



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

1.0 Introduction

This policy aims to outline the responsibilities of employees when accessing social media, either personally or using it for Trust purposes. The purpose of this policy is to provide advice for line managers and members of staff about how to manage organisational risks when social media is used for both business and personal use, and to ensure that its use is acceptable to avoid bringing the for Trust into disrepute.

Social media is the term used to describe the online tools, websites and interactive media that enable users to interact with each other in various ways, through sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. Social media can involve building online communities or networks, which encourage participation, dialogue and involvement.

The Trust recognises the value that social media can have if used in a responsible and professional way. While it is recognised that employees are entitled to a private life, the Trust is committed to maintaining confidentiality and professionalism at all times whilst also upholding its reputation by ensuring employees exhibit acceptable behaviours.

Individuals are personally accountable for their behaviour and may be held liable for any breaches of this policy. All individuals who work on Trust premises, including agency, contract workers and volunteers are therefore expected to abide by the Trust's policy on social media. Not acting in accordance with the policy will be taken into consideration when offering work.

The Trust will adhere to its obligations under the legislation relevant to the use and monitoring of electronic communications, which are predominantly the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000; the Telecommunications (Lawful Business Practice) (Interception of Communications) Regulations 2000; the Communications Act 2003; Data Protection Act 1998; the Human Rights Act 1998; the Defamation Act 1996 and the Equality Act 2010.

This policy supports the aims of the Acceptable use of IT Equipment, Staff Code of Conduct and the Disciplinary Policy.

The Trust treats equality of opportunity seriously and has an equality framework that is applicable to staff in order to promote and ensure equality of opportunity. Implementation of this procedure must be clear and transparent and not subject to any unfair discriminatory practices. All staff are required to familiarise themselves and understand this procedure.

2.0 Data protection and monitoring

Computers and servers are the property of the Trust and are primarily designed to assist in the performance of work duties. To ensure appropriate use of the internet, the Trust's internet software monitors all websites visited by employees for business and security purposes. Therefore, employees should have no expectation of privacy when it comes to the sites they access from Trust computers, devices or remote desktop service.



The Trust may exercise its rights to intercept internet access under the Telecommunications (Lawful Business Practice) (Interception of Communications) Regulations 2000 for the following business reasons:

- To establish the existence of facts relevant to the Trust's business
- To ascertain compliance with regulatory practices or procedures relevant to the Group
- To ensure that employees using the system are achieving the standards required
- To prevent or detect crime
- To investigate or detect the unauthorised use or abuse of the telecommunications systems, including using social media websites
- To ensure effective operation of systems, e.g. to detect computer viruses and to maintain an adequate level of security

To be able to exercise its rights, the Trust must make all reasonable efforts to inform every person who may use the internet systems that monitoring may take place. The communication of this policy to all employees meets this requirement as;

1. This policy will be saved centrally for all staff to have immediate access.
2. All new staff through their induction will be requested to confirm they have read and understood it before being able to access the Trust IT network unsupervised.

3.0 Privacy settings and personal information

Default privacy settings for some social media websites allow some information to be shared beyond an individual's contacts. In such situations, the user of the site is personally responsible for adjusting the privacy settings for the account. Information available on social media sites could be produced as evidence by either the Trust or an employee, should it be necessary during Trust procedures, or legal proceedings.

Therefore, employees are strongly encouraged to review their access and privacy settings for any social media sites to control, restrict and guard against who can access the information on those sites. Even if privacy and security settings are utilised, anything posted on social media sites may be made public by onward transmission.

Social media offers the ability to share personal information rapidly and easily. Employees should be aware of the Trust's Acceptable Use of IT Equipment, particularly with regard to protecting passwords and personal information to reduce the risks of abuses such as identity theft.

To avoid identity theft, employees are advised to refrain from publishing any personal or sensitive information on social media websites, e.g. date of birth, home address, telephone number or any information related to personal bank accounts.

4.0 Acceptable use of social media at work

The Trust IT Systems are first and foremost business tools, and as such personal usage of the systems is a privilege and not a right. Employees are permitted to make reasonable and appropriate use of social media websites where this is part of the normal duties of their work.



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Employees responsible for contributing to the Trust's social media activities should be aware at all times that they are representing the Trust.

The Group accepts that employees may wish to use social media channels as a way of communicating personally with the public and/or friends; however its use at work should be restricted to the terms of this policy. Employees are permitted to make reasonable and appropriate use of social media websites from the Trust's IT network at certain times. Employees should limit their use of social media, except for school use, to official rest breaks or times when they are not on duty (before and after work).

Employees may wish to use their own personal devices to access social media websites, while at work. Employees should limit their use of social media on their own personal equipment to their official rest breaks or times when they are not on duty (before and after work).

