

Guidelines on Email Management

Staff must not use the County Council's email system for their own private or personal use.

You must not use the email system in any way that is insulting or offensive. You must not deliberately view, copy or circulate any material that:

- is sexually explicit or obscene;
- is racist, sexist, homophobic, harassing or in any other way discriminatory or offensive;
- Contains material, the possession of which would constitute a criminal offence;
- Promotes any form of criminal activity;
- Contains unwelcome propositions;
- Involves gambling, multi-player games or soliciting for personal gain or profit;
- Contains images, cartoons or jokes which may cause offence;
- Appears to be a chain letter
- Brings the Council in to disrepute or exposes it to legal action;

Access to Email Inboxes

These guidelines aim to assist you to achieve the Customer Care Charter standards of:

1. Acknowledging emails within 24 hours
2. Responding in full within a maximum of 10 working days

This will avoid the risk of emails sitting unattended in your email inbox when you are absent from work – either planned (more than half a day) or unplanned (e.g. sickness, time off for dependants).

Setting Up Permissions for Access

Dependent on departmental policy, likely volumes of email and the need for confidentiality, the employee's line manager will decide to whom the employee will need to delegate permission to access their inbox on a permanent basis. This will be either:

- (a) the employee's line manager and/or
- (b) at least one team member or other colleague.

The delegate will need to access the inbox in the employee's absence and action emails as appropriate.

Delegate permission is set up by the employee via the initial MS Outlook window and accessing **Tools / Options / Delegates – Add / Permissions – Inbox - 'Reviewer'**.

As a sender of a message, if you wish only the recipient to be able to read the message, and not a delegated colleague of theirs, you should specify the sensitivity of

the message as 'private'. This is accessed via the new mail message window either through **View / Options / Sensitivity** or using the **Options tool** on the toolbar.

However, to retain the privacy of the email, the recipient needs to have ensured that the box 'Delegate can see my private items' box in **Tools / Options / Delegates / Permissions**, remains unticked.

The above sensitivity marking will only operate if the sender uses an email system compatible with the current version of MS Outlook used by the Council.

Further instructions will be made available regarding outlook web access and webmail.

Supplementary Notes

The following notes relate to the above guidelines. These notes explain the background behind the guidelines and why certain MS Outlook facilities do NOT form part of the guidelines.

1. Different departments may have different policies as to who should be granted delegated access. In some services, delegated access will be granted to an employee's line manager. In other services, delegated access to colleagues or other team members may be more appropriate. The policy within a particular department will take account of (a) confidentiality of emails (particularly from service-users) and (b) likely volumes of emails.
2. MS Outlook has facilities to automatically forward emails, intended for one employee to another employee. The use of this auto-forward facility does not form part of the published guidelines and is therefore disabled because:
 - (a) The facility cannot be invoked in the case of an unplanned absence.
 - (b) It could potentially divert an email from a service-user that was sent in confidence to a single, named, employee without the service-user being able to influence that diversion.
3. Note that, as well as the DCC Customer Care Charter standards, there are other, external, requirements to respond to emails promptly:
 - (a) The e-Government national standards require that 100% of email enquiries from the public are responded to within one working day.
 - (b) Requests under the Freedom of Information Act (which can arrive via email) must be fulfilled within twenty working days.
4. All emails are automatically tagged with the classification 'controlled'. You should consider whether you need to change the classification to 'public' or 'restricted'. This can be done by selecting **Options / Permissions**.

Email Etiquette

For many people email is now the standard way of communicating within organisations, and also with customers, external contacts and business partners.

In business, the formality of email messages tends to vary, between the semi-formal approach that was previously the domain of the inter-office memo, down to chatty exchanges that you might have with someone over the telephone or while standing next to the coffee machine.

However, email messages are surprisingly permanent. Have a really good look through the contents of your mailbox and you might be surprised to see just how old some of those messages are. Would you have kept a paper inter-office memo for that length of time? Probably not. Many people give very little thought to the contents of an email message, even though it might linger around an organisation for several years.

