

OA Reablement service	OA Day Care	OA Residential Care	Domiciliary Services	DMH Day Services	DMH Supported Living	DMH Residential Services	EIA'd
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# SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE GUIDANCE

## POLICY

To ensure all employees of Cumbria Care are aware of their own responsibilities whilst using any social networking site.

## PROCEDURE

1. This policy and procedure compliments the Cumbria County Council procedure which can be found on the intranet.
2. It is recognised that many people working for Cumbria Care use the internet outside of work for personal purposes and many participate in social networking websites such as Facebook, Twitter, My Space, You Tube, Friends Reunited and any other online discussion blogs / forums. In the majority of cases this is uncomplicated and trouble-free. However, there are some occasions where your personal life and work life can start to overlap through these sites.
3. As an employer, we have no wish to interfere with your personal life. However we would advise you, when using such sites, to consider the potential impact on both your own reputation and that of the County Council.
4. You should always use your own judgment but should bear in mind the codes of conduct and policies which are part of your professional and employment requirements.

Examples of these may include:

- Relevant County Council policies relating to confidentiality, whistle blowing, information security and data protection (including acceptable use policy for email and intranet), conduct and confidentiality clauses in your contract of employment.
5. Social networking sites are a relatively new phenomenon and social norms of conduct and behaviour continue to evolve. It is important to intelligently review and reapply the principles of the code of conduct as new situations emerge. You should think through what this information means for you in practice and if needed, take steps to change the way you use social networking sites.

Things to consider:

- Check your security settings on social networking site so that your information is only visible to the people who you want to see it.
- Put your name into an internet search engine to see what people can find out about you. Are you happy with what they can see?

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- Help your friends and colleagues out – let them know if you spot things on their pages that might be misconstrued.
- Do not reveal too many personal details such as contact details or your date of birth. Such information could put you at risk of identity fraud.
- Do not upload any images of yourself in a work environment.
- Before posting images or joining any causes, be aware that it is not just your friends and colleagues who may see this but also service users and employers.
- Protect your own privacy. Think through what kinds of information you want to share and with whom and adjust your privacy settings. On Face book you can adjust your privacy settings at group level to share different levels of information with different kinds of friends. Remember that the more personal life is exposed through social networking sites, the more likely it is that this could have a negative impact.
- Do not use social networking sites to build or pursue relationships with service users even if they are no longer in your care.
- If you receive a friendship request on Face book you can ignore it without this person being informed so avoiding unnecessary offence. Do not feel pressured into accepting a friend request if it makes you feel uncomfortable.
- Do not discuss work related issues online including conversations about service users or complaints about colleagues.
- Never post pictures of service users or colleagues even if they ask you to do so.
- Do not post inappropriate comments about colleagues, service users, Cumbria Care or the Council as a whole.
- Do not use social networking sites to bully or intimidate anybody.
- Do not distribute sexually explicit material.
- Do not use social networking sites in any way which is unlawful.
- Do not share confidential information.

6. Remember that everything you post online is public even with the strictest privacy settings. Once something is online it can be copied and redistributed and it is easy to lose control of it. Presume that everything you post online will be permanent and will be shared.

### **Social networking concerns or complaints**

1. Staff have a responsibility to report any issues and provide evidence of this if requested.
2. Managers must ensure staff are aware of their responsibilities and that they have read and understand the policy.

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3. Social networking sites should not be used for raising and escalating concerns. There is a complaints procedure which should be followed.
4. Concerns or complaints about social networking sites or other online activities should be taken seriously. Cyber-bullying, for example can be distressing and sharing confidential information online can be more damaging than sharing it verbally.
5. Concerns or complaints must be dealt with in the same way as any other complaint and should follow the complaints procedure.

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