



COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY POLICY

Introduction

To operate effectively, organisations need to communicate effectively. It is important to ensure that we treat everyone, internally and externally, professionally and courteously.

This policy is to be regarded as a code of conduct on e-mail and internet usage, on contact with the media and all aspects of communication. It applies to all employees, volunteers, Trustees and any other person connected with and/or using Mind in Croydon's services/facilities. Failure to observe this policy may be regarded as misconduct or gross misconduct and will be dealt with according to Mind in Croydon's normal disciplinary procedure.

Written communication

All written communication should use plain English, be professional, polite and spell checked.

E-mail and internet use

Mind in Croydon has invested in the necessary resources to provide employees with the facility to use e-mail and to access the Internet which is beneficial in enabling them to undertake their duties more effectively. These facilities may only be used for business purposes except in certain circumstances outlined below.

Any person who experiences problems concerning abuse of the electronic communication facility, should in the first instance approach their immediate or (in the case e.g. of volunteers/trustees the appropriate) line manager.

USE OF E-MAIL

- E-mail should normally only be used to communicate internally with colleagues and externally to clients and suppliers, on business related issues. Messages to family or friends, and others are permitted, but must be of a serious nature and be as brief as possible. The mailing of jokes containing sexually explicit or otherwise offensive material, either internally or externally may be regarded as gross misconduct.
- All staff should ensure that the automatic 'out of office' assistant/response and/or message forwarding facilities are used to cover absences and should cover when the staff member will be away and when they will return to the office and who to contact if there is an urgent matter
- No e-mail may contain any references to other individuals which might be construed as libellous.
- No e-mail communication, which might be regarded as harassing or insulting, may be sent using Mind in Croydon's system. Complaints about the performance or service of other departments or individuals must be made on a face-to-face basis or in a formal letter, as is normal and courteous practice.
- Mind in Croydon recognises that it is not always possible to control incoming mail. Any material received which would be considered as non-businesslike, sexually explicit or offensive should be reported to a person's line manager.
- E-mail may be used for the despatch of formal documents such as contracts or proposals, but it should be borne in mind that documents issued this way are just as legally binding as those sent conventionally. **However, please remember that e-mail can be intercepted on the Internet and if confidentiality is an issue, avoid it.**
- If employees receive virus warnings via e-mail, they should take no action whatsoever other than informing Richard Swann, Mind in Croydon's IT contractor (contact details appear on page 2) immediately
- E-mails sent internally may be sent in an informal style, but staff are asked to observe the normal courtesy that they would extend in written memos.

- E-mails which are sent to recipients outside Mind in Croydon should be composed in a business-like manner.
- Unsolicited e-mails must not be sent at any time. Any 'junk' mail received should be deleted.
- It is a disciplinary offence to access another individuals' e-mail facility by using their password without their express permission.
- Any message sent should have the appropriate authority. No one is permitted to send e-mails in another person's name.
- Employees should inform their line manager if training is required to ensure adherence to this policy.
- Computers, networks, e-mail systems etc are the property of Mind in Croydon. Emails are not the property of staff and as such there can be no expectation of privacy. Hard copies of e-mail will be used as evidence in disciplinary proceedings and as evidence supporting any claims.
- When a member of staff or volunteer leaves the agency, Mind in Croydon will post an out of office message saying that the person no longer works here and referring the person to whom they should contact instead. E-mails and user profiles will be archived or deleted in accordance with Data Protection/UK GDPR procedures.

USE OF INTERNET

- Employees should not access, view, receive, download, send or store material from sites such as those relating to pornography, racism, terrorism, cults, hate speech, illegal drugs or other inappropriate sites. To do so may be considered an act of gross misconduct. The only possible exceptions to this are for employees who need to access such sites in relation to work. For example, someone in the Therapeutic Service may need to go to a site about gambling addiction or a member of staff may have good reason to go to a site about the effects of illegal drugs. Visits to such sites however should be limited strictly to work-related issues.
- The Company accepts that employees may find it convenient to browse the Web for their own personal reasons during their own time (e.g., lunch break). If you decide to buy anything over the Internet you are advised that, if you give credit card details or other sensitive information, ensure that you have a secure connection. Goods may be received on company premises but this should be kept to a minimum and if in any way it interferes with the smooth running of the office employees may be asked to cease the practice.
- Employees should not use work equipment and email to join any mailing lists or solicit any information on the Internet unless there is a business need to do so.
- It is forbidden to access an external computer or external network (excluding the www) without authorisation or to compromise the performance or privacy of any computer system.
- It is forbidden to place any Mind in Croydon Limited material on any publicly accessible website unless authorised by the Chief Executive
- You should be aware that those viewing Web pages can be identified by the site owners.
- Mind in Croydon reserves the right to view and monitor all e-mail and internet access. Should this be found to be inappropriate it may be viewed as gross misconduct.

