

Huntingdonshire District Council Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)



Service area	Human Resources
Date of assessment	August 2015
Name of Policy to be assessed	Social Media, Networking and Blog Policy
Is this a new or existing Policy?	New Policy
Name of manager responsible for Policy	HR Business Partner (LGSS)
Names of people conducting the assessment	Lisa Morris
Step 1 – Description of Policy	
Describe the aims; objectives and purpose of the Policy (include how it fits in to wider aims or strategic objectives).	<p>This Policy outlines the Council's approach to blogs and details the ground rules for employees who should ensure that the content of blogs / social networking sites does not bring the Council into disrepute or breach their obligations under the Code of Conduct as employees of the Council.</p> <p>This Policy is specifically in relation to personal use of Social Media whether during office hours or personal time. HDC has a separate Policy (Social Media Policy) for the use of Social Media for professional/work related issues, on sites owned and managed by the Council as well as sites that are run in partnership with other organisations, for further information on this please contact the Corporate Team.</p>
<p>The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, the Council also needs to demonstrate its compliance with the Equality Duty. The Council therefore needs to understand how its decisions and activities impact on different people, specifically employees and how they are affected by policies and practices. An Equality Impact Assessment is the current method by which the Council can assess and keep a record of the impact of new or amended strategies, policies, functions or services. The council retains these duties even when outsourcing services or providing shared services.</p>	

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<p><i>Definition of Adverse Impact - occurs when a decision, practice, or Policy has a disproportionately negative effect on a protected group. Adverse Impact may be unintentional</i></p> <p>Adverse impact can be measured statistically:</p>	
<p>Are there any (existing) equality objectives of the Policy</p>	<p>None – new Policy</p>
<p>Who is intended to benefit from the Policy and in what way?</p>	<p>This Policy applies to all those employed on Huntingdonshire District Council’s terms and conditions of employment. Volunteers, contractors and Members are required to adhere to the requirements in this Policy.</p>
<p>What are the intended outcomes of this Policy?</p>	<p>HDC recognises that blogs and social networking sites provide a useful tool for communication, and therefore does not restrict access to these sites.</p> <p>The main purpose of the Social Media, Networking and Blog Policy is to clarify to employees how they should conduct themselves when using all forms of social media sites. It provides guidance to employees on how to minimise the of unintentionally placing themselves at risk when using social media e.g. bringing the Council into disrepute, or causing damage to professional relationships with colleagues and service users or breaching any obligations under the Code of Conduct as employees of the Council. The ground rules of the Policy enable employees to use social networking sites whilst ensuring they are aware of their responsibilities.</p>

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Step 2 – Data	
What baseline quantitative data (statistics) do you have about the Policy relating to equalities groups (e.g. monitoring data on proportions of service users compared to proportions in the population), relevant to this Policy? Huntingdonshire Statistics	Information about equality groups and use of social media not available
What qualitative data (opinions etc) do you have on different groups (e.g. comments from previous consumer satisfaction surveys/consultation, feedback exercises, or evidence from other authorities undertaking similar work), relevant to this Policy?	The Policy has had input through employee focus groups, from Staff Council, Joint Liaison Group and Senior Management Team to get the correct balance to meet the needs of the differing services. No previous disciplinary cases involved the use of social media
The Consultation and Engagement Strategy Accessibility Guidance may be helpful when thinking about the potential impact of a Policy on people with different protected characteristics.	
Are there concerns that the Policy could have a differential impact on different racial groups ; this refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins. Gypsy/Travellers are distinct group within this category. What evidence do you have for your answer?	Neutral as it is expected that all groups of employees would use social media
Are there concerns that the Policy could have a differential impact on younger or older people ? For some services this should include consideration of impact in terms of safeguarding young people. What evidence do you have for your answer?	Although it is expected that all groups of employees would use social media, in general terms the use of social media is often associated with younger people, but uptake is actually evolving and developing.
Are there concerns that the Policy could have a differential impact on gender, including transgender people ?	Neutral as it is expected that all groups of employees would use social media

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What evidence do you have for your answer?	
Are there concerns that the Policy could have a differential impact on part time/full time employees? What evidence do you have for your answer?	Neutral as it is expected that all groups of employees would use social media
Are there concerns that the Policy could have a differential impact on disabled people ? What evidence do you have for your answer?	Although it is expected that all groups of employees would use social media access to the Policy for employees who have a visual or hearing impairment has been considered. Any barriers could be overcome through reasonable adjustments i.e. adaptive computer software, or the document being available in a Word format allowing the employee to adjust size, font and colour as required.
Are there concerns that the Policy could have a differential impact in terms of marriage and civil partnership	Neutral as it is expected that all groups of employees would use social media
Are there concerns that the Policy could have a differential impact in terms of pregnancy and maternity (e.g. pregnant or breast feeding women)	Neutral as it is expected that all groups of employees would use social media
Are there concerns that the Policy could have a differential impact on lesbian, gay man, bisexual or heterosexual (straight) people ? What evidence do you have for your answer?	Neutral as it is expected that all groups of employees would use social media
Are there concerns that the Policy could have a differential impact on grounds of religion or belief ? What evidence do you have for your answer?	Neutral as it is expected that all groups of employees would use social media
Are there concerns that the Policy could have a differential impact in terms of specific characteristics of Huntingdonshire e.g. Rural isolation	Neutral as it is expected that all groups of employees would use social media



Findings

No adverse impact or discrimination has been identified. The Policy is not intended to restrict employees from using social media sites, but to make them aware of the risks they could potentially face when sharing information about their professional and personal life.

Recommendations

- The Social Media, Networking and Blog Policy will be launched to all staff through (Management Team, Key Issues). Managers will be responsible for raising awareness of the Policy with their employees. The potential barrier of using Key Issues and the Intranet is for those employees without access to email or the Intranet. This could be overcome by ensuring managers are made aware of the importance of the need to inform all employees about the Policy and making sure a paper copy is available for employees without access to the Intranet/Internet. For employees who have a visual or hearing impairment, this could be overcome through reasonable adjustments i.e. adaptive computer software, or the document being available in a Word format allowing the employee to adjust size, font and colour as required.
- The Social Media, Networking and Blog Policy will be monitored to ensure it is working effectively. Disciplinary cases will be monitored by HR where any conflict with social media occurs. This will allow the Council to establish the number of cases in each Service and the types of situations occurring so that appropriate action can be taken where needed and learning shared.