SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Social media definition

Social media is an interactive online media that allows users to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum. It includes social and business networking websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Instagram and LinkedIn. Social media also covers video and image sharing websites such as YouTube and Flickr, as well as personal blogs. This is a constantly changing area with new websites being launched on a regular basis and therefore this list is not exhaustive. This policy applies in relation to any social media that employees may use.

Use of social media at work

Unless it is an express requirement of their job role, employees are only permitted to log on to social media websites or to keep a blog using Autism East Midlands' IT systems and equipment outside their normal working hours (for example, during lunch breaks or after the working day has finished) and this must not under any circumstances interfere with their job duties or have a detrimental effect on their productivity. This includes laptop and hand-held devices distributed by Autism East Midlands for work purposes. Autism East Midlands nevertheless reserves the right to restrict access to this type of websites at any time. Where employees have their own computers or devices, such as laptops and hand-held devices, again they must limit their use of social media on this equipment to outside their normal working hours.

However, in support of marketing activities, employees may be asked to contribute to Autism East Midlands' own social media activities during normal working hours, for example by writing Company blogs or newsfeeds, managing a Facebook account or running an official Twitter or LinkedIn account for Autism East Midlands. Employees must be aware at all times that, while contributing to Autism East Midlands' social media activities, they are representing Autism East Midlands.

Autism East Midlands' social media activities

Where employees are authorised to contribute to Autism East Midlands' own social media activities as part of their work, for example for marketing, promotional and recruitment purposes, they must adhere to the following rules:

- use the same safeguards as they would with any other type of communication about Autism East Midlands that is in the public domain
- ensure that any communication has a purpose and a benefit for Autism East Midlands
- obtain permission from their line manager before embarking on a public campaign using social media
- request their line manager to check and approve content before it is published online
- follow any additional guidelines given by Autism East Midlands from time to time.

The social media rules set out below also apply as appropriate.

In addition, such social media accounts which are operated for business purposes (and their contents) belong to Autism East Midlands and therefore these accounts used by an employee during employment may not be used after termination of employment. Post termination of employment, employees remain bound by the express confidentiality clause within their contract of employment.

Social media rules

Autism East Midlands recognises that many employees make use of social media in a personal capacity outside the workplace and outside normal working hours. While they are not acting on behalf of Autism East Midlands in these circumstances, employees must be aware that they can still cause damage to Autism East Midlands if they are recognised online as being one of its employees. Therefore, it is important that Autism East Midlands has strict social media rules in place to protect its position.

When logging on to and using social media websites and blogs at any time, including personal use on non-Company device outside the workplace and outside normal working hours, employees must not:

- other than in relation to Autism East Midlands' own social media activities or other than where expressly permitted by Autism East Midlands on business networking websites such as LinkedIn, publicly identify themselves as working for Autism East Midlands, make reference to Autism East Midlands or provide information from which others can ascertain the name of Autism East Midlands (and in any event they should not hold themselves out as associated with Autism East Midlands on any social media website after termination of employment)
- other than in relation to Autism East Midlands' own social media activities or other than where expressly permitted by Autism East Midlands on business networking websites such as LinkedIn, write about their work for Autism East Midlands - and, in postings that could be linked to Autism East Midlands, they must also ensure that any personal views expressed are clearly stated to be theirs alone and do not represent those of Autism East Midlands
- conduct themselves in a way that is potentially detrimental to Autism East Midlands or brings Autism East Midlands or its clients, customers, contractors or suppliers into disrepute, for example by posting images or video clips that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate website content
- other than in relation to Autism East Midlands' own social media activities or other than where expressly permitted by Autism East Midlands on business networking websites such as LinkedIn, use their work e-mail address when registering on such sites or provide any link to Autism East Midlands' website
- allow their interaction on these websites or blogs to damage working relationships with or between employees and clients, customers, contractors or suppliers of Autism East Midlands, for example by criticising or arguing with such persons
- include personal information or data about Autism East Midlands' employees, clients, customers, contractors or suppliers without their express consent (an employee may still be liable even if employees, clients, customers, contractors or suppliers are not expressly named in the websites

or blogs as long as Autism East Midlands reasonably believes they are identifiable) - this could constitute a breach of the General Data Protection Regulations which is a criminal offence

