

## **Communications Policy**

### **Introduction**

This Communications Policy applies to all employees, contractors, students on work placements and agents of Grafton Childcare who use the communications equipment and systems provided by Grafton Childcare and are referred to in this policy as "Users".

Users are encouraged to use email and the internet at work as a fast and reliable method of communication with significant advantages for business.

In light of the fact that communications made by Users reflect upon Grafton Childcare and are capable of creating a number of commercial, professional and legal problems, this policy is intended to clarify what Grafton Childcare expects from Users and their responsibilities when using Grafton Childcare's communications facilities.

Communications facilities, communications equipment and communications systems include: Telephone; Fax; Email; Internet and Intranet; Video conferencing facilities and any other communication device or network provided by Grafton Childcare.

### **General Principles**

There are certain general principles that should be born in mind when using any type of communication, be it external or internal, including hard copy letters, memos and notices. Grafton Childcare expects all users to:

- Use communication equipment and facilities, including Grafton Childcare's letterheads and stationery, responsibly and professionally and at all times in accordance with your duties;
- Ensure that they do not breach any copyright or other intellectual property rights when making communications;
- Ensure that they do not bind themselves or Grafton Childcare to any agreement;
- Be mindful of the fact that any communication may be required to be relied upon in court, to the advantage or the detriment of the individual or Grafton Childcare, and conduct their use of communication systems and equipment accordingly.

### **Internet**

Grafton Childcare provides access to the internet for the sole purpose of business and to assist Users in the furtherance of their duties. The use of the internet for personal purposes is strictly prohibited during normal working hours or during designated breaks unless prior consent has been sort of the manager.

Users must not use the internet to gain or attempt to gain unauthorised access to computer material or private databases, including restricted areas of Grafton Childcare's network. Nor must they intentionally or recklessly introduce any form of malware, spyware, virus or other malicious software or code to the communications equipment or systems of Grafton Childcare.

Users must not access or attempt to access any information which they know or ought to know is confidential or restricted.

Users must not download or install any software without the express permission of the Manager. Users must not attempt to download, view or otherwise retrieve illegal, pornographic, sexist, racist, offensive or any other material which may cause embarrassment to the corporate image of Grafton Childcare. Any such attempt will constitute a disciplinary offence and in addition to internet access being reviewed, reduced or withdrawn, may be subject to disciplinary action or summary dismissal.

### **Blogging and Social Networking Sites**

The viewing of or contribution to blogs, content sharing and social networking sites such as "Facebook", "Myspace", "Bebo", "YouTube", "Pinterest" and "Yahoo Groups" using Grafton Childcare's communications systems is prohibited without specific task only consent of the Manager. Grafton Childcare recognises that there may be other sites of this type of which it is not aware and therefore Users are reminded that despite any existence of such websites, the visiting of them is nonetheless prohibited.

Grafton Childcare recognises that in their private time Users may wish to publish content on the internet through a variety of means. Even outside of work Users must adhere to this policy when creating, modifying or contributing to websites.

If a User makes any posting, contribution or creation or publishes any other content which identifies or could identify the User as an employee, contractor, student on work placements or agent or other member or associate of Grafton Childcare, or in which the User discusses his/her work or experiences relating to Grafton Childcare, the User must at all times ensure that his/her conduct is appropriate and consistent with their contract of employment and the corporate image of Grafton Childcare, and should bear in mind that the User as an employee owes a duty of fidelity to Grafton Childcare.

If a User is unsure as to the appropriateness of a posting or other content published by him/her, they should speak to the Manager at the earliest opportunity to seek clarification.

If, in any contribution or posting which identifies or could identify the User as an employee, agent or other affiliate of Grafton Childcare, the User expresses an idea or opinion he/she should include a disclaimer which clearly states that the opinion or idea expressed is that of the User and does not represent that of Grafton Childcare.

The User should be aware that any material which they upload which is pornographic, sexist, racist, homophobic, paedophilic or any other discriminatory or otherwise offensive material could amount to gross misconduct with the possibility of summary dismissal;

Material and information which the User uploads and knows or ought to know is confidential or restricted information and which they are not authorised to deal with could amount to gross misconduct with the possibility of summary dismissal;

Users may not at any time hold discussions or express opinions with any ex-clients, current clients or prospective clients of Grafton Childcare which refer to any aspect of the care for

which we provide here at Grafton Childcare and will amount to gross misconduct with the possibility of summary dismissal;

If any User is contacted by ex-clients, current clients or prospective clients of Grafton Childcare they are advised to direct all enquires to the Manager and advise the Manager immediately of the approach or face the possibility of gross misconduct with the possibility of summary dismissal;

Any content which has the object or effect of causing harassment to the recipient, including but not limited to ex-clients, current clients or prospective clients of Grafton Childcare will amount to gross misconduct with the possibility of summary dismissal;

## **Email**

The email address with which users are provide by Grafton Childcare ending in the suffix @graftonchildcare.co.uk is provided for business purposes in order to facilitate information sharing and timely communication with clients, parents, colleagues and suppliers. Any business which is conducted via email must be conducted through Grafton Childcare's email and is under no circumstances to be conducted through any other personal email address or account without prior approval of the Manager.

