



**CORPORATE**

**POLICY FOR USING & PARTICIPATING IN**

**SOCIAL MEDIA**

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

**Social media** is the term commonly given to web-based tools which allow users to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests online. As the name implies, social media involves the building of online communities or networks to encourage participation and engagement.

This includes blogs, message boards, social networking websites (such as [facebook](#), [twitter](#), [bebo](#), [MySpace](#)), content sharing websites (such as [flickr](#), [YouTube](#)) and many other similar online channels.

This policy sets out principles and highlights the expectations for WEF employees relating to using social media.

## **2.0 PRINCIPLES & EXPECTATIONS**

**2.1 Adhere to WEF Employee Code of Conduct & other related policies.** All WEF employees are subject to this Code which sets out the minimum standards that apply. In addition, other policies, including those listed below; govern employee behaviour with respect to the disclosure of information online, including personal activities. All WEF employees should make sure that they are familiar with these policies:

[Using County Council Websites and the Internet](#)

[Private Use of ICT](#)

[Social Media and Online Participation Policy and Guidelines](#)

[Information Security](#)

[Personal Information Security Policy](#)

[WEF Conduct Policy](#)

### **2.2 An employee is responsible for their own actions.**

Anything an employee posts online can potentially affect the reputation of the WEF and is ultimately the responsibility of the employee. The WEF encourages business use of the WEF website and the wider internet to help the WEF improve its efficiency, effectiveness and management of information but employees must do so properly, exercising sound judgement and common sense.

### **2.3 Be aware that business and personal lives do overlap.**

Online, an employee's personal and business lives are likely to overlap. Whilst WEF respects the free speech rights of its employees, it is important to remember that information/comments posted online originally intended just for friends and family can be forwarded on and might be viewed by parents, colleagues and/or management, or other outside agencies.



Participation in public forums must be professional, must not adversely affect WEF reputation, customer relations or public image and must not bring the WEF into disrepute. This duty extends to an employee's off-duty time.

When an employee participates in a public forum as part of their job they should specify their job title.

When an employee participates in a public forum as a private individual they must make that clear and only use their private e-mail address.

#### **2.4 Consider carefully anything that you say.**

Employees are personally responsible for their words and actions. An employee must ensure that any information posted is not confidential and gives a balanced view. An employee must not make any derogatory, untrue or discriminating comments about WEF, its employees or the WEF, or any comments that are likely to bring the WEF into disrepute. Employees should also not canvass members of the public or interest groups via the internet or any other social media.

Be aware that whilst there may be no intention to be detrimental to the WEF, the end result could be that it is damaging the WEF reputation.

Confidential information, including information which is available to an employee due to the nature of their job, but is not in the public domain, should not be disclosed unless specific permission has been granted to do so.

**If there is any doubt, do not post it.**

#### **2.5 Do not respond to negative comments posted online.**

If negative or disparaging comments about the WEF are posted online or third parties try to spark negative conversations, a WEF employee must not respond and should bring this to the attention of their manager/Head teacher.

#### **2.6 Know that the Internet is permanent.**

As soon as information is published online, it is essentially part of a permanent record, even if it is removed or deleted later or attempts are made to make it anonymous. Information can be disseminated very quickly via social media and is virtually impossible to retract once it has been published; even if it has been online for only a short time, it may well have been picked up and cached by computers around the world.

### **3.0 Standards of behaviour**

WEF is committed to making the best use of all available technology and innovation to improve the way it does business. However, employees must use all forms of social media with extreme care, together with sound judgement and common sense.

Failure to adhere to this policy and those policies listed at paragraph 1 may result in formal action within the WEF Conduct Policy.

### **4.0 Further Advice**

Further information can be obtained by contacting the HR Helpdesk at [hrsshelp@devon.gov.uk](mailto:hrsshelp@devon.gov.uk). For information and advice on the practical use of social media, contact Corporate Communications at [communications@devon.gov.uk](mailto:communications@devon.gov.uk) or the Enterprise Architecture Team at [ideas@devon.gov.uk](mailto:ideas@devon.gov.uk).