

Social media guidance for social service workers

Many of us use social media to communicate with others both personally and in our working lives. It helps us to connect with people with shared interests, keep in touch with friends and colleagues and more and more we use social media in our working lives too. It is a great way to bring together groups of people working on the same project, for example, and to share views and opinions.

While there are many benefits in using social media, it is important that you use it within the standards set for social service workers in Scotland. This guidance helps you to identify potential risks in your personal use of social media.

What do we mean by social media?

For the purpose of this guidance, social media means the online platforms you use to engage – to create relationships, have conversations and communicate with others. It's the content that you upload to platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, WhatsApp, Snapchat etc. It could be posting a comment, video or photograph or replying to other people's posts or a blog, video, podcast, for example.

The SSSC Codes of Practice

Please read this guidance alongside the [**SSSC Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers**](#).

As a registered worker, you must work to the **SSSC Code of Practice for Social Service Workers** (the Code) and follow the same standards with your online presence as you would in any aspect of your life.

The same professional expectations and guidelines apply online as in the real world. Here are some examples from the Code that are relevant and there may be more.

- I will respect and maintain the dignity and privacy of people who use services.
- I will be truthful, open, honest and trustworthy.
- I will communicate in an appropriate, open, accurate and straightforward way.
- As a social service worker, I must uphold public trust and confidence in social services.
- I will respect confidential information and clearly explain my employer's policies about confidentiality to people who use services and carers.
- I will not abuse, neglect or harm people who use services, carers or my colleagues.

- I will not abuse the trust of people who use services or carers, or the access I have to personal information about them or their property, home or workplace.
- I will not form inappropriate relationships with people who use services or carers.
- I will not behave, while in or outside work, in a way which would bring my suitability to work in social services into question.

Sharing information

When you post information online think about whether it is something you should be sharing. If the information is confidential and is about a person who uses social services, their family or carers, don't share it online. Nor should you post any information or views that reflect negatively on you, your employer or the social service profession.

Maintaining boundaries

Using social media can create risks, particularly where personal and professional boundaries become unclear.

Think carefully before accepting friend requests from people who use your service. If you only know someone because they use your service you shouldn't become friends with them.

If a person who uses your service, their family or carer contacts you about their care or other professional matters through your private profile tell them that you cannot mix social and professional relationships.

Do not use social media to discuss people who use social services or their care with them or anyone else.

Protect yourself

Other people can easily find and see your personal information and profiles as well as the posts on your social media. Think about how accessible you are online. For example, you can limit who can read your posts and turn off the ability for your profile to appear in online searches. You can also make some accounts private like Instagram and Twitter.

However, social media sites do not guarantee confidentiality whatever privacy settings are in place. Remember to update your privacy settings regularly.

But above all, remember that everything you post online is public. People can easily find, copy and share your posts without you knowing. Everything you post online can be traced back to you and there is a permanent record, even after deleting it.