Users should adopt the following points as part of best practice:

- Before communicating via email, Users should satisfy themselves that it is the most suitable mode of communication, particularly where time is of the essence;
- Ensure that the email contains Grafton Childcare disclaimer notice. This should be added automatically by the email client. If it is not you should speak to the Manager immediately;
- All emails should contain the appropriate business reference(s), either in the subject line or in the body of the text;
- Emails should be worded appropriately and in the same professional manner as if they were a letter;
- All emails should be proof read before transmission, which includes ensuring that any attachments referred to in the text are actually attached and are correct and the intended recipients' email addresses are correct;
- If an important document is transmitted via email, the sender should telephone the recipient where possible to confirm that the document has been received in full;
- Users must not email any business document to their own or a colleague's personal web-based email accounts unless specifically permitted to do so by the Manager.
- The use of Grafton Childcare's email for any personal matter is prohibited as it places additional strain on Grafton Childcare's communications facilities. In any case User's are not permitted to use Grafton Childcare's email address to subscribe to any newsletters or to receive any marketing, as this will result in extra unnecessary burden being placed upon Grafton Childcare's communications systems.
- Users should at all times remember that email messages may have to be disclosed as evidence for any court proceedings or investigations by regulatory bodies and may

therefore be prejudicial to both there and Grafton Childcare's interests. Users should remember that data which appears to have been deleted is often recoverable.

## **Personal Email**

Users are not permitted to access their personal email accounts via Grafton Childcare's communication systems without the prior consent of the Manager and then only if the Manger deems that the use is reasonable and does not interfere with the User's performance of his/her duties i.e. is outside of normal working hours during a staff or management meeting or during a lunch break when no children are present.

## **Smart Phones and Watches**

At all times employees, visitors and students Smart Phones must be kept in staff bags in the designated cloakroom areas and may not be checked for messages or texts without prior consent of the Manager. In order to avoid disruption to others, Smart Phones must be turned off during working hours. Disciplinary action will be taken against anyone disregarding these rules. If necessary, emergency calls may be received through Grafton Childcare's Landline.

Users' may use their Smart Phones during designated breaks in a separate room away from any child for essential personal telephone calls regarding Users' domestic arrangements. However all Smart Phones must remain turned off and in users bags and stored in the designated staff bag area at all other times. The Smart Phone must not be removed from the bag until the user is in the room designated for their break, with the door closed and no children present. After the designated break the Smart Phone must be turned off and returned to the users bag and then returned to the designated staff bag storage area.

The making and receiving of private calls or texting on Users own Smart Phones at Grafton Childcare must not be undertaken at any point whilst working unless the user is on a designated break away from any children.

Employees, visitors and students are permitted to wear Smart Watches when they visit Grafton Childcare, on the understanding that the Smart Phone they are linked to is turned off and the Smart Watch does not have any ability to take any photos, whilst the Smart Phone is turned off and stored in the users bag.

Grafton Childcare has its own Smart Phones which are used solely for business purposes and not for the personal use of any member of staff or member of Grafton childcare's own family. For example; while caring for the children we may sometimes wish to take photographs to share with parents, to support observations and planning for future activities for a child, or to help support a current theme or activity which a child is engaged with. Our Smart Phones may be used as our emergency telephone when staff are off the premises with children or whilst attending offsite training. Photographs may be taken with Grafton Childcare's Smart Phones and then used in a child's Learning Journey Folder. Photos are also published on our facebook and instagram pages and very occasionally on our website. We gain ongoing specific prior permission to do so from each parent and carer when a child is placed in our care.

We also occasionally send photos to the local press e.g. The Mid Devon Advertiser etc when we are promoting Grafton Childcare's, recent activities or money we have raised for good causes, e.g. Children in Need etc. All of these photos are taken on Grafton Childcare own Smart Phones for which we gain ongoing prior permission to do so from each parent and carer when a child is placed in our care.

At no point may a member of staff, student or volunteer remove, forward, share or send copies of any photos stored on either of Grafton Childcare's own Laptops, iMac, iPad, Memory Storage Devices, Smart Phones, Website, Facebook or Instagram Pages to any unauthorised persons without prior express permission of the Manager. Any user found to be misusing the communication equipment and systems provided by Grafton Childcare will be treated in line with the usual disciplinary procedures.

Only the Manager and members of the Senior Management Team are responsible for deleting any unneeded photos and securely uploading any necessary photos to Grafton Childcare's Facebook or Instagram Page and Website as well as printing photos for Learning Journals with the prior written consent of parents and carers.

