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Introduction

This document is designed for all end users of NHSmail and gives information on how and when to use the encryption feature.

NHSmail includes an encryption feature that allows users to exchange information securely with users of non-accredited or non-secure email services, for example Gmail, Hotmail etc.

**Before using the encryption feature, please ensure you read and understand all guidance and instructions to ensure data remains secure.**

Once a message is sent from NHSmail using the encryption feature, it is encrypted and protected with a digital signature to assure the recipient that the message is authentic and has not been forged or tampered with. Formatting of the message is preserved, and attachments can be included.

**Note:** Please ensure your organisation has given approval for you to communicate sensitive information to non-accredited or non-secure recipients using the NHSmail encryption service, and that you always adhere to local information governance (IG) policies.

When to use the NHSmail encryption feature

NHSmail users can exchange sensitive information securely with other NHSmail users, without needing to use the encryption feature. For example, sending from @nhs.net to @nhs.net.

If you are sending sensitive information outside of NHSmail, then the encryption feature should be used. The only exception is when sending emails to an organisation that has accredited to the secure email standard. A list of these accredited domains is available on NHS Digital’s website.

NHSmail will identify if a destination domain is secure or not, therefore if there is doubt or uncertainty you should use the NHSmail encryption feature which will encrypt the email if the destination domain is not secure.

If sending an email to multiple organisations with some secure and some insecure domains, using the encryption feature means that automatically those that are secure will receive an unencrypted email and those that are not secure will receive an encrypted email.

How to send an encrypted message

**Before sending an encrypted email**

Exchanging patient / sensitive information should be done in accordance with local information governance policies and the NHSmail Acceptable Use Policy.

Before sending patient or sensitive data via the encryption service you should:
• ensure that the recipient is expecting it and is ready to handle the contents appropriately, either as part of an agreed clinical or sensitive business workflow
• send the recipient the accessing encrypted emails guide for non-NHSmail users, so they can register for the service
• send an encrypted email as a test following the instructions below, but do not include patient or sensitive information the first time. This is to ‘set-up’ the secure channel of communication and ensure the correct recipient has successfully received the email. If it is an incorrect recipient, data has not been compromised.

Once you have established the secure channel of communication, patient and sensitive data can be sent within an email or as an attachment, subject to local governance policies.

Some attachment types are not permitted to be sent via NHSmail, including .exe files. If a non-permitted attachment is detected it will automatically be removed. For the full list of non-permitted attachments see the attachments guide.

Note: It is your responsibility and legal duty under the Data Protection Act 2018, on behalf of your employing organisation, to safeguard any data received in line with the data protection and information governance requirements agreed between your organisation and the receiving organisation. If required, and in line with your local information management policies and processes, you should retain unencrypted copies of any encrypted email received in your local information repositories.

To send an encrypted email

1. Log in to your NHSmail account (either via an email client such as Outlook or via the web portal at www.nhs.net).
2. Create a new email message.
3. Ensure the recipient’s email address is correct.
4. In the subject field of the email, enter the text [secure] either before or after the subject of the message. The word secure must be surrounded by the square brackets for the message to be encrypted.  
   Note: If square brackets aren’t used, the content of the email will be sent in plain text and may potentially be exposed to interception or amendment.
5. Type the message.
6. Click on **Send** to send the message. The service will then encrypt the message and deliver it to the intended recipient.

7. An unencrypted copy will be saved in your **Sent Items** folder.

**Note:** [secure] is not case sensitive and [SECURE] or [Secure], for example, could also be used.

Any replies received will be decrypted and displayed as normal in NHSmail with the orange Egress banner which includes details of when the email was decrypted as per below.

```
From: "Joe Bloggs Test" <JoeBloggstest@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 20, 2020 2:47 PM
Received: Thursday, February 20, 2020 3:23 PM
To: Test <Test@nhs.net>
Subject: RE: [Secure] Results of blood test

Hi Test

Thank you for your email, I can confirm I have received it and will book an appointment at the surgery.

Thanks, Joe Bloggs
```
Revoking access to an encrypted email

It is possible to revoke access to an encrypted email and attachment sent via Egress. This should only be used when there is a genuine reason why the email should no longer be able to be accessed or for example if it was sent in error.

You can look at details of every secure email that you have sent via the Egress Web Portal.

Note: This does not show you a copy or the contents of the secure email that was sent.

How to view your sent secure email

1. Log into the Egress Web Portal at https://switch.egress.com
2. Select Sent Packages and then the tab that corresponds to the date you sent the email you are wanting to check or change permissions for.
3. Select the Package Label of the email you would like to see. This will open a new window.

