

**GUIDELINES FOR NURSING STAFF (CNSp)
ON THE USE OF EMAIL TO COMMUNICATE HEALTH INFORMATION
TO CHILDREN / PARENTS**


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1.0 Introduction and background

The data Protection Acts 1988, 2003, 2018 protects the rights of the individual and confers responsibilities on those persons processing and using the personal data of patients who attend CHI at Crumlin for care. In this electronic age, families are familiar with email technology and some may prefer this form of communication with the nursing service.

Currently the Health Care Record (HCR) used in CHI at Crumlin is in paper format. This poses a challenge for medical and nursing staff with communication when contacted by the child/parent by phone, email or drop in to CHI at Crumlin with a query about their child's care/condition or treatment. It is essential that in using electronic means of communication, nursing staff ensure that this is reconciled with the child's healthcare record in a timely manner.

2.0 Definition of Guidelines

Guidelines represent the written instructions about how to ensure high quality services are delivered. Guidelines must be accurate, up to date, evidence-based, easy to understand, non-ambiguous and emphasise safety. When followed they should lead to the required standards of performance.

3.0 Applicable to

All nursing staff

4.0 Objectives of the Guidelines


The objective of this guideline is to ensure communication by word, face to face, letter, phone or email protects the child/parents confidential health information in so far as possible.

This Guideline has a threefold purpose:

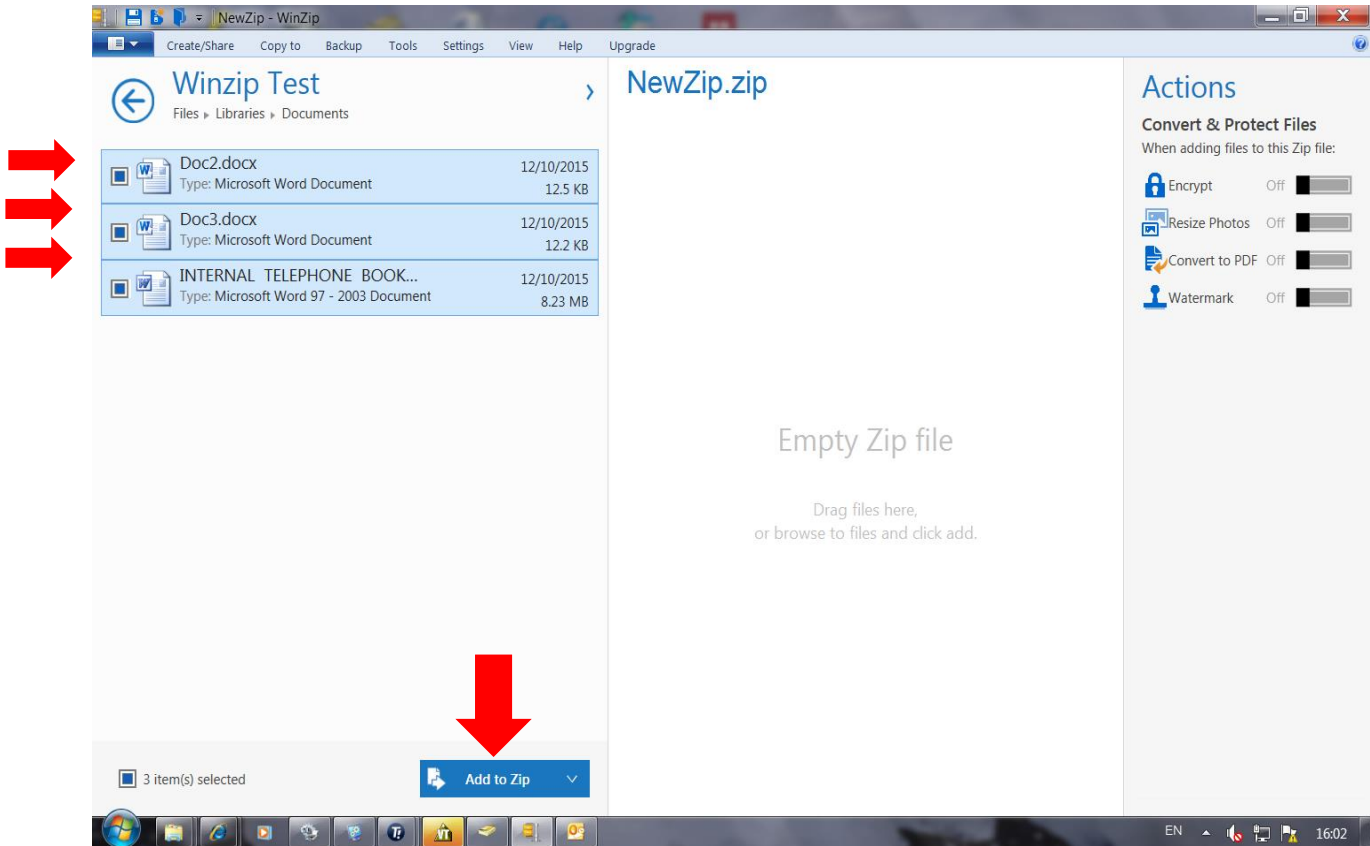
- To ensure nursing staff alert parents and children to the potential risks of the use of this type of communication and follow specific guidance to minimise any breach of confidential health information should the email be viewed by another party. This will be agreed in advance by the nurse and child / parent and signed.
- To give guidance to nursing staff on what information should be included in this type of communication to agree this in advance with the parent and child.
- To give guidance to nursing staff on what information can be included in email correspondence to consultants off site regarding their patient care.

