

GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF SOCIALMEDIA

Appendix

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this document is to advise employees that the behaviours expected for functioning in an electronic world are the same as behaviours expected to be demonstrated in other methods of communication such as

- face-to-face email or telephone.
- statements made on social networking sites could have implications for their employment with Moray Council.
- they are aware of their responsibility to comply with the law on issues including discrimination, data protection, libel and copyright etc.

1.2 The guidance applies to the use of social networking media sites in all circumstances:

- while employees are at work
- while employees are not at work

1.3 Additional guidance exists for teaching staff in relation to pupils.

What is Social media?

2.1 Social media has become an extremely important communications channel.

2.2. While this creates new opportunities for communications and collaboration, it also creates new responsibilities for individuals. Posted material (whether in a work or personal capacity) can, when matched with an identity or photograph, reflect not only on the individual but also on that individual's employer, clients, colleagues or profession.

2.3 Employees who come into contact with the public in the normal course of duties have to ensure they have the trust and confidence of client groups and should therefore consider carefully the impression they want to portray of themselves on social networking sites.

2.5 The Council respects employees' rights of privacy and freedom of expression but needs to protect its reputation arising from employees' comments online. The council can be held accountable for discrimination by employees if comments made online amount to harassment, etc.

2.6 In addition to the Council's Code of Conduct, employees may also be governed by other agencies which may have an impact on their employment with the Council, e.g. Scottish Social Care Council, General Teaching Council, etc. Staff should also familiarise themselves with the ICT Computer Use Policy.

3. SOCIAL NETWORKING MEDIA

3.1 Social media includes the various online technology tools that enable people to communicate easily via the internet to share information and resources. Social media includes, but is not limited to:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Blogger
- You Tube
- MySpace
- Flickr
- LinkedIn

More platforms such as Snapchat and Instagram are becoming available all the time, but the council's main activity takes place on Facebook and Twitter.

4. SHARING FROM PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

4.1 The lines between what is public and private, personal and work can sometimes be unclear to those reading posted material online, and therefore care should be taken when posting references to your work.

4.2 If you associate yourself with another Facebook user or site you could be linked with postings and content on that page and therefore your comments may have a wider circulation than you intended.

4.3 Don't make the mistake of thinking that everyone linked to your page is actually 'your friend'. Don't include sensitive personal details such as your address. Your real friends already know this information.

4.4 Anything you post, tweet or text can be 'liked', shared, copied and pasted and be around the world in seconds. Even the highest privacy settings will not prevent this, as 'friends' can copy and paste someone's status update into their status bar, click to post and it's instantly shared with a whole new set of people. As soon as it is shared you can't get it back

4.5 Think about how you behave in public as there is always someone, somewhere with a mobile phone taking photos or video, no matter where you are or what you are doing. So think about how your actions would be perceived should you then appear on YouTube or find yourself trending on Twitter.

5. USING SOCIAL MEDIA at work

5.1 Employees are reminded that they must not use their own or another user's page for the following:

- post negative or damaging comments about the Council, work colleagues or service users
- post comments which bring the Council into disrepute
- agree or imply agreement with defamatory comments etc made by others
- defame, harass or create a hostile working environment for another employee
- make discriminatory remarks of any kind about another employee
- disclose any sensitive and confidential information about members of the public, service users or other employees
- make any reference to a service user on a social networking site

6. GUIDANCE ON PERSONAL POSTING

6.1 Employees are advised to remember the following guidance which will assist them in their postings on their work social networking media:

- If you are speaking for the Council make sure you have the authority to do so and have correct information
- what you write on social networking sites is essentially in the public domain
- be aware of your continuing responsibilities to the Council when using such sites
- always read what you have written before posting online
- never post online when angry
- you are responsible for what appears on your social networking site
- protect the security of your page at all times. If you remain logged in then you potentially leave your page open to abuse.
- Don't allow social media to be used instead of other procedures i.e. complaints procedures. Always refer them to the proper procedures.
- Seek advice
- Remove inappropriate material asap – what is considered inappropriate (discrimination, etc)
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7. NON COMPLIANCE

7.1 As with all other forms of communications, there may be circumstances where an employee's participation with social media is brought to the attention of the Council. An example of this may be on receipt of a formal complaint or via some kind of publicity. In these circumstances, and dependant on the nature of the complaint, this may require further investigation and may be subject to the Council's Disciplinary Policy and Procedures.

7.2 Employees are advised to familiarise themselves with the Council's Code of Conduct Policy with particular regard to the section on public statements

7.3 Posting online discriminatory, harassing, defamatory remarks or creating a hostile working environment for another employee could constitute bullying and harassment and serious misuse of social networking sites is regarded as gross misconduct and may lead to dismissal.