



## **E-mail and Internet use policy**

### **Introduction**

Childhood First encourages its employees to use e-mail and the internet at work where this can save time and expense. However, it requires that employees follow the rules below. It is a term of each employee's contract that they comply with these rules, and any serious breach could lead to dismissal. Any employee who is unsure about whether or not something they propose to do might breach this e-mail and internet policy should seek advice from their line manager.

Although Childhood First encourages the use of e-mail and the internet where appropriate, their use entails some risks. For example, employees must take care not to introduce viruses to the system and must take proper account of the security advice below. Employees must also ensure that they do not send untrue statements about others in e-mails as the Charity could face legal action for libel and be liable for damages.

These rules are designed to minimise the legal risks to the Charity when its employees use e-mail at work and access the internet. Where something is not specifically covered in this policy, employees should seek advice from their line manager.

Technology and the law change regularly and this policy will be updated to account for changes as and when necessary. Employees will be informed when the policy has changed, but it is their responsibility to read the latest version of this document.

### **E-mail and internet use for work purposes**

Many employees will be required to use e-mail and the internet regularly for work purposes. This is clearly acceptable when it is fulfilling work duties. However, it is important that employees are mindful of the need to use e-mail and the internet appropriately. In particular:

- No obscene or offensive language should ever be used in e-mails;
- E-mails of a discriminatory, derogatory or defamatory nature must never be sent;
- E-mail must never be used as a form of communication which could cause harassment or be abusive to someone;
- E-mails should not be copied to people inappropriately;
- If an employee receives an offensive e-mail this should be reported to his/her line manager. It should not be passed on to other employees;
- Internet sites should only be accessed if they are appropriate to the work that is being carried out;
- E-mail content and language should remain consistent with the Charity's best practice;
- E-mail messages should be remain concise and appropriate.

If you do use e-mail inappropriately including some of the examples above, you may be liable to disciplinary action up to and including summary dismissal.

During an employee's absence (for holiday, sickness or any other reason) the Charity reserves the right to access the employee's e-mail account. This is necessary to ensure that any business issues are addressed in a timely manner.

### **E-mail use for personal purposes**

Employees should not send personal e-mails during work time, unless the e-mail relates to an urgent matter that needs addressing immediately.

During official breaks (eg lunchtime) employees may access their personal e-mail accounts. However, in responding to e-mails the code of conduct relating to work e-mails (as explained above) applies.

Employees may only use their work e-mail address for work purposes. They are not to send personal e-mails using this address.

### **Internet use for personal purposes**

Employees should not use the internet for personal purposes during work time.

During official breaks (eg lunchtime) employees may access the internet for personal use. However, only appropriate sites may be accessed (see below).

### **Internet sites that cannot be accessed**

Under NO circumstances can any pornographic internet site be accessed during working hours or at any time using a computer belonging to the Charity.

In addition, social networking sites such as Facebook cannot be accessed using a computer belonging to the Charity, or during working hours.

Any other internet sites that contain offensive, obscene or otherwise unacceptable material must not be accessed using a computer belonging to the Charity, or during working hours.

### **Downloading of material**

Viruses and similar problems can bring an entire computer network to a standstill. It is important, therefore, that all employees are aware of the need to act responsibly and minimise the risk of this occurring. To help protect the company network, employees must not download any documents on to a computer belonging to the organisation without being confident that it comes from a legitimate source.

No software can be downloaded onto a computer belonging to the Charity without the express agreement of the Director.

### **On-line blogs**

Employees must not contribute to on-line blogs during working hours, or using a computer belonging to the Charity.

Employees must not contribute to any blog which criticises the Charity, or otherwise brings the organisation into disrepute, at any time (this includes during personal time). If the employee is dissatisfied with some aspect of their employment this should be addressed using the charity's grievance procedure.

Using a blog to criticise or damage the reputation of the Charity may result in disciplinary action.

### **Charity's website**

No employee may add any information to the Charity's website without express consent of the manager responsible for the website.

### **Monitoring**

The Charity reserves the right to monitor employees' internet usage, but will endeavour to inform an affected employee when this is to happen and the reasons for it. The Charity considers the following to be valid reasons for checking an employee's internet usage:

- If the Charity suspects that the employee has been viewing offensive or illegal material, such as material containing racist terminology or nudity (although the Charity understands that it is possible for employees inadvertently to view such material and they will have the opportunity to explain if this is the case).
- If the Charity suspects that the employee has been spending an excessive amount of time viewing websites that are not work related.

Monitoring will consist of checking the websites that an employee has visited and the duration of such visits.

### **Action to be taken in the case of inappropriate use**

If an employee is found to have used e-mail or the internet in an inappropriate manner disciplinary action may be taken. This could include summary dismissal, depending on the nature and severity of the offence.

### **Key Legislation**

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Investigatory Powers Act 2016
- Investigatory Powers (Interception by Businesses etc for Monitoring and Record-keeping Purposes) Regulations 2018 (SI 2018/356)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- General Data Protection Regulation (2016/679 EU)

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