

Title: The Confidentiality Policy of the Directorate of Laboratory Medicine

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The Directorate of Laboratory Medicine is committed to ensuring the confidentiality of all patient sensitive information. This policy builds on the Trust's Confidentiality Policy in giving clear guidelines on the transmission of patients' pathology results and reports.

A breach in confidentiality occurs if 'anyone deliberately, or by accident, gives information or allows access to information gained through their work to unauthorised persons, without the consent of the patient to whom the information relates.'

Employees who breach patient (or staff) confidentiality will be dealt with through the Trust's disciplinary procedures and through civil law, if appropriate.

All Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust employees are made aware of their duty to protect patient confidentiality during their induction period and a statement to this effect is included in all employment contracts.

With this in mind, the Directorate of Laboratory Medicine has adopted a policy that as all employees handling patients' results are bound by the same confidentiality, all laboratory reports are treated the same regardless of the nature of the patients' clinical information or test result. Access to confidential information is on a strictly 'need to know' basis.

The following summarises the Directorate's guidelines on handling patients' results: -

- Patient results are only telephoned to designated employees within the healthcare field.
- Electronic results sent by email must comply with Trust and NHS policy to ensure they are sent securely.
- Electronic results sent by GP link are transmitted in an encrypted format to secure areas within GP practices.
- Access to patients' results on the Laboratory Information Management System is restricted to certain staff and is password protected.
- Staff are not allowed to access their own results through their position within the Trust.
- Hard copy reports are placed in sealed envelopes before being posted to GP practices or requesting hospitals, all outgoing envelopes are initialled by the sender.
- Sensitive results from staff members (where known) are handled outside normal laboratory procedures with results sent to the requestor in a sealed envelope if the requestor is still routinely receiving paper copies of results.
- As a general rule if there is any uncertainty regarding the confidentiality of any patient's results the query should be referred to a manager.

Note that this is based on the following Trust Policies:

- Trust Data Protection Policy (Ref no. 108)
- Trust Policy for the Use and Protection of Patient Information – Confidentiality Code of Conduct (Ref no. 90)
- Information Governance Policy (Ref no. 130)