



## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY MAY 2015

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Social media is the term commonly used for websites, which allow people to interact with each other in some way, by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interest. As the name implies, social networking involves the building of online communities and networks encouraging participation and engagement.

For the purposes of this policy, social media and social networking are used interchangeably. Social media is defined as interactive online technology tools that allow individuals to exchange and share information and resources including pictures instantly via the Internet. This includes online blogs, personal websites, discussion boards, email groups, instant messaging and also forums such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. The term social media also covers blogs and video sharing sites including YouTube. This list is not intended to be exhaustive as this is a constantly evolving area.

Employees, students and volunteers should follow this policy in relation to any social media that they use. STaSS recognises that in recent years there has been a significant rise in the use of social networking sites. While it is recognised that all employees are entitled to privacy in their personal life, STaSS is committed to maintaining confidentiality and safety at all times whilst also maintaining our reputation and that of the relevant profession by exhibiting acceptable behaviour at all times.

All members of staff and volunteers need to be aware that, even if they believe that they are using these sites with enhanced privacy settings applied, this does not exempt them from the guidelines that are outlined in this policy.

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If a member of staff has concerns about the online conduct of any other employee, this should be raised with an appropriate manager in line with the relevant policies; i.e. Whistleblowing/grievance etc.

## 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to set out the clear expectation that, if a member of staff identifies an association with STaSS, discusses their work and/or colleagues, or comes into contact, or is likely to, with service users on any social media sites, he/she will behave appropriately and in a way which is consistent with our values and where relevant, with his/her professional code of conduct. The duty to act in a manner that is in line with the conditions set out herein does not only apply when an employee, student or the volunteer is at work or undertaking a task for STaSS, but at all times when a connection to STaSS has been made.

This policy aims also:

To outline to employees, students and volunteers what is acceptable use of social media linked to their employment

To make a clear distinction between acceptable usages of social media at work and in employees, students and volunteer's personal lives.

To encourage employees, students and volunteers to be mindful of what content they share on the Internet

Ensure appropriate standards of confidentiality are maintained.

To ensure that professional boundaries with service users are maintained and protected.

This policy sets out the principles which employees; students and volunteers are expected to follow when using social media in their personal lives. The Internet involves fast moving technologies and it is therefore impossible to cover all circumstances.

The intent of this policy is not to stop employees, students and / or volunteers from conducting legitimate activities on the Internet, nor to stifle constructive criticism, but serves to highlight these areas in which problems can arise for both individual employees and STaSS.

## 3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees, students and volunteers who are directly employed or involved with STaSS through their training or volunteering. The policy also applies to any agency workers, temporary staff and other students whilst on placement at STaSS.

“Users”, are defined as; all employees, students on placement, volunteers, trustees, temporary staff and anyone else with a professional connection to STaSS.

The policy should be read in conjunction and with, reference to; any relevant professional or code of conduct.

## 4. RESPONSIBILITIES, ACCOUNTABILITIES AND DUTIES

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## 4.1 Executive Director

It is the Directors' responsibility to ensure that employees are aware of this policy and the parameters that are outlined. To react in an appropriate manner when informed of instances where behaviour is not in accordance with the procedure that is set out herein. The Volunteer Co-ordinator will need to ensure that all volunteers are aware of the policy.

## 4.2 Employees

Users must ensure that they are complying with the expectations of this policy to support the reputation of STaSS and where relevant of their profession. Users must make sure that they conduct themselves online in the same manner that would be expected of them in any other situation. To uphold the reputation of STaSS and, where relevant, the reputation of their profession.

## 5. PROCEDURE/IMPLEMENTATION

### 5.1 Summary of Principles

When any user has identified their association with STaSS when using any social media site it is expected that they behave in a manner, which acknowledges the duty of care that they owe to their colleagues and the organisation.

Once information has been published on the internet it is no longer considered to be private and thus the user will be held accountable for any information posted which is challenged on the basis that it compromises themselves, their colleagues and/or STaSS.

If a user has a mobile telephone which has a camera facility this must not be used in the workplace to then load photographs onto social media UNLESS in situations where the user have been given the permission to do so for the benefit of STaSS but the user must delete the data from their mobile phone immediately after uploading it on STaSS social media upon the request of management.

### 5.2 Use at Work

STaSS understands that users may wish to use their own devices such as mobile phones, to access social media websites while they are at work, during their allocated break times. Users must limit their use of their own devices so not to interfere with their working day and this must be limited to their allocated break times.

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Given the increasing use of Facebook and Twitter to promote our services and engage with clients STaSS may permit users to access Facebook and Twitter during their working hours. This will clearly be authorised by their line manager and in this instance users are free to use Facebook and Twitter etc during their normal working hours for official STaSS business.

