any organisation that cannot show it has appropriate measures in place is breaking the law. Any organisation that cannot show it has appropriate measure in place and then loses personal data is in deep trouble and faces the likelihood of –

- Reputational damage - would you trust a company that can't keep your private info safe?,
- Regulatory damage - the Information Commissioner regularly requires organisations that have lost info, or simply didn't have the necessary safeguards in place, to sign legally enforceable undertakings to improve, and –
- Financial damage – ***the Information Commissioner has the power to fine organisations that don't take adequate care of information up to £500,000 and is not afraid to use that power:*** 28 organisations have been fined to date and the Commissioner is constantly campaigning for more enforcement powers.

Encryption of e-mailed communications is seen as one 'appropriate technical measure' to ensure the security of personal information.

Information that is encrypted can be lost or sent to the wrong person, but this won't matter as it is effectively unreadable without the proper access key or password. This is why the Council uses encryption and it's why we require our business partners to do the same.

The Council has adopted 7Zip as its preferred encryption solution. It is an encryption system that is compatible with Microsoft WinZip functions, offers levels of security equivalent to those used by M.I.5. and (importantly) is free.