

HUMAN RESOURCES

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS (EqIAA)

INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

Name of Function under consideration:	Social Media Policy
Date(s) of completing the EqIAA:	16 November 2012
Name and job title(s) of person(s) completing the EqIAA:	Emma Ford, HR Advisor – Engagement and Equalities

SECTION 1 – IMPACT AND ANALYSIS

1. Considering all aspects of this Function, state what issues have an impact on equalities and why.

Social media is one of the many ways that South Gloucestershire Council communicates with residents, staff and partners. The policy covers the use of social media, including Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and other internet based forums, blogs and emails.

The aims of the policy are to protect the council's reputation and its employees.

High standards of behaviour are required from employees and misuse of social media may be dealt with in conjunction with other policies e.g. Managing Employee Performance, bullying and harassment and grievance policies, ITC User Guide and IT Security policy, and the Code of Conduct.

The policy and guide will be regularly reviewed by the Head of HR.

The policy and guidance notes are available electronically from the council's HR intranet site (MyHR) and in printed format. The Employee Relations team will produce the policy in an accessible format in accordance to the RNIB's Clearprint Guidelines and different formats will be provided on request e.g. Braille, audio tape, large print, easy read, languages other than English etc.

All council employees are protected by this policy. It will have a positive impact on all people with a protected characteristic as it promotes equality through good practice.

The policy does not restrict freedom of speech but it does make people aware of the risks of sharing information about themselves, colleagues or the council on the internet.

A potential barrier is that many employees do not have IT access as part of their job. This will be overcome by informing managers about the policy through the HR management circular which they are expected to share with all staff.

External groups will benefit from this policy as social media creates a new communication method and enables the council to reach new customers. This will help to increase awareness of council services and improve customer satisfaction.

Social media tools may not be accessible to everyone, for example, screen reader software used by a person with a visual impairment may not be compatible. This would cause a negative impact. All posts will be in English which could impact negatively on people whose first language is not English. Therefore, social media must not be used as the sole method of communicating.

2. What data does the council have internally that links to this Function and what does it tell us about equalities impact?

The use of social media is not widely used by employees in the workplace currently and so there is no data available that provides any evidence of equality impact. As social media becomes more commonplace for council employees as a work communication method we will be able to identify any equalities impact and take action if necessary to remove barriers to any protected groups.

3. Where appropriate, what consultation has been conducted in relation to this Function and what evidence has this provided about equalities impact?

Consultation has been conducted with Trade Unions, HR Management Team, IT professionals, Strategic Communications team, HR and legal professionals, the council's Safeguarding Development Manager. Methods of consultation used include meetings, email and information from HR casework reports.

The consultation did not provide any evidence about equalities impact.

4. What relevant external research (data, reports, expert opinion, legislation etc.) has been considered and what evidence has this provided about equalities impact?

Sources of information considered in the writing of this policy are:

- Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) - 'Social media and its impact on employers and trade unions' Sept 2011 and 'Workplaces and Social Networking the Implications for Employment Relations' Sept 2011
- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) – example policy
- hrmagazine.co.uk – article by David Woods on 08/08/12 and various others
- Strategic Communications team – produced guidance regarding webpages and numerous discussions held
- Legal Services – professional advice provided
- Safeguarding Development Manager – email to confirm the policy meets the appropriate standards

This information was used to ensure that the policy and guidance meet required standards by protecting all employees and the council's reputation. No equalities impact was identified.

5. Any other relevant notes?

None.

SECTION 2 – OUTCOMES

6. The evidence that has been collected under Section 1 of this form will need to feed into the decision making process regarding any changes to be implemented before any final decisions are taken. There are four possible outcomes of this EqIAA – indicate which outcome below with the reasons and justification for this.

Outcome	Response	Reason(s) and Justification
Outcome 1: No major change required.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>This EqIAA has identified that the policy document itself needs to be formatted to make it more accessible.</p> <p>Social media will present some barriers e.g. people who use assistive technology that is not compatible but it will not be used as the only form of communication.</p> <p>The policy promotes good practice and so will protect all equalities groups from bullying, harassment and victimisation.</p>
Outcome 2: Adjustments to remove barriers or to better promote equality have been identified.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Outcome 3: Continue despite having identified potential for adverse impact or missed opportunities to promote equality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Outcome 4: Stop and rethink.	<input type="checkbox"/>	

7. List the actions you will take as a result of this EqIAA.

The Employee Relations Team's minimum standard is to produce documents that meet the standards of the RNIB. The policy and guidance will be reviewed to check this. Whenever necessary the team will provide the document in alternative formats to meet individual needs.

It will be considered if a statement should be included to explain that the document can be provided in different formats.

The policy and guidance will be reviewed annually and if any equalities impacts are identified actions will be taken to remove barriers if possible.

SECTION 3 – EqIAA EVIDENCE

8. List and attach the evidence you have which shows how you have systematically considered equality impact.

HR/Trade Union meeting minutes

HR Strategy Group email

ITC email and meeting

Strategic Communications input into policy document

HR colleagues – provided info re casework in email format

Safeguarding Development Manager provided email feedback

Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) reports: 'Social media and its impact on employers and trade unions' Sept 2011 and 'Workplaces and Social Networking the Implications for Employment Relations' Sept 2011

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) example policy

hmagazine.co.uk – article by David Woods on 08/08/12 and various others

Legal Services – professional advice provided

RNIB's Clearprint guidelines

Strategic Communication's Communication Toolkit including advice on plain English.

These pieces of evidence are saved securely on the HR electronic directory and can be produced on request.