5.0 Guidelines - Electronic mail

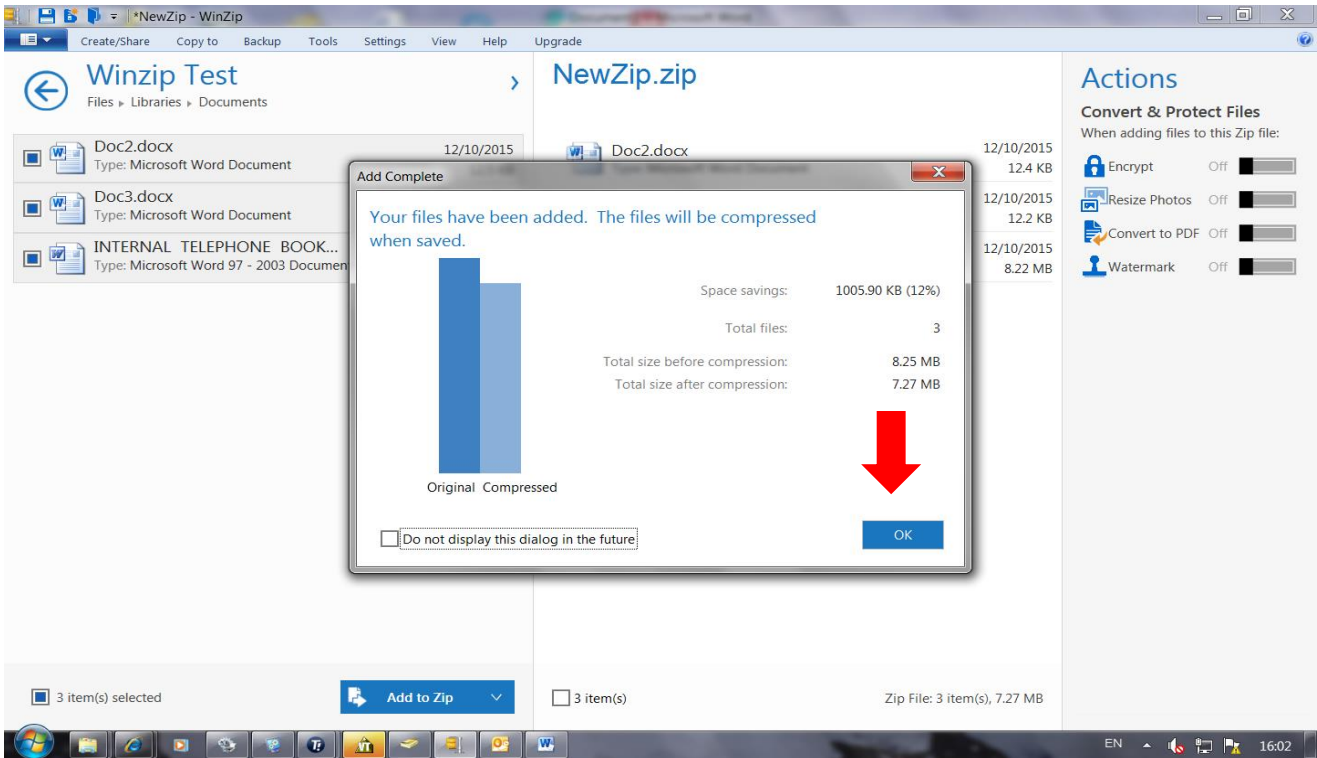
- Reasonable steps must be taken to ensure all children's personal health information is secure and safe from unauthorised access.

