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**Social Media Policy**

**Purpose**

This policy provides guidance for Buckinghamshire Community Wellbeing (BCW) Hub employee and volunteer use of social media. For this policy, social media should be broadly understood to include blogs, wikis, message boards, chat rooms, electronic newsletters, online forums, social networking sites and other sites and services that permit users to share information with others. This is a constantly changing area with new websites and sources being launched on a regular basis and therefore this list is not exhaustive. This policy applies in relation to any social media that employees may use. This policy should be read in conjunction with the organisations ICT and Acceptable Use of Technology Policy.

**Scope**

Please note that this policy applies to employees, trustees, and volunteers of BCW Hub.

**Use of social media at work**

Employees are only permitted to log on to personal social media websites or to keep a personal blog using the BCW Hub IT systems and equipment outside their normal working hours (for example, during breaks or after the working day has finished) and this must not under any circumstances interfere with their job duties or have a detrimental effect on their productivity. BCW Hub reserves the right to restrict access to these types of websites at any time. Where employees have their own computers or devices, again they must limit their use of personal social media on this equipment to outside their normal working hours.

**BCW Hub social media activities**

Where employees and volunteers are authorised to contribute to BCW Hub’s own social media activities as part of their work, for example for marketing, promotional and recruitment purposes, they must adhere to the following rules:

* use the same safeguards as they would with any other type of communication about the organisation and its service users that is in the public domain
* ensure that any communication has a purpose and a benefit for BCW Hub and the area in which we support
* obtain permission from the Hub Manager before embarking on a public campaign using social media
* follow any additional guidelines given by the organisation from time to time

The social media rules set out below also apply as appropriate.

**Social media rules**

BCW Hub recognises that many employees and volunteers make use of social media in a personal capacity outside the workplace and outside normal working hours. While they are not acting on behalf of the organisation in these circumstances, employees and volunteers must be aware that they can still cause damage to BCW Hub if they are recognised online as being part of the organisation. Therefore, it is important that BCW Hub has strict social media rules in place to protect its position.

When logging on to and using social media websites and blogs at any time, including personal use on non-organisation computers outside the workplace and outside normal working hours, employees and volunteers must not:

* other than in relation to the organisations own social media activities or other than where expressly permitted by the organisation on business networking websites such as LinkedIn, write about this work and in postings that could be linked to BCW Hub, they must also ensure that any personal views expressed are clearly stated to be theirs alone and do not represent those of BCW Hub
* conduct themselves in a way that is potentially detrimental to BCW Hub or brings the organisation or its service users or trustees into disrepute, for example by posting images or video clips that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate website content
* other than in relation to the organisations own social media activities or other than where expressly permitted by the organisation on business networking websites such as LinkedIn, use their work email address when registering on such sites or provide any link to the organisation’s website
* allow their interaction on these websites or blogs to damage working relationships with or between employees, volunteers, service users or trustees of BCW Hub, for example by criticising or arguing with such persons
* include personal information or data about the organisation’s employees, volunteers, service users or trustees without their express consent. This could constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act 2018 which is a criminal offence
* make any derogatory, offensive, discriminatory, untrue, negative, critical, or defamatory comments about the organisation, its employees, volunteers, service users or trustees
* make any comments about the organisation’s employees, volunteers, service users or trustees that could constitute unlawful discrimination, harassment or cyber-bullying contrary to the Equality Act 2010 or post any images or video clips that are discriminatory, or which may constitute unlawful harassment or cyber-bullying – employees and volunteers can be personally liable for their actions under the legislation

Employees and volunteers must remove any offending content immediately if they are asked to do so by BCW Hub.

Employees and volunteers should remember that social media websites are public forums, even if they have set their account privacy settings at a restricted access and therefore, they should not assume that their postings on any website will remain private.

You should never provide references for other individuals on social or professional networking sites, as such references, positive and negative, can be attributed to the organisation and create legal liability for both the author of the reference and the organisation.

You must also be security conscious when using social media websites and should take appropriate steps to protect themselves from identity theft, for example by placing their privacy settings at a high level and restricting the amount of personal information they give out, e.g., date and place of birth. This type of information may form the basis of security questions and/or passwords on other websites, such as online banking.

Should employees notice any inaccurate information about BCW Hub online, they should report this to their line manager in the first instance.

**Social media monitoring**

BCW Hub reserves the right to monitor employees use of social media on the internet, both during routine audits of the computer system and in specific cases where a problem relating to excessive or unauthorised use is suspected. The purposes for such monitoring are to:

* promote productivity and efficiency
* ensure the security of the system and its effective operation
* make sure there is no unauthorised use of time
* ensure that inappropriate, restricted, or blocked websites are not being accessed by employees
* make sure there is no breach of confidentiality

BCW Hub reserves the right to restrict, deny or remove internet access, or access to particular social media websites, to or from any employee.

**Contravention of this policy**

Failure to comply with any of the requirements of this policy is a disciplinary offence and may result in disciplinary action being taken under the disciplinary procedure. Depending on the seriousness of the offence, it may amount to gross misconduct and could result in the employee’s summary dismissal.