

# Social Networking

## Togail Lìonraidhean Sòisealta

### Guidance for Professionals Iùl do Phroifeiseantaich

The Highland E-Safety Strategy Group has produced this guidance to support professionals in Highland learning communities. Following this guidance will help to keep you safer online and contribute to safer online communities for others too.

- Keep your profiles separate, have a personal profile and a professional profile on different sites depending on how you wish to use them.
- Think about who you 'friend' or 'follow'. Are they appropriate for that particular site, network or community?
- On personal online communities / networks it is not advisable to offer or accept friendships to children and young people you engage with on a professional basis. It is recognised this may extend to their families too e.g Parents, Carers or even children and young people who were known to you in a professional capacity who have now grown up. Have a statement prepared if this happens, *"Thank you for your invitation, I only use this site for sharing my personal information with my close friends and family"*

### Social Networking

For the purpose of this guidance document, 'social networking' can be taken to mean a variety of online communities.

This includes informal and personal sites such as Facebook and also other platforms for communication which constitute an online community. This includes platforms such as webchat, Skype, gaming or video and file / image sharing sites such as Youtube, Flickr and Slideshare

This guidance also provides advice for more professional related online communities such as blogs, LinkedIn and Twitter.



# Guidance for Professionals

## Iùl do Phroifeiseantaich

As a professional if you were to see behaviours or conduct that might lead to the child or young person being at risk of harm, you would need to follow the appropriate procedures. As a professional you hold a position of trust and are expected to maintain that in accordance with the standards of your professional body.

In deciding to be part of an online community it is important to remember that no matter how 'private' your profile is, the information you post about yourself and others is outwith your control as soon as it is posted. Privacy settings can be confusing and other users in your groups are not bound by any 'confidentiality' or 'privacy agreements'. Your information can be forwarded on or made public.

- Think before you post, whether it's a statement about your current activities, a picture, a video clip, a link or something you 'like' what does that say about you and would you mind a complete stranger knowing this information about you..
- Remembering the above, it is not advisable therefore to put personal contact details on a status update or profile, this includes, phone numbers, email addresses, location, even full date of birth. When these details are linked it could lead to identity theft, unwelcome contacts or spam / virus attacks.
- Consider your password strength, often interests or personal details of family or hobbies in an online profile can lead to your password being hacked. We say to children and young people to keep their passwords like their toothbrush, never share them and change them often! It's a good reminder for everyone.
- Be wary of online comments or conversations that can lead to the identification of fellow professionals, children or young people. These comments will be outwith your control and may be misconstrued.
- If you upload pictures or videos online, be aware that the picture may contain something called 'meta' data. Many cameras now identify automatically where the picture was taken using GPS location data. This information can be accessed on the picture once it has left your device, therefore revealing the exact location it was taken. This feature can be disabled on most phones very easily in the settings.

## Achieving a Balance

---

It is recognised by the producers of this guidance that it is important to highlight the benefits of online communities.

Belonging to an online community can bring overwhelmingly positive benefits to an individual. Particularly making contact with extended family members or friends.

Being part of a group having a sense of belonging, sharing thoughts, ideas and being able to express ones feelings can be a positive experience and contribute to a healthy sense of wellbeing.

Being part of more professional communities or networks that are based online, the benefits are also overwhelmingly positive.

Contributing to discussions online can not only enhance teaching, learning and practice by accessing a wonderful network of professionals who are like-minded. It can also bring a sense of cohesion and identity to professionals who at times may feel isolated in their work.

Therefore it is important to remember all these benefits ensuring you can fully take advantage of the opportunities online communities provide.

This guidance aims to encourage this whilst keeping yourself as safe as possible. In doing so you will offer role modeling to others upon the ways in which these benefits can be realised in a safe manner whether doing so for personal or professional reasons.

# Guidance for Professionals

## Iùl do Phroifeiseantaich

Many online communities, social networks or messaging services have now become integrated, so that activities that you engage in on other websites may show up on your profile. For example 'Facebook Chat' or 'Social Plug In's' or by simply 'liking' something or having an app which shows what you are reading online.

- Remember that all content on your profile will have a time / date stamp; therefore it will provide a chronology of your interactions with a particular community. This might be interesting as a timeline but can also be used as evidence of your whereabouts should this ever need to be accessed from a legal perspective.
- Be aware of guidance issued by The Highland Council ICT Services Team and consider your use of email. It is not advisable to use personal email accounts for professional purposes and exchanging / forwarding emails between different professional and personal email providers may weaken security. For example, sending on a funny email may spread data of recipient's details and weaken safety from hacking or spam. As with email remember that online chat records can also be forwarded on and made publicly available.
- Be wary of 'liking' other websites as this will show up on your profile on your particular online community.
- Think of the future, what does your online identity say about you?
- On communication platforms such as Skype, keep your online presence secure as your contact details may be published and you may attract unwarranted contacts.

Blogging platforms have become a popular way of sharing your world of work, interest or hobby. 'Bloggers' also tend to form an online community. If you have or are thinking about keeping a blog, consider the style and content and blogging service, it may be that for professional uses keeping a GLOW blog would be more effective and safer tool.

- If using a blog check copyright on material you post.
- Think about how widely your blog could circulate, particularly inadvertently due to the widespread nature of trends and topics, you may gain overnight notoriety.
- Be aware of inappropriate comments, adverts and spam links which may be left on your site.
- It may be wise to use a disclaimer stipulating that the views contained within the profile or blog are purely personal and do not represent the views of my employer.

## Concerns about Content

There are a number of online communities globally where anonymous comments can be left for professionals or children and young people.

A specific support facility in Highland has been established for professionals who may have found they have been targeted online.

Incidents such as these should be managed according to the Cyberbullying Guidance; there is a dedicated email address

[Cyberbullying@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Cyberbullying@highland.gov.uk)

It is important to discuss with your line manager the incident as in some cases this may constitute violence and aggression at work.

By sending an email to this address you will be provided with guidance on how to manage the incident.

Using this facility helps the e-safety team to have a general awareness of the kinds of sites that are being used and further support can be incorporated into training events.

You may also wish to contact a Union representative.

If you are concerned about content of sites you see a good place to report this is the Internet Watch Foundation

[www.iwf.org.uk](http://www.iwf.org.uk)

For further safety online guidance for children, young people, parents or carers please go to [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

**Remember, it is never too late to report and no-one is going to judge you if you do so.**

This document has been produced by the Highland E-Safety Strategy Group which includes the following partners:



This guidance has been endorsed for use in Highland by key groups such as the ICT Strategy Group and Informal Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers (LNCT)

Any questions or suggestions, please contact

Louise Jones – Curriculum Liaison Manager (ICT)

[louise.jones@highland.gov.uk](mailto:louise.jones@highland.gov.uk)

To request this information in an alternative format e.g large print, Braille, computer disk, audio tape or suitable language please contact

© The Highland Council. The Highland Council are copyright holder and the Reuse of Public Sector Information Regulations 2005 (SI 2005/1515) as amended applies to this information.

Any application to reuse the enclosed material for example for commercial purposes should be made to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the Highland Council Glenurquhart Road, Inverness IV3 5NX