

CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER

HUMAN RESOURCES

SOCIAL MEDIA & ON-LINE PARTICIPATION POLICY

1.0 Introduction

The growing popularity of social media has attracted the attention of companies and individuals who believe that these platforms open up new opportunities for communication. However with these opportunities come potential risks.

This policy sets out the guidelines for an employee to follow if they use social media (see para 5.0 Definitions) either during their professional work or through their personal use.

2.0 Policy

- 2.1 Employees who use social media should use the same safeguards as they would with any other form of communication about the organisation in the public sphere and must abide by the rules and guidance as outlined in the Council's Social Media Guidelines. These Guidelines aim to support the employee by establishing a clear framework to protect both the employee and organisation from any legal and/or reputational impact.

2.2 Business Use

The Council encourages employees to make reasonable and appropriate use of social media website as part of their work. It is an important part of how the organisation promotes its services.

Employees may contribute to the Council's social media activities, for example by writing for blogs/managing a Facebook account/running an official Twitter account.

Employees must be aware at all times that, while contributing to the organisation's social media activities, they are representing the Council. Staff who use social media as part of their job must adhere to the principles as set out in the Social Media Guidelines.

2.3 Personal Use

The Council recognises that many employees make use of social media in a personal capacity. While they are not acting on behalf of the Council, employees must be aware that their actions could potentially damage the organisation if they are recognised as being a Council employee.

Any communications that employees make in a personal capacity through social media must therefore adhere to the principles as set out in the Social Media Guidelines.

Whilst in work, employees are allowed limited access to social media websites from the Council's computers/devices or using their own equipment, in their own time and in accordance with the ICT Acceptable Use Policy.

2.4 Monitoring

The Council reserves the right to monitor employees' internet usage, but will endeavour to inform an affected employee when this is to happen and the reasons for it. The organisation considers that valid reasons for checking an employee's internet usage include suspicions that the employee has:

- been using social media websites when he/she should be working; or
- acted in a way that is in breach of the rules set out in this policy.

The organisation reserves the right to retain information that it has gathered on employees' use of the internet for a period of one year.

Access to particular social media websites may be withdrawn in any case of misuse.

2.5 Use of Social Media in Recruitment

Unless it is in relation to finding candidates (for example, if an individual has put his/her details on social media websites for the purpose of attracting prospective employers), the HR department and managers will not, either themselves or through a third party, conduct searches on applicants on social media. Conducting these searches during the selection process might lead to a presumption that an applicant's protected characteristics (for example, sexual orientation or religious beliefs) played a part in a recruitment decision.

2.6 Breach of the Policy

All employees are required to adhere to this policy and should note that any breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action. Serious breaches of this policy, for example, incidents of bullying of colleagues, or social media activity causing serious damage to the Council, may constitute gross misconduct and lead to summary dismissal. Employees should be aware that their external activities, that may come to light through social media, may impact on their role in the Council.

3.0 Aims/Principles

As a forward thinking Council we want our employees to be able to use new forms of technology for their work and we trust and respect their rights to use social media for their personal use. The policy and guidelines therefore aim to provide employees with information to make responsible decisions whilst making the most of the technology.

4.0 Scope

This policy applies to all employees, excluding schools. This policy also applies to any workers ie agency workers, casual worker, volunteers or other third parties who are associated with the Council and who may/may not have access to electronic communications.

5.0 Definitions

Blogs are perhaps the most well known example of social media, but the term encompasses other platforms. Examples include podcasts, 'wikis' (such as [Wikipedia](#)), message boards, social bookmarking websites (such as [del.icio.us](#)), social networking websites (such as [facebook](#), [bebo](#), [MySpace](#)) and content sharing websites (such as [flickr](#), [YouTube](#)). It also includes: instant messaging, on-line forums, 'Lync'.

'Social media' can be referenced in a variety of ways, often depending on which sector is discussing it. Other terms which may be used in a similar context include 'social software', 'social computing' and 'Web 2.0'. For convenience 'social media' is referred throughout.

6.0 See Also

- Social Media Guidelines and Guidance
- ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Code of Conduct

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2.0	(originally Oct. 2009) Revised Jan. 2013	HR Strategy (in consultation with ICT Strategy)	January 2013	