

Policy No: 03-1510	Authorised: 	Date: 05/02/2020
USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA STAFF & SERVICE USERS		

This Policy will define the Organisation's philosophy regarding the use of social media sites by Company staff and service users. The overriding concerns focus upon data protection and the preservation of confidential information from both the service user and Care Worker standpoints:

1. PRINCIPLES OF THE POLICY:

- 1.1 Social media sites are socially-oriented networks which are increasing in use for both personal / social and professional purposes. Popular sites are *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Instagram*. However, management recognises that it is highly possible that the boundaries between social and professional use of these sites by service users and Care Workers can become blurred or indistinct. Therefore, more precise definition is required to determine where personal and professional boundaries lie, and particularly where personal and professional obligations start and end.
- 1.2 The use of social media raises the following concerns for the Organisation:
 - 1.2.1 The Organisation could be exposed to a greater reputational risk, either through ignorance or malicious intent, due to the longevity of material once posted, and the ability of the internet to send information world-wide within seconds; this can include comments, opinions and statements that could potentially cause harm, offence, or a breach of trust.
 - 1.2.2 Additional potential areas for problems include data protection, confidentiality issues, defamation, trust and confidence.
 - 1.2.3 A key concern is the specific safeguarding values relating to the vulnerable adults that form the Organisation's service user base, and the potential for these values to be compromised through uncontrolled access to social networking sites.
- 1.3 This Policy is intended to establish 4 key principles which are reflected within staff Induction Training programmes:
 - 1.3.1 The Organisation's Care Workers are accommodated at the service user's domiciliary environment purely in a professional capacity.
 - 1.3.2 The Care Worker should, at all times, endeavor to keep their personal and professional lives separate.
 - 1.3.3 Permitted methods of communication between the Care Worker and service user should maximize privacy and confidentiality for both parties.
 - 1.3.4 The Organisation recognizes the following:
 - (1) That it has a Duty of Care towards its Care Staff. This will include unwanted personal data being posted on a social media site by a service user, relative etc. which may make the Care Worker feel uncomfortable or embarrassed, or that their human rights have been violated. Permitted methods of communication between Care Worker and service user should therefore reflect this. Refer to clauses 1.3.3 and 2.4 of this Policy, and to *Policy No: 1004 - Code of Conduct for Care Staff*.
 - (2) Set against this is the right that the service user has to access social media networking sites whenever they wish. However, it must be explained to them that it is unacceptable for them to post any photographs, statements or opinions about the Organisation or their Care Staff and treatment, and that their Contract for Care (ref *Policy No: 3011*) is conditional upon their signed acceptance of this requirement.

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2. POLICY - *IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CARE WORKER:*

The following rules are mandatory for all Care Staff in respect of their relationship with service users:

1. Staff are not permitted to access social networking websites for any reason, and AT ANY TIME, while on the Organisation's business.
2. Staff using these sites outside working hours for their own personal use MUST NOT, AT ANY TIME (even though off-duty) make reference to the Organisation, its service users, or their employment on the site.
3. The use of personal social networking accounts and user IDs for the business of the Organisation is prohibited. Similarly, the use of any social network user IDs held by the Organisation for personal use is prohibited.
4. It should not become necessary for a Care Worker to keep in touch directly with a service user, this must be done only with the written agreement of the manager and specifically by telephone, texting or e-mail, all of which afford privacy, and NOT through social media sites
5. The Care Worker's Contract of Employment contains an appropriate clause relevant to 2.4 above. This clause refers to Organisation's Staff Code of Conduct (Policy No: 1004) which in turn clearly defines the limitations of the use of social media sites by the Care Worker, with particular reference to methods of communication with the service user.

3. POLICY - *IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SERVICE USER:*

1. As part of the initial Baseline Assessment of Needs process for a prospective service user (ref *Policy No: 3002*), the Care Staff conducting the assessment will explain to the service user (and / or advocate, as appropriate) the acceptable methods of communication that will be used between Care Worker and service user.
2. Reference clause 1.3.4 of this Policy, care is taken to explain that it is unacceptable for them to post any statements or opinions about the Organisation or their Care Staff and facilities on social media networking sites, and that their Contract for Care (ref *Policy No: 3011*) is conditional upon their signed acceptance of this requirement. Violation of this could constitute grounds for terminating the service by the Organisation.

4. Violation of this Policy by the Organisation's staff will be viewed as an act of gross misconduct and may result in disciplinary action being taken in accordance with *Policy No 1202*.