

## **Social Media Policy and Guidance**

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## **1. Policy Statement**

- 1.1 Social media provides the Food Standards Agency (FSA) an opportunity to engage and communicate with the public, its stakeholders and employees in an immediate, alternative and accessible way.
- 1.2 The FSA encourages responsible use of social media. When using social media and participating online you are accountable for your contributions. Be respectful of others and be clear about who you are representing.
- 1.3 This policy and supporting guidance sets out how you should conduct yourself online and applies when using work or personal IT devices whether in work or personal time. In all of your interactions be mindful of the core Civil Service values: integrity, honesty, objectivity, and impartiality. Posting any content online which is considered to be a breach of the Civil Service Code may result in disciplinary action.

### **Effective Date**

- 1.4 The Policy is effective from 1 May 2015.

## 2. Policy Guidance

### What is Social Media?

2.1 Social media consists of online IT platforms where you can generate, contribute and share content, including text, pictures and videos. Examples include Facebook, Yammer, YouTube, Twitter and online forums / discussion boards. More information can be found in the Frequently Asked Questions.

### What is the purpose of the Policy?

2.2 This policy and guidance seeks to provide clarity on what is and what is not appropriate when using social media. It highlights the key things to remember, clarifies the boundaries and potential issues and empowers employees to use social media responsibly.

### Who does the Policy apply to?

2.3 This guidance applies to all FSA employees and those who work for and / or represent the FSA in their use of work or personal IT devices whether in work or personal time.

## Principles

### *Responsibility*

- you are responsible for anything you post online;
- apply the same rules of interacting with people in the online community as you would when commenting to the public, stakeholders or your colleagues through any other medium. Also, remember that using social media can make a post difficult to retract;
- if you think an inappropriate post has been made by a colleague or another civil servant you should report this to your manager;
- read and follow the Terms of Use / Rules of Engagement for the social media sites that you use.

### *Respect*

- show the same respect for others that you would if you were interacting face to face. Remember that sometimes actions are amplified online because they are accessible by so many people.

### *Representation*

- think carefully before sharing details about the FSA as your employer. Your views could be misinterpreted as being representative of the FSA and even with a disclaimer, your views could still be associated with the FSA;
- if you become aware someone is misrepresenting the FSA, or posting on behalf of another person or the FSA when they have not been authorised to do so, then please inform your manager.

### *Professional Representation*

- if you have access to post from FSA corporate social media accounts, ensure that you disclose and comment only on information for which you have authorised permission and ensure that the information which you are sharing is accurate and complies with FSA policy;
- information and passwords linked with business social media accounts belong to the FSA and remain the property of the FSA even after a person is no longer employed.
- if you are not authorised to represent the FSA but you use social media professionally (for example to network via a professional social media site, for example, LinkedIn) then you should again follow the principles highlighted in this guidance and always adhere to the Civil Service Code;
- if you do use different profiles for personal and professional use, you should make a clear separation between your professional profile (authorised or not) and any personal profiles.

For further information on how to use social media for business purposes, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-media-guidance-for-civil-servants>

### **Misuse of social media**

2.4 As with any communication channel, problems can arise if you use social media inappropriately (either at work or in your personal time) and this may lead to disciplinary action being taken by the FSA. Examples of inappropriate use could include:

- bullying / harassment, for example, using threatening or abusive language and posting crude jokes or derogatory comments;
- posting offensive comments which are inconsistent with the HUC standards and values and / or are considered to be a breach of the Civil Service Code;

- posting inappropriate material which brings the FSA into disrepute;
- posting derogatory / defamatory comments to any person or organisation. A defamatory statement gives false information which damages the reputation of another person or organisation. This could include re-posting information that had originally been shared by others. In re-posting you can personally be held liable for the post as if you had posted it yourself;
- disclosing confidential / restricted information about the HUC "business, its employees, stakeholders or suppliers;
- spreading rumours or reposting inappropriate comments about the FSA, its employees, stakeholders or suppliers;
- the use of personal social media during work time which negatively impacts your ability to effectively carry out your work.

2.5 It is the responsibility of all employees to ensure online interactions stay within the law, for example defamation, copyright, equality and data protection laws. An example of a legal breach could include publicising confidential / restricted information or personal data without consent which could result in a potential breach of the Data Protection Act 1998. If your actions are considered to be criminal then they could lead to prosecution.

2.6 You are required to fully cooperate with investigations into any alleged breaches of this policy. This may include providing information on, or access to, online material and removing online content when asked to do so.

2.7 If you see a colleague acting inappropriately online you should report this to your manager.

## **Monitoring**

2.8 The FSA does not routinely monitor personal use of social media. However, it reserves the right to investigate " " " " " " " " and outside the workplace where it has been made aware of a potential impact on the FSA, its employees, customers, or suppliers. This includes usage in work or personal time, on work or on personal IT devices.

## **Summary**

2.9 Social media is an important means of communication with millions of people choosing to interact online. When using social media be responsible in your actions, respectful of others and clear about who you are representing.

2.10 Five things to remember when using social and digital media, either at work or in a personal capacity:



### **3. Key Intranet and access information**

You can get an electronic version of this document on Foodweb.

#### **Further information**

Further guidance can be found in the following documents: *Social Media: Frequently Asked Questions*; *How to use social media responsibly and safely*; and *Social Media Case Studies*. V "HJC "Social Media Manager can also provide additional advice.

#### **Monitoring**

The application of this policy will be monitored on a regular basis by the FSA Social Media Manager and HR department.

#### **Review date**

This guidance is due for review in November 2016.