

Email, social media and internet use policy

This policy is intended to ensure the proper use of email and the internet at the practice and to make you aware of unacceptable use. All team members must comply with this policy at all times – and not only during working hours and while on practice premises.

Legal aspects

There are legal risks associated with email and internet that can result in you and the practice owner being held liable. These include:

- Sending or forwarding emails with remarks, images or attachments that are libellous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene
- Unlawfully forwarding confidential information
- Unlawfully forwarding or copying messages without permission, thereby infringing copyright
- Sending an email or attachment that contains a virus
- Accessing websites or downloading from the internet material that is libellous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene or that infringes copyright.

Email

Email is a business communication tool that should be used in a responsible, effective and lawful manner. Although email seems less formal than other written communication, the same laws apply.

- Do not send or forward emails containing libellous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks, images or attachments. If you receive an email of this nature at the practice, you must inform the practice owner.
- Do not forward a message with a privacy disclaimer without acquiring permission from the sender first
- Do not send unsolicited email messages
- Do not forge or attempt to forge email messages
- Do not send email messages using another person's email account
- Do not copy a message or attachment belonging to another user without permission of the originator.
- Email referrals must be completed through NHS mail only
- Replies to patients must be done through NHS mail only
- One and One email must be checked daily and remove SPAM emails as soon as possible

Internet

The internet provides access to a vast amount of information that is a useful resource for the practice. We expect you to use it primarily for business-related purposes – to communicate with patients or suppliers and obtain useful business information. You must conduct yourself honestly and appropriately on the internet, and respect the copyrights, software licensing rules, property rights and privacy of others, just as you would in any other business dealings.

Anything written on the internet by an employee can be taken as representing the practice. You must therefore act with the same degree of professionalism as you would when speaking on the telephone. An internet user can be held accountable for any breaches of security or confidentiality.

You must not use practice computers or internet to access websites or download material from the internet that is libellous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene or that infringes copyright.

Social media

Online social networking websites (for example Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and others) have become part of the daily routine for many people. However, your personal use of these websites and services must follow the terms of this policy, whether your use occurs during or outside working hours, on practice premises or elsewhere. Wifi is not to be used for social media or un-authorized websites. Personal internet usage is to be used.

Whilst using social networking websites or services you are free to talk about your personal life outside of work. If your use of social networking websites or services and your personal internet presence do not make any reference to the practice by name and the practice cannot be identified, this is unlikely to concern the practice. If employment at the practice is referred to or the practice could be identified, the information posted must comply with the terms of this policy.

- You should not disclose on social networking websites confidential information relating to your employment at the practice
- You should not use social networking websites to verbally abuse, bully or harass colleagues or patients. The privacy and feelings of others should always be respected; you must obtain the permission of individuals before posting their contact details or photographs on social networking websites
- You should not use social networking websites or services for accessing or sharing content that is libellous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene or that infringes copyright
- You should not use social networking websites in a way that brings the practice into disrepute

- Viewing and updating social networking websites or other personal websites should not take place during working times. While you are at work, reasonable access is acceptable before and after working hours and during work breaks.

Personal use

Personal use of email and social media should be kept to a minimum and must not interfere with work. The forwarding of chain letters, junk mail and executables (ie computer program files that cause a computer to perform certain tasks according to encoded instructions, such files often have the file extension .exe) is strictly forbidden.

All messages distributed via the practice email system, even personal emails, are the property of the practice owner. You must have no expectation of privacy in anything you create, store, send or receive on the practice computer system.

Date:

Review date: