

Social Networking Sites and Blogs Policy



What this policy covers

This policy sets out the NPC's position on employees' use of social networking sites and blogs, whether conducted on NPC media and in work time or your own private media in your own time.

Your responsibilities

Social networking sites and blogs offer a useful means of keeping in touch with friends and colleagues, and they can be used to exchange views and thoughts on shared interests, both personal and work-related.

The NPC does not object to you setting up personal accounts on social networking sites or blogs on the internet, in your own time and using your own computer systems. However, you must not do so on NPC media or in work time.

You must not link your personal social networking accounts or blogs to the NPC's website. Any such links require the NPC's prior consent.

You must not disclose NPC secrets, breach copyright, defame the NPC or its clients, suppliers, customers or employees, or disclose personal data or information about any individual employee, colleague, or worker on your blog or on your social networking site.

Social networking site posts or blogs should not be insulting or abusive to employees, suppliers, NPC contacts, clients or customers.

Compliance with related policies

Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of the NPC's other policies. If an internet post would breach any of our policies in another forum, it will also breach them in an online forum.

For example, you are prohibited from using social media to:

- breach our Computers and Electronic Communications Systems Policy;
- breach our obligations with respect to the rules of relevant regulatory bodies;
- breach any obligations contained in those policies relating to confidentiality;
- breach our Disciplinary Policy or procedures;
- harass or bully other staff in any way OR breach our Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy;
- unlawfully discriminate against other staff or third parties OR breach our Equal Opportunities Policy;
- breach our Data Protection Policy (for example, never disclose personal information about a colleague online); or
- breach any other laws or regulatory requirements.

Staff should never provide references for other individuals on social or professional networking sites, as such references, positive and negative, can be attributed to the organisation and create legal liability for both the author of the reference and the NPC.

References to the NPC

If reference is made to your employment or to the NPC, you should state to the reader that the views that you express are your views only and that they do not reflect the views of the NPC. You should include a notice such as the following:

'The views expressed on this website/blog are mine alone and do not reflect the views of my employer'

You should always be conscious of your duty as an employee to act in good faith and in the best interests of the NPC under UK law. The NPC will not tolerate criticisms posted in messages in the public domain or on blogs about the NPC or any other person connected to the NPC.

You must not bring the NPC into disrepute through the content of your website entries or your blogs.

Any misuse of social networking sites or blogs as mentioned above may be regarded as a disciplinary offence and may result in dismissal without notice.

You should be aware that any information contained in social networking sites may be used in evidence, if relevant, to any disciplinary proceedings.

Business Use of Social Media

If your job duties require you to speak on behalf of the NPC in an online social media environment, you must still seek approval for such communication from your manager, who may require you to have training before you are permitted to participate in social media on behalf of the NPC.

Similarly, if you are invited to comment about the NPC for publication anywhere, including in any social media outlet, you should inform your manager and you must not respond without prior written approval.

If you disclose your affiliation with the NPC on your business profile or in any social media postings, you must state that your views do not represent those of your employer, unless you are authorised to speak on our behalf. You should also ensure that your profile and any content you post are consistent with the professional image you present to clients and colleagues.

Third parties

You must not disclose any information that is confidential or proprietary to the NPC or to any third party that has disclosed information to the NPC.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the NPC's policies on Computers and Electronic Communications and Monitoring.

Confidential Information and Intellectual Property

You must not post comments about sensitive business-related topics, such as the NPC's performance, or do anything to jeopardise trade secrets, confidential information and intellectual property. You must not include the NPC's branding, logos or other trademarks in any social media posting or in your profile on any social media platform.

You are not permitted to add business contacts made during the course of your employment to personal social networking accounts.

Details of business contacts made during the course of your employment are regarded as NPC confidential information, and are the property of the NPC. This includes information contained in databases such as address lists contained in Outlook, or business and contacts lists created and held on any electronic or social media format, including but not limited to LinkedIn and Facebook.

On termination of employment you must provide the NPC with a copy of all such information, surrender or delete all such information from your personal social networking accounts, and destroy any further copies of such information that you may have.

Updating your LinkedIn profile to refer to your new employer and setting up your account to ensure that your contacts receive notification of this will be regarded as an act of unlawful solicitation and/or an unlawful attempt to deal with customers, employees, and business contacts of the NPC and may result in civil proceedings being brought against you.

Monitoring

The NPC reserves the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, staff activities using our IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities, to ensure that our rules are being complied with and for legitimate business purposes and you consent to such monitoring by your use of such resources and systems.

Procedure

Breaches of this policy will be dealt with under the NPC's Disciplinary Procedure. You should be aware that the NPC regards breach of any part of this policy as gross misconduct that may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal without notice.

If you become aware of information relating to the NPC posted on the internet, you should bring this to the attention of your manager.