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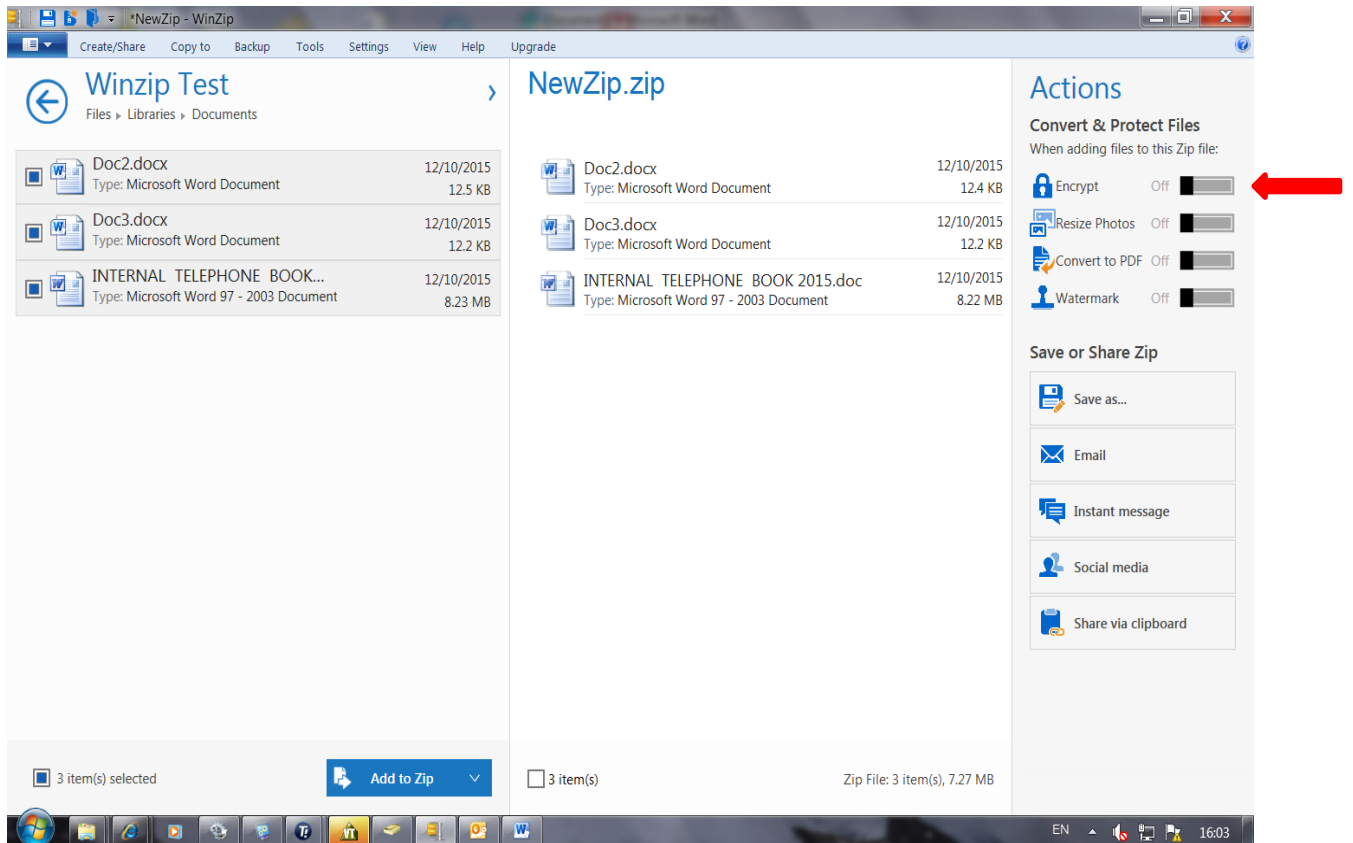
- Protect computer operating system with passwords and ensure they are active when leaving terminals at all times.
 - Be aware that storing patient personal health information on Laptops and USBs is not advised, these can be stolen and if unencrypted will allow access to patient information and evoke a penalty payable by CHI at Crumlin. (Data Protection Commissioner, 2020)
 - Explain to your patients/parents that email information is not secure and may be inappropriately accessed by others.
 - Ensure the email contact is made by the child/parent to minimise any email address issues as much as possible.
 - If parents/patients wish to use email to communicate, ensure parents understand that they will need to download some free software from the internet to allow them to open encrypted email from the CNSp.
 - Winzip encryption package is used in CHI at Crumlin to protect patient sensitive information.
 - All parents will agree a password with their CNSp, which can be stored with their contact details on the speciality database.
 - Permission to contact parent by email will be assumed by them contacting the service by email themselves.
1. Select the files you want to add to zip file and click **Add to Zip**