Staff who are given access to social media sites such as YouTube, Twitter and Facebook for work purposes must:

only use these sites in an ethical and lawful manner - subject to the same principles as above, such as patient confidentiality, not bringing STaSS into disrepute and not posting sensitive information.

not accessing their personal accounts - such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs.

make total separation between their personal accounts and any accounts monitored or updated on behalf of STaSS.

### 5.3 Personal Use

While using social networking sites in a personal capacity and not acting on behalf of STaSS it should still be recognised that users actions can still damage STaSS' reputation and all communications that are made, even in a personal capacity must not;

Behave in a manner that would not be acceptable in any other situation

Bring STaSS into disrepute

Breach confidentiality or data protection policies

Make comments that could be considered to be bullying, harassment or discriminatory against any individual.

Use offensive or intimidating language

Pursue personal relationships with current service users\*

Use social networking sites in any way, which is unlawful

Post inappropriate comments about colleagues or service users

Post remarks, which may unwittingly cause offence and constitute unlawful discrimination in the form of harassment

Comment on work related issues

Professionally qualified staff may place their registration at risk if they fail to adhere to the above guidelines.

**\* - Pursuing personal relationships with current services users is not acceptable under any circumstances. These actions will bring about possible disciplinary proceedings, which could result in the employee's dismissal.**

All users should be mindful of the personal information they disclose on social networking sites, especially with regards to identity theft. Making information such as date of birth,

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place of work and other personal information publicly available can be high risk in terms of identity theft.

Where users associate themselves with STaSS in whatever manner, they should also act in a manner, which does not bring STaSS or their profession into disrepute. This applies to both open and private sections of a site if a user has identified themselves as an employee of STaSS.

Where a user is unsure about whether or not to post something on a social networking site then the most prudent action should be taken in line with their professional judgment

## 5.4 Interactions Involving Different Affected Groups

### 5.4.1 Service Users

Confidentiality must be upheld at all times and no information that could lead to a service user being identified should be disclosed through this media. Users should not accept or make contact with any service users and/or carers so that professional boundaries can be maintained; this is in line with other professional guidelines.

### 5.4.2 Work Colleagues

When interacting with colleagues online users should be mindful of their responsibilities to be professional and courteous and never use these sites to attack or abuse any colleagues. When there is content that is being uploaded that includes other employees, for example pictures from a social event, then permission should be sought from their colleagues before they post such items and they should not post any items that they have been asked not to. Any item that a colleague has asked to be removed that includes them should be removed immediately.

Within social media sites, individuals may post comments, pictures or phrases which other individuals can indicate their support/agreement to by clicking the 'like' button. This action is seen to be attaching the users name and implied support to the original material. This can be seen as being equivalent to posting the comment and therefore this action may also bring the users conduct into question. Users should be aware of the consequences of using any social media site to post content of any kind that conflict with information that they already provided to STaSS. These actions will bring about possible disciplinary proceedings, which could result in the users dismissal.

### 5.4.3 STaSS

In any instances where there are any comments, questions or observations that the user wishes to raise in connection with their employment with STaSS, either positive or negative, these should be raised through the appropriate channels internally rather than these views being expressed on social networking sites. Additional guidance and support is available through other appropriate STaSS Policies and Procedures.

## 5.5 Breaches of the Policy

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If there is an instance where the guidelines set out in this policy appear to have been breached and the breach is brought to the attention of the Executive Director then the matter should be investigated to ascertain the nature and the extent of the concerns that have been raised. The investigation should be carried out in accordance with Policy and Procedure. Complaints about the use of social networking sites or other online activity will be taken as seriously as 'real-world' events by STaSS. Consideration should be given to any professional boundaries that have been crossed; any breach of confidentiality; whether an association to STaSS has been identified and/or whether any of the material is offensive to colleagues or service users or potentially damaging to the reputation of any party to whom the member

of staff owes a duty of care as an employee of STaSS.

If a user is concerned about another employee's, student or a volunteer's behaviour online then they should report this to their line manager along with any supporting evidence of their claim, so that the appropriate action can be taken in accordance with STaSS policy. Failure to follow this policy may result in the instigation of disciplinary procedure and/or may constitute a breach of professional code of conduct. In serious cases, a breach may be regarded as gross misconduct and may result in the employee's, student or the volunteer's dismissal.

This policy was explained to me and I have also read and understood its content. I promise to abide by it now and after my engagement with STaSS.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Policy Review

The Director and Board of Trustees are responsible for reviewing this policy annually and ensuring that it is compliant with current legislation and good practice.

**REVIEWED MAY 2015, NEXT SCHEDULED REVIEW MAY 2016**

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