

Guidance on Use of Social Media

1. Many of us thoroughly enjoy using social networking sites and do so responsibly. However, it may be, and indeed has been, the case that well-meant or inadvertently risky comments or behaviour online can put your employment or personal safety at risk or result in you being personally sued for breach of a civil law or charged with a criminal offence. The above situation includes when you are forming links with colleagues through social networking. [So, there is personal liability (in both civil and criminal law) to consider here, as well as possible employer disciplinary action.]

2. Also, always carefully consider the level of privacy settings you may wish to use. Remember, when you are using social media you are in effect publishing your photographs, opinions and personal details, often in circumstances where the lines between work and personal life have been blurred. You **must** take care when doing so.

3. Familiarise yourself with your employer's Social Media Policy, Internet Use Policy, any other policies of relevance, and the terms of your employment contract, and adhere to the obligations placed upon you by those documents. (These policies can form part of your employment contract, and your contract is likely also to include a clause saying you cannot publish anything derogatory about your employer.) Don't leave it until you are in trouble to do this! Pleading ignorance will not be enough if you find yourself accused of accessing banned sites, improper use of work equipment or bringing your employer into disrepute. If possible, only access social networking sites on your mobile during break times or when at home.

Even if you are not using your work PC to access these sites, any offensive, defamatory, derogatory, private, confidential, etc material you post or share could still leave you open to disciplinary action as you may be deemed to be representing your employer at all times.

4. If you have had a bad day and need to vent about work, colleagues, service users, partner agencies, we advise you not to do this online at all. You can still be disciplined or held liable in law, even if you post items in your non-work time. The use of disclaimers ('the views I express here are mine alone etc...') may provide evidence of reasonable care, and to that extent they are helpful, but they cannot exclude liability in law – you should not therefore rely on them to protect you.

5. To prevent any potential workplace conflicts, think about what links you are forming online. If you do not get on so well with a colleague, it is better not to have them as a 'friend' or follow them on any social media. If you find yourself in a position where you are being harassed or intimidated online, block the contact immediately, rather than retaliating, and report the abuse to the social network site.

6. Having online contact with service users is definitely off limits as you may be posting information about your personal life that you would not want the person to have access to. To reduce the risk of it being alleged that you are bringing your employer into disrepute, it is also preferable not to identify yourself as a worker in either Probation or Cafcass. Linking your profile name to where you work also makes you easily identifiable and could leave you or your family members in a vulnerable position. Importantly, no matter how tempting it is, do not use the internet to research people you supervise, as you could be breaking the law.

7. Lastly all social networking sites have privacy settings which you should make full use of and review regularly. Even with these privacy settings in place, do not publish your address, telephone number, car registration or other sensitive information that may allow you to be stalked. Also, do not publish such personal details in relation to others, as to do may be a breach of privacy, confidentiality, and data protection laws.

CHECK OUT PAGE 3 AND 4 BELOW FOR SOME DO'S AND DON'TS

Here is a list of advisable "Do's and Don'ts"

Do: -

- Take care when publishing information about where you are and what you are doing in real time such as "checking in" on Facebook
- Report through websites' official channels any bullying or harassment you receive via social networking and consider blocking people if needed
- Restrict your use of social networking sites on your mobile telephone to break times, or when at home
- Consider whether or not you really need to be "friends" with people who ask you. If there are difficulties at work, forming links online may create potential problems
- Stop and think before sharing photographs, opinions and web links and check they are appropriate. Remember that any offensive material you post which your employer deems to have been disreputable, places you at risk of disciplinary action. You should also monitor what other people are posting on your "wall" and remove any comments that could be seen as offensive
- Make use of security settings and review these regularly to ensure that only people you invite can see your private information - do you really want people you supervise to see your children playing in the garden? You may also want to consider changing your settings so that friends cannot post anything on your wall to avoid offensive content slipping through the net
- Consider that when you are making up passwords for work systems you may have already given information such as pets' names away on the internet
- Think carefully before 'liking' or 'retweeting' anything. Some people get a bit trigger happy with the 'like' and 'retweet' buttons, and might think that because they didn't make the original comment, there will be no repercussions in liking and retweeting. Not so. In law you can be liable or prosecuted for republishing an item that contains unlawful content

Do not: -

- Make "friends", "follow", contact or make any other on-line link with people on social media sites that you have met through your relationship as service-user and member of staff
- Conduct any research via social network sites about people you supervise, if you really need to know something for the protection of the public then go via the Police
- Start any unauthorised blogs about life at work, etc
- Make any comments WHATSOEVER about service users, whether they be anonymised or even just in general. You can be traced, even if you use an anonymised name
- Make any defamatory or derogatory comments about your employer, management, colleagues or partner agencies, no matter how minor you may think these are, anonymised or otherwise.
- Publish sensitive information which could constitute a business risk, this could include something as simple as "the computers were down today" or "this building is a wreck"
- Publish information that is confidential to your employer, or private to others
- Use social media as a way to organise work activities or discuss the day's events, this does not include social activities
- Bully, harass, argue with or intimidate anyone online
- Publish your or anyone else's address, telephone number, car registration or other sensitive/personal information
- Many members choose to make it clear where they work in their on-line profile. Whilst this is generally acceptable you must not identify yourself as an employee of Cafcass, or Probation, and do not use your employment status/location *as part of your username or profile name*. If you have the name of your employer under/as part of your profile name you need to REMOVE IT NOW. This is to protect you and your Facebook friends from harassment and harm.