



INFORMATION POLICY

Access to Social Media websites¹ v1.1

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| Effective Date: | 1 st March 2011 | Approved by: | GIST-ISec & GIST IS |
| For further information contact: | Office of the Chief Information Officer, [REDACTED] | | |

1. Policy overview

This policy defines how the Home Office uses external Social Media websites for business purposes, and the limitations of this access within the Home Office ICT infrastructure.

2. Scope

This policy applies to corporate office networks within the Home Office, and is recommended for adoption by Executive Agencies of the Home Office and its NDPBs for use in their local networks and systems.

For the purposes of this policy, Social Media websites are defined as electronic systems which “allow people to easily and simply create their own online page or profile and to construct and display an online network of contacts, often called ‘friends’ ... and communicate via their profile both with their ‘friends’ and with people outside their list of contacts”².

3. Policy Description

Our policy is to:

- Enable access to Social Media websites only for individuals who have a business requirement which has been approved by their Director;
- Provide access to such individuals whilst they are in a particular post: such access is to be removed when they move post to another unit, and reviewed when their role within a business unit changes;
- Provide access to Social Media websites which uses the functionality enabled through the Home Office ICT infrastructure: i.e. access to a specific category of website is opened up, but not additional functionality which would require the relaxation of security controls;
- Provide additional functionality to Social Media websites beyond that enabled by the Home Office ICT infrastructure through the use of standalone PCs to meet business need, e.g. if active participation in Social Media websites rather than passive monitoring is required by the business unit. The cost of this to be carried by the relevant business unit. Active participation in Social Media websites e.g. use of tools such as blogs to engage with stakeholder groups, must be conducted in line with the guidance detailed below in 4. below;

¹ Version 1.0 of this policy was titled: Social Networking. All references to Social Networking Sites or SNS have now been replaced with the term Social Media

² Ofcom. Social Networking, 2008

(http://www.ofcom.org.uk/advice/media_literacy/medlitpub/medlitpubrss/socialnetworking/report.pdf)

- Review the number of individuals with access to Social Media websites for business purposes ensuring that this is maintained at a manageable level. Appropriate security and monitoring of access will be undertaken;
- Audit the business requirement for individuals to have continuing access to Social Media websites on a six-monthly basis;
- Usage of Social Media websites may be monitored and recorded to ensure that usage relates to approved business requirements.

4. Related Statements

Lifecycle Policy – Access v1.1

<http://horizon.gws.gsi.gov.uk/portal/site/horizon-intranet/menuitem.5e9fdfa5b28a104a43757f10466b8a0c/?vgnextoid=117c60d7f7236210VgnVCM2000003cb1a8c0RCRD>

Statements from Staff Handbook re acceptable use of IT³:

- Use of Departmental Resources: <http://horizon.gws.gsi.gov.uk/portal/site/horizon-intranet/menuitem.9a6ef755dd73104a43757f10466b8a0c/?vgnextoid=0a9a0810e97e3210VgnVCM2000003cb1a8c0RCRD>
- Acceptable use of the internet: <http://horizon.gws.gsi.gov.uk/portal/site/horizon-intranet/menuitem.9a6ef755dd73104a43757f10466b8a0c/?vgnextoid=2632594e46ce3210VgnVCM1000002bb1a8c0RCRD>
- Unacceptable use of the internet: <http://horizon.gws.gsi.gov.uk/portal/site/horizon-intranet/menuitem.9a6ef755dd73104a43757f10466b8a0c/?vgnextoid=6a6ad381e7ce3210VgnVCM1000002bb1a8c0RCRD>
- Internet, e-mail & telephone usage: action to be taken: <http://horizon.gws.gsi.gov.uk/portal/site/horizon-intranet/menuitem.9a6ef755dd73104a43757f10466b8a0c/?vgnextoid=a0176fc42e7e3210VgnVCM2000003cb1a8c0RCRD>

Guidance on usage of Social Media websites:

- This includes links to further document, including guidance from the Cabinet Office, COI and the Civil Service Code on use of social media by civil servants. <http://horizon.gws.gsi.gov.uk/portal/site/horizon-intranet/menuitem.9a6ef755dd73104a43757f10466b8a0c/?vgnextoid=b5265d3b9cdee210VgnVCM2000003cb1a8c0RCRD>

Home Office policy on use of governmental Social Media websites, such as Civil Pages, is included in:

- Policy on collaborative working: <http://horizon.gws.gsi.gov.uk/portal/site/horizon-intranet/menuitem.5e9fdfa5b28a104a43757f10466b8a0c/?vgnextoid=3b4edaf0250ae210VgnVCM1000002bb1a8c0RCRD>

³ These parts of the Staff Handbook detail what is, and is not, acceptable use of Home Office IT systems and equipment. The policy on 'use of departmental resources' provides guidance on the management of any misuse.