

Background

The dawn of social media has allowed people to communicate with each other in online environments. This allows them to share interests, information or friends (e.g. Facebook and MySpace). Social media is now frequently utilised by businesses and government organisations to promote their messages, events and products, depending on the rules of the particular social media tool.

Social media tools include:

- i. social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace
- ii. video and photo sharing websites like Flickr and YouTube
- iii. micro-blogging sites like Twitter
- iv. weblogs, including personal blogs or blogs hosted by traditional media publications
- v. forums and discussion boards such as Whirlpool, Yahoo!, Groups or Google groups
- vi. online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia
- vii. web sites that allow individual users or companies to use publishing tools e.g. comments on news sites.

Greater Hume Children Services and individual educators registered with the scheme can use social media and the internet to promote their individual service, the scheme as a whole and to share information with families in accordance with this policy.

Websites and social media sites can provide information to potential clients to assist them to find a service to best meet their needs.

Social media also allows Educators to share information with existing families on the operation of the service, recognising they can do this in their own time fitting in with busy lives and helping to build partnerships.

The scheme also encourages training and reflective practice for busy and sometimes isolated Educators which can also be facilitated through internet opportunities such as weblogs, forums, discussion boards and social media.

Purpose

The policy will guide Educators and staff in the safe and ethical use of all internet and social networking sites for both professional and private use.

The Policy does NOT apply to personal use. For personal use no references or inferences should be made about members or stakeholders and Greater Hume Children Services.

Scope

Coordination unit staff, Educators, Relief Educators, volunteers, children, parents and guardians.

Definitions

Blogging: means the act of using web log or 'blog'. 'Blog' is an abbreviated version of 'weblog' which is a term used to describe websites that maintain an ongoing chronicle of information. A blog is frequently updated website featuring diary style commentary, audio-visual material and links to articles on other websites.

Intellectual Property: means all forms of intellectual property rights throughout the world including copyright, patent, design, trade mark, trade names, and all confidential information and including know-how and trade secrets.

Social networking site: means Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, YouTube and other similar sites.

Policy Content

A staff member or Educators access to, and use of the above tools outside the course of employment is a private matter, however issues may arise where Greater Hume Children Services is mentioned on-line or where it is possible to link staff and Educators to the scheme.

In such cases, the following rules apply:

- i. professional and personal issues are separated so they do not compromise the interests and reputation of Greater Hume Children Services
- ii. Greater Hume Children Services endorsement of personal views is not implied
- iii. staff and Educators of Greater Hume Children Services are aware and obey the laws covering libel, defamation, privacy and the protection of intellectual property
- iv. staff and Greater Hume Children Services Educators are familiar with the scheme Staffing and Code of Conduct Policy which adopts the Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics and for staff, Greater Hume Children Services Code of Conduct requirements.

Activities on social media may be subject to the requirements of the Greater Hume Shire Council Model Code of Conduct.

Staff and Educators of Greater Hume Children Services who are identified as an employee of Greater Hume Shire or a registered Educator with the service, and post comments or pictures on social media that negatively impact Greater Hume Children Services reputation or brand and who can be identified as a employee of Greater Hume Shire or registered Educator, may be subject to disciplinary action.

Greater Hume Children Services use of social media and internet

The use of social media or internet by Greater Hume Children Services to achieve its aims will be overseen by the Service Manager.

This role will be responsible for delegating authority to a restricted number of social media administrators within the scheme and will be guided by the policies and procedures of the Greater Hume Shire Council.

Educator's use of Social Media and internet

Educators of Greater Hume Children Services are required to consult with and gain permission from the Greater Hume Children Services Manager prior to the setup of social media networks, unless strictly for personal use. Educators must first gain permission and consult with parents and guardians with regard to the ongoing use of social media and internet sites for any child or family in the service.

Educators and stakeholders who are given access to protected areas of the Greater Hume Children Services website must respect the intellectual property of materials and must not copy or reproduce for unintended purposes.

Personal Use of social media sites - general guidelines

Greater Hume Children Services recognises that staff and Educators may wish to use social media in their personal lives. The policy does not intend to discourage nor unduly limit personal expression or online activities. However, users should recognise the potential for damage to be caused (either directly or indirectly) to the Greater Hume Children Services in certain circumstances via personal use of social media when the user can be identified as a Greater Hume Children Services representative. Accordingly, users should comply with this policy to ensure that the risk of such damage is minimised. Users are personally responsible for the content published in a personal capacity on any form of social media platform.

It is important that staff and Educators note the following issues:

- i. blog comments remain permanently accessible. Tracking tools can identify the contents of a website at a particular date and via ISP addresses, even if the contents are later deleted
- ii. a search of an organisation's name will produce a full list of any blogged comments about that organisation, so that anyone with internet access can find them
- iii. similarly, a search using an email address or individual name will produce a full list of comments and other material made from that address or attributed to that individual
- iv. personal revelations and comments, embarrassing photos, etc. that are accessible to current and prospective clients or employers may be detrimental to a person's reputation, depending on the context
- v. be aware of privacy settings and preferences to restrict access to content
- vi. that they seek permission to use photographs for publicity or for use on social media pages where those images contain image(s) of adults/children and such permission be obtained in writing.

Records Management

Material published on Greater Hume Children Services official social media sites must be recorded and stored in compliance with Greater Hume Shire policies and procedures.

The particular social media administrator is responsible for the identification of record material and the proper archiving of that material in accordance with governance and management of the service, including Confidentiality of Records Policy.

Non Compliance Statement

Non-compliance with this Social Media and Internet Use Policy may have the potential to damage the reputation, image, competitive or financial position of Greater Hume Children Services, and consequently, may result in disciplinary action.

Links to Policy

Greater Hume Shire Media Policy

Greater Hume Shire Records Management Policy

Greater Hume Shire Code of Conduct

Greater Hume Shire Computer and Internet Use Policy

Greater Hume Shire Disciplinary Action Policy

Staffing Policy Code of Conduct Determining the Responsible Person Present and Participation of Volunteers and Students (GHCS.GOV.POL.010.1)

Governance and Management of the Service, including confidentiality of Records Policy (GHCS.GOV.POL.012.1)

Monitoring Support and Supervision of Family Day Care Educators (GHCS.GOV.POL.019.1)

Links to Procedures

Social Media and Internet Procedure (GHCS.GOV.PROC.021.1)

Code of Conduct Procedure Including Determining the Responsible Person Present and Participation of Volunteers and Students (GHCS.GOV.PROC.010.1)

References

Responsibility

Service Manager

Relevant Legislation

Privacy & Personal Information Protection Act 1998

Associated Records

Document Control

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