

# Secure Emails in Care Homes Across Lothian

Promoting communication between NHS Lothian and Care Homes via secure email connections.

Julie Kershaw, Project Support Officer, Care Home Programme Team

Samantha Galbraith, Associate Quality Improvement Advisor, Quality Improvement Team for Care Homes and Primary Care Settings

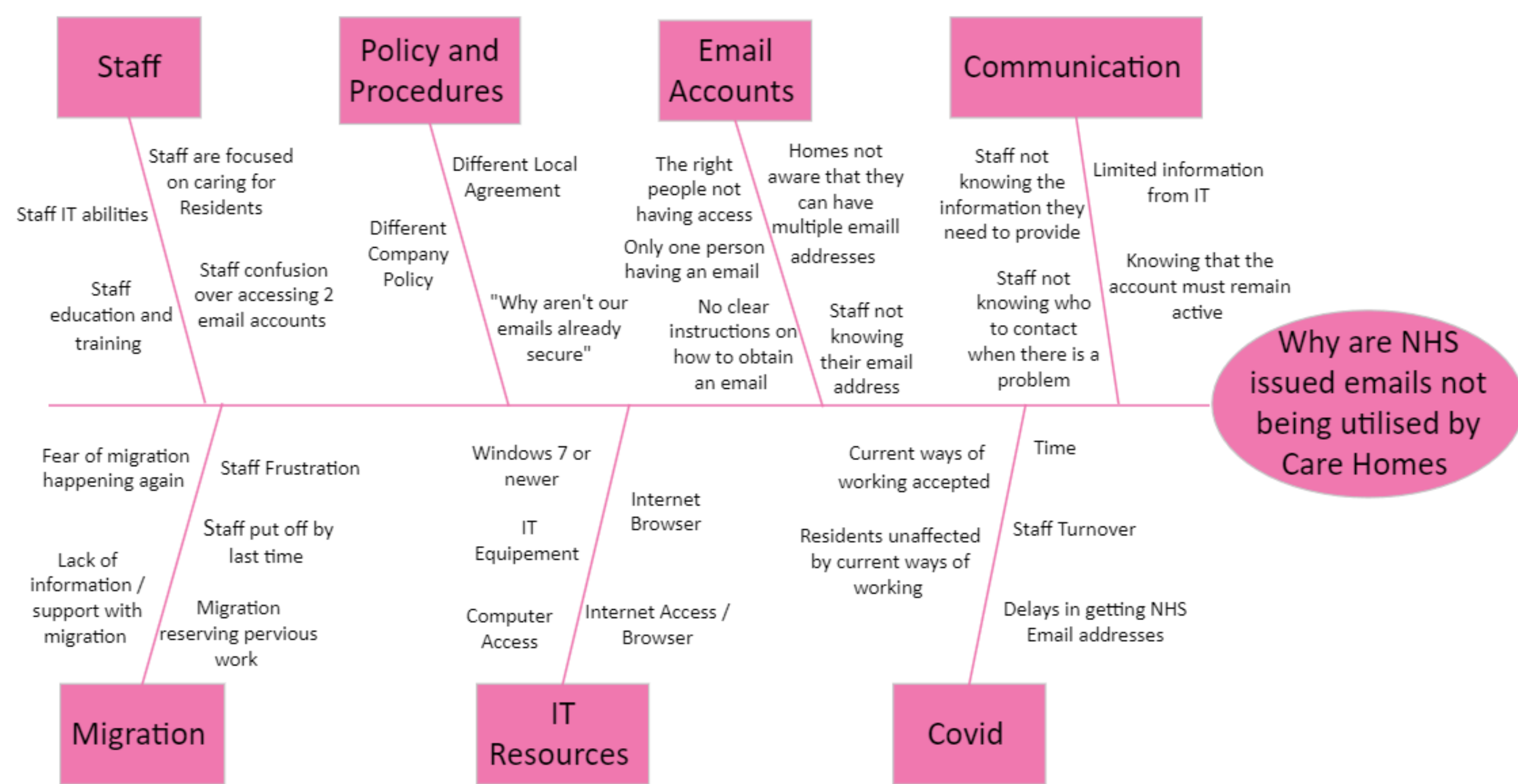
## Aim

To improve communication and collaboration by creating a robust process which allows the creation of secure emails between NHS Lothian and all our Care Homes.

## Background

The need for quick, effective, and secure communication between NHS Lothian and Care Homes was a high priority during the pandemic and continues to be.

Previously, Care Homes were given the opportunity to apply for up to 3-person specific and one shared NHS email account which would allow person identifiable information to be shared securely. Following feedback from Care Homes and guidance from Scottish Government<sup>1</sup> this process appeared to be ineffective.

