Scarborough Counselling & Psychotherapy Training Institute

Social Media policy

Introduction

The aim of this document is to clarify SCPTI's position regarding the use of social media and offer guidance for trainees, staff and members using these various platforms, to do so responsibly. This document is written in line with UKCP's Code of Ethics and Professional Practice. (2019).

Many practitioners are using the internet, social networking sites and blogs to communicate - both personally and professionally. Members need to be aware that these internet/social networking sites are public and permanent. Once something has been uploaded or posted, it is still possible to trace it or be saved by others, even if it is subsequently deleted.

Keeping Boundaries

The nature of an online presence has the potential to blur personal and professional boundaries. SCPTI requires that practitioners make a clear distinction between their online personal and professional presence, about emails, websites and social media accounts i.e., Facebook or Instagram. We require members to have a separate email address for personal and professional use and that all possible steps are taken to ensure confidentiality of professional emails. Particularly, members are required not to use any joint email address with partner/other family member for professional purposes. It is important that if one email programme is used to collect emails from a variety of different accounts, e.g., Outlook, that it is not jointly used by a partner/other family member and is password protected.

Where confidential documents are sent electronically, they must have password or other forms of protection against being opened or tampered with by a third party.

Smartphones and tablets that are synchronised with a main computer need to be protected from being accessed by a partner/other family member. If computers are used by people other than the practitioner then all confidential, professional material needs to be password protected.

Practitioners will have up to date antivirus and anti-phishing protection and be registered under the Data Protection Act. Privacy Members are strongly advised to protect their own privacy. This means regularly checking your privacy settings as well as choosing carefully the information you make available online.

Be aware that comments or images posted by friends or family may be accessible as their privacy settings may not be set as rigorously as your own. Pictures of you that were taken by other people may be 'tagged' and it is recommended that you monitor this as much as possible and request people 'un-tag' any inappropriate images. Members need to be aware that most search engines will guide members of the public to any sites that could have personal information posted about them. Members are also reminded that when social media sites update their services, sometimes the privacy settings are automatically reset to a default setting. It is incumbent upon members to be vigilant about this.

Whichever way you identify yourself on your professional account (e.g., student/contractual trainee/SCPTI/UKCP etc), you are required to always act professionally and be guided by the UKCP and SCPTI Code of Ethics and Professional Practice. When members are involved in social networking sites, they may inadvertently become involved in ethically questionable conversations. If this occurs, members are required to act according to our ethical guidelines (e.g., withdraw, seek supervision or confront).

MEMBERS MUST NOT:

-Establish online relationships which in any way compromise their professional relationship with clients and service users.

-Accept friend requests from clients or service users, and to decline this request using formal or professional means of communication.

-Discuss clinical work or work-related issues online in any non-secure medium.

-Publish pictures of clients, trainees, supervisees or other service users online without their permission.

-Post defamatory comments about individuals or institutions. This applies to all comments made on personal or professional accounts. Defamation law applies to any comments posted on the internet.

-Use social-networking sites/internet/blogs for raising professional and/or ethical concerns or whistleblowing.

See next section for more details.

Professional Misconduct

The SCPTI Code of Ethics outlines our guiding principles, one of which is open communication with colleagues as well as clients. Members are required to confront any misconduct of other members on social networking sites either directly and formally with their colleagues, or as guided under the "Reporting Possible Violations" section of the Code. This policy is regularly reviewed every 12 months and updated a minimum of every 36 months as necessary.

Last Reviewed and Revised January 2026