Personal use of social media should not interfere with employees' work duties and responsibilities. Excessive personal use of social media website and abuse of this policy will be considered a disciplinary offence.

5.0 Expected standards of conduct on social media websites

5.1 Appropriate conduct

The line between public and private, professional and personal is not always clearly defined when using social media. If an employee identifies themselves as a member of staff at the Trust, this has the potential to create perceptions about the Trust to a range of external audiences and also among colleagues and students.

When communicating either in a professional or personal capacity, within or outside the workplace, employees **must**:

- Conduct themselves in accordance with other policies, procedures and the Trust's Staff Professional Code of Conduct, particularly when using social media accounts to portray the Trust's activities, as this is an extension of the Trust's infrastructure.
- Be professional, courteous and respectful as would be expected in any other situation.
- Think carefully about how and what activities are carried out on social media websites.
- Be transparent and honest. The Trust will not tolerate employees making false representations. If employees express personal views, it should be made clear that the views do not represent or reflect the views of the Trust.
- Remove or request the removal of any inappropriate comments, images or videos.

5.2 Inappropriate conduct

While using social media in any capacity, employees' actions can potentially damage the Trust's reputation.

When communicating either in a professional or personal capacity, within or outside the workplace, employees **must not** conduct themselves inappropriately which may bring the Trust into disrepute. The following are examples of inappropriate conduct:



- Engaging in activities that have the potential to bring the Trust into disrepute.
- Breach of confidentiality by disclosing privileged, sensitive and/or confidential information.
- Making comments that could be considered to be bullying, harassing or discriminatory against any individual.
- Posting remarks which may cause offence and constitute unlawful discrimination, harassment and/or victimisation.
- Posting or uploading inappropriate comments, images, photographs and/or video clips about colleagues or ex-colleagues, pupils or ex-pupils, parents or clients.
- Publishing defamatory and/or knowingly false material about the Trust, other employees or pupils.
- Engaging in discussions or anything which may contravene the Trust's equality and diversity policy and may have the potential to cause serious harm to the business.
- Use of offensive, derogatory or intimidating language which may damage working relationships.
- Blurring the boundaries of professional and personal life.
- Pursuing personal relationships with pupils, ex-pupils or parents.
- Participating in any activity which may compromise your position at the Trust.
- Behaviour that would not be acceptable in any other situation.
- Knowingly accessing, viewing or downloading material which could cause offence to other people or may be illegal.
- Commenting on any work-related matters.
- Posting any material that breaches copyright legislation.
- Using a Trust email account to create a personal social media account.
- Doing anything that may conflict with the interests of the Trust.
- Using social media websites in any way which is deemed to be unlawful.

The above examples are not exhaustive or exclusive.

Employees will be held personally liable for any material published on social media websites that compromise themselves, their colleagues and/or the Trust.

5.3 Acceptance of friends

The Trust understands the positive use of social media as part of the educational process. Social media is used by many people, particularly pupils to communicate with their peers and the public. Students may wish to form personal relationships with employees, however to ensure professional boundaries are maintained, employees **must not** under normal circumstances accept and/or invite the following individuals to be 'friends' on personal social media accounts or other online services:

- Current pupils, including vulnerable students who are adults or children
- ex-pupils under the age of 18
- parents

There may be exceptions, such as family members who attend the Trust as students or where members of staff are affiliated to a particular membership/association.

Staff must be aware that entering into such relationships could be viewed as an abuse of an employee's position of trust and breach the standards of professional behaviour and conduct expected at the Trust. The Trust reserves the right to take disciplinary action if employees are found to be in breach of this policy, with the potential of dismissal for serious breaches.

Acts of a criminal nature or any safeguarding concerns may be referred to the police, Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and/or the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA).

6.0 Use of social media during recruitment and selection process

The Trust does not specifically view social media websites as part of the pre-employment process, however where any information is made known to the group from any source it can reasonably take account of this information and may need to discuss it with applicants.

Any information that relates to applicants' protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 will not be used as part of the recruitment and selection process.

7.0 Inappropriate conduct and excessive use

Any breach of this policy, including inappropriate conduct of the kind listed in section 5 above, or of a similar nature, and any excessive personal use of social media websites will be dealt with in accordance with the Trust disciplinary procedure.

Disciplinary action may be taken against employees in line with the Trust disciplinary policy and may also result in the withdrawal of access to social media websites/ withdrawal of internet access. Persistent or serious breaches of this policy may lead to dismissal.

8.0 Responsibilities

All employees are responsible for complying with the requirements of this policy and for reporting any breaches of the policy to their line manager/ nominated person/department.

If employees have concerns about information or conduct on social media sites that are inappropriate, offensive, demeaning or could be seen to be bullying, this should be reported to their line manager/ nominated person/appropriate department immediately.