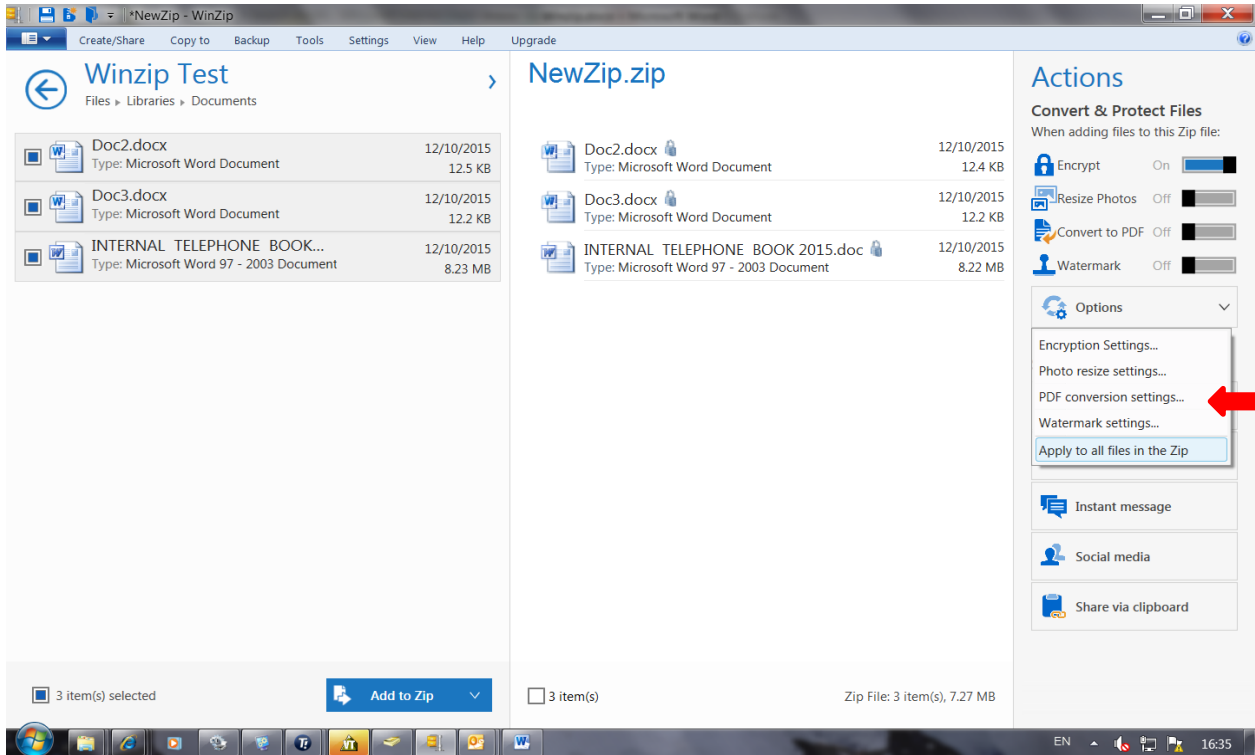
2. Click OK to confirm



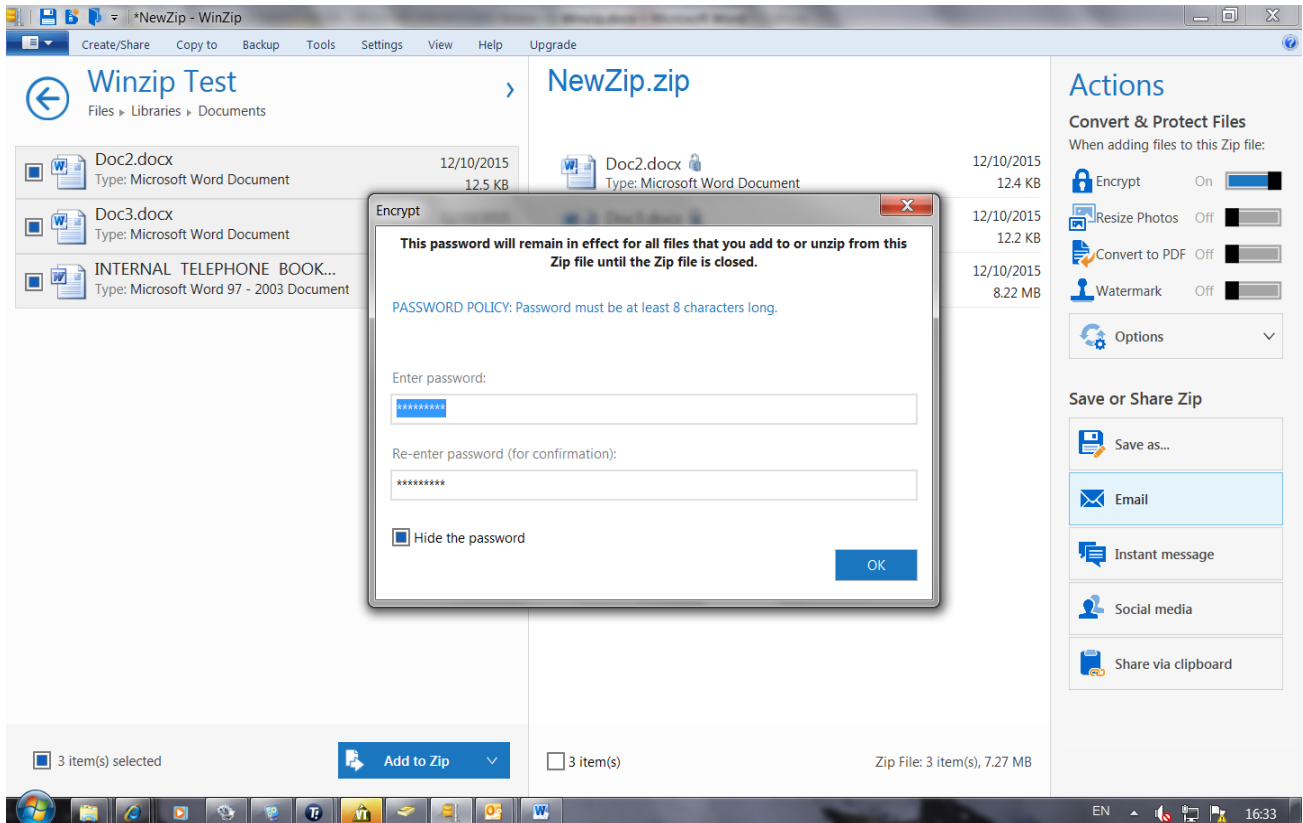
3. On the right hand side, select the actions you want e.g. Encryption




