

Guide Number: 4

Subject: Mitigating the risk of personal information breaches through e mail transfers

What is a data breach?

A personal data breach means a breach of security leading to the accidental or unlawful destruction, loss, alteration, unauthorised disclosure of, or access to, personal data.

In short, there will be a personal data breach whenever any personal data is accidentally lost, destroyed, corrupted or disclosed; if someone accesses the data or passes it on without proper authorisation; or if the data is made unavailable and this unavailability has a significant negative effect on individuals.

Key data breach causes

Many data breaches occur from simple human errors, such as:

- Sending an email to the wrong recipient
- Failing to complete a mail merge and mismatching names and addresses
- Attaching the incorrect document to an e mail message

This highlights the importance of carefully handling information and double-checking any of your work that incorporates data, personal or otherwise.

This guide advises staff on things to consider when using e mails to transfer personal data to mitigate the risk of such breaches occurring.



Top Tips to consider when transferring personal data



- Consider the type of information you are sending. Does it contain personal, sensitive data? Do I need to send all of this information or would this be excessive?
- Use links to share documents wherever possible, to avoid sending attachments.
- Use secure transfer tools (such as Zend to) when transferring any personal / special category via e mail. Ensure any passwords are sent in a separate e mail to the intended recipients to enable them to open the document.
- Double check the e mail address of the individual you are sending the information to – there are staff and students with similar e mail addresses and it is important the information is sent to the correct recipient.
- When using templates to gather personal information please ensure blank templates are sent for completion. Check that templates are not pre-populated with personal information relating to other data subjects.

E Mail addresses are also classified as personal data. Particularly individual's personal email addresses.



- When sending e mails to groups of people consideration should be taken to place personal e mail addresses into the bcc field rather than the "To" or "cc" field. By typing e mail addresses into the "bcc" field this will prevent the disclosure of personal e mail address details to other recipients.

Where can I find out more?

You can access a series of support and guidance documents relating to data breaches and the management of e mails our web pages by clicking [here](#).

The Information Governance team can also provide advice and support in relation to the secure transfer of data and data breaches and can be contacted at:

E Mail: infocompliance@leedsbeckett.ac.uk