Professionals Guide to Using Social Media

Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership

TEA-BREAK GUIDE

What is social media?

The term social media is the term used to describe websites and applications such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, etc., which enables users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

As a professional why should I be concerned about the use of social media?

Social media has become an everyday part of our lives. The development of "user created content" can blur the boundaries between personal and professional lives. Professionals need to be aware that personal observations and comments on issues can be misinterpreted as a professional view or a view of the agency for which they work. This can have consequences for both the individual posting the view and their agency.

Should I friend or follow people I work with?

Entering into informal relationships with service users can increase the likelihood of inappropriate boundaries and can raise ethical issues as well as potential the potential to open the professional to allegations.

Professionals who receive "friend requests" from current or former service users should politely refuse and explain that is it inappropriate for them to accept the request.

Using Social Media

Always…

✓ **Refer to you agency's policy on the use of social media**—each agency should provide staff with guidance on what is acceptable conduct when using social media.

✓ **Use common sense and good judgement**—remember that what you post or publish may have an impact on others.

✓ **Be respectful of others**

✓ **Be sensible in your content**—avoid posing statements, pictures or media that could be viewed as malicious, obscene, threatening, intimidating, disparaging, bullying or harassing.

✓ **Maintain confidentiality**—do not post information which you may have obtained in the course of your duties public if this information is not already in the public domain.

Never…

✕ **Post your personal opinions on your agency's social media sites**—personal opinions are fine for your own personal social media but are inappropriate for disclosure through your agency's social media outlets.

✕ **Publish content that may result in libel, defamation or other claims for damages.**

✕ **Publish personal information about other individuals on your agency's social media without consent**—it may be acceptable to post pictures of your friends on you own personal social media pages, but when posting for your organisation you should be respectful of an individual's right to privacy.

✕ **Use social media as a method of whistleblowing**—each agency should have their own whistleblowing policy which will identify appropriate pathways for raising concerns about your agency outside of the organisation

✕ **Breach copyright**—you should not repost copyrighted materials without consent as this may lead to legal action.

Simon Aston – Online Safety Officer can provide more information contact him at onlinesafety@northnorthants.gov.uk