Social Media Policy and Procedures

Policy Aim

This policy aims to provide staff and volunteers at the Tarner community Project with safe and appropriate guidelines for the use of various online social media and online social networking sites to support their work. This policy will require user-participation in its development and improvement on a frequent basis to stay relevant as the world of Information and Communication Technology evolves.

1.   Social Media Policy Statement

1.1   Tarner community Project (TCP) acknowledges that Social Media has begun to play a major part in people's lives, whether they are residents we support or organisations we work with.

1.2   Communication with certain groups of people may be facilitated by the proper use of social media.

1.3   Social Media will not replace other forms of communication that the TCP uses as this may exclude many groups of people. It will be used to enhance the work that the TCP does.

1.4   This policy is intended to support workers to embrace Social Media at work but does ask workers to also consider best practice relating to personal usage of Social Media, without trying to be restrictive.

1.5   It is the duty of **all** staff to ensure that TCP volunteers are aware of our policy and follow its guidelines.

1.6   Social Media is potentially a very useful medium in promoting the profile of the TCP.

2.   Definitions

2.1   **Social Media –** Can be defined as web-based media which allows its users to enter a dialogue with each other. This can be through sharing of images or videos, sending messages to one another or writing articles which other users can alter or which allows others to post comments on. The term 'Social Media' can be used to describe online social networking activities.

2.2   **Blog –** Contraction of the term 'web log', a blog is a form of online journal with articles posted on particular subjects. **WordPress** is one of the most popular blog creation websites.

2.3   **Twitter & Instagram –** Micro-blogging services which allow users to provide 140-character updates. Users can 'follow' each other but unlike other social networks 'following' is not automatically reciprocal. Twitter & Instagram allow you to 'follow' a great many people/organisations who will be communicating about specific subjects regularly and as such is a good way of hearing about the latest information specific to your interest.

2.4   **Facebook –** A social network which allows users to present an online 'profile', form online groups and post media.

2.5 **YouTube –** Video-sharing network which allows users to upload and share video footage with others. 'Links' to these videos are then easily sharable through other mediums.

2.6 **SNS –** Social Networking Site(s), for example **Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn**.

2.7 **Wiki's –** For example **Wikipedia**, are collaborative websites that allow users to create, edit and link web pages easily. Can generate large bodies of information quickly which can subsequently evolve regularly.

2.8 **Instant messaging (IM) -** A type of communications where two people communicate privately in real-time over the Internet, like a telephone conversation but using text-based, not voice-based, communication.

3. Safe Usage

3.1 A request to develop a SNS or use social media should be discussed with the appropriate project manager so that the TCP may ensure that workers responsible for managing SNS are suitably skilled and familiar with this policy.

3.2 Establishing work-related profiles/groups/networks using Social Media will be subject to a risk assessment (example provided – see **Appendix 2**).

3.3 Service users should be informed of our Social Media Policy where appropriate/possible.

3.4 Any young people utilising SNS should be over the age of 13 as upheld by SNS providers.

3.5 Clear abuse reporting systems are outlined in **Section 7.**

3.6 Child and Vulnerable Adult policies and procedures still apply when communication is via web-based mediums.

3.7 Usage should be monitored by line-management on a regular basis to ensure that Social Media is being used appropriately and safely.

3.8 Where possible/appropriate training should be sought by workers and service users in online safety.

4. General Guidelines

4.1 Workers should add Social Media to their supervision topics to discuss any concern or training issue related to Social Media.

4.2 Workers may not engage in 'instant messaging' with members of communities the TCP works with, volunteers, young people or trustees etc through personal Pages as communications need to be recordable to support workers should any issues arise.

4.3 Workers will not access or use personal information gained through a connection on a SNS unless prior permission was given by the other party/parties.

4.4 Feedback from use of social media should be shared with colleagues at team meetings so that the policy can evolve with the technology.

4.5 Workers may not knowingly cause damage to TCP by releasing non-public information or proprietary information over SNS.

4.6 When blogging, the author is always accountable for what they write unless a manager has seen and agreed to the content before it is posted.

4.7 Photos and videos shared on SNS should not include images of young people without expressed consent from parents (for under 16's – over 16's can consent for themselves).

4.8 The 'tone of voice' when using SNS does not necessarily have to be formal, often a more personal approach works best when using SNS. However, care should be taken not to appear unprofessional, e.g. use of bad language.

4.9 If the TCP or groups TCP supports are criticised using SNS, discuss the best course of action with line-management before responding.

4.10 Consideration should be given to the frequency of updating Social Media/Networking Sites relative to each individual context. To ensure the most effective use of Social Media, efforts should be made to keep content current and engaging.

