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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The function of this policy is to ensure compliance with existing policies Set out on Information governance, data protection, and confidentiality. See appendices.

1.2 This policy is also intended to work alongside the NHS Lothian procedure See appendices.

2. SCOPE OF POLICY

2.1 This policy is intended to cover post sent both externally via a contracted service providers which requires postage to be paid and internal mail distributed by our own staff. Communication may also be in the form of electronic means via contracted service providers.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

3.1 All letters and packages handled by our staff will be maintained in a secure and confidential environment both during processing and while in transit. All external post that is paid for by the organisation must relate to the organisation’s business and must be sent using the national contracted route.

3.2 All external letters and packages received which are undeliverable by our mail room will be opened in a secure and confidential environment. Every effort will be made to forward on to intended recipient or returned to originator.

3.3 Lab Van Services will deliver all mail between sites they service.
4. CLASS CRITERIA

4.1 As a guide mail delivery can be classified into the following:

- Category 1: Next day (not guaranteed)
- Category 2: 2-3 days
- Category 3: 3-5 days

5. PATIENT APPOINTMENTS

5.1 Taxis / couriers will not be used to deliver letters to patients that have accepted a short notice appointment in person or by telephone. Letters should be sent as follows for appointments booked:

1. 5-7 days in advance → send via standard mail.
2. 3-4 days in advance → send first class via Royal Mail.
3. 1-2 days in advance → do not send a letter.

Further guidance is available from the intranet:

http://intranet.lothian.scot.nhs.uk/NHSLothian/Corporate/A-Z/WaitingTimes/SOP

6. PERSONAL AND OTHER NON-BUSINESS POST

6.1 The organisation will not pay for any personal post. Any letters or packages which are processed through our mail-rooms and are suspected as being of a personal nature may be opened and examined under controlled and confidential conditions for verification. If these can be traced back to a member of staff then this will be considered to be fraud and action including disciplinary action may be taken. Any suspect packages will be in accordance with “dealing with suspicious packages” mailroom guidance.

Further guidance is available from the intranet:

http://intranet.lothian.scot.nhs.uk/NHSLothian/Corporate/A-Z/facilities/logistics/
6.2 Post which is generated to promote non core business activities such as conferences, research, polls, or other such events must be arranged in advance with the Site Services SFM Manager and will require to be supported by the provision of the appropriate cost centre.

7. PRESENTATION OF MAIL

7.1 All letter post should be presented clearly typed; with the post code on a separate line at the base of the address this will enable us to process mail more efficiently and cost effective.

Further guidance is available from the intranet:
http://intranet.lothian.scot.nhs.uk/NHSLothian/Corporate/A-Z/facilities/logistics/

8. RELATED DOCUMENTS

This document should be read in conjunction with the following:

8.1 NHS Lothian Confidentiality Policies

8.2 NHS Lothian Safe Transfer of Records Policy

9. REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

9.1 Information Governance (Source Intranet)
http://intranet.lothian.scot.nhs.uk/NHSLothian/Corporate/AZ/ehealth/

9.2 Facilities, Logistics Mail (Source Intranet)
http://intranet.lothian.scot.nhs.uk/NHSLothian/Corporate/A-Z/facilities/logistics/
9.3  Waiting Times SOP (Source Intranet)

http://intranet.lothian.scot.nhs.uk/NHSLothian/Corporate/A-Z/WaitingTimes/SOP