4. Click on Options and Apply to all files in the zip

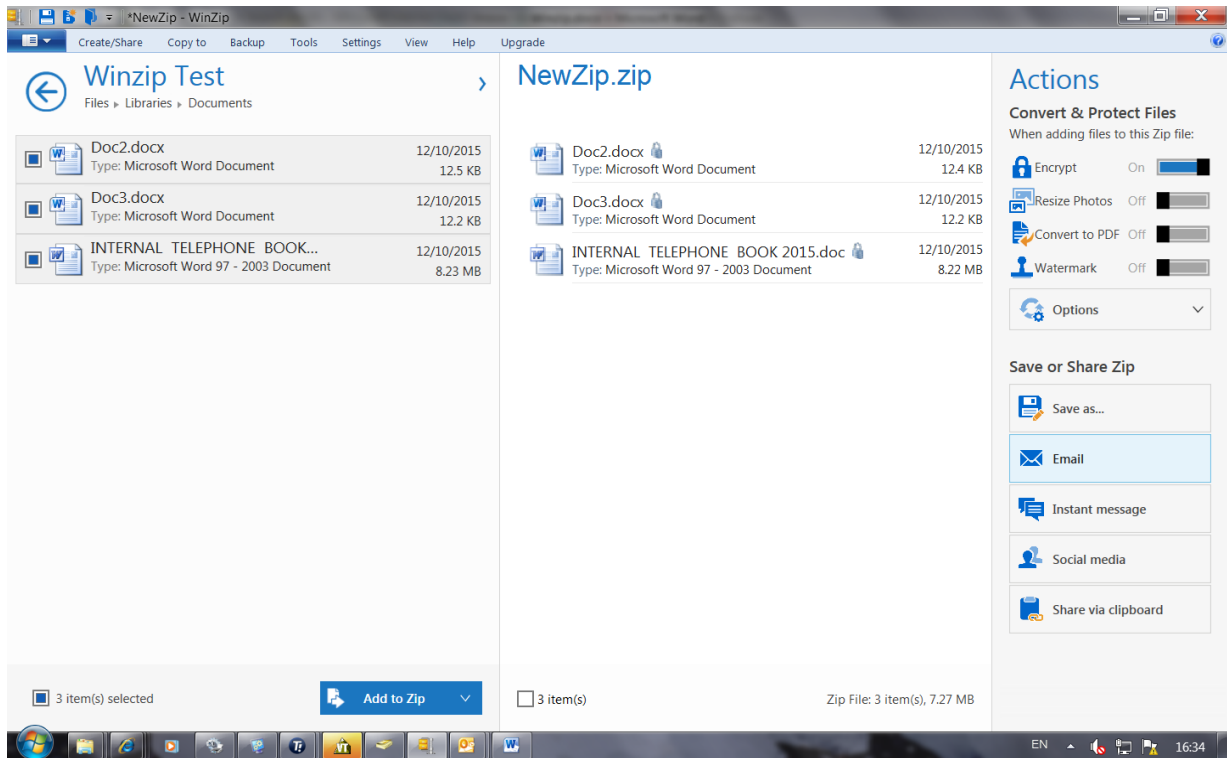


5. You will be asked to supply a password then click OK




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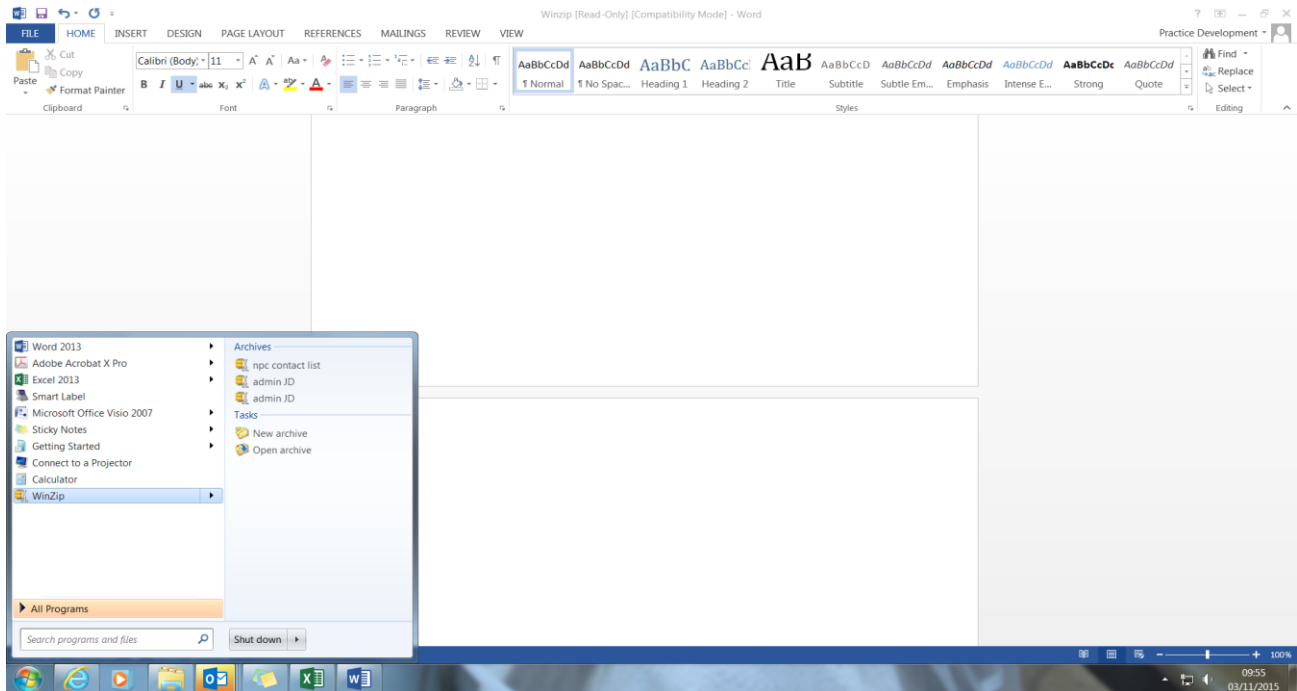
6. You can now choose to save the zip file or attach to an email.



