

POLICY	Email and Internet Use	
POLICY NUMBER	CFL012	
EDITION		
DATE OF ISSUE	DATE OF REVIEW	
SIGNATORY		

1. Introduction

This document does not form part of any contract of employment and may be changed from time to time in line with current best practice and statutory requirements, and to ensure that organisational needs are met. Employees, Volunteers and the Board of Trustees will be consulted and advised of any changes as far in advance as possible of the change being made, unless the change is required by statute.

CONFIDANCE for Life encourages its employees to use e-mail and the internet at work where this can save time and expense. However, it requires that employees and volunteers follow the rules below. It is a term of each employee's contract that he/she complies with these rules, and any serious breach could lead to dismissal. Any employee or volunteer who is unsure about whether something he/she proposes to do might breach this e-mail and internet policy should seek advice from his/her manager.

Although CONFIDANCE for Life encourages the use of e-mail and the internet where appropriate, their use entails some risks. For example, employees and volunteers must take care not to introduce viruses on to the system and must take proper account of the security advice below. Employees and volunteers must also ensure that they do not send libellous statements in e-mails as CONFIDANCE for Life could be liable for damages.

These rules are designed to minimise the legal risks to the Organisation when its employees and volunteers use e-mail at work and access the internet. Where something is not specifically covered in this policy, employees /volunteers should seek advice from their manager. Employees/volunteers with access to personal data are in a particularly sensitive position and must bear in mind at all times the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Technology and the law change regularly and this policy will be updated to account for changes as and when necessary. Employees/volunteers will be informed when the policy has changed but it is their responsibility to read the latest version of this document.



REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER SC037515

2. Use of e-mail

Contents of e-mails

E-mails that employees/volunteers intend to send should be checked carefully. E-mail should be treated like any other form of written communication and, as such, what is normally regarded as unacceptable in a letter is equally unacceptable in an e-mail communication.

The use of e-mail to send or forward messages which are defamatory, obscene or otherwise inappropriate will be treated as misconduct under the disciplinary procedure. In serious cases this could be regarded as gross misconduct and lead to dismissal.

Equally, if an employee/volunteer receives an obscene or defamatory e-mail, whether unwittingly or otherwise and from whatever source, he/she should not forward it to any other address.

Statements to avoid in e-mails include those criticising other organisations or their staff, those stating that there are quality problems with goods or services of suppliers or service users, and those stating that anyone is incompetent.

Corporate information to be included in e-mails

Employees should ensure that official corporate information is given on any e-mails that they send. An example of the e-mail layout is provided below:

*Karen Cloney
Chair of the Board of Trustees
CONFIDANCE for Life
Registered Charity SC037515
Woodside
Charlottetown
Cupar
Fife
KY17 7UJ*

This message is intended for the use of only the person(s) ('Intended Recipient') to whom it is addressed. It may contain information that is privileged and confidential. Accordingly any dissemination, distribution, copying or other use of this message or any of its content by any person other than the Intended Recipient may constitute a breach of civil or criminal law and is strictly prohibited. If you are not the Intended Recipient, please contact the sender as soon as possible.

CCing

Employees should exercise care not to copy e-mails automatically to all those copied in to the original message to which they are replying. Doing so may result in disclosure of confidential information to the wrong person.



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Attachments

Employees should not attach any files that may contain a virus to e-mails, as the Organisation could be liable to the recipient for loss suffered. The Organisation has virus-checking in place but, if in doubt, employees should check with the IT department.

Employees should exercise extreme care when receiving e-mails with attachments from third parties, particularly unidentified third parties, as these may contain viruses.

3 Personal use of e-mail

Although the e-mail system is primarily for business use, the Organisation understands that employees may on occasion need to send or receive personal e-mails using their work address. When sending personal e-mails, employees should show the same care as when sending work-related e-mails.

4 Monitoring of e-mail

The Organisation reserves the right to monitor employees' e-mails, but will endeavour to inform an affected employee when this is to happen and the reasons for it. The Organisation considers the following to be valid reasons for checking an employee's e-mail:

- If the employee/volunteer is absent for any reason and communications must be checked for the smooth running of the business to continue.
- If CONFIDANCE for Life suspects that the employee has been viewing or sending offensive or illegal material, such as material containing racist terminology or nudity (although the Organisation understands that it is possible for employees/volunteers inadvertently to receive such material and they will have the opportunity to explain if this is the case).
- If CONFIDANCE for Life suspects that an employee/volunteer has been using the e-mail system to send and receive an excessive number of personal communications.
- If CONFIDANCE for Life suspects that the employee/volunteer is sending or receiving e-mails that are detrimental to the Organisation.

When monitoring e-mails, CONFIDANCE for Life will, except in exceptional circumstances, confine itself to looking at the address and heading of the e-mails. Employees/volunteers should mark any personal e-mails as such and encourage those who send them to do the same. CONFIDANCE for Life will avoid, where possible, opening e-mails clearly marked as private or personal.

CONFIDANCE for Life reserves the right to retain information that it has gathered on employees/volunteers' use of e-mail for a period of one year.

5 Use of internet

Authorised internet users

Where an employee/volunteer has been provided with a computer with internet access at his/her desk, he/she may use the internet at work.



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Not everyone CONFIDANCE for Life needs access to the internet at work. Anyone who does not have access but believes that he/she requires it should contact his/her manager and make a written request, setting out the reasons why access should be allowed.

