
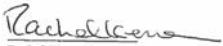



GUIDELINES FOR NURSING STAFF (CNS) ON THE USE OF EMAIL TO COMMUNICATE HEALTH INFORMATION TO CHILDREN / PARENTS	
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1.0 Introduction

The data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 protects the rights of the individual and confers responsibilities on those persons processing and using the personal data of patients who attend OLCHC 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 OLCHC 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 OLCHC 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 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. See appendix 1 Authorisation to Email consent.
- 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.

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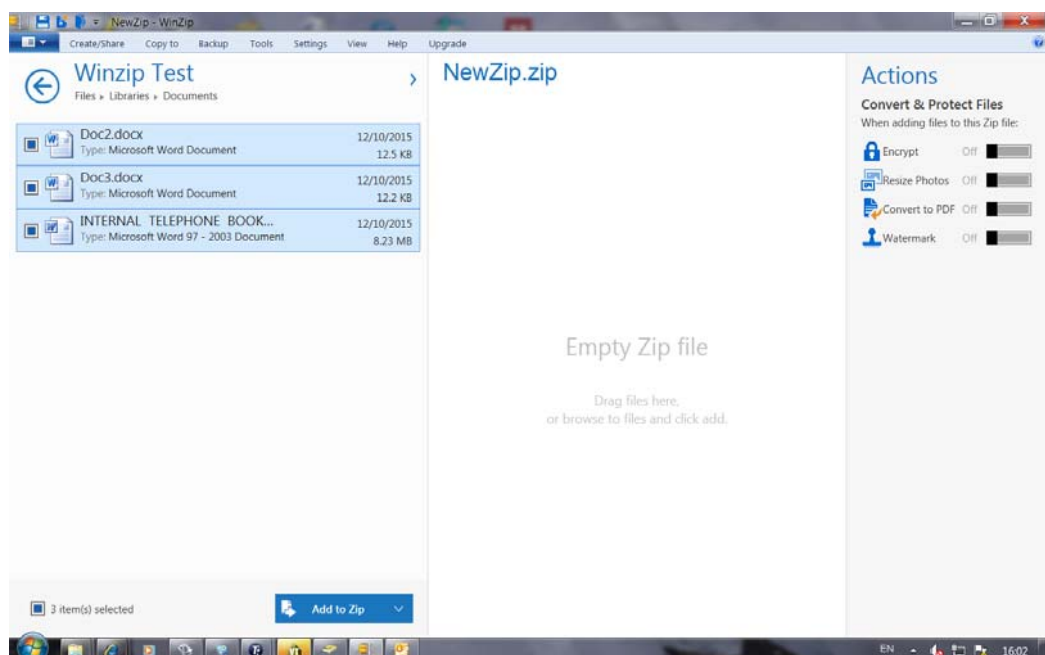
- To give guidance to nursing staff on what information can be included in email correspondence to consultants off site regarding their patient care.


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.
- The CNS must explain to the parent that initiation of email will indicate their desire to communicate by email, a written consent will not be required. It is advisable that all relevant email communication is then filed in the HCR.
- 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 invoke a penalty payable by OLCHC. (Data Protection Commissioner, 2015)
- Explain to your patients/parents that email information is not secure in order to protect their child's personal health information any attached documents will be encrypted prior to being sent to them.
- 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 only specific pre agreed information may be sent by email by them or to them to minimise patient identification in the event the email is viewed by others.