Sent package options

Sent Packages displays a list of all secure emails that you have sent via the Egress Web Portal. This enables you to manage secure information in real-time meaning even after you have sent the email you have some control over the information by being able to:

- **revoke access** - you instantly remove the recipient’s ability to open the email or any attachments
- **control who can access the email and when** - modify this list of people and / or time restrictions in real-time meaning changes will take place immediately
- **view audit logs** - audit logs display all information about a secure email package including who has accessed it, when and where from. Failed attempts are also logged.

Egress Outlook add-in

In addition to being able to send encrypted emails using [secure], NHSmail users who use Outlook to access their email accounts can download a free Outlook tool (known as an add-in). This enables users to send encrypted emails without using [secure].

Information on how to download the Egress Outlook add-in is available on the NHSmail support site.
Once downloaded and installed successfully, you can use the Egress Outlook add-in to encrypt emails by clicking on the open padlock icon in the top left of a new email and selecting the **SECURE** icon as per the screenshot below. Your email will then be encrypted once it is sent.

There is also an option to add date and time restrictions meaning that the recipient can only access the encrypted email and any attachments within the time that you select on the **Message Restrictions** icon as per the screenshot below. Please note this is optional and not required to send an email encrypted.
Approving access for others to secure emails sent via Egress

If the recipient forwards the encrypted email notification to another individual and they were not the original recipient(s), in order to get access to the encrypted email they will need to request access from you as the original sender.

They can do this by creating an Egress account - further information on how to do this is available in the accessing encrypted emails guide for non-NHSmail users.

You will receive an email notification to your NHSmail account that someone has requested access to a ‘secure package’ that you have sent. This refers to the encrypted email and any attachments that were sent encrypted. You are then able to approve or deny access to that individual, based on whether they have a genuine need to receive and view the content.

Dear Firstname Lastname,

User Two (usertwo@outlook.com) requested access to your package

Package label: QM-200219-215820
Subject: [secure] Medical Record Update
Created at: Wednesday, February 19, 2020 9:58:20 PM (GMT)

with the following message:

--------------
Please grant me access to this package.

Thanks,
User Two
--------------

To view the package properties and, possibly, grant or deny the request, please visit

https://esi.nhs.net/ui/admin/view.aspx?id=efghrgf-5c80-4e41-8034-f5c0f33b4b0e&as=firstname.lastname@nhs.net.

Regards,
Egress

Note: Please refer to your local policies on sending sensitive information.
Help and further guidance

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<td>Egress support desk: 0844 800 0172</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recipients of NHSmail encrypted emails who require help with registration.</td>
<td>Refer to: Accessing encrypted emails guide for non-NHSmail users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other NHSmail queries</td>
<td>NHSmail helpdesk: 0333 200 1133</td>
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Frequently asked questions

**Where is the data processed?**
Data is encrypted on the NHSmail platform within the United Kingdom (UK).

When a recipient of encrypted email authenticates to the Egress encryption service to open the encrypted content or uses the Egress Outlook add-in (Egress software used to encrypt and access encrypted files), these actions are processed in the UK.

The encrypted email is stored within UK data centres for 90 days, to allow users to access it via the Egress Web Portal. Once encrypted, the reply is only unencrypted when it arrives on the NHSmail platform within the UK.

**Does the encryption feature work when NHSmail is accessed on all browser types?**
Yes. The encryption feature works when NHSmail is accessed from all recommended browser types.

**Is message tracking (for example, delivery or read receipts) available on encrypted emails?**
Yes. Full audit events are available within the Egress Web Portal to see who has accessed the secure email and when.

**Do I have to register for the service to decrypt replies?**
No. As an NHSmail user, replies are received encrypted into the NHSmail data centre where they are decrypted and delivered to your inbox as normal.
Can I set up an application linked to NHSmail which will send automated encrypted emails?
Yes. The subject line must contain the encryption keyword – [secure] and the application must be locally signed off for clinical use.

Can encrypted replies received by shared mailboxes be accessed as normal?
Yes.

What is the maximum attachment size I can send by encrypted email replies or forwards?
35mb.

What types of attachments can be included on encrypted email replies and forwards?
Certain file types are blocked by the NHSmail service and cannot be sent or received. The list of blocked attachments can be found in the attachments guide.

Is the service suitable for urgent, real-time communication?
As the service sends and receives email over the internet there are no guarantees that a message will reach its intended recipient as internet email can be silently lost, even when delivery reports are requested.

Equally, there is no guarantee on how quickly the message will be delivered or the availability of the service the recipient uses to process the message.

We would recommend organisations develop mitigations, through their local business processes, around loss of messages or being unable to open files.

Can the service be used to communicate with nhs.uk email addresses?
Yes. Organisations that run their own local email service can receive encrypted emails from NHSmail users and reply to them. If the local email service is not a secure domain, the recipient will need to create an account with Egress.