

Axe the fax: 95% of security-threat devices to be decommissioned



Fax machines, decommissioned by some industries years ago, are still widely used within the NHS. However, the use of outdated IT systems and processes, such as fax machines, is "downright dangerous," as noted by the UK's Secretary of State for Health, Matt Hancock, during a keynote speech in Manchester earlier this month.

It's therefore quite reassuring to learn that Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust has made a pledge to remove 95 percent of its fax machines by 1st January 2019.

The Trust has launched an 'Axe the Fax' campaign to identify all machines within the hospitals, their location, phone numbers and what they are being used for before looking at how they can be replaced with more innovative and cost-effective processes.

The campaign follows research naming the NHS as the world's largest purchaser of fax machines and a recent study by the Royal College of Surgeons of England claiming that there are almost 9,000 in use across the service.

Richard Corbridge, Chief Digital and Information Officer at the Trust, acknowledged that it's a challenge to remove all the machines in such a short time frame, but noted "we simply cannot afford to continue living in the dark ages." So far the feedback from hospital staff regarding the campaign has been positive, he said.

"Staff are recognising that on the one hand we have hugely innovative technology being implemented in the Trust and on the other we have technology that hasn't existed for decades in other industries," Corbridge said.

The Trust has 340 fax machines across the organisation but has already axed 20 fax machines and has several undergoing process mapping.

Corbridge added: "The use of nhs.net is far more secure and safe than the use of faxes. We are aiming to help services safely decommission their faxes and move to email in the first instance and take it from there."

One of the key areas where staff are also keen to remove faxes is Bedboard, where wards currently send paper requests for admissions to be logged onto the PAS via an internal fax to the team. Rather than set up a generic account to do this via email the Trust plans to eliminate waste and remove the process altogether, which will also ensure best practice of real-time admissions too.

The Trust has had several NHS organisations requesting information about how it is axing the fax and has set up an email "axethefaxenquiries@nhs.net" to encourage and support them with their commitment.

Source: Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust
Image Credit: Pixabay

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