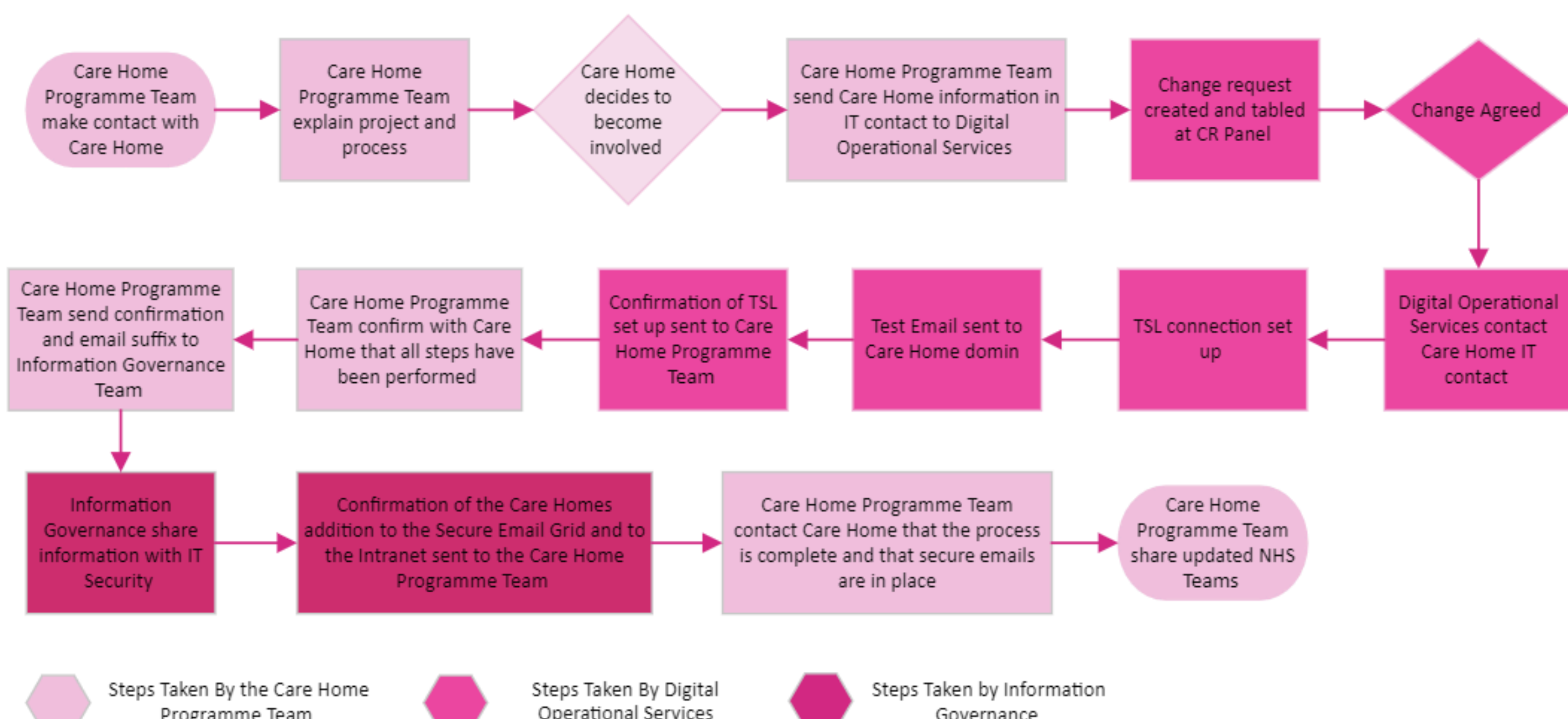


## Method

All Care Homes have been offered the opportunity to make a secure TLS connection with NHS Lothian using their business email. This has been supported by a dedicated member of staff with the Care Home Programme Team to act as a liaison between all involved parties.

The benefits include:

- Improving the sharing of information
- Quicker communication between Care Homes and NHS Lothian teams
- Direct referral to NHS Lothian Teams therefore reducing the number of referrals made by GPs/DN/ANP etc
- Sharing of treatment plans resulting in Residents receiving care in a timelier manner
- Time Saving - Reducing the reliance of hand delivering information to Care Homes



## References

1, Scottish Government, Data, Digital & Technology, My Health, My Care, My Home - healthcare framework for adults living in care homes, 2022, Available from: My Health, My Care, My Home - healthcare framework for adults living in care homes - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

2, Scottish Government, My Health, My Care, My Home - healthcare framework for adults living in care homes: annual progress report September 2023, 2023, Available from: My Health, My Care, My Home - healthcare framework for adults living in care homes: annual progress report September 2023 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

