

Employee Code of Conduct – Proposed Amendment to Social Media Guidance

Committee Personnel

Date of meeting 9 February 2018

Date of report 11 January 2018

Report by Assistant Chief Executive (Business Support)

1. Object of report

To recommend the Committee approve the attached updated Social Media Guidance, which forms part of the SPT Employee Code of Conduct.

2. Background

SPT has previously approved and issued to all staff an Employee Code of Conduct. This document outlines the basic standards expected of all SPT staff and failure to adhere to these standards can lead to disciplinary action.

In 2015, the Code of Conduct was amended to include specific guidance on the use of social media. The inclusion of this guidance was welcomed by the respective unions.

3. Current Proposals

The 2015 guidance has been reviewed and is considered in need of updating again to take account of the fast-moving environment and significantly increased usage of social media.

Attached is the revised Appendix. The main changes are:

- A change to the definition of “social media” to include new platforms;
- An updated definition of “social networks” to reflect current practices; and
- An update to the “best practice” section.

SPT has also recently conducted training and briefing sessions on what social media is, and the associated dangers that can arise in the workplace. A rollout of these briefing sessions will continue this year.

4. Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to approve the revised Social Media Guidance for inclusion within the Code of Conduct, and that the updated document will now be issued to the respective unions for consultation.

5. Consequences

Policy consequences	<i>None directly.</i>
Legal consequences	<i>None directly.</i>
Financial consequences	<i>None directly.</i>
Personnel consequences	<i>Revised guidance will be issued to all staff.</i>
Equalities consequences	<i>None directly.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>None directly.</i>

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SPT Social Media Employee Guidance

January 2018

This guidance note should be read in conjunction with Appendix C of the Staff Code of Conduct. Its purpose is to provide additional information which staff many find helpful.

Social Media Best Practice

What is social media?

Social media includes social platforms and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking i.e., Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Google+ and Foursquare, along with photo and video sharing sites like Instagram, WhatsApp, Vine, Flickr, Tumbler and Pinterest. This list is not exhaustive as new apps appear frequently.

What are social networks?

A social networking service is an online service, platform, or site that focuses on building and reflecting of social networks or social relations among people, who, for example, share interests and/or activities. A social network service consists of a representation of each user (often a profile), his/her social links, and a variety of additional services. Most social network services are web-based and provide means for users to interact over the internet, such as email and instant messaging. Social networking sites allow users to share ideas, activities, events, and interests within their individual networks.

What are blogs?

Short for “Web log,” a site that allows an individual or group of individuals to share a running log of events and personal insights with online audiences. In short, a diary which can be publicly viewed.

Best practice

Both blogs and social networking are a common way to communicate. However, when someone clearly identifies their association with SPT and/or discusses their work, they are expected to behave appropriately when on the Internet, and in ways that are consistent with SPT policy.

The best practice outlined below will help employees when participating in social media – in particular through blogs and the social networks mentioned above.

The internet is a fast moving technology and it is impossible to cover all circumstances. However, the principles set out in this document should always be followed when identified as an SPT employee:

- must not engage in activities on the internet which might bring SPT into disrepute;
- must not use the internet in any way to attack or abuse colleagues;
- must not post derogatory or offensive comments on their own page or someone else's;

- must not reference SPT in any form without prior permission from their line manager, including posting images or sensitive information about SPT; and
- must act in a transparent manner when altering online sources of information.

Best practice to safeguard against this would be to **not reveal SPT as your place of work.**

During working hours, all SPT employees are not allowed to access social media sites unless their role permits it. Staff can browse social media sites during lunch breaks on their own devices, i.e. via mobile phone or tablet, following SPT's Internet Policy. Failure to follow this guidance may lead to disciplinary action.

Any online activities associated with work for SPT should be discussed and approved in advance by a line manager and staff should also use a disclaimer if publishing a blog, post a comment, referencing SPT in any way or sharing an image that has something to do with the work they do at SPT.

This means that whether publishing a blog or participating in someone else's, it is made clear that what is said is representative of the individual's views and opinions and not necessarily the views and opinions of SPT. At a minimum, an employee's social media page should include the following standard legal disclaimer language:

The postings on this site are my own and do not represent SPT's positions, strategies or opinions.

or

DISCLAIMER: This is a personal web site, produced in my own time and solely reflecting my personal opinions. Statements on this site do not represent the views or policies of my employer, past or present, or any other organisation with which I may be affiliated.

Bear in mind that when posting a comment on someone else's page or Twitter feed that it can be traced back to you regardless of whether your page is private or not.

Note to Managers and Supervisors – this standard disclaimer does not by itself exempt SPT managers and supervisors from a special responsibility when using social media. By virtue of their position, managers and supervisors must consider whether personal thoughts they publish may be misunderstood as expressing SPT positions. A manager should assume that his or her team will read what is written. Social media is not the place to communicate SPT policies to employees nor to announce company news. Do not cite or reference clients, partners or suppliers without their approval. When the company wishes to communicate publicly – whether to the marketplace or to the general public – it has well-established processes to do so. Only those officially designated by SPT have the authorisation to speak on behalf of the company.

Consideration towards members of staff when using social networking sites

Social networking sites allow photographs, videos and comments to be shared with thousands of other users. However, staff should be aware that it may not be appropriate to share work-related information in this way. For example, there may be an expectation that photographs taken on SPT property or at a private SPT event will not appear publicly on the internet, both from those present and perhaps those not at the event. Or SPT may have objections. Staff should be considerate to their colleague in such circumstance and should not post information when they have been asked not to. They should also remove information about a colleague if that colleague asks them to do so.

Under no circumstance should offensive comments be made about SPT colleagues on the internet. This may amount to cyber-bullying and could be deemed a disciplinary offence.

Open access online encyclopaedias

In the course of SPT work, staff may find errors in online encyclopaedias. If staff members edit online encyclopaedias at work, the source of the correction will be recorded as a SPT IP address and the intervention may therefore look as if it comes from SPT itself. SPT staff should therefore act in a manner that does not bring SPT into disrepute and should not post derogatory or offensive comments on any online encyclopaedias.