



Steps to Work

WALSALL Limited

Email and Internet Usage Policy

Introduction

Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd internet and email services are provided by and monitored by Walsall Council on an outsourcing agreement. Walsall Council liaises with senior managers at Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd with regards to any issues or concerns arising.

This policy explains what members of staff must do when they apply to become users of Walsall Council's email and Internet services, send and receive emails and use the internet and Walsall Council's intranet. The policy also explains how Walsall Council will monitor email and Internet usage, and any circumstances under which certain officers are allowed to operate outside this policy.

1 Approval

The policy has been approved by Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd Board on 25 November 2009. All changes to the policy will be agreed by the Board. All members of staff will be informed of the document's existence and sign up to the revised policy.

2 What does the policy cover?

This policy explains what members of staff must do when they: -

- a) Apply to become users of Walsall Council's email, internet and Intranet services,
- b) Send and receive emails using Walsall Council's email services,
- c) Use the Internet and council's intranet, and
- d) Send email, text and other data from a personal computer, mobile telephone or Blackberry type device.

It also explains how Walsall Council will monitor email and Internet usage, and the circumstances under which certain council officers are allowed to operate outside this policy.

3 To whom does the policy apply?

This policy applies to all members of Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd Employees. Steps to Work also expects agency workers and casual workers, volunteers and others working on its behalf to comply with this policy.

4 Legislation and council policies

4.1 Legislation

All users must have full and proper regard for the law, company's policies and standards.

This policy intends to assist all users to comply with the law, especially;

- a) Data Protection Act 1998,
- b) Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003
- c) Human Rights Act 1998,
- d) Telecommunications (Lawful Business Practice) (Interception of Communications) Regulations 2001,
- e) Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, (RIPA),
- f) Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988,
- g) Freedom of Information Act 2000,
- h) Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000,
- i) Computer Misuse Act 1990, and
- j) Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
- k) The Safeguarding of Children Young People and Vulnerable Adults Act 2006.

4.2 Company policies

All users must comply with company policies and standards, especially regarding;

- a) Equality and diversity,
- b) Race equality,
- c) Equal opportunities,
- d) Disability equality,
- e) Whistle blowing,
- f) Members' code of conduct,
- g) Financial and contract rules and procedures,
- h) Code of conduct for employees and
- i) Records management policy and retention guidelines.
- J) Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Act 2006.

Users are responsible for ensuring their use of emails and the Internet complies with these and other relevant company approved policies.

5 Becoming a user of Walsall Council's email and Internet services

5.1 Entitlement

All members of staff are given access to email, Internet and intranet services only after completion of an authorised request form.

All members of staff of Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd are entitled to use email, Internet and intranet services for Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd business purposes where permission has been provided by the Chief Executive.

Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd officers are entitled to use the Internet for business and private use providing it conforms to the requirements of this policy.

Email can be used by members of staff for private use during lunchtime providing its use is reasonable, not excessive, does not distract users from undertaking their duties and is compliant with this policy.

5.2 Applying to become a user

All members of staff who wish to use email and the Internet must apply to Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd Chief Executive for this using a request form.

An Operational Manager must authorise the form to confirm that the requester has legitimate need for the services.

By signing the request form all users of Walsall Council's email, Internet and intranet services agree to be bound by this policy's requirements. This shall include an agreement that Walsall Council shall undertake monitoring of all users' emails, intranet and Internet usage to the extent that the Chief Executive deems appropriate. Monitoring will only be undertaken in accordance with Section 8 of this policy.

5.3 Security

Every user must use a personal user identification and password.

No user must attempt to access emails, the Intranet, or the Internet except with the user identification and password issued to them. They must not create other names or aliases.

All passwords are to be kept in confidence and changed using procedures laid down by Walsall Council's Assistant Director responsible for information technology and shall be made available to users through the intranet.

Passwords must never be disclosed to another person nor should disclosure be sought.

Passwords must not be written down or left where other people may obtain access to them.

All users shall be solely responsible for the emails sent by them and for their use of the Internet undertaken under their password. Users should note that deletion of an emails no guarantee of its permanent removal.

All users must comply with Walsall Council's information security policy.

All Officers are responsible for making arrangements to ensure that emails are received by another officer during periods of absence. They should use a procedure approved by Walsall Council's Assistant Director responsible for information technology.

5.4 Withdrawal of service

The provision of the services supplied to Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd by Walsall Council may be withdrawn at any time, at the direction of Walsall Council's Chief Internal Auditor, company's Chief Executive or Operations Manager or by an officer acting on their authority.

Walsall Council's email and Internet services will be withdrawn immediately from all users when they cease to be Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd employees.

Managers must inform the ISS customer service desk when users cease to be Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd employees. Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd Personnel Officer must inform the ISS customer service desk when users cease to be Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd employees.

Email and Internet services will be withdrawn if abused or misused. Employees not adhering to this policy will be dealt with under Steps to Work's disciplinary procedure and a serious misuse or abuse may lead to dismissal.

6 Sending and receiving emails

