

# Exceptional Circumstances Access Policy

## Purpose

This policy provides legitimacy and clear guidance as to the circumstances and procedure under which access to an email account or databases can be approved without the explicit consent of the user.

## Scope

All users of Lothian Buses and subsidiaries, and all information systems such as network databases, email, desktop or laptop computers and any other device or data storage media owned by the above.

This policy does not apply to shared mailboxes or shared databases, which will normally have their own access arrangements.

## Criteria for allowing access

Access without a user's consent to emails and files is only permitted in the following situations:

- where accessing these records is necessary to meet legitimate business interests such as when a user is on unplanned absence such as sick or compassionate leave
- for disciplinary purposes where accusations of gross misconduct are being investigated
- where it is in the vital interests of an individual

Permission to allow access will only be sanctioned when a request is received from the Head or Manager of the team, containing a fully detailed case for why access is required.

## **Initial Steps**

Where an absent person may be able and willing to access their own email, an attempt to contact them should be considered. Be considerate of circumstances in which this contact would be inappropriate, for example; illness or compassionate leave.

If the user is able to access their email remotely, advise them to set up an out-of-office message and/or configure delegated permissions until they return to work. Do not ask for or allow them to divulge their password.

If the absent user is unable to access their account remotely, or it is inappropriate to request this, an appropriate colleague, such as their line manager can be authorised to do so.

## **Formal Request Procedure**

Where a legitimate criteria has been identified, the Head or Manager should contact the IT Department in writing (email is suitable) requesting access and copying the Finance Director. The request should include:

- The identity of the user
- Details of the information in question (be as specific as possible)
- The case for why access is required
- The staff member selected to be allowed access
- The expected period of time that access is required

IT Department will consider the request to ensure it complies with this and any other relevant policies. IT Department will refer cases where the reasons are deemed insufficient to an appropriate Director or Manager and in such cases will notify the requester.

Where access is sanctioned, IT Department will provide the delegated staff member with a time when they must attend the IT Department or arrange a time for remote access. Access to the PC or account shall be made by a System Administrator who shall retrieve or access the required data on behalf of the delegated staff member. This data shall then be made available to the designated staff member.

## **Access Procedure**

For legitimate business access, only business emails and files should be accessed. Any emails or files which appear to be of a personal nature should remain unopened. If a personal email or document is opened inadvertently, this should be recorded.

Emails should not be replied to from within an absent user's account. Where appropriate, an out-of-office message should be placed on a user's email account or delegated permissions configured for the duration of their absence.

Where appropriate (such as return to work), the user must be given a copy of the record of which emails and files were accessed, and made aware of any outstanding work regarding these. Additionally, the IT Department shall inform the user that a delegated member of staff has accessed their email and/or files.

## **Guidance for Users**

Heads and Managers should make staff aware that their email and files may be accessed during unexpected or long-term absences.

To avoid any disclosure of personal data where business information is being accessed, users are advised that any personal emails should be headed "Personal" in the subject line and/or moved to a separate folder named "Personal", so that whoever might be assigned to check their emails will know not to open these messages. However, personal correspondence may still be accessed for disciplinary reasons, or in the vital interests of an individual or individuals.

For further information, please contact:

IT Department