

Appropriate Use of Social Media by Safeguarding Professionals

Minimum Standards Policy

2017

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Many of us now use social media to communicate, stay in touch and feel part of an online community. For most people, joining in is trouble-free and fun but it can be easy to blur the lines between your personal voice and your role as a safeguarding professional.
- 1.2 The purpose of these policy standards is to outline the Bromley Safeguarding Children Board's minimum standards regarding the responsibilities of all staff and partners when using social media **in a personal capacity**.
- 1.3 This document is **NOT** focused on safeguarding partners' engagement with, and use of, social media platforms in their official capacity. Such use is covered by the BSCB Policy on Authorised Use of BSCB Official Social Media Accounts.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy refers to the personal use of social media, which includes multi-media, private and business-oriented social networking websites (e.g. Facebook, Google+, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn etc.), and all other internet postings including blogs and wikis. The absence or lack of explicit reference to specific social media does not limit the extent of the application of this policy.
- 2.2 The principles of this should be applied to all kinds of online communication, including, for example, personal websites and blogs, discussion boards, email groups and instant messaging. It applies to access to social media using any type of internet-enabled device, whether personal or for work.
- 2.3 The policy sets out the expectations for the conduct of safeguarding partners in relation to the personal use of social media both during and outside of working hours. This policy applies to all safeguarding professionals/partners, volunteers

and staff.

3. Responsibilities of all safeguarding professionals

- 3.1 When accessing and using social media, employees/partners must ensure that they conduct themselves in a way that reflects positively on the Board.
- 3.2 When using social media outside of the work environment, employees/partners should be aware that when posting information, they are not authorised to represent the BSCB or express a view on behalf of the BSCB.
- 3.3 Chat rooms and newsgroups are public forums where it is inappropriate to reveal confidential BSCB information, personal data relating to colleagues or members of the community or any other material covered by existing policies and procedures.
- 3.4 The expression of opinion on web blogs, social networks or similar sites could inadvertently reveal information which is not suitable for public consumption and employees/partners should be mindful of this and ensure they do not engage in inappropriate behaviour.
- 3.5 Examples of inappropriate behaviour include:
 - Comments that may damage the reputation of the BSCB, regardless of whether the BSCB is named directly or identifiable in any other manner
 - Photographs or videos of employees/partners behaving inappropriately which may be linked to the BSCB or which include a BSCB identifier such as logos, premises etc
 - Falsely registering another employee/partner on social media, identifying the BSCB directly or indirectly
 - Posting comments or photographs of Board members or members of the community without their express consent.
 - Posting threatening comments, bullying or harassing Board members or

members of the community.

- Derogatory, disparaging, defamatory, discriminatory or offensive comments regarding the BSCB, co-workers, members of the community or others.
- Reflecting any personal behaviour, which if seen in any other public place would conflict with the ethical expectations of the BSCB.

3.6 The following guidance is designed to protect the BSCB and its partners from risk of allegation, disrepute or liability:

- Never include any confidential or sensitive work-related information on any social media sites. Work-related conversations that would be inappropriate on public transport for example, are just as inappropriate on a social networking site.
- Never share confidential information online, for example, identifiable personal information about colleagues, members of the community or confidential BSCB business
- Never post or take photographs on BSCB partner premises without explicit permission.
- Safeguarding professionals are discouraged from posting photos of work colleagues on work-related social events. Some colleagues will object to their photographs being on websites and this can cause offence.
- Never post audio and sound clips recorded during BSCB meetings without explicit consent of all present.
- Never use social networking sites to bully or intimidate another member (including posting inappropriate or offensive comments and pictures).
- Never use social networking sites in any way, which is unlawful or grossly offensive.
- BSCB advice is not to accept a 'friend request' from a member of the community (or their family member) that you only know through professional work / contact.

- BSCB advice is to remove yourself if you have previously accepted a friend request from a member of the community or their family members, who you only know through professional work.

3.7 Whilst we encourage and recognise the right of an individual to bring matters of concern to the attention of the appropriate authorities, there are internal mechanisms available to escalate and address such concerns. Social Media should not be used for such a purpose.

4. Expectations of Privacy

4.1 Personal is not the same as private, don't operate on the assumption that it is. It is important to note that once a comment is posted on social media, it ceases to be private and can be shared and turn up in online searches.

4.2 All safeguarding professionals must recognise that social media is just another public space and therefore all policies, guidance and laws that we follow and adhere to in the real world must be applied in the virtual online world.

5. Monitoring compliance

5.1 BSCB reserves the right to monitor internet use and the use of social media to ensure policy compliance.

5.2 BSCB reserves the right to report or investigate personal Facebook or similar social media sites if any matter comes to its attention, which it considers may constitute a potential breach of this policy.

5.3 BSCB reserves the right to request the closure of any applications or removal of content published by members which is deemed by the BSCB to constitute a breach of this policy.

5.4 Failure to comply with any such request may result in further action being taken.

6. Discipline

- 6.1 Being part of the online community can be fun and a useful way to keep in touch with friends and family. However, it must be remembered that Social Media platforms represent public spaces and it is important that all safeguarding partners reflect on the fact that our values, behaviours and integrity remains unchanged whether at, or away from work, and reflect the guidance set out within this policy.
- 6.2 Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action being taken by the parent organization of any offending member, and in extreme situations, up to and including dismissal. Disciplinary action may be taken whether the breach is committed during working hours or otherwise and whether committed on the Board's IT equipment or communication systems or otherwise.
- 6.3 Any BSCB member suspected of breaching this policy shall be expected to cooperate with any investigation which may involve the disclosure of relevant passwords or log-ins.

7. Related Policies

- Safeguarding in the Context of Access to Technology and Use of Social Media
- Authorised Use of BSCB Official Social Media Accounts.

Personal Accounts	
Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think before you post. • Set security to restrict access/visibility to friends only. • Be selective with 'Friends' on SM. • Clearly warn that this is a personal site and opinions are your own. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post comments/photos which are abusive, improper or offensive. • Use photos of yourself/colleagues in work or with vulnerable people. • Use the BSCB logo. • Post comments / photos which could be portrayed as committing an offence (e.g. public drunkenness or ASB).

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