- make any derogatory, offensive, discriminatory, untrue, negative, critical or defamatory comments about Autism East Midlands, its employees, clients, customers, contractors or suppliers (an employee may still be liable even if Autism East Midlands, its employees, clients, customers, contractors or suppliers are not expressly named in the websites or blogs as long as Autism East Midlands reasonably believes they are identifiable)
- make any comments about Autism East Midlands' employees that could constitute unlawful discrimination, harassment or cyber-bullying contrary to the Equality Act 2010 or post any images or video clips that are discriminatory or which may constitute unlawful harassment or cyber-bullying - employees can be personally liable for their actions under the legislation
- disclose any trade secrets or confidential, proprietary or sensitive information belonging to Autism East Midlands, its employees, clients, customers, contractors or suppliers or any information which could be used by one or more of Autism East Midlands' competitors, for example information about Autism East Midlands' work, its products and services, technical developments, deals that it is doing or future business plans and staff morale
- breach copyright or any other proprietary interest belonging to Autism East Midlands, for example, using someone else's images or written content without permission or failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce particular work - if employees wish to post images, photographs or videos of their work colleagues or clients, customers, contractors or suppliers on their online profile, they should first obtain the other party's express permission to do so.

Employees must remove any content immediately if they are asked to do so by Autism East Midlands.

Work and business contacts made during the course of employment through social media websites (such as the names and contact details of existing or prospective customers, clients and suppliers) and which are added to personal social and business networking accounts (in particular to LinkedIn), or which are stored on Autism East Midlands' computer system, amount to confidential information belonging to Autism East Midlands and accordingly must be surrendered when requested and the on termination of employment.

On termination of employment or once notice to terminate employment has been given, employees must, on request, disclose to Autism East Midlands a full list of all work and business contacts that they hold on all devices or on all social and business networking accounts. Autism East Midlands may then require the departing employee to delete any or all such work and business connections from their devices (including from personal devices) or from their social or business networking account, not keep copies of the same and not reconnect with those connections for a period of six months from termination of employment. Autism East Midlands may also require written confirmation from the employee that these provisions have been complied with. Post termination of employment, employees

remain bound by the express confidentiality clause within their contract of employment.

Employees must also surrender all login and password details for accounts run on Autism East Midlands's behalf or where an account has been used to promote and/or market Autism East Midlands' business activities on the termination of employment or whenever so requested by Autism East Midlands.

Employees should remember that social media websites are public fora, even if they have set their account privacy settings at a restricted access or "friends only" level, and therefore they should not assume that their postings on any website will remain private.

Employees must also be security conscious when using social media websites and should take appropriate steps to protect themselves from identity theft, for example by placing their privacy settings at a high level and restricting the amount of personal information they give out, e.g. date and place of birth. This type of information may form the basis of security questions and/or passwords on other websites, such as online banking.

Should employees notice any inaccurate information about Autism East Midlands online, they should report this to their line manager in the first instance.

Social media monitoring

Autism East Midlands reserves the right to monitor employees' use of social media on the Internet, both during routine audits of the computer system and in specific cases where a problem relating to excessive or unauthorised use is suspected. The purposes for such monitoring are to:

- promote productivity and efficiency
- ensure the security of the system and its effective operation
- make sure there is no unauthorised use of Autism East Midlands' time
- ensure that inappropriate, restricted or blocked websites are not being accessed by employees
- make sure there is no breach of confidentiality.
- Ensure that there is no breach of the general data protection regulations.

Autism East Midlands reserves the right to use screen shots and down load of social media postings as evidence in disciplinary proceedings where these may be deemed to cause offence either to fellow employees or the organisation and or its business.

Autism East Midlands reserves the right to restrict, deny or remove Internet access, or access to particular social media websites, to or from any employee.

Contravention of this policy

Failure to comply with any of the requirements of this policy is a disciplinary offence and will result in disciplinary action being taken under Autism East

Midlands' disciplinary procedure. Depending on the seriousness of the offence, it may amount to gross misconduct and could result in the employee's summary dismissal.

Related policies:

Computer policy
Email and Internet Policy
Data Protection Policy
Telephone Policy

Document Control Title: Social Media Policy Category: Contractual
Applicable To: All Staff
Date Last Reviewed: November2025
Date of Review: November 2026
Procedure Owner: HR