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PSNC Briefing 115/13: A brief guide to NHSmail

NHSmail is the central email and directory service available to all NHS staff in England. It is the only email service secure enough for the transmission of confidential patient data, and is accredited to Government RESTRICTED status.

As well as an email service, NHSmail also offers a calendar, directory, fax and SMS service. This briefing gives an introduction to NHSmail, as well as an update to the NHSmail2 project.

What are the benefits of NHSmail?

The key benefit of the service is its security, and it is the only NHS email system which is approved for transmission of patient data, for example MUR feedback or hospital discharge communications.

NHSmail is available anywhere, over either the NHS N3 network or the open internet. The service can be viewed through a free web based client or a local email client, such as Microsoft Outlook.

NHSmail is based in two datacentres to ensure that if one fails, the other is able to seamlessly take over. NHSmail should never be unavailable, and email data should always be safe.

The service's fax and SMS functionality allows users to send free faxes and SMS messages from their inbox. This can be used to contact patients, for example to send a reminder of an MUR appointment or to collect a repeat prescription.

All NHSmail users are listed in the directory to allow users to easily find and contact each other. Users can be contacted individually or through a distribution list, which could, for example, be a group of all staff with accounts linked to a particular pharmacy or all pharmacies in an area.

The NHSmail helpdesk is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, so that any problems can be fixed straight away.

NHSmail accounts can be used as a means of validating that an individual is working for the NHS or for an organisation contracted to the NHS, and so it can help in the administration of other services such as obtaining an Athens password.

How can community pharmacies start to use NHSmail?

Policy approval has been given for pharmacy staff to be issued with individual email accounts and for a pharmacy to request a generic dispensary account for their pharmacy. To register for an account, users should contact the Local Organisation Administrator (LOA).

To find your LOA:

- At www.nhs.net (only from an NHS connection) click on 'Search Directory', 'Search', 'Organisation'
- Search for organisation
- Select your organisation and view the 'Administrators' tab

Alternatively, contact the NHSmail national helpdesk on 0333 200 1133.

The development of NHSmail2

With the current NHSmail contract coming to an end soon and the service growing at 15,000 users per month, the Health and Social Care Information Centre has been tasked with developing a successor service.

NHSmail2 is the project established to look at options for this and while no decisions have yet been made, HSCIC has released a Project Overview which explains the project's vision, transition plan and timescales. As part of this, the HSCIC is consulting current NHSmail users on the development of the new service.

The NHSmail2 project aim is to ensure a seamless transition from the current service to a new, improved and more cost effective set of services before June 2015. The HSCIC envisage that the NHSmail2 project will deliver:

- A new, improved, modern secure email solution for local NHS organisations to use to communicate securely with each other, as well as secure communication to “insecure” users such as non-NHS partners and patients;
- Continuation of the national email directory service for all to use;
- A new secure email router to permit local email systems that meet new published secure email standards to securely connect to the NHSmail service. This will remove the need for local organisations to operate two parallel email systems, reducing confusion for staff, system duplication and cost;
- The new service will also allow locally branded email sub-domains to be used on NHSmail. Everyone will have a national email address for their life in the NHS for example firstname.lastname@nhs.net and the opportunity for their organisation to use a local NHSmail email address for example firstname.lastname@localhospital.nhs.net which both lead to the same secure user account;
- Innovative and competitive additional services as “add-ons” to the core service (including collaboration tools, cloud storage etc.) that can be purchased locally and separately on top of the centrally funded core service; and
- The nhs.uk relay, and the NHSmail Fax and SMS Gateways will continue as centrally funded services until at least March 2015. Continuation after that date will be subject to a broader infrastructure review being undertaken by NHS England.

For more information on NHSmail2, please visit the [HSCIC NHSmail2 website](#) or to read the [Project Overview](#).

Where can I find more information?

For more information on NHSmail, please visit the PSNC website at psnc.org.uk/nhsmail or the [HSCIC website](#).

If you have queries on this PSNC Briefing or you require more information please contact [Alastair Buxton, Head of NHS Services](#).