

Social Media Guidance

1 Introduction

Healthwatch Worcestershire recognises that social media can be a fun, rewarding and instant way for individuals and organisations to share information and opinions with family, friends, colleagues and the wider public. However, use of social media also presents certain risks and carries with it certain responsibilities. To assist employees in making responsible decisions about their use of social media, Healthwatch Worcestershire has established this guidance which applies to all employees.

2 What is social media?

In the rapidly expanding world of electronic communication, 'social media' can mean many things. Essentially, social media includes all means of communicating or posting information or content of any sort on the internet, whether at work or at home, using interactive websites and applications. Some of the most popular ones currently are social networks such as Facebook and LinkedIn, media sharing such as YouTube and Flickr and online news sites such as Twitter - but there are many more and new applications are emerging all the time.

3 Business use

Healthwatch Worcestershire uses social media as a cost-effective means of increasing visibility and connecting/engaging with a wider audience than we could reach by more traditional means. Employees in some roles will have a remit which includes use of social media to provide business benefits and Healthwatch Worcestershire will ensure these employees are trained to do so professionally and responsibly.

4 Personal use

Whilst at work, personal use of social media is necessarily restricted, whether on Healthwatch Worcestershire equipment or employees using their own interactive devices (smart phones, tablets, etc). Too many hours a day spent on any personal activity at work will necessarily be managed as a performance issue and could result in disciplinary action. Work e-mail addresses should never be used to register on a social media site unless it is a business account used to promote Healthwatch Worcestershire activity.

5 Guidance

The basic rules for employees are:

- You are solely responsible for what you post online. Consider how the content could be perceived by other people from a diversity of backgrounds (not just your friends). Consider your own personal reputation and the public perception of the organisation.

- Content, whether posted at work or from home, should never be inappropriate, offensive or illegal. Before posting, consider whether you might be in breach of the Healthwatch Worcestershire Diversity and Inclusion policy or Dignity at work policy.
- Ensure that any comment you make would not show the organisation in a negative light or potentially damage organisational reputation.
- Never reveal confidential information; if in doubt check with senior management if something should be in the public domain.
- Never breach data protection or give information which could identify someone else without their permission. Never post photographs without the subject's permission.
- Never post derogatory comments about colleagues, managers, the organisation, its business associates or clients.
- Never bad-mouth, defame, slander or libel individuals or organisations.
- Remember that once information is posted, you can never get it back, even if you later delete it.

6 Further information

If you have questions or require further guidance, please contact the Managing Director or one of the other Directors.