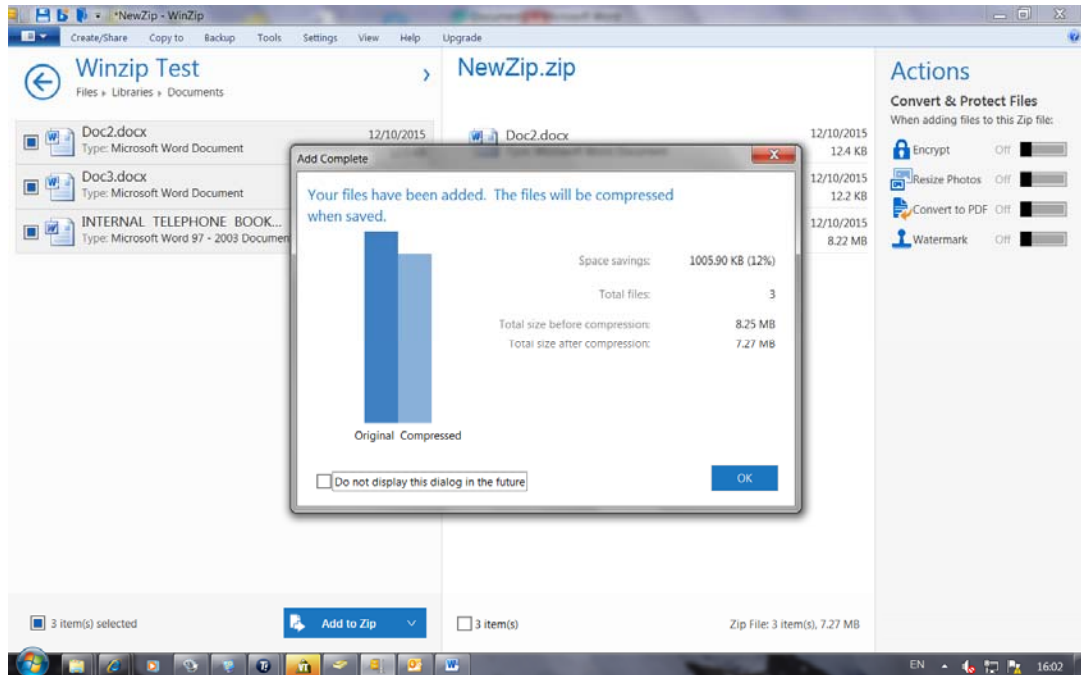
6.0 How to encrypt and send a document attached to an email