To use your encryption package:

- Click on you start menu left icon on the bottom left
- You will see Winzip as detailed below.
- Click on the arrow to view details, this will identify documents in your archive zipped for email
- You can access the documents at any time and it keeps the archive


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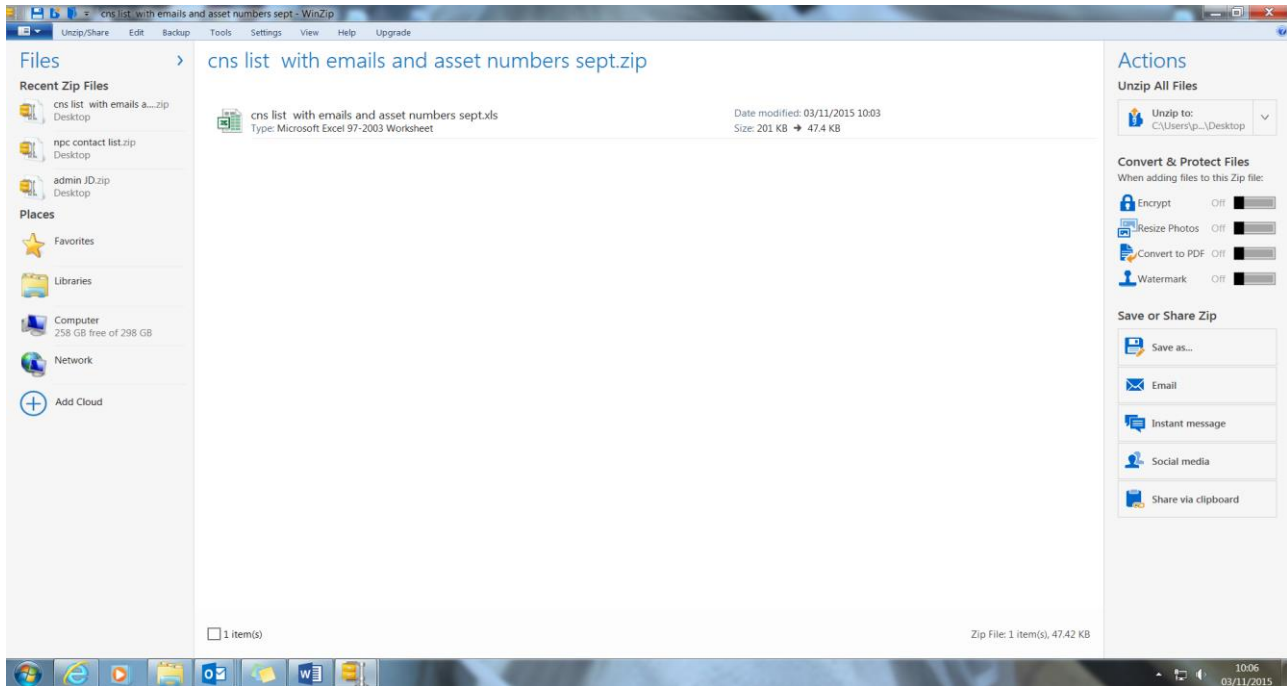


Once you have successfully created a file and zipped it the symbol beside it will look like this



- You will need to have a conversation with the parent to determine how they wish to manage this process
- A password of 8 characters with at least 1 number or 1 letter will be required
- This password must be agreed with the parent
- The password agreed will be the same used for all correspondence
- The password needs to be communicated by phone but not my email as this will negate the point of encrypting.
- The parent's pc must contain software that can open zipped files
- Unzipping version for laptop or pc is 7-zip this may be downloaded for free.
- For Ipad/Iphone an unzipping technology is available for free to download as an app called izip.
- For Android smart phones Unzip or Izip-Zip-unzip tool.

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6.0 Implementation Plan


All Clinical Nurse Specialists, will be alerted to the guidance in this document and if relevant to them must adhere to the guidance.

7.0 Evaluation and Audit

It may be advisable on an annual basis to audit the use of email communication between nursing – CNSp and families. This could be carried out by the Clinical Nurse Specialist in the service.

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