



SOCIAL NETWORKING POLICY FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

INTRODUCTION

'Social Media' is the term commonly given to websites and on-line tools which allow users to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge, and interests. Social media involves 'building communities' (networks), encouraging participation and engagement.

Social Networking sites (such as Twitter, Facebook, Bebo, MySpace) open up new opportunities for communication, however, there are also pitfalls. The following guidelines are developed to provide staff with the information to make responsible decisions whilst using these tools.

OBJECTIVE

To promote safe use of social networking for staff and trustees.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Confidentiality Policy, IT Policy and Mobile Phones Policy.

PRINCIPLES

These principles apply to on-line participation in the context of being an employee of York Childcare Ltd (YCL) and set out the standard of behaviour expected in representing the organisation.

We encourage positive representation and promotion of the organisation and therefore welcome all staff in building upon this through the use of social networking websites. You are representing YCL so we trust that you will act accordingly.

- The use of social networking sites such as Facebook or Myspace is not permitted during working hours, unless for an agreed purpose.
- Be professional: remember that you are an ambassador for York Childcare. If someone has an on-line link with your personal profile, you are constantly representing the organisation and are never 'off duty'.
- Always remember that participation on-line results in your comments, activities and photographs being permanently available and open to being republished.
- Be responsible and honest at all times.
- Be credible, accurate and fair and make sure you are doing the right thing.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Children and parents/carers must not be named on such sites and colleagues must only be named with their prior consent to avoid any breaches of confidentiality.
- Members of staff are personally responsible for any content they post - make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not for the organisation.
- If you discuss matters relating to the organisation, remember that automatic links will identify who you are – ensure that your profile is consistent with how you present yourself professionally.



- Never give out your personal details unless you are totally satisfied that you know who the recipient is and that you are not breaching any other company policy in so doing.
- Be aware that there may be times when you attract media interest, so proceed with care whether you are participating in an organisational or personal capacity. If you have any doubts, take advice from your line manager.
- Ensure that your online activities do not interfere or cause you to neglect your role in the organisation and your commitment to colleagues and children.
- Respect copyright clauses and do not make reference to or quote colleagues, trustees, parents or any other stakeholders without their approval.
- Respect the views of your audience. Don't engage in behaviour which would not be acceptable in the workplace. Show proper consideration for the privacy of others and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory (eg topics relating to race, politics or religion)
- Don't be confrontational and be the first to correct your own mistakes.
- Try to add value by providing worthwhile information and perspective. Our organisation is best represented by the people who work here. What you publish or comments you leave may reflect on YCL.
- Remember that once information or images are sent to a social networking site, they are no longer private but are classed as now being in the 'public domain'. YCL monitors the use of such sites and seeks the support of all employees in raising awareness of any activity which may bring either an individual or the organisation into disrepute.

RAISING CONCERNS

If issues of concern are raised by individuals, the organisation has a duty of care to investigate and take appropriate action. In the first instance this would typically be a request to remove or amend the relevant text or images. However, if this request does not lead to a resolution, YCL reserves the right to take action under the Disciplinary Policy. The individuals concerned may also initiate legal action independently of YCL. We are keen that staff do not inadvertently post items which might lead to risk of action. If staff have genuine concerns about postings, the most effective route to having these addressed is to follow the Grievance Procedure and raise the matter with their line manager. Staff are advised to carefully consider who they 'add as friends' and to be mindful of the professional standards required of them.

PROHIBITION OF INAPPROPRIATE MESSAGES

Messages must not be sent if they might cause offence or harassment.

It is forbidden to send any material, in any format, which the recipient or other person who may come into contact with the message may find objectionable.

This would include material, which is:

- Defamatory
- Offensive, distasteful or obscene
- Untrue or malicious
- Spreads gossip
- Likely to constitute bullying or harassment
- In breach of any of YCL's policies
- Of a political or religious nature



- In breach of copyright
- For personal gain
- Likely to bring the organisation or any of its employees into disrepute

MONITORING

YCL appoints persons to hold responsibility for monitoring the use of social networking sites, although the support of all parents, employees and trustees is necessary to make monitoring effective.

BREACH OF POLICY

If an employee is found to be in breach of any of the Social Networking or related policies or procedures, then disciplinary action will follow.