**Social Media Policy**

For the purposes of this policy, social media is a type of interactive online media that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum. This includes online social forums such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. Social media also covers blogs and video- and image-sharing websites such as YouTube.

Employees should be aware that there are many more examples of social media than can be listed here and this is a constantly changing area. Employees should follow these guidelines in relation to any social media that they use.

At the current time, the Executive Officer is mainly responsible for the social media status of Hearing Loss Cornwall.

Integrity is our most important commodity: Avoid writing or posting anything that would embarrass Hearing Loss Cornwall or compromise your ability to do your job.

* Assume that your professional life and your personal life will merge online regardless of your care in separating them.
* Even if you use privacy tools (determining who can view your page or profile, for instance), assume that everything you write, exchange or receive on a social media site is public.
* Just as political bumper stickers etc. are to be avoided in the offline world, so too are partisan expressions online.
* Be aware of perceptions. If you “friend” a source or join a group on one side of a debate, do so with the other side as well. Also understand that readers may view your participation in a group as your acceptance of its views; be clear that you’re looking for story ideas or simply collecting information. Consider that you may be an observer of online content without activelyparticipating.

**Guidelines for Reporting**

• Be aware of inadvertent disclosures or the perception of disclosures. For example, consider that “friending” a professional contact may publicly identify that person as one of your sources.

• You should identify yourself as having an affiliation with Hearing Loss Cornwall if you would do so in a similar situation offline.

• Authentication is essential: Verify sourcing after collecting information online. When transmitting information online – as in re-Tweeting material from other sources – apply the same standards and level of caution you would in more formal publication.

**Additional Notes**

**•** Using social media sites means that you (and the content you exchange) are subject to their terms of service. This can have legal implications, including the possibility that your interactions could be subject to a third-party scrutiny/injunction. The social media network has access to and control over everything you have disclosed to or on that site. For instance, any information might be turned over to law enforcement without your consent or even your knowledge.

**Use of personal social media at work**

Employees are allowed to make reasonable and appropriate use of social media websites from the organisation's computers or devices, provided that this does not interfere with their duties.

Hearing Loss Cornwall understands that employees may wish to use their own computers or devices, such as laptops and palm-top and hand-held devices, to access social media websites while they are at work. Employees must limit their use of social media on their own equipment to their official rest breaks such as their lunch break/times.

**Excessive use of personal social media at work**

They should ensure that use of social media does not interfere with their other duties or have a detrimental effect on employees' productivity.

**Monitoring use of social media during work time**

The charity reserves the right to monitor employees' internet usage, but will endeavour to inform an affected employee when this is to happen and the reasons for it. The charity considers that valid reasons for checking an employee's internet usage include suspicions that the employee has:

* been using social media websites when he/she should be working; or
* acted in a way that is in breach of the rules set out in this policy.

The organisation reserves the right to retain information that it has gathered on employees' use of the internet for a period of one year.

Access to particular social media websites may be withdrawn in any case of misuse.

**Use of social media to benefit Hearing Loss Cornwall**

The organisation encourages employees to make reasonable and appropriate use of social media websites as part of their work. It is an important part of how Hearing Loss Cornwall communicates its existence and promotes its cause.

Employees may contribute to the organisation's social media activities, for example by [writing for our blogs/managing a Facebook account/running an official Twitter account for Hearing Loss Cornwall.

Employees must be aware at all times that, while contributing to the organisation's social media activities, they are representing the organisation. Staff who use social media as part of their job must adhere to the following rules.

Employees should use the same safeguards as they would with any other form of communication about the organisation in the public sphere. These safeguards include confidentiality and non-political activity or propaganda:

* making sure that the communication has a purpose and a benefit for the organisation;
* obtaining permission from the Executive Officer before embarking on a public campaign using social media

Any communications that employees make in a professional capacity through social media must not bring the organisation into disrepute, for example by:

* criticising or arguing with customers, colleagues or rivals;
* making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups; or
* posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content;

breach confidentiality, for example by:

revealing information owned by the organisation;
giving away confidential information about an individual (such as a patient, interpreter, trustee or colleague
discussing the organisation's internal workings or its future business plans that have not been communicated to the public);

* breach copyright, for example by:
* using someone else's images or written content without permission;
failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something; or
* do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by:
	+ making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age;
	+ using social media to bully another individual (such as an employee of the organisation); or
	+ posting images that are discriminatory or offensive [or links to such content].

**Excessive use of social media at work**

Employees should not spend an excessive amount of time while at work using social media websites, even if they claim to be doing so as part of their work. This is likely to have a detrimental effect on employees' productivity. They should ensure that use of social media does not interfere with their other duties.

**Monitoring use of social media during work time**

The organisation reserves the right to monitor employees' internet usage, but will endeavour to inform an affected employee when this is to happen and the reasons for it. The organisation considers that valid reasons for checking an employee's internet usage include suspicions that the employee has:

* been spending an excessive amount of time using social media websites for non-work-related activity; or
* acted in a way that is in breach of the rules set out in this policy.

The organisation reserves the right to retain information that it has gathered on employees' use of the internet for a period of [one year].

Access to particular social media websites may be withdrawn in any case of misuse.

**Social media in your personal life**

The organisation recognises that many employees make use of social media in a personal capacity. While they are not acting on behalf of the organisation, employees must be aware that they can damage the organisation if they are recognised as being one of our employees.

Employees are allowed to say that they work for the charity, which recognises that it is natural for its staff sometimes to want to discuss their work on social media. However, the employee's online profile (for example, the name of a blog or a Twitter name) must not contain the organisation's name.

If employees do discuss their work on social media (for example, giving opinions on their specialism or the sector in which the organisation operates), they must include on their profile a statement along the following lines: "The views I express here are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer."

Any communications that employees make in a personal capacity through social media must follow the same guidelines as referred to in: -. **Use of social media to benefit Hearing Loss Cornwall**

**Use of social media in the recruitment process**

Unless it is in relation to finding candidates (for example, if an individual has put his/her details on social media websites for the purpose of attracting prospective employers), Hearing Loss Cornwall, will not, either themselves or through a third party, conduct searches on applicants on social media. This is because conducting these searches during the selection process might lead to a presumption that an applicant's protected characteristics (for example, sexual orientation or religious beliefs) played a part in a recruitment decision. This is in line with the charity’s equal opportunities policy.

**Disciplinary action over social media use**

All employees are required to adhere to this policy. Employees should note that any breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action. Serious breaches of this policy, for example incidents of bullying of colleagues or social media activity causing serious damage to the organisation, may constitute gross misconduct and lead to summary dismissal.