



Social Media Policy

Purpose

The widespread availability of social media means it is important to understand how to use it effectively and sensibly, both in the workplace and during personal use.

County Durham Sport (CDS) enthusiastically supports and explores the use of social media tools and emerging technologies and encourages employees to do the same.

The use of social media technologies should be used to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange in support of the organisation's vision and purpose.

The use of social media technology follows the same standards of professional practice and conduct associated with the organisation.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

This policy covers all individuals working at all levels and grades, including senior managers, members of the Board or management committee, officers, directors, employees, consultants, contractors, trainees, home workers, part-time and fixed-term employees, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as "staff" in this policy). Third parties who have access to our electronic communications systems and equipment are also required to comply with this policy.

Definitions

Social Media

Social media is a term used to describe a suite of applications or tools on the Internet (also known as Web 2.0) that support collaboration and the sharing of ideas and opinions across a global scale where the content is usually managed by the users rather than the provider of the applications.

Social media activities can include, but are not limited to:

- maintaining a profile page on social/business networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn
- writing or commenting on a blog, whether it is an individual's own or the blog of another person
- taking part in discussions on web forums or message boards
- leaving product or service reviews on business websites or customer review websites
- taking part in online polls.

Stakeholders

In this policy stakeholders refer to employees, volunteers, members of the board or management committee, customers, clients, suppliers, contractors.

Policy

This policy aims to ensure that CDS is not exposed to legal and governance risks through the use of social media and that its reputation is not adversely affected.

This policy aims to ensure that staff of CDS are protected whilst using social media and feel empowered to contribute to collaborative online activity when it supports their role within the organisation. It applies to the use of social media for both business and personal purposes, whether during office hours or otherwise. The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using the organisation's IT facilities and equipment or equipment belonging to members of staff.

Responsibilities

Board Members / Trustees

Board/committee members must ensure this policy is communicated to all staff through the appropriate channels e.g. team meetings, email, noticeboards and ensure that staff understand and adhere to this policy.

Strategic Director & Line Managers

Line managers will explain the acceptable usage of social media during any new staff induction in accordance with this policy.

Line managers will monitor usage; investigate any breaches of usage; and take appropriate action where required.

Staff

All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any misuse of social media should be reported to their line manager. Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to line manager. Staff have a responsibility to all customers and clients and must respect confidentiality at all times both at work and outside of work. This applies to employee's past and present.

Compliance with related policies and agreements

Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of the organisation's other policies. If an internet post would breach any of our policies in another forum, it will also breach them in an online forum. For example, staff are prohibited from using social media to:-

- Breach any obligations they may have relating to confidentiality;
- Breach our disciplinary rules;
- Defame or disparage the organisation or its affiliates, customers, clients, business partners, suppliers, vendors or other stakeholders;
- Harass or bully other staff in any way;
- Breach our equal opportunities policy;

- Breach our data protection policy;
- Breach any other laws or ethical standards.

Staff 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.

Employees who breach any of the above policies will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Procedure

1) Using and accessing social media

Use of social media as a business tool

If the duties of a staff member require them to speak on behalf of the organisation in a social media environment, they must still seek approval for such communications from their line manager, who may require the staff member to undergo training before they do so and impose certain requirements and restrictions upon their activities.

If a member of staff is contacted for comments about the organisation for publication anywhere, including in any social media outlet, staff members must direct the enquiry to the Chief Executive and must not respond without written approval.

The use of social media for business purposes is subject to the remainder of this policy.

Accessing Social Media within the workplace

Staff are allowed to access social media websites from organisation property (eg their office computer, mobile/smart phone, IPAD provided by the organisation):-

A) Only during break times

Or

B) any time providing this is for valid work purposes

Whilst at work staff are allowed to access social media websites from personal mobile/smart phones at any time (provided this doesn't interfere with effective working practices.)

Whilst using social media at work, circulating chain letters or other SPAM is never permitted. Circulating or posting commercial, personal, religious or political solicitations, or promotion of outside organisations unrelated to the organisation's business is also prohibited.

The Employer reserves the right to review and amend the above guidelines at any time.

Should a member of staff fail to adhere to the above requirements disciplinary action may be taken which could result in dismissal.

Using Social Media for personal reasons outside of the workplace

Use of social media for personal reasons outside of the workplace and out of working hours, does not need to be approved by the organisation.

A) Staff must not refer to the organisation by name, nor make any reference (written or photographic) to their place of work when using any social media for personal reasons, nor reference any of the organisation's clients or other stakeholders.

B) Staff are advised, but not compelled, to restrict access to their Social media content to approved 'followers/friends'

The above guidelines also apply during any form of leave from the workplace e.g. annual leave, maternity leave, suspension etc.

2) *Disciplinary Action*

Should the organisation become aware that a member of staff may be in breach of this policy, disciplinary action may be taken (after the situation has been fully investigated). This could result in dismissal and the offending content being removed with the employee responsible being suspended from using social media as a representative of the organisation.

If there is any evidence of bullying or harassment via any form of social media then this will be dealt with appropriately as outlined in the organisation's relevant policy.

If any staff member becomes aware of information relating to the organisation posted on social networking sites or blogs, this must be brought to the attention of the Strategic Director

3) *Monitoring social medial usage and access*

The contents of IT resources and communications systems are the organisation's property. Therefore, staff should have no expectation of privacy in any message, document, telephone conversation, social media post, or any other kind of information transmitted to, received or printed from, the organisation's electronic information and communications systems.

CDS reserves the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, staff activities using IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities, to ensure that rules are being complied with and for legitimate business purposes and staff members consent to such monitoring by their use of such resources and systems. This might include, without limitation, the monitoring, interception, accessing, recording, disclosing, inspecting, reviewing, retrieving and printing of transactions, messages, communications, postings, log-ins, recordings and other uses of the systems as well as key stroke capturing and other network monitoring technologies.

Staff must not use IT resources and communications systems for any matter that they wish to be kept private or confidential from the organisation.

4) *Social media during recruitment and selection*

CDS supports the usage of social media for recruitment purposes, other policies and codes of conduct must be adhered to at all times.

If a recruiting manager intends to access the profile page of a candidate, they will detail the social media site they wish to access, the reasons for accessing it and any benefits it will add to the selection process that cannot be gained through other methods. This information will be kept with the other recruitment and selection materials. After accessing the site, the recruiting manager must keep a record of the date, time and website along with the information retrieved from this website which should be kept with the candidate's application form/interview notes. Managers should only undertake background checks after initial interviews have taken place.]

5) *Human Rights*

The Human Rights Act 1998 gives a 'right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence' and CDS gives staff a reasonable amount of privacy in the workplace. However, this is limited if it interferes with the ability to perform their role effectively.

Principles

Guidelines for social media usage

Everything written should be considered as public. Staff should assume that everything they write is permanent; can be viewed by others and can be traced back to them personally as well as to colleagues and the organisation.

Any content on social media should not:

- contain disparaging or defamatory statements
- be utilised to bully or harass
- contain breaches of copyright and data protection
- contain material of an illegal, sexual or offensive nature
- include confidential information to the organisation, its clients, customers or any other stakeholders
- reference any clients, customers, or partners without obtaining their express permission to do so.
- bring the organisation into disrepute or compromise the brand and reputation
- use the organisation to endorse or promote any product, opinion or political cause

This list is not exhaustive and each case will be considered on its own merits.

All staff are responsible for protecting the reputation of the organisation. Any staff member who sees content on social media that disparages or reflects poorly on the organisation or stakeholders should contact their line manager immediately.