

Social Media and Networking Policy

Purpose

Social networking platforms provide opportunities for communication, sharing information, and building connections. They include websites, apps, email, and online forums, where users can post text, images, videos, or a combination of these, from mobile devices, tablets, or computers.

This policy aims to:

- Encourage the **positive and responsible use** of social networking by parents, carers, staff, Trustees, and anyone associated with Time Childcare.
- **Safeguard children, staff, Trustees, and anyone associated with Time Childcare** from the negative effects of social media.
- Protect the **reputation of Time Childcare** from inappropriate or harmful content.
- Clarify what Time Childcare considers **appropriate and inappropriate online conduct**.
- Outline the **actions Time Childcare may take** if social media is used inappropriately or unlawfully.

Appropriate Use of Social Media

Social networking can enhance:

- Communication between parents/carers and the setting
- Access to information and services
- Promotion of home learning
- Efficient sharing of feedback

Guidance for parents and carers:

Before posting any content related to Time Childcare, children, staff, or Trustees, consider:

- Is this **the right channel** to raise a concern or provide feedback?
- Would a **private conversation with the Manager or Trustee Team** be more appropriate?
- Could the content **cause emotional or reputational harm** to individuals or Time Childcare?
- Does the post **comply with legal and safeguarding obligations**?

Remember: Naming individuals, posting abusive comments, or sharing sensitive information can result in **legal action**. Concerns should be raised through **appropriate channels**, including the complaint procedure.

Inappropriate Use of Social Media

It is rarely appropriate to use social media to express frustrations about Time Childcare. Examples of inappropriate use include (but are not limited to):

- Allegations or complaints about children, staff, Trustees, or the setting
- Defamatory statements or offensive comments
- Racist, sexist, or homophobic remarks
- Threats of violence
- Sharing images of the setting or children without **explicit permission**

Parents and carers are also responsible for ensuring that **children in their care use social media safely and appropriately**, including accessing age-appropriate platforms (e.g., Facebook requires users to be at least 13 years old).

Staff and Trustees

To protect the business and reputation of Time Childcare:

- Staff and Trustees are **strictly prohibited**, during or after employment or service, from **directly or indirectly sharing or publishing opinions, facts, or material** on any matter relating to Time Childcare.
- **General information, advertising, or public responses** are the responsibility of the Manager. Trustees will be **consulted as appropriate**.
- Staff and Trustees **must not accept or initiate friend requests** from parents or carers of children at Time Childcare unless there is a **pre-existing social relationship**.
- Any such relationship must be **declared at the time of appointment** or immediately if it develops during employment or service as a Trustee.
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How Time Childcare Will Respond

Time Childcare will address inappropriate social media use in a **professional and proportionate manner**:

1. **Initial discussion** – Contact to explain concerns and request removal of inappropriate content.
2. **Written warning** – Issue a formal warning if inappropriate posting continues.
3. **Further action** – Depending on severity, may include:
 - Seeking **legal advice** or action for defamatory content
 - Contacting the **Police** if a crime is suspected
 - Restricting access to Time Childcare online platforms
 - Contacting the social media provider to request **removal of content**

Raising Concerns

- Most concerns can be resolved by speaking with the **Manager, Lead Practitioner, or Trustee Team**.
- If unresolved, follow the **Time Childcare Complaints Procedure**, displayed at the entrance and available on the website.

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