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| Your group name/logo.  Social Media Usage Policy  Registration number/charity number |
| This policy and guidance will be reviewed annually or if there are any changes in the related legislation or when an incident dictates.  This will ensure that this document is current and fit for purpose. |
| This Policy was approved by (named person within your organisation) |
| Date of implementation |

1. ***These documents, templates and policies are for advice and support purposes only.***
2. ***You may edit and amend the documents to render them suitable for your group purposes.***
3. ***You must not sell or re-distribute any documents or derivatives thereof.***

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8. **Introduction.**

Social media can, when used positively,support your group name and really enhance the potential to reach wider support. As a group we believe all social media postings should be coherent with this policy, this includes the employees/volunteers of your group name.

Your group name recognises that the internet provides a unique opportunity to participate in interactive discussions and share information using a wide variety of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs. Employees and volunteers are likely to use social media in a private capacity outside of work and they may also be required to use it in a business capacity as part of their role at your group name.

However, employees/volunteers’ use of social media in both a personal and business capacity can present risks to our confidential information and reputation, and can jeopardise our compliance with legal obligations. To minimise these risks, and to ensure that our social media systems are used appropriately, we expect employees and volunteers to adhere to this policy.

The purpose of this policy is to assist employees and volunteers by providing clear guidance about acceptable behaviour and use of language on social media both at work and at home. It is consistent with the regulations and conditions of service employees and volunteers (volunteer policy) should already be aware of in their work for your group name.

1. **Scope**

This policy applies to all employees and volunteers of your group name.

The policy also applies to contractors, agency workers and those on apprenticeships and student/work experience placements, working on behalf of your group name.

This policy applies to the use of social media for both business and personal purposes, whether during office hours or otherwise. It also applies whether the social media is accessed using your group name IT facilities, or equipment belonging to members of staff.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the volunteer policy, confidentiality policy and complaints policy.

1. **Definitions**

Social media is a type of interactive online media that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other, or to share data in a public forum.

This includes online social forums such as;

* Twitter,
* Facebook,
* Linked-In,
* Internet newsgroups
* Chat rooms
* Social media also covers blogs, video and image-sharing websites such as;
  + YouTube
  + Flickr
  + Google +
  + Picasa
  + Instagram
  + Snap Chat
  + What’s App

There are many more examples of social media than can be listed here and this is a constantly changing area. This policy refers to the examples listed, and any new social media which are developed in the future.

1. **Personal Safety and Privacy**

Employees/volunteers need to be aware that the information they post on their personal social media profile can make them identifiable to service users, as well as people they know in a private capacity.

Employees/volunteers should therefore consider this when setting up their online profile particularly in relation to; use of a photograph, providing details of their occupation, employer, and work location.

Employees/volunteers should ensure that guests/service users known to them through their work, *where there could be a conflict of interest*, are not linked to them through social media. Your group name considers it inappropriate to have guests/service users as ‘friends’ through social media, especially where these people are vulnerable and there may be safeguarding issues.

*For example, it would be inappropriate for a Social Worker, Doctor or Support Worker to have guests/service users and their families as ‘friends’ on Facebook/Twitter.*

Online sites such as Facebook are in the public domain, and personal profile details can be seen by anyone, even if users have their privacy settings on the highest level. Also if a user’s profile is linked to other sites, any changes to their profile will be updated there too. Membership to online groups is visible to all and once a comment is out there, the internet world will always have a record.

Employees and volunteers who have set their privacy level to the maximum can have their privacy compromised by ‘friends’ who may not have set their security to the same standard.

1. **Key Principles**

**5.1 Personal accountability and responsibility**

All employees and volunteers are expected to behave appropriately and responsibly, and should be aware that they may be accountable to your group name for actions outside of their work.

Online conduct is the employee’s and volunteers responsibility, and it is important that employees/volunteers are aware that posting information on social networking sites in a personal capacity cannot be entirely isolated from their working life. Employees and volunteers work within the safeguarding framework and have a professional code of conduct.

Any information published online can be accessed around the world within seconds and will be publicly available for all to see, and is not easy to delete/withdraw once published.***If you read something and respond in anger, frustration or in an unprofessional manner. It remains forever more and reflects negatively on you and also your group name.***

Your group name views any comment that is made on a social media site is made publicly, and that any inappropriate comment made, will be considered in the context of which it is made.

*For example, inconsiderate, rude or sexual comments against a colleague made to all friends on Facebook could be viewed as bullying/harassment, or could be considered to bring your group name into disrepute.*

Employees and volunteers are advised to be mindful that all comments made through social media must meet the standards of the Data Protection Act, the Volunteer Policy and the Equality and Diversity policy.

Employees and volunteers may be accountable for actions outside of work, including making comments on social media sites, if that is contrary to any of your group name policies, impacts on or compromises the employee’s or volunteers’ ability to undertake their role, or undermines management/group leader decisions. Such behaviour could be investigated and may result in disciplinary action being taken, and ultimately could result in dismissal.