During our regular Stay, Play and Chat Meetings with Parents we might also from time to time place photos onto our TV in the lounge which we have taken of the children whilst at Grafton Childcare, demonstrating what the children have been achieving and doing during the course of their time with us.

During our regular Stay, Play and Chat Meetings with Parents we ask that Parents keep their Smart Phones turned off and in their bags, to prevent them accidentally taking a photo of a child whose parent may not wish their children to be photographed for safeguarding reasons.

When Parents, Carers and Designated Emergency Contacts are dropping off or collecting children from Grafton Childcare all Smart Phones must be turned off and stored in a bag or pocket. If when Parents, Carers and Designated Emergency Contacts come to the door a member of staff notices that they are holding a Smart Phone they will be asked to turn it off and place it in a bag or pocket before we will permit them to drop off or collect any children.

## **Telephone Use**

Grafton Childcare's telephone line is for the exclusive use by Users working on the Grafton Childcare's business. Essential personal telephone calls regarding Users' domestic arrangements are acceptable, but excessive use of Grafton Childcare's telephone system for personal calls is prohibited. Acceptable telephone use may be defined as no more than five minutes of personal calls in a working day. Any personal telephone calls should be timed to cause minimal disruption to Users' work.

Users should be aware that telephone calls made and received on Grafton Childcare's telephone system may be routinely monitored to ensure customer satisfaction or to check the telephone system is not being abused. If Grafton Childcare discovers that the telephone system has been used excessively for personal calls, this will be dealt with under Grafton Childcare's disciplinary procedures.

## **Grafton Childcare's Communications Equipment**

The integrity of Grafton Childcare's business relies on the security of its communications equipment and systems. Users are responsible for preserving the security of communications equipment and systems through careful and cautious use.

Access to certain websites is blocked from Grafton Childcare's communications equipment and systems. Often the decision to block a website is based on potential security risks that the site poses. Users must not attempt to circumvent any blocks placed on any website or features by Grafton Childcare.

Users must not download or install any software or program without the express permission of the Manager. Users must not share any password that they use for accessing Grafton Childcare's communications equipment and systems with any person, other than when it is necessary for training, support, maintenance or repairs.

Users must ensure that confidential and sensitive information is kept secure. Workstations and screens should be locked when the User is away from the machine, hard copy files and documents should be secured when not in use and caution should be exercised when using Grafton Childcare's mobile telephones outside of the workplace.

When opening email from external sources Users must exercise caution in light of the risk viruses pose to system security. Users should always ensure that they know what an attachment is before opening it. If a User suspects that their computer has been affected by a virus they must contact the Manager immediately.

No external equipment or device may be connected to or used in conjunction with the Grafton Childcare's equipment or systems without prior express permission of the Manager.

### **Monitoring**

Grafton Childcare may monitor your communications for the following reasons:

- To ensure Grafton Childcare's policies and guidelines are followed, and standards of service are maintained;
- To provide evidence of transactions and communications;
- To help combat unauthorised use of Grafton Childcare's communications equipment and systems and maintain security;
- In order to better understand the requirements of Grafton Childcare in terms of the provision of communication equipment and systems.

Users should be aware that all internet and email traffic data sent and received using the Grafton Childcare's communication systems is logged, including websites visited, times of visits and duration of visits. Any personal use of the internet will necessarily therefore be logged also. User's who wish to avoid the possibility of the Grafton Childcare becoming aware of any political or religious beliefs or affiliations should avoid visiting websites at work which might reveal such affiliations. By using Grafton Childcare's's communications equipment and systems for personal use, Users are taken to consent to personal communications being

logged and monitored by Grafton Childcare. Grafton Childcare shall ensure that any monitoring of communications complies with the Data Protection Act 1998.

When monitoring emails, Grafton Childcare will normally restrict itself to looking at the address and heading of the emails. However, if it is considered necessary, Grafton Childcare may open and read emails. Users should be aware that sensitive and confidential communications should not be sent by email because it cannot be guaranteed to be private.

### **Misuse and Compliance**

Any user found to be misusing the communication equipment and systems provided by Grafton Childcare will be treated in line with the usual disciplinary procedure.

The viewing, transmission, downloading, uploading or accessing in any way of any of the following material using Grafton Childcare's communications equipment and systems will amount to gross misconduct with the possibility of summary dismissal;

- Material which is pornographic, sexist, racist, homophobic, paedophilic or any other discriminatory or otherwise offensive material;
- Illegal or criminal material, including material which breaches copyright or any other intellectual property right;
- Any material which has the object or effect of causing harassment to the recipient;
- Material which the User knows or ought to know is confidential or restricted information and which they are not authorised to deal with;
- Any website which Grafton Childcare has blocked access to from Grafton Childcare's communications equipment and systems.