



### **Purpose**

The aims of this Policy are to outline the expectations of the Trust in respect of the use of digital and social media for all foster carers, employees and stake holders.

It applies to the use of all internet- based social networking sites of any kind on which users may publish either personal or work–related information.

### **Policy**

The Trust recognises that digital and social media are influential and effective resources commonly used to communicate with the general public in the UK and worldwide. Social media makes a positive contribution to raising awareness of the need to increase the number of suitable families to consider fostering. Increasingly social media is influencing social policy and can be an advantageous mechanism to communicate with the general public, policy makers and decision makers in social care. The Trust also acknowledges that social media is now the most commonly used mechanism by statutory, private for profit and third sector fostering providers to recruit suitable fostering households.

The Trust acknowledges that the use of digital and social media sites, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Linked In, is common amongst staff, carers, stakeholders and young people. This form of social media has a growing influence on the dissemination of information and worldwide communication and there are both benefits and pitfalls. This policy encompasses the principles of other established Trust policies including and not limited to safeguarding, safer caring, confidentiality and data protection. In addition to this, CFT acknowledges that social workers are bound by the HCPC professional standards of conduct and should conduct themselves on line in the spirit of these standards. The CFT welcomes the use of digital media to promote the ethos and positive work of the Trust.

The Trust accepts that staff, stakeholders, carers, and children engage in social networking in their personal time and have a right to a private life. There are two main areas that Trust are concerned with:

- Personal activity conducted for friends and contacts, but not in the name of CFT.
- Official activity conducted on behalf of the Trust to promote and represent the work and ethos of CFT

### **Personal activity**

The Trust accepts that, due to the nature of social media, personal and professional activity may occasionally overlap. CFT assumes that they have trust and confidence that all known associates, staff and carers will conduct their online activity in a manner that protects the reputation of the Trust; therefore avoiding “doing anything stupid” that may compromise the professional standards of conduct expected of all staff and representatives of the Trust. It is important to consider that even though personal activity is conducted by individuals, it is likely that people’s personal networks will be aware of their connections to CFT.

Staff and carers are allowed to say that they work for CFT and discuss work of the Trust publicly; however in discussing personal views online it should be explicit that these are personal opinions rather than representative of the Trust.

Staff, carers, stakeholders and young people are encouraged to safeguard personal information through effective use of privacy settings on the various social media platforms.

CFT strongly urges all staff, carers and stakeholders to carefully check their sources of information shared online for accuracy and association to organisations or individuals which may bring CFT into disrepute or

cause public embarrassment. This is particularly important when sharing information on social network platforms for material that is not original to the individual.

Publically criticising CFT, colleagues, carers, partners and stakeholders online is considered unacceptable and may lead to disciplinary proceedings.

### **Official activity**

The Trust positively welcomes the use of digital media to promote the work and ethos of CFT. It also welcomes the opportunity to use these mediums for consultations and communication processes with affiliated partners, organisations, local and central government. CFT will develop a Digital Media Strategy. This will be communicated and reviewed with all staff in order that official activity is carried out to achieve the overall aims of the strategy.

Staff and stakeholders participating in official activity must do so following all of the guidance already detailed in the guidance for personal activity.

Staff involved in official social media activity conducted on behalf of the Trust must communicate in a manner which is consistent with the ethics, values and ethos of CFT.

All social media accounts set up on behalf of the Trust remain the property of the Trust. Details, passwords and operation of these accounts will be property of and held at Head Office. They will be transferred between staff members when changes of roles and responsibilities for staff members occur.

When material or communications shared by official accounts may be considered controversial and/or political, staff will seek the opinion of a colleague or line manager before sharing such information. This will be referred to as “a second pair of eyes principle” and when there is uncertainty about the political impact and reputational risk associated with sharing certain information, colleagues are required to defer to line management advice.

### **Confidentiality**

The Children's Family Trust have a duty to safeguard children and young people in their care and to ensure that they are protected from potential harm or abuse via the internet. Therefore it also important to be aware of issues of confidentiality on digital and social networking sites.

It is the expectation of the Trust that you do not publish any information about a child or young person on any social media platform. Although photographs are encouraged to be taken of the children and young people in your care for their life story journey, no photographs of the children/ young people should be uploaded onto any social media platform.

The Trust accepts that foster carers will have their own personal social media accounts. However it is expected that as foster carers representing the Children's Family Trust you will conduct your online activity in a manner that protects the reputation of the Trust and avoids compromising the professional standards of conduct expected of all staff and representatives of the Trust. It is important to consider that even though personal activity is conducted by individuals, it is likely that people's personal networks will be aware of their connections to Trust.

