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Social Networking and Blog Policy and Guidance

This policy was adopted at a meeting of:

Bananas Playgroup

Address *c/o Broughton Primary School
Broughton
ML12 6HQ*

On *28th August 2014*

At *The AGM*

Signed Chairperson

Name (*print*)..... Chairperson

Witnessed by (*sign here*).....

Witnessed by (*print name*).....

Introduction

Bananas Playgroup recognises that some employees may use the Internet for personal purposes and may participate in social networking on sites such as Facebook and MySpace. Employees must ensure they do not breach the law or disclose any confidential information about the setting, children or families.

This policy outlines the setting's approach to social networking and the use of blogs. It details the ground rules for employees, who should ensure that the content of their blogs/social networking sites does not bring the setting into disrepute or breach their obligations under the setting's Code of Conduct.

This policy applies to all setting employees, volunteers, committee and students

Definitions

The term '**blog**' is short for 'web log'. A blog is an online diary detailing personal insights and experiences. This is shared with an online audience.

A **social network site** is a website, which allows individuals to construct a public or semi-public online profile and to connect with others who share similar interests and views.

Ground rules

Must not access personal blogs/social networking sites on work premises or use the setting's Internet systems or email address for their own use, without prior agreement or in accordance with the setting's policy.

The setting does not condone employees, volunteers, committee and students writing about their work on social networking sites or web pages and asks them not to do so. If they choose to do so, they are expected to follow the rules below.

Must not:

- disclose any information that is confidential to the setting or any third party or disclose personal data or information about any individual child, colleague or service user, which could be in breach of the Data Protection Act.
- disclose the name of the setting or allow it to be identified by any details at all. This includes posting photos of **children and young people**, the premises or events with work colleagues.
- link their own blogs/personal web pages to the setting's website.

- make defamatory remarks about the setting, colleagues or service users.
- misrepresent the setting by posting false or inaccurate statements.

Communication with children and young people, by whatever method, should always take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries. Employees, volunteers, committee and students should avoid any misinterpretation of their motives or any behaviour that could be construed as grooming.

- Must be aware of viruses which could lurk in emails. Whilst using the nursery internet facilities staff must not open any emails from names that aren't recognised in order to protect the nursery computer from potential viruses.
- Must be aware of their responsibilities to the nursery when using social networking sites such as Facebook. Our confidentiality policy must be adhered to at all times, even outside of working hours. It is important to maintain your status as a professional childcare worker and therefore we would urge you to think twice before fostering online friendships with parents. Disciplinary action could result if the nursery is brought into disrepute.
- Must not post anything onto social networking sites such as 'Facebook' that could be construed to have any impact on the nursery's reputation.
- Must not post photos related to the setting on any internet site including children, colleagues, parents or the nursery branding (uniform).
- Must not post anything onto social networking sites that would offend any other member of staff or parent using the nursery.
- Children are to be encouraged to use the internet if appropriate but must be supervised at all times.

Employees, volunteers, committee and students should also be provided with some guidance to help protect them, please see the 'safeguarding yourself' factsheet below for ideas:

Failure to adhere to the rules and guidelines in this policy may be considered misconduct and could lead to disciplinary and /or criminal investigations.

Remember that anything posted online could end up in the public domain to be read by children, parents or even future employers – so be careful what you post and who you post it to. For example, posting explicit pictures of yourself could damage your reputation and that of your profession and organisation. Parents may question your suitability to care for children.

FACTSHEET

Safeguarding yourself

Guidance on the personal use of social networking sites for adults involved in services for children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Due to the increasing personal use of social networking sites, staff and volunteers within the workforce should be aware of the impact of their personal use upon their professional position.

In practice, anything posted on the Internet will be there forever and is no longer in your control.

Remember when something is on the Internet even if you remove it, it may have already been duplicated by a “web crawler” and so will always be there. Current and future employers and service users may see this. Keep all professional work completely separate from your private life.

The following guidance, in addition to the above, will safeguard adults from allegations and protect an individual’s privacy as well as safeguard vulnerable groups.

Failure to comply with the following may result in organisations taking disciplinary action.

- Social networking sites such as facebook have a range of privacy settings that are often set up to ‘expose’ your details to anyone. When ‘open’ anyone can find you from a search of the social networking site or even from a Google search. Therefore, it is important to change your setting to ‘just friends’ so that your details, comments, photographs can only be seen your invited friends
- Have a neutral picture of yourself as your profile image
- Do not post embarrassing material or comments that may call into question your employment status
- Do not accept friendship requests unless you know the person or want to accept them - be prepared for being bombarded with friendship requests from people you do not know
- Do not make friendship requests with service users
- Choose your social networking friends carefully and ask about their privacy controls
- Do not accept friendship requests on social networking or messaging sites from the children, young people (or their parents) or service users that you work with. For those working with young people remember that ex pupils may still have friends that you may have contact with through your work

- Exercise caution. For example, if you write on a friends 'wall' on facebook all of their friends can see your comment even if they are not your friend
- There is a separate privacy setting for facebook groups and networks. You may have your own profile set to private, however, when joining a group or a network please be aware that everyone in that group or network is able to see your profile
- If you have younger friends or family members on your social networking groups who are friends with children, young people (or their parents) or service users that you work with, be aware that posts you write will be visible to them
- Do not use your personal or professional details (email or telephone) as part of your profile
- If you or a friend are tagged in an online photo album (facebook, flickr) the whole photo album may be visible to their friends, your friends and anyone else tagged in the photo album
- You do not have to be friends with anyone to be tagged in their photo album, if you are tagged in a photo you can remove the tag but not the photo
- You should be aware of the privacy settings on photo sharing websites
- Your friends may take and post photos that you may not be happy about. You need to speak to them first to request that it is removed rather than contacting the web provider. If you are over the age of 18, the website will only look into issues that contravene their terms and conditions
- Do not use your personal profile in any way for official business. If you are going to be a friend of your organisations official social networking group ensure you have a separate professional profile

If you have difficulty in implementing any of this guidance contact your safeguarding lead.

Examples of social networking websites

Facebook: A social networking service where users create personal *profiles*, add other users as *friends* and exchange messages, including automatic notifications when they update their own profile.

Additionally, users may join common-interest user groups, organised by common characteristics (e.g. workplace).

Twitter: A *micro blogging** service enabling its users to send and read publicly visible messages called *tweets*. Tweets are text-based posts of up to 140 characters displayed on the user's profile page. Users may subscribe to other users' tweets.

LinkedIn: A business-related social networking site mainly used for professional networking. Users maintain a list of contact details of people with whom they have some level of relationship, called *connections*. This list of connections can then be used to build up a contact network, follow different companies and find jobs, people and business opportunities.

MySpace: An online community of users' personal profiles. These typically include photographs, information about personal interests and *blogs**. Users send one another messages and socialise within the MySpace *community*.

YouTube: A video-sharing website on which users can upload, share, and view videos. A wide variety of *user-generated* video content is displayed, including film and TV clips as well as amateur content such as video *blogging**. Media corporations including the BBC also offer some of their material via the site. Most videos enable users to leave and exchange comments.

Wikipedia: A collaborative web-based encyclopaedia project; its 18 million articles have been written collaboratively by volunteers around the world, and almost all articles are freely editable by any visitor. A prominent web 2.0 site but not an example of social networking site *per se*.

*A **blog** is a type of website or part of a website usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary and descriptions of events (*blogging*). The content of a micro blog is simply smaller in size.

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