Sensible internet use

Where employees/volunteers are allowed access to the internet at work they are expected to use it sensibly and in such a manner that it does not interfere with the efficient running of the CONFIDANCE for Life. For example, where it would be quicker to make a telephone call than to engage in an internet search for the required information, then the telephone call should be made.

Employees/Volunteers may be called upon to justify the amount of time they have spent on the internet or the sites that they have visited.

CONFIDANCE for Life encourages employees/volunteers to become familiar with the internet and does not currently impose any time limitation on work-related internet use. It trusts employees/volunteers not to abuse the latitude given to them, but if this trust is abused it reserves the right to alter the policy in this respect.

Removing internet access

CONFIDANCE for Life reserves the right to deny internet access to any employee/volunteer at work, although in such a case it will endeavour to give reasons for doing so.

Registering on websites

Some sites that could be useful for CONFIDANCE for Life require registration. Employees/volunteers wishing to register as a user of a website for work purposes are encouraged to do so. However, they should ask their manager before doing this.

Licences and contracts

Some websites require CONFIDANCE for Life to enter into licence or contract terms. The terms should be printed off and sent for approval in advance or e-mailed to the Board of Trustees before an employee/volunteer agrees to them on the Organisation's behalf. In most cases, there will be no objection to the terms and it is recognised that the free information provided by the website in question may save the Organisation money. Employees/volunteers should, however, always consider whether the information is from a reputable source and is likely to be accurate and kept up to date, as most such contract terms will exclude liability for accuracy of free information.

Downloading files and software

Employees/volunteers should download files on to only those PCs with virus checking software and should check how long the download will take. If there is any uncertainty as to whether the software is virus-free or whether the time the download will take is reasonable, the relevant line manager should be consulted.

Using other software and hardware at work

CONFIDANCE for Life does not allow employees/volunteers to bring software or hardware into the office without the Chair of the Board of Trustees personnel's consent.



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6 Personal use of the internet

Although the e-mail system is primarily for business use, CONFIDANCE for Life understands that employees/volunteers may on occasion need to use the internet for personal purposes. Employees/volunteers may access the internet at work for personal purposes provided that:

- such use is limited to no more than 20 minutes in any day;
- the internet is not used to access offensive or illegal material, such as material containing racist terminology or nudity;
- no contracts or commitments are not entered into in the name of, or on behalf of, CONFIDANCE for Life;
- they do not arrange for any goods ordered on the Internet to be delivered to the CONFIDANCE for Life's address or order them in the CONFIDANCE for Life's name.

7 Social Networking

CONFIDANCE for Life permits employees/volunteers to access social networking websites on the internet for personal use during certain times (provided employees are not undertaking overtime). These times are:

- before and after work hours; and
- during a break at lunch.

CONFIDANCE for Life reserves the right to restrict access to these websites.

CONFIDANCE for Life respects an employee's/volunteer's right to a private life. However, the Organisation must also ensure that confidentiality and its reputation are protected. It therefore requires employees/volunteers using social networking websites to:

- refrain from identifying themselves as working for CONFIDANCE for Life;
- ensure that they do not conduct themselves in a way that is detrimental to CONFIDANCE for Life; and
- take care not to allow their interaction on these websites to damage working relationships between employees/volunteers and service users of the Organisation.

Employees/Volunteers should be aware that social networking websites are a public forum, particularly if the employee/volunteer is part of a 'network'. Employees/volunteers should not assume that their entries on any website will remain private. Employees/volunteers should never send abusive or defamatory messages.

Employees/Volunteers must also be security conscious and should take steps to protect themselves from identity theft, for example by restricting the amount of personal information that they give out. Social networking websites allow people to post detailed personal information such as date of birth,

place of birth and favourite football team, which can form the basis of security questions and passwords. In addition, employees should:

- ensure that no information is made available that could provide a person with unauthorised access to CONFIDANCE for Life and/or any confidential information; and
- refrain from recording any confidential information regarding CONFIDANCE for Life on any social networking website.

8 Disciplinary action

Misuse of computers is a serious disciplinary offence. The following are examples of misuse:

- Fraud and theft
- System sabotage
- Introduction of viruses and time bombs
- Using the system for excessive private work or any game playing
- Breaches of Data Protection Act
- Sending abusive, rude or defamatory messages via electronic mail
- Hacking
- Breach of CONFIDANCE for Life security procedures and email and Internet Policy.

This list is not exhaustive. Depending on the circumstances of each case, misuse of the computer system is likely to be considered a gross misconduct offence, punishable by dismissal. Misuse amounting to criminal conduct may be reported to the police.

9 Monitoring of internet access at work

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 the following to be valid reasons for checking an employee's internet usage:

- If CONFIDANCE for Life suspects that the employee/volunteer has been viewing offensive or illegal material, such as material containing racist terminology or nudity (although CONFIDANCE for Life understands that it is possible for employees/volunteers inadvertently to view such material and they will have the opportunity to explain if this is the case).
- If CONFIDANCE for Life suspects that the employee/volunteer has been spending an excessive amount of time viewing websites that are not work related.

CONFIDANCE for Life reserves the right to retain information that it has gathered on employee/volunteer's use of the internet for a period of one year.



10 General

The aim of these rules is to be helpful, and to set guidelines on the use of e-mail and the internet at work for the smooth and efficient running of the business.

If there is anything in these rules that an employee/volunteer considers to be unworkable or does not understand, he/she should notify his/her manager.

Self-employed contractors, agency workers or any other individuals working temporarily for COCNFIDANCE for Life should be made aware of the rules regarding the use of e-mail and the internet.

New members of staff should be shown this policy as part of their induction.