Communications Policy

Using email is not a secure method of communication; a third party may gain access to the email account, it may be a shared email account, it may be inadvertently be sent to an incorrect address, or the email account could be hacked. It is therefore important that all staff have a clear understanding about when general email can be used and when to use a secure messaging system.

1. **What is Secure Messaging?**
   Secure messaging is an encrypted or password/identity protected method of sending information. Secure messaging systems include:
   - Fax
   - Registered or Collect (signed for) mail
   - Courier service
   - Encrypted ZIP folder within an email
   - A secure portal e.g., court portal

2. **When to use Secure Messaging:**
   Secure messaging must be used when we share any patient health information, accounts information or sensitive information such as private, identifying details of a patient. You must have a signed consent form for the information to be communicated to the patient, next of kin or other third parties
   Third parties may include:
   - Courts e.g., Coroner's Court
   - Next of Kin (NOK)
   - Lawyers
   - Police
   - Other Medical practices
   - Specialists or other doctors e.g., referrals
   - Hospitals
   - Pharmacies
   - Pathologist service e.g., Australian Clinical Labs
   - Imaging service e.g., SKG

   ***Referral letters and scripts must be either:
   - handed to the patient directly
   - posted by registered mail
   - FAXED
   - or sent in an encrypted email to the patient/doctor/clinic/pharmacy.

   Scripts and referral letters MUST NOT be sent in un-encrypted emails.

3. **When you don't have to use it:**
   To answer general enquiries such as appointment times, or to provide general information about Fresh Start services.

Fresh Start staff are responsible for ensuring that all outgoing communication adheres to this policy. Please be aware, **if a request is made to send information without an encrypted zip folder, one of the other secure messaging methods must be used.**