1. Select the files you want to add to zip file and click Add to Zip

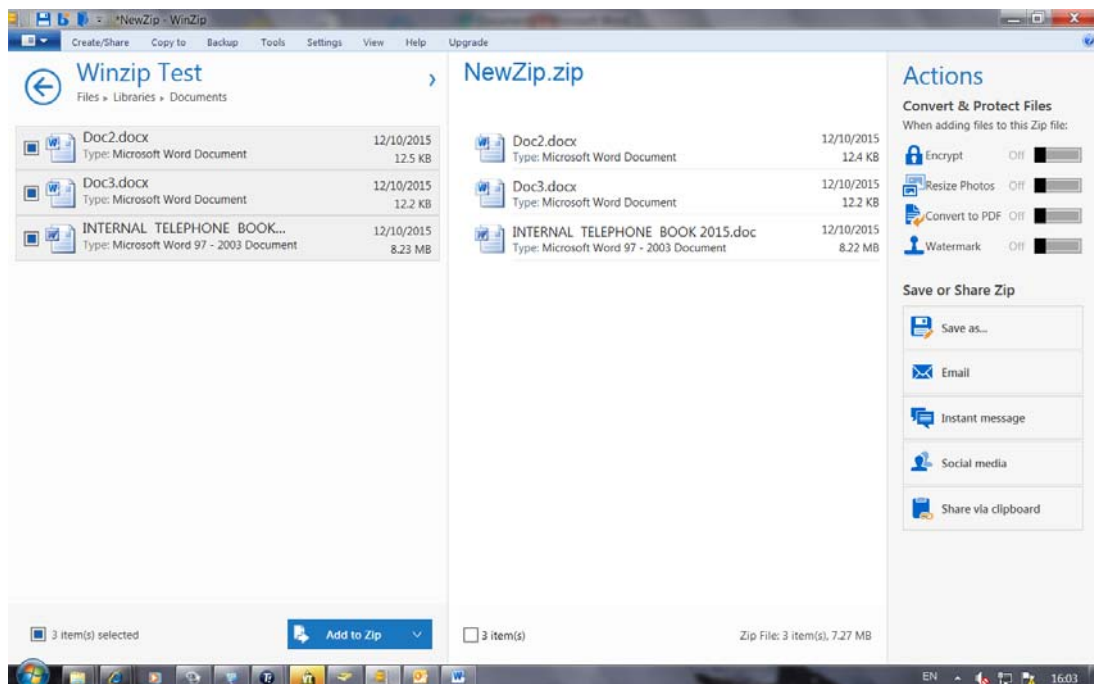



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2. Click OK to confirm

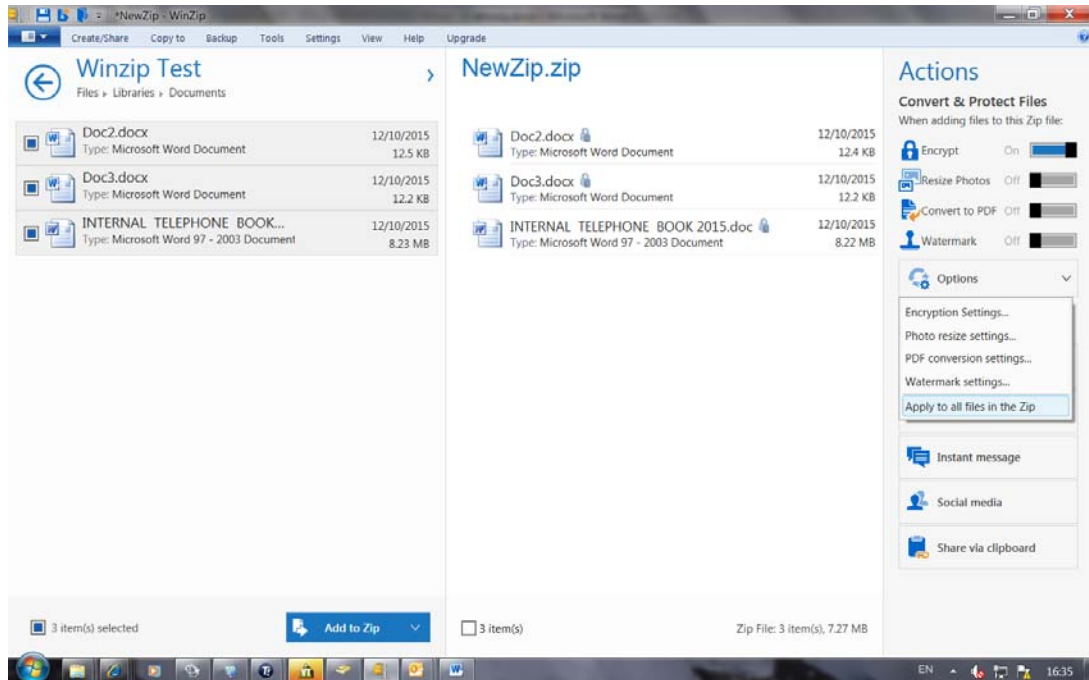


3. On the right hand side, select the actions you want e.g. Encryption

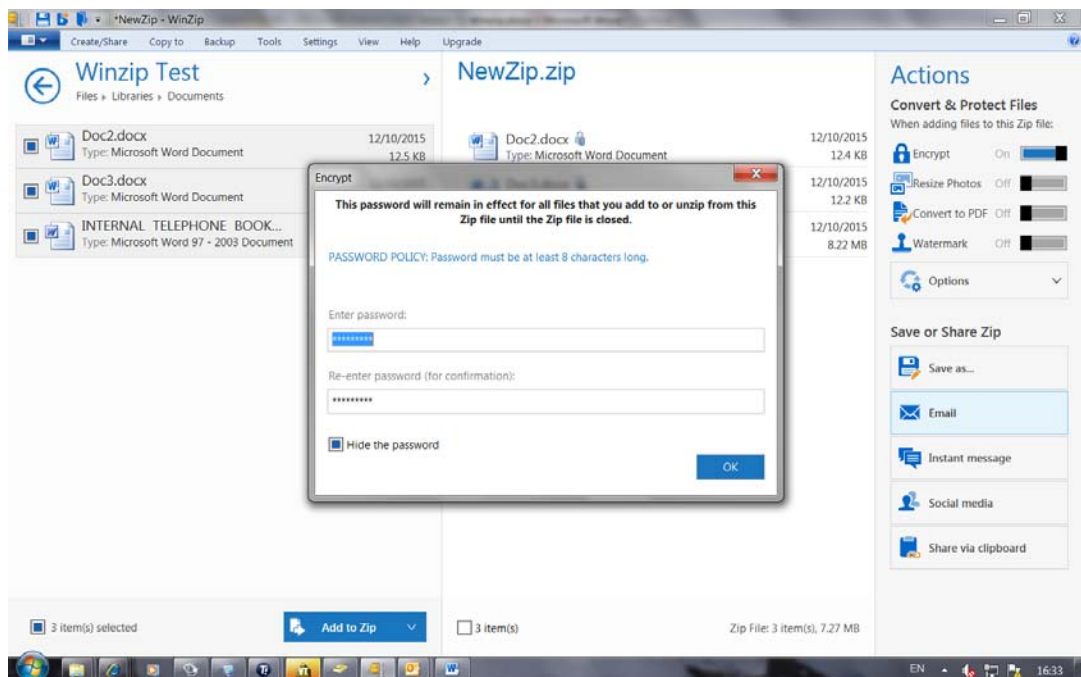



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4. Click on Options and Apply to all files in the zip

