

DATA PROTECTION – EMAIL ADDRESSES

The National Spiritual Assembly wrote to all Local Spiritual Assemblies in June 2015 on the importance of data protection – on that occasion in connection with the launch of the Data Processing Agreement intended to be agreed between every Local Spiritual Assembly and the National Spiritual Assembly.

This Guidance Note is concerned with the practical implications of some of the requirements of data protection – in particular the requirement to protect personal data at all times, and to ensure that it is destroyed when an individual's service comes to an end.

THE VALUE OF A DEDICATED EMAIL ADDRESS

It is easy and free to set up dedicated email addresses using services such as Gmail, Hotmail or Outlook. So an Assembly might readily set up an email address for its Secretary as follows:

secretary.newtownassembly@ gmail.com

or

newtown.assemblysecretary@outlook.com

or simply

newtown.spiritualassembly@hotmail.com.

An Assembly serving a large community might benefit from several such dedicated email addresses; there might be a separate one for the Treasurer, for instance.

There are several reasons why it makes sense for every Assembly to have its own email address(es), rather than for individuals to use their own email address(es):

- There is an inherent continuity. An incoming Secretary, for instance, simply takes over the Assembly's existing email account. No new email address has to be published, and the incoming Secretary can easily search for relevant information within the email account.
- There is no need for an outgoing Secretary to search through their personal email accounts to delete all Assembly-related content
- Web-based email accounts typically come with cloud storage drives, which can be used to store Assembly documents. So personal data information may not need to be held on individual's PC or other devices at all
- The contact point for the Assembly which is publicised – and may be on the Assembly's website, for instance, or passed on to enquirers calling the National Office – is not a personal email account (which looks better from the enquirers perspective, and means that the individual's personal email account is unaffected).