None of these examples is exhaustive. Depending on the circumstances of each case any use of Information Technology deemed to be unauthorised, to bring the Charity into disrepute or deemed to be in any way unwelcomed by the Charity will result in disciplinary action, and in some cases summary dismissal. Misuse amounting to criminal conduct will be reported to the police.

STORAGE AND BACKUP OF FILES

In light of the General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) rules, Mind in Croydon has carried out a review of its data security policy in terms of the storage and backup of data files and will continue to do so on an ongoing basis.

The data used at work is the property of Mind in Croydon and must be stored securely to ensure confidentiality and compliance with UK GDPR. It must be stored in such a way that management (the data controller) can access the data should a request be received as a result of UK GDPR.

In order to comply with the above and to ensure that all work files are a) backed up securely and b) available to other authorised staff they must be saved to a networked location

- In the case of Fairfield House this will be the S: or P: drive
- At Orchard House this will be the F:, H: or S: drive
- For Pampisford Road this will be the NASbox
- A number of users store files in Google Drive and/or MS SharePoint, these locations are also deemed as networked and secure.

The contents of files saved on your PC/laptop are not backed up. Should your device fail or be damaged, mislaid or stolen the information will be lost with no means of retrieval. All staff and volunteers must ensure that any work files are always saved to a networked location. If you need assistance, please contact Richard Swann (S-Guard Ltd), who is Mind in Croydon's IT contractor and available on 07841 066117.

CONTACTS WITH THE MEDIA

The media can have their own agenda which may conflict with our own. For this reason, and because they frequently get things wrong, we need to handle our contact with the media with great care.

Enquiries and requests for information or comment from the media fall into three main categories: -

1. Enquiries about specific incidents or individual people

Examples: - a suicide; an assault on a member of the public by a patient discharged from compulsory detention in hospital; a fire at a Mind in Croydon project.

No trustee or member of staff apart from the Chief Executive is permitted to comment on specific incidents or individual people and this should be made clear to media representatives. All enquiries must be referred to the Chief Executive, Director of Services or the Chair who may delegate the responsibility for responding to media enquiries to another staff member or trustee in specific circumstances such as absence or holiday.

2. Requests for comment on general mental health issues

These are likely to fall into two categories: -

a) Issues where Mind's policy is established and well-known.

Example: - support for increased user involvement in running services.

b) Current issues where Mind in Croydon's Board of Directors may not have discussed and agreed on the view the organisation should hold and promote.

Examples: - what is the impact of the new system of care management on clients locally; are homeless people in Croydon receiving adequate medical care?

The Chief Executive is the only member of staff authorised to comment on these matters.

3. Requests for factual and statistical information

All such queries should be referred to the Director of Services or, in their absence, the Chief Executive.

N.B. NON-SENIOR STAFF ARE NOT PERMITTED TO MAKE STATEMENTS OR RESPOND TO QUERIES FROM THE MEDIA IN ANY CIRCUMSTANCES

This includes all staff members except the senior staff and project leaders specifically referred to above.

Press Releases

Where Mind in Croydon has an agreed view on an issue and wishes to use the press to publicise it or help in campaigning on it, it is advisable to prepare a press release. A press release is also a helpful way of keeping the press informed of the opening of new projects or other achievements. Such prepared statements for the press must be approved by the Chair before release.

Submitting Articles for Publication

All articles must be approved by the Chief Executive or Chair before they are submitted for publication.

Radio and TV Programmes

No trustee or member of staff apart from the Chief Executive may agree to participate in a radio or television programme in connection with their work for Mind in Croydon without the permission of the Chair or the representative to whom they have delegated responsibility in this matter.

Interviews carried out or responses given over the phone must be carried out strictly within the provisions of these guidelines.

Volunteers

If volunteers are approached by the media they must not respond to queries but must refer these to the Director of Services or the Chief Executive.

General guidelines on contact with the media

When a call from the media is received note down who is calling, from which agency, and the subject of the enquiry or request for comment.

Explain why you can't comment (you're not permitted to do so). Refer the caller to another agency or the Chief Executive/Chair if appropriate.

Failure to comply with this policy by staff and volunteers may result in disciplinary action.