Corporate email systems are backed up regularly, and those archives can allow access to mail that you had previously thought was gone forever. Remember, all emails are potentially 'disclosable' under the Freedom of Information Act and the Data Protection Act. They can also be recovered and used in legal cases.

It can be normal day-to-day email messages that can cause the most problems, with their offhand remarks and unguarded comments, thoughtless turns of phrase and careless wording. Care must be taken both when sending an email message, and, perhaps more importantly, when reading it. Try not to be too harsh if there's a chance that you might have misinterpreted the sender's meaning.

One problem with less formal email is missed signals - the written message doesn't come with facial expressions or gestures that you would get in a face-to-face meeting, and there's no tone of voice to interpret as you could over the telephone. A great deal of human communication comes from these non-verbal signals and traditionally they help to make the message more clear for example, irony and humour can be difficult to express in an email message.

The following tips should help you avoid some of the pitfalls.

Good Email Etiquette

- **Do** ensure that you have a **relevant "Subject"** line.
- **Do** include a **signature** on your email messages to help the recipient understand who it is from, especially if you are dealing with someone you do not know very well.

Your Name
Your Job title
Derbyshire County Council
Your Telephone Number(s)

- **Do** be **careful** when replying to mailing list messages, or to messages sent to many recipients. Are you sure you want to reply to the whole list?
- **Do** try to think about the message **content** before you send it out.
- **Do** make sure that the content is **relevant** to the recipients.

- **Do** be **polite**. Emails can be misinterpreted.
- **Do** **trim** any quoted message down as much as possible.
- **Do** try to use humour and irony **sparingly**. You can use *smileys* such as :) or :(to indicate facial expressions, but make sure that the recipient understands what they mean.
- **Do** try to **quote** from the original message where relevant. You can break the quoted message down into paragraphs and comment on them individually to make it clearer.
- **Do** be **patient**, especially with inexperienced email users. Give people the benefit of the doubt - just because you are familiar with email etiquette, it doesn't mean that they are.
- **Do** remember to **delete** anything that is not needed or is trivial.
- **Do** remember to tell people the format of any **attachments** you send if they're anything other than basic Microsoft Office file types.
- **Do** tell your correspondent if you **forward** a message to somebody else to deal with, so they know who to expect a reply from.
- **Do** use **emphasis** where it's useful to do so e.g. **bold** or *italics*.
- **Do** send personal/sensitive data to external users using the encrypted email service.

Bad Email Etiquette

- **Do not** reply to an email message when **angry**, as you may regret it later. Once the message has been sent, you will not be able to recover it.
- **Do not** mark things as **urgent** if they aren't, because then when you really do have an urgent message it may not be treated in the way it deserves.
- **Do not** send **excessive multiple postings** to people who have no interest.
- **Do not** keep mail on your **server** longer than necessary, especially large attachments.
- **Do not** copy out an **entire, long** message just to add a line or two of text such as "I agree".
- **Do not** type in **CAPITALS** as this is considered to be **SHOUTING**.
- **Do not** over-use punctuation such as **exclamation marks** ("!") as these are meant to be for emphasis. In particular avoid more than one exclamation mark ("!!!"), especially if your email is quite formal. Also, over-use of the full-stop (e.g. "...") can make a message difficult to read.
- **Do not** send **irrelevant** messages, **especially** to mailing lists or newsgroups.
- **Do not** send large **attachments** without checking with the recipient first.
- **Do not** criticise people's **spelling**. Many people have no way of running a spell check on their messages and will make typos.
- **Do not** conduct **arguments** in public, for example on a mailing list.
- **Do not** send **abusive** email messages.
- **Do not** make **personal remarks** about third parties.
- **Do not** send **unsuitable** email or attachments, especially anything of a sexual nature as they may well be found by a third party later.
- **Do not** use an **over-elaborate** signature on your email message. Never use scanned images in a signature as these tend to be very large.
- **Do not** post your email address on web sites and other public parts of the Internet otherwise you may be deluged with **spam**.