5.   Profiles
Personal profiles
5.1 Reasonable efforts should be made to keep personal SNS profiles separate from the working environment. If/where there is overlap (for whatever reason) workers have responsibility for managing those relationships so that no harm comes to TCP in terms of appearing unprofessional or bringing the TCP into disrepute etc, which may be deemed as misconduct.

5.2 Workers should not accept 'personal' friend requests from people they work with, especially children, or adults known to be vulnerable.

5.3 Workers should be mindful and not post professionally inappropriate content on their personal profiles **or** Workers should use relevant privacy settings to ensure that people in the professional environment cannot access it.

Public, work profiles
5.4 Workers are encouraged to use public profiles or groups to market events/projects or be a point of contact for service users over the internet.

5.5 All worker profiles and groups set up should be kept recorded by line-management, including login details.

5.6 Profiles should be set up using work email addresses where possible, and not a personal email address. Passwords should be the same as work email passwords so that access can be gained by the Administrator should this be necessary.

5.7 A worker should not share personal information on a work SNS profile e.g. date of birth.

5.8 Groups or profiles should include a clear message stating who the profile owner is, their affiliation, how to confirm their identity, and who to contact in the case of any concerns about their conduct or content. It is advised that the TCP website address is also published for these purposes.

5.9 Workers should not post any content on their profile which would be professionally inappropriate.

5.10 With permission, workers may use a SNS profile to contact service users with whom they have a direct professional relationship.

5.11 Workers should log significant/substantial contact with users where appropriate, i.e. where sensitive information was shared or abuse was posted.

5.12   If a programme/application which links to a SNS is deemed relevant to the work then it may be downloaded with the agreement of line management. Games or applications with attached costs shall not be downloaded or played on work SNS.

5.13   Where a profile is being used to contact people it is important that the messages are checked regularly/weekly. Where possible, notifications should be set up to be sent to the worker's email inbox. During periods of extended leave these notifications should be automatically forwarded to a colleague's email address.

5.14   When a worker leaves the TCP their profile should be deleted and their groups they manage should be transferred to a co-worker to manage.

5.15   If a group is set up by worker has finished its purpose it should be closed/deleted.

5.16   If an event/group page was started by a worker but a service user wishes to take it over (and this is deemed appropriate) the worker should provide guidance in line with this policy's recommendations for safe and proper usage (unless the service user is affiliated to an organisation with its own social media policy).

5.17   Workers should only use work-related SNS when in work time.

5.18   Avoid contact which could be seen as socialising or pestering, e.g. Contacting people at unusual hours.

5.19   Where appropriate workers should use their SNS to notify people if they are on annual leave or off on long-term sick leave.

5.20   A worker's profile picture/photo should be kept professionally appropriate.

5.21   Workers must take responsibility for altering privacy settings appropriately.

6.   Workers with Young People
6.1   A worker with young people's profile should include a disclaimer informing young people of who they are and brief confidentiality and information sharing guidelines.

6.2   Youth workers should make sure young people are aware that adding them as a contact/friend makes information on the young person's profile accessible to the worker. Workers should request that young people set up separate 'lists' (in Facebook) with limited profile access for people such as youth workers. This disclaimer could be sent back with a response to a 'friend request'.

6.3   Workers should make sure that any online discussions they host are free of bullying and/or abuse. This can be managed by regularly checking on SNS. Should forms of bullying/abuse occur, see guidelines listed in **Section 7** of this policy.

6.4   Young People under the age of 13 should not be accessing Twitter, Facebook or Instagram as these sites have a minimum age limit. This is not enshrined in law but it is part of the self-regulation guidelines.

6.5   Workers may only accept requests from people if they are satisfied that their identity is as presented.

7   Responding to abuse or bullying
7.1   For responding to an abusive comment/abusive online behaviour/bullying, see **Appendix 1**

7.2   If you feel someone has gained access to your Social Media space without consent firstly try to change the password (and inform line-management), remove any inappropriate content and discuss with line-management any further necessary actions.

7.3   Seek advice from other TCP policies such as the Child Protection Policy where necessary.

8.   Community Groups
8.1   Groups the TCP supports may use this policy for guidance on best practice regarding Social Media/Networking. However, if a group's functions include a relatively large amount of Social Media/Networking they should be encouraged to develop their own policy.

8.2   Where groups upload content to their respective sites the content's ownership remains with the original publisher. As such, reasonable efforts should be made to credit the content owners and allow for requests to alter it.

8.3   As with other community group activities, community development workers should support the groups themselves to administrate their own sites/networks. Workers should signpost group members to relevant training where appropriate.

9.   Use of the Complaints Procedure
9.1   If a service user feels the need to complain about the TCP processes with regards to our management of a Social Media/Networking issue, staff should ensure that the Complaints Procedure is explained to service users and parents/carers where possible/appropriate.

Revised and updated: Nov 2019

Date of next review: Nov 2020