



## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY & COMMUNICATIONS

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### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 To operate professionally and efficiently, organisations need to communicate effectively. It is important to ensure that we treat everyone, internally and externally, professionally and courteously.
- 1.2 This policy is to be regarded as a code of conduct on electronic mail (email) and internet usage, on contact with the media and all aspects of communication. It applies to all employees, volunteers, Trustees and any other person connected with and/or using South Lakeland Mind's (SLM) facilities.
- 1.3 Related Policies include those dealing with Confidentiality, Health & Safety, Data Protection and Complaints & Grievance.
- 1.4 Data should be saved daily to the Z/Drive where it is automatically stored and backed up externally through our network supplier – Oftech.
- 1.5 All written communication should use plain English, be professional, timely, polite and spell checked. Any correspondence received requiring action or acknowledgement should have an initial response within 5 working days.

### 2. Email and Internet Use

- 2.1 South Lakeland Mind has invested in the necessary resources to provide employees, trustees and volunteers with the facility to use email and to access the Internet which is beneficial in enabling them to undertake their duties more effectively. These facilities may only be used for business purposes.
- 2.2 Computers, networks, email systems, etc., are the property of South Lakeland Mind and as such there can be no expectation of privacy. A person nominated by the Chief Officer will undertake a regular audit of the email and internet system.
- 2.3 Any person who experiences problems concerning abuse of the email/internet facility, should in the first instance approach their immediate or (in the case of volunteers/trustees the appropriate) line manager.
- 2.4 It is forbidden to access an external computer or external network (excluding the www) without authorisation or to compromise the performance or security of any computer system.
- 2.5 SLM reserves the right to view and monitor all email and internet access. If this is found to be inappropriate it may be viewed as gross misconduct.

## 2.5 Use of Email

- Email should normally only be used to communicate internally and externally with colleagues, clients, suppliers or other agencies. The mailing of jokes containing sexually explicit or otherwise offensive material, either internally or externally may be regarded as gross misconduct.
- Emails should be checked daily to ensure that they are dealt with in a timely manner.
- No email may contain any references to other individuals which might be construed as libellous.
- No email communication, which might be regarded as harassing or insulting, may be sent using SLM's system. Complaints about the performance or service of other departments or individuals must be made on a face-to-face basis or in a formal letter, as is normal and courteous practice.
- SLM recognises that it is not always possible to control incoming mail. Any material received which would be considered as non-businesslike, sexually explicit or offensive should be reported to the line manager.
- Staff need to recognise that there are risks associated with conducting business via email. Email is not inherently secure – messages can be intercepted, stored, read, modified and forwarded to anyone, and sometimes go missing. Casual comments may be misinterpreted and bring the organisation into disrepute or even lead to legal issues.
- If employees, trustees or volunteers receive virus warnings via email they should inform their line manager at once.
- Emails which are sent from SLM should be composed in a businesslike manner.
- Unsolicited emails must not be sent at any time. Any “junk” mail received should be deleted.
- It is a disciplinary offence to access another individual's email facility by using their password without their express permission.
- Any message sent should have the appropriate authority. No one is permitted to send emails in another person's name.

## 2.7 Use of the Internet

- Service users, staff, trustees and volunteers should not access, view, receive, download, send or store material from sites such as those relating to pornography, racism, terrorism, cults, hate speech, illegal drugs or other inappropriate sites. To do so may be regarded as an act of gross misconduct. The only possible exception to this is for employees who need to access such sites in relation to work. For example, someone in the counselling service may need to go to a site about gambling addiction or a member of staff may have good reason to go to a site about the effects of illegal drugs. Visits to such sites however should be limited strictly to work-related issues.
- SLM accepts that employees may find it convenient to browse the Web for their own personal reasons during their own time (e.g. lunch break).
- Employees should not generally join any mailing lists or solicit any information on the internet unless there is a business need to do so. Should they wish to take part in such activities in a private capacity, they should consult their Line Manager first who may give permission on a case by case basis.

## 2.8 Use of Social Media

- Only staff approved by the Chief Officer are allowed to post on South Lakeland Mind's social media channels. The use of social media is subject to the rules and procedures relating to Diversity and Equality, Confidentiality, Health & Safety plus any other policies that may be adopted by South Lakeland Mind.

## 3. Communication with the Media (Press, Radio, TV)

3.1 The press, TV and radio can be powerful friends for organisations like Mind and the people we are here to help and support. But they also have their own agenda, which may conflict with our own. For this reason, and because they frequently get things wrong, we need to handle our contact with the media with great care.

3.2 Enquiries and requests for information or comment from the media may include enquiries about specific incidents or individual people, requests for comment on general mental health issues or requests for factual and statistical information.

3.3 SLM may also from time to time issue statements and releases to the media in order to promote its services or raise awareness of mental health issues.

3.4 The procedures for handling media requests and initiating press statements are governed by the Association's Working Rules, which state that:

- All public announcements, statements to the press, radio and television shall be made by the Chair or a person authorised by the Chair. Their content shall be authorised by the Chair.
- The Board of Trustees may, by resolution, deprive the Chair of this authority and appoint some other person to speak. No other officer or member of the association shall make any statement in the association's name without approval of the Chair or other person appointed for this purpose.

3.5 All media enquiries should in the first instance be referred to the Chief Officer and/or the Chair of Trustees who will make an appropriate response or authorise another to do so.

*This policy is intended as a statement of intent and does not constitute a binding contractual or personal agreement. But it will be monitored and revised in the light of service user, staff or volunteer experience or comments and any operational changes and legislative or other external considerations. Interpretation and any matters not specifically covered by the policy will be decided by the Chief Officer and / or Trustees.*

Policy Approved by Board of Trustees: 11<sup>th</sup> November 2010

Revision(s) approved: 13<sup>th</sup> October 2011, 14<sup>th</sup> August 2014

Review Date: June 2015

*If at any time it seems appropriate to review the policy sooner than the review date, such as through a change in the law, then this should be done without delay.*