



Social Networking Policy

Agreed by Trustees
June 2011

Review Date
Jan 2018



Introduction to the Policy

The organisation is aware and acknowledges that increasing numbers of adults and children are using social networking sites. The two with the widest use are Facebook and Twitter.

The widespread availability and use of social networking application bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with audiences in new ways.

It is important that we are able to use these technologies and services effectively and flexibly. However, it is also important to ensure that we balance this with our reputation.

This policy and associated guidance is to protect staff and advise organisation leadership on how to deal with potential inappropriate use of social networking sites.

For example, our use of social networking applications has implications for our duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults.

The policy requirements in this document aim to provide this balance to support innovation whilst providing a framework of good practice.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

That the organisation is not exposed to legal risks

That the reputation of the organisation is not adversely affected

That our users are able to clearly distinguish where information provided via social networking applications is legitimately representative of the organisation.

Facebook is targeted at older teenagers and adults. They have a no under 13 registration policy and recommend parental guidance for 13 to 16 year olds.

The following are extracts from Facebook privacy policy:

"If you are under age 13, please do not attempt to register for Facebook or provide any personal information about yourself to us. If we learn that we have collected personal information from a child under age 13, we will delete that information as quickly as possible. If you believe that we might have any information from a child under age 13, please contact us"

"We strongly recommend that minors 13 years of age or older ask their parents for permission before sending any information about themselves to



anyone over the Internet and we encourage parents to teach their children about safe internet use practices.

Materials to help parents talk to their children about safe internet use can be found on this help page”

MSN recommend 13 but do not appear to have a policy of debarring younger young peoples. There are many primary age young people active on MSN This guidance is to advise and protect staff from accusations of improper relationships with young peoples:

SCOPE

This policy covers the use of social networking applications by all organisation stakeholders, including, employees, Trustees and service users. These groups are referred to collectively as ‘organisation representatives’ for brevity.

The requirements of this policy apply to all uses of social networking applications which are used for any organisation related purpose and regardless of whether the Organisation representatives are contributing in an official capacity to social networking applications provided by external organisations.

Social networking applications include, but are not limited to:

Blogs, for example Blogger

Online discussion forums, such as netmums.com

Collaborative spaces, such as Facebook

Media sharing services, for example YouTube

‘Micro-blogging’ applications, for example Twitter

All organisation representatives should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, data protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other legislation. They must also operate in line with the Organisation’s Equality and Diversity Policy.

Use of Social networking sites in work time

Use of social networking applications in work time for personal use only is not permitted, unless permission has been given by the senior management.



Social Networking as part of Organisation Service

All proposals for using social networking applications as part of an organisation service (whether they are hosted by the organisation or by a third party) must be approved by the trustees or senior/line manager first. Use of social networking applications which are not related to any organisation services (for example, contributing to a wiki provided by a professional association) does not need to be approved by the senior/line manager. However, organisation representatives must still operate in line with the requirements set out within the policy

Organisation representatives must adhere to the following Terms of Use. The Terms of Use below apply to all uses of social networking applications by all organisation representatives.

This includes, but is not limited to, public facing applications such as open discussion forums and internally-facing uses such as project blogs regardless of whether they are hosted on organisation network or not.

Where applications allow the posting of messages online, users must be mindful that the right to freedom of expression attaches only to lawful conduct. Walton Youth Project expects that users of social networking applications will always exercise the right of freedom of expression with due consideration for the rights of others and strictly in accordance with these Terms of Use.

Terms of Use

Social Networking applications

- Must not be used to publish any content which may result in actions for defamation, discrimination, breaches of copyright, data protection or other claim for damages. This includes but is not limited to material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature that may bring the organisation into disrepute.
- Must not be used for the promotion of personal financial interests, commercial ventures or personal campaigns
- Must not be used in an abusive or hateful manner
- Must not be used for actions that would put organisation representatives in breach of organisation codes of conduct or policies relating to staff.
- Must not breach the organisation's misconduct, equal opportunities or bullying and harassment policies
- Must not be used to discuss or advise any matters relating to organisation matters, staff, young peoples or parents
- No staff member should have a young people or former young people under the age of 18 as a 'friend' to share information with



- Employees should not identify themselves as a representative of the organisation
- References should not be made to any staff member, young people, parent or organisation activity / event unless prior permission has been obtained and agreed with the Trustees or senior/line manager
- Staff should be aware that if their out-of-work activity causes potential embarrassment for the employer or detrimentally affects the employer's reputation then the employer is entitled to take disciplinary action.

Violation of this policy will be considered as gross misconduct and can result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee up to and including termination of employment.

Guidance/protection for staff on using social networking

- No member of staff should interact with any young people in the organisation on social networking sites
- No member of staff should interact with any ex-young people in the organisation on social networking sites who is under the age of 18
- This means that no member of the organisation staff should request access to a young people's area on the social networking site. Neither should they permit the young people access to the staff members' area e.g. by accepting them as a friend.
- Where family and friends have young peoples in organisation and there are legitimate family links, please inform the trustees or senior/line manager in writing. However, it would not be appropriate to network during the working day on organisation equipment
- It is illegal for an adult to network, giving their age and status as a child
- If you have any evidence of young peoples or adults using social networking sites in the working day, please contact the named Child Protection person in organisation

Guidance/protection for Young peoples on using social networking

- No young people under 13 should be accessing social networking sites. This is the guidance from both Facebook and MSN. There is a mechanism on Facebook where young peoples can be reported via the



Help screen; at the time of writing this policy the direct link for this is: http://www.facebook.com/help/contact.php?show_form=underage

- No young people may access social networking sites during the organisation working day
- No young people should attempt to join a staff member's areas on networking sites. If young people's attempt to do this, the member of staff is to inform the Trustees/line manager.
- No organisation computers are to be used to access social networking sites at any time of day, unless over the age of 13.
- Any attempts to breach firewalls will result in a ban from using organisation ICT equipment other than with close supervision
- Please report any improper contact or cyber bullying to your youth worker in confidence as soon as it happens.
- We have a zero tolerance to cyber bullying

Cyber Bullying

By adopting the recommended limited use of social networking sites on organisation premises, Walton Youth Project protects themselves from accusations of complicity in any cyber bullying through the provision of access.

Parents should be clearly aware of the organisation's policy of access to social; networking sites.

Where a disclosure of bullying is made, organisations now have the duty to investigate and protect, even where the bullying originates outside the organisation.

This can be a complex area, and these examples might help:

A child is receiving taunts on Facebook and text from an ex young people who moved three months ago: This is not an organisation responsibility, though the organisation might contact the new organisation to broker a resolution.

A child is receiving taunts from peers. It is all at weekends using MSN and Facebook.

The young people are in the organisation: The organisation has a duty of care to investigate and work with the families, as they attend the organisation.



Once disclosure is made, investigation will have to involve the families. This should be dealt with under the organisations adopted anti bullying policy.

If parent / carers refuse to engage and bullying continues, it can be referred to the police as harassment

This guidance can also apply to text and mobile phone cyber bullying.