

Caring Hands in the Vale Social Networking Policy

Introduction

Caring Hands in the Vale is committed to building and reinforcing a culture where people value each other and treat each other with dignity and respect. We recognise that the use of online social networking sites (e.g. Facebook and Twitter) has become a very significant part of life for many people. They provide a very positive way to keep in touch with friends and colleagues. It can be used to exchange ideas and thoughts on common interests, both personal and work related.

However, we also recognise that this medium presents significant dangers for individuals and organisations and believe that some common principles should be acknowledged and observed. Media coverage has highlighted cases involving cyber bullying and harassment or employment disciplinary action and we wish to avoid such instances.

The following is the Caring Hands in the Vale's Social Networking Policy. The absence of, or lack of explicit reference to a specific site does not limit the extent of the application of this policy. Where no guideline exists, staff and volunteers should use their professional judgment and take the most prudent action possible. Consult with the Community Worker or Chair of the Steering Group if you are uncertain.

Use of Social Network Sites

These guidelines are consistent with the rest of our statements about professional conduct and mutual respect. They reflect the realities of the social networking world which has emerged over recent years. We wish to influence online behaviour from the perspective of "doing the right thing," not "mitigating the risk of getting caught." Caring Hands in the Vale does not discourage staff or volunteers from using online networking services. However, you should be aware that Caring Hands in the Vale will take seriously any instances where the services are used inappropriately.

You should be mindful that personal information that staff and volunteers reveal about themselves or colleagues may be linked back to Caring Hands in the Vale. That is true even if staff and volunteers restrict their pages to viewing only by "friends". Posting a message on-line is not just like making a passing comment over lunch with an acquaintance. It is all too easy for someone to copy material out of restricted pages and redirect it elsewhere for wider viewing. It would not be unknown for a registered friend to invite a third party to view what would normally be restricted pages. Naturally people will always talk about what they have read or viewed. As more and more people are learning, virtually nothing is truly private on the internet.

Your attention is drawn to the broader principles outlined in Caring Hands in the Vale's policies relating to staff and volunteer conduct and behaviour, bullying and

harassment, diversity and equal opportunity. If breaches of those guidelines occur, the fact that they happened online or were intended for a restricted audience will not be an acceptable defence.

Any serious misuse of social networking sites, which has a negative impact on Caring Hands in the Vale, its staff and volunteers or its service users will be handled under our disciplinary procedures.

Guidelines

In general – If personal internet presence makes no reference to Caring Hands in the Vale, its staff and volunteers, its clients and Caring Hands in the Vale cannot be identified, then content is unlikely to concern us.

However, if employment at Caring Hands is referred to, or if registered “friends” are aware of your work with Caring Hands in the Vale, then the following guidelines must be observed. Please remember, these guidelines refer not only to pages which you may instigate or create, but also those which you may visit or become aware of as a registered “friend”.

- You are free to talk about Caring Hands in the Vale. However, instances where Caring Hands in the Vale is brought into disrepute or where derogatory or negative comments are made about its activities, may constitute misconduct or gross misconduct and disciplinary action will be taken;
- Ensure that appropriate privacy settings are used to restrict access to approved “friends”;
- Ensure clear professional boundaries are observed when considering “friends” and communicating online.
- Be respectful to Caring Hands in the Vale, its employees, volunteers, service users, partner organisations, and competitors;
- Sites should not be used to verbally abuse, criticise or undermine staff, volunteers or service users. If instances arise which may be construed as online bullying or harassment, these will be dealt with as disciplinary matters;
- Privacy and feelings of others should be respected at all times. You should obtain the permission of individuals before posting contact details or pictures;
- Care should be taken to avoid using language which could be deemed as offensive to others;
- Sites should not be used for accessing or sharing illegal or offensive content;
- Where your association with Caring Hands in the Vale is clear from the content on your page, please ensure any entries are clearly identifiable as your personal views and not attributable to Caring Hands in the Vale;
- If approached by a media contact about content on a site relating to Caring Hands in the Vale, you should advise the Community Worker or Chair of the Steering Group before taking any action;

- Viewing and updating personal sites should not take place during working times;
- If information or contributions on the site raises a cause for concern with regard to possible breaches of these guidelines, staff or volunteers must raise the issue with the Community Worker or Chair of the Steering Group;
- You must not disclose confidential information relating to your employment or volunteering at Caring Hands in the Vale

In short, please remember that your online presence may at times be taken by contacts as reflecting Caring Hands in the Vale. Your actions captured through images, posts, or comments can be misconstrued or manipulated by others. While careful and sensible use of online social networking sites can be an enjoyable and positive activity, inappropriate or careless use may leave you open to disciplinary action.

Date Agreed: _____

Signed by Chair of Steering Group: _____