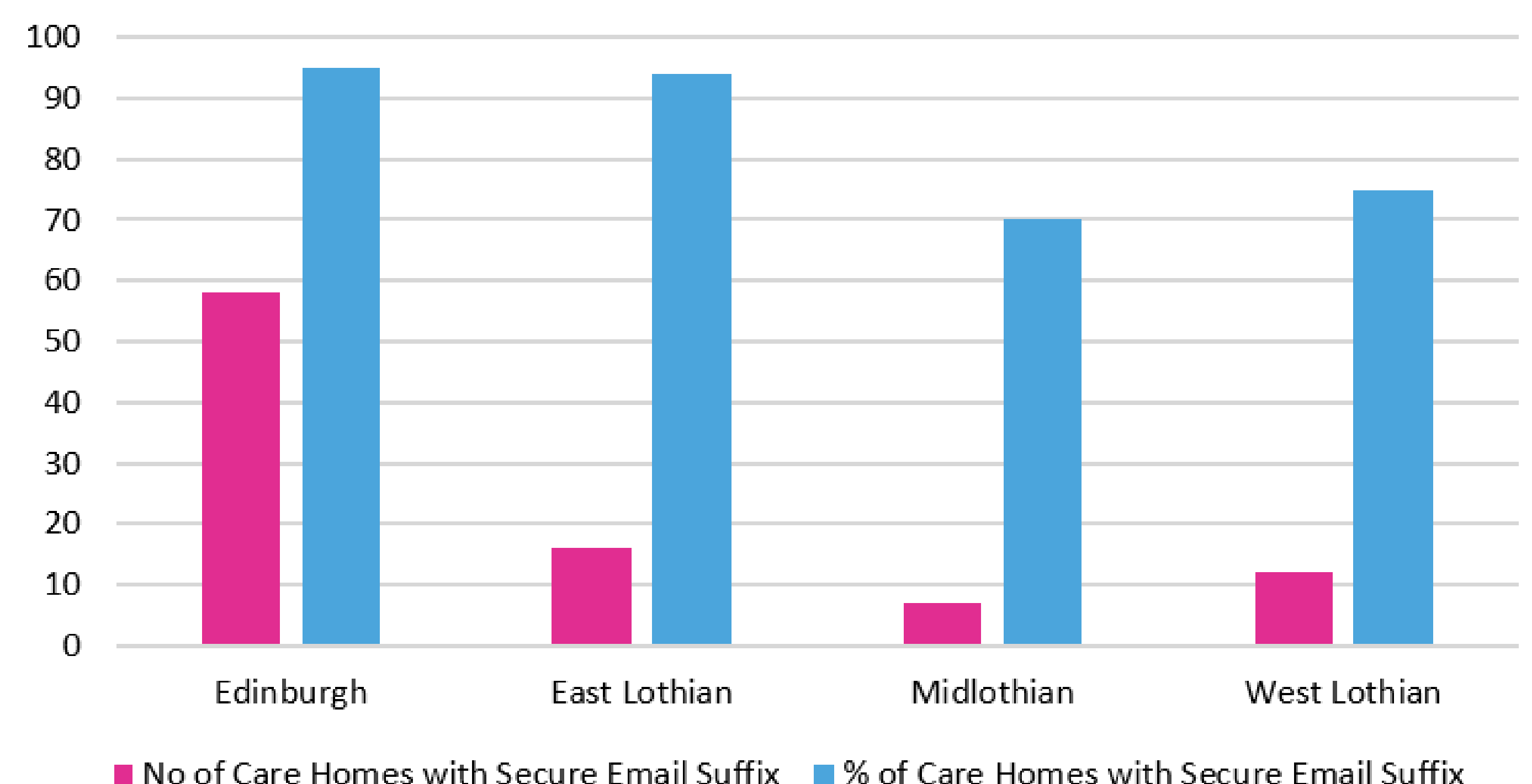
## Results

As of the 25th of April 2024, 89% (93/104) of Care Homes have a secure email suffix connection in place. 1% (1/104) of Care Homes do not want a secure email suffix connection with NHS Lothian. 3% (3/104) of Care Homes are unable to have a secure email suffix connection with NHS Lothian due to IT infrastructure issues within the Care Homes. 5% (5/104) of Care Homes are currently completing the process. 2% (2/104) of the Care Homes are still to decide if they would like to take apart.

An NHS Staff and Care Home Staff survey was undertaken in February 2024. 46% of the responses came from Care Home Staff and from 54% NHS Staff. The feedback was as follows:

- 88% of responders stated that using Care Homes own email address is more effective than using an NHS email address.
- 87% of responders agreed that the new secure email process has made communication easier
- 75% of responders agreed that the secure email connection has had a positive impact to the delivery of Resident care

## Partnership Results



## Feedback

"Time Saving"

## Feedback

"Referral to Physiotherapy for Resident who was struggling with moving and sitting. The referral was quick to go through. . . . The Resident is now able to sit up in a chair with assistance of equipment and staff are more confident."

## Feedback

"Emailing directly means you have contact faster than phoning"

## Feedback

"It has enabled the progress of TVN referrals without lots of issues"

## Feedback

"should have been done ages ago"

## Conclusions

This process has created interest from other Health Boards and the Scottish Government<sup>2</sup> about how it could be rolled out further across Scotland. The Care Home Programme Team will continue to support and collaborate with any new Care Homes in Lothian.

## Acknowledgements

NHS Lothian Care Home Programme Team  
 NHS Lothian Digital and IT Operations  
 NHS Lothian Information Governance  
 NHS Lothian IT Security  
 Rene F Rigby MBE, Independent Sector Lead for City of Edinburgh, Scottish Care  
 All Care Homes in Lothian involved in the project