*Further employee/volunteer guidance is available in the Volunteer Policy.*

**5.2 Access to social media for work purposes**

Employees and volunteers who use social media as part of their role must adhere to this policy. Employees and volunteers must be aware that they are representing your group name when they are contributing to your group name social media activities. Employees and volunteers should use the same safeguards as they would with any other form of communication about the organisation in the public domain.

*For example you would not post a status on Facebook without fact checking, you wouldn’t share a picture of a person without prior consent in writing (with exception to Missing Persons currently in the public domain) You would also never post anything that is politically volatile, aggressive, discriminatory or racist*.

*Always ensure you check for guidance before posting pictures of individuals and that permission is sought.*

**5.3 Access to social media at work, for personal use**

Employees/volunteers are not allowed to access social media websites for personal use from your group name computers or devices during working time and they must not be left running ‘in the background’, whilst at work. These provisions also apply to personal computers and mobile devices.This is also to protect the items from theft while working alone.

**5.4 Any communications that employees make through social media must not:**

* **Bring your group name into disrepute, for example by:**
* Criticising, disagreeing or arguing with other volunteers in a public space online;
* Making maliciousor false comments about individuals or other organisations/groups;
* Posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content;
* Posting images of individuals without permission;
* **Breach confidentiality, for example by:**
* Referring to or disclosing confidential information about an individual (such as acolleague or guest/service user) or your group name.
* **Do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual or group of individuals, for example *by:***
  + Making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender and/or gender-reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age;
* Using social media to bully another individual (such as an employee/volunteer of another group or organisation);
* Posting images that are discriminatory or offensive or links to such content.
  + **Any other action that impacts on the employees/volunteers ability to do their job, for example by:**
* Online activity that is incompatible with the position they hold within your group name
  + Any breach occurring inside or outside the workplace that is likely to affect the employee/volunteer doing his/her work.
  + **Contravene your group name policies, for example;**
* The volunteer policy, the complaints policy, or the Equality and Diversity policy.

The above examples are not a definitive list of the misuse of social media, but are examples to illustrate what misuse may look like. Employees/volunteers are encouraged to talk to their line manager or group leader and seek advice if they are unclear.

1. **Roles and Responsibility**

**Employees/volunteers have a responsibility to:**

* Avoid behaviour that may cause an individual to feel the subject of harassment or bullying.
* Familiarise themselves with the Social Media policy and Volunteer Policy or guidelines to using social media in the Appendix.
* Act responsibly when using online media for work and personal use.
* Report instances to their line manager or group leader, if they are subject to abuse

**Managers have a responsibility to:**

* Familiarise themselves with the Social Media policy and Volunteer Policy or employee/volunteer guidelines to using social media in the Appendix below.
* Take prompt action to stop any harassment or bullying they become aware of, whether a complaint has been raised or not.
* Ensure staff/volunteers are aware of the Social Media Policy and Volunteer Policy
* Support employees who are the subject of abuse through existing practices
* Ensure all complaints/allegations are dealt with fairly and consistently, and in accordance with other policies where appropriate.

**HR/Admin/Support staff have a responsibility to:**

* Provide support and advice to managers and employees/volunteers on the operation of the policy and guidelines, where necessary.

N.B. Should no person be available for acting as a support for management the group may ask assistance from an independent organisation or another charity.

1. **APPENDIX**

*EMPLOYEE GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA*

* Employees and volunteers must be mindful that any online activities/comments made in a public domain, must be in line with your group name policies and procedures. You must maintain safeguarding for the group and individuals we work with.
* Protect your own privacy. To ensure that your social network account does not compromise your professional position, ensure that your privacy settings are set correctly.
* Comments made outside of within the arena of social media, do not remain private and so can have an effect on or have work/volunteering-related implications. Therefore, comments made through social media, which you may intend to be “private” may still be in contravention of the Volunteer Policy, the Equality and Diversity and/or the Complaints Policy.
* Once something is online, it can be copied and redistributed making it easy to lose control of. Presume everything you post online will be permanent and can be shared.
* Do not discuss work-related issues online, including conversations about service users, complaints, management/group leaders or disparaging remarks about colleagues or your group name. Even when anonymized, these are likely to be inappropriate. In addition doing this in the presence of others may be deemed as bullying and/or harassment.
* Do not under any circumstances accept friend requests from a person you believe could be a guest/service user or may conflict with your position.
* Be aware that other users may access your profile and if they find the information and/or images it contains offensive, make a complaint about you to your group name, The Charity Commission or Police.
* Ensure that any comments and/or images cannot be deemed defamatory, libelous or in breach of copyright legislation.
* When setting up your profile online consider whether it is appropriate and prudent for you to include a photograph, or provide occupation, volunteer position or employer or work location details.
* You can take action if you find yourself the target of complaints or abuse on social networking sites. Most sites will include mechanisms to report abusive activity and provide support for users who are subject to abuse by others.
* If you do find inappropriate references and/or images of you posted by a ‘friend’ online you should contact them and the site to have the material removed.
* If you are very concerned about someone else's behaviour online, you should take steps to raise your concerns. If these are related to your group name you should inform your line manager/group leader.

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| **Name** | **Signed** | **Date** |
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