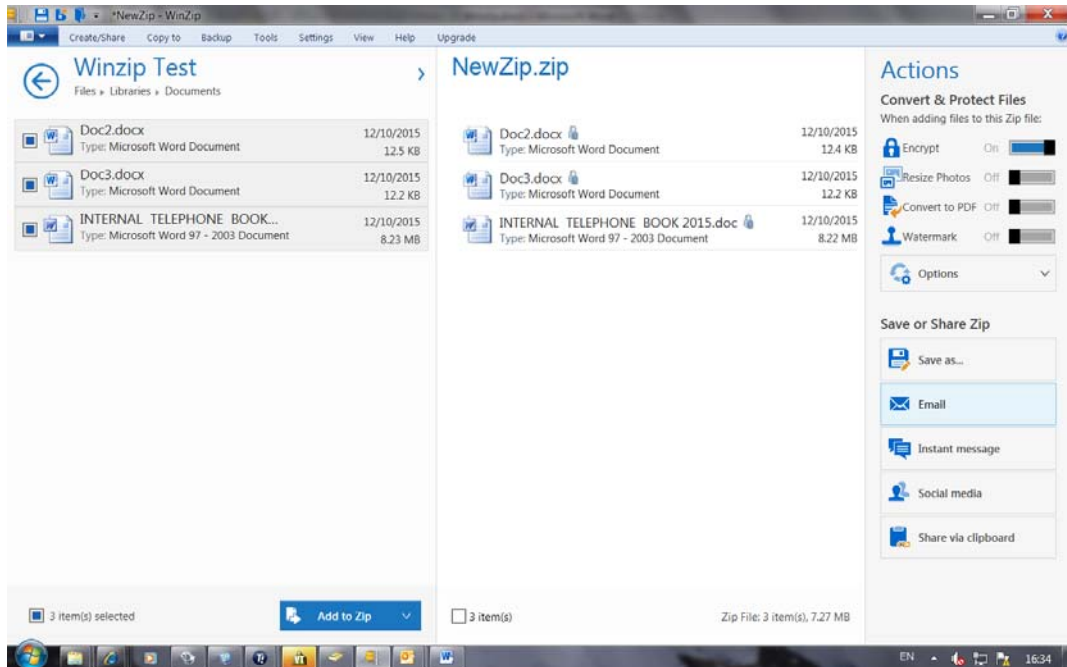


5. You will be asked to supply a password then click OK



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

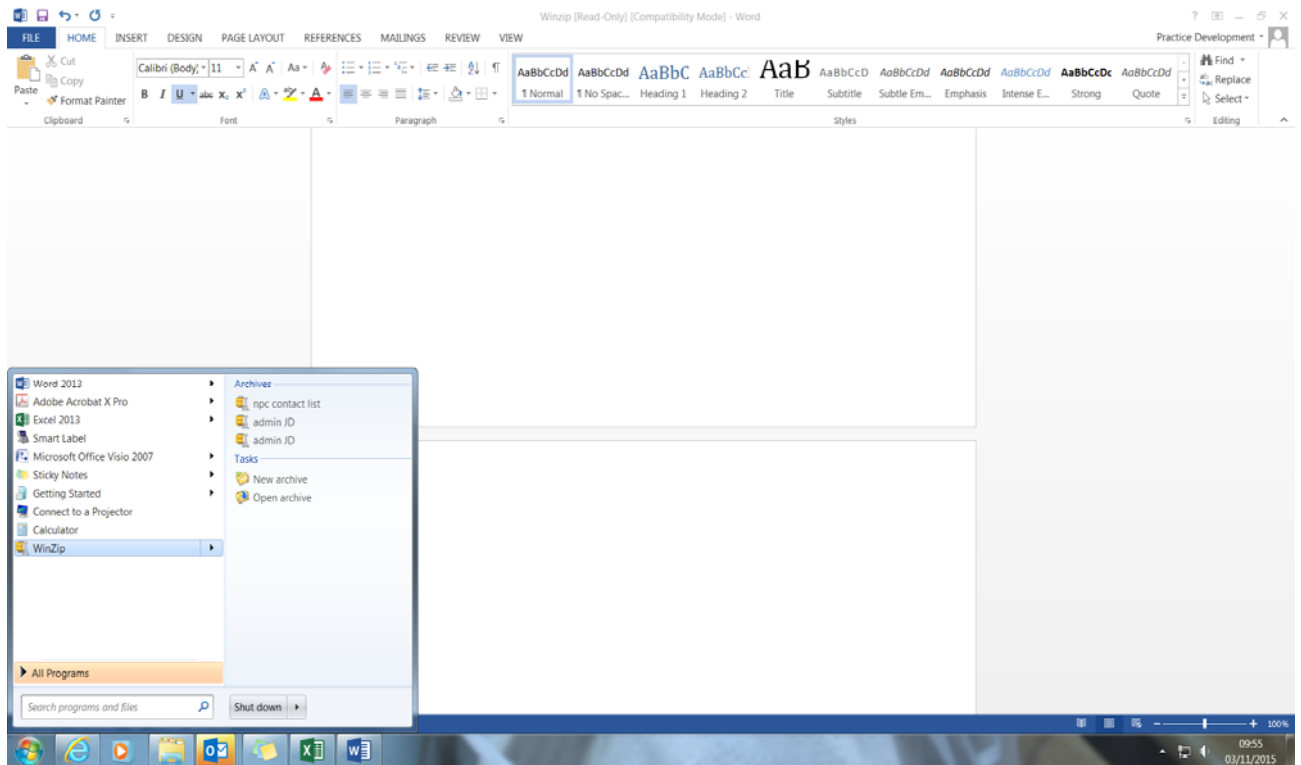


To use your encryption package:

- 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




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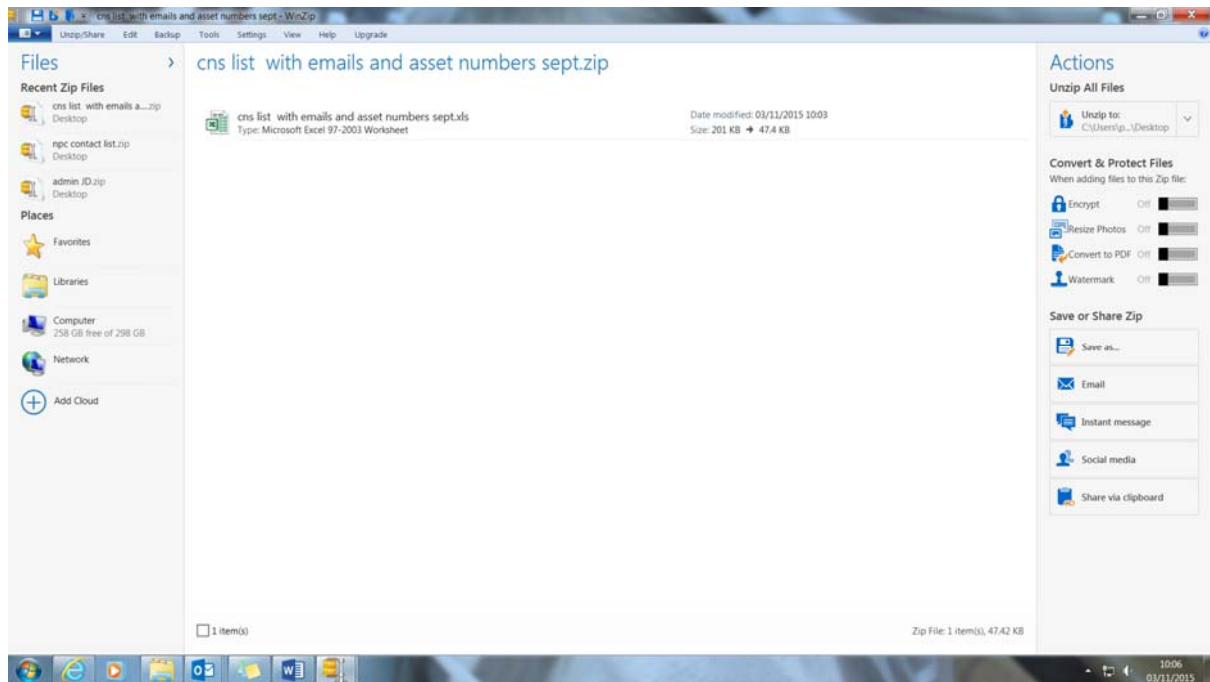


Once you have successfully created a file and zipped it the symbol beside it will look like this



- 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 parent's pc must contain software that can open zipped files-a 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.

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7.0 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.

8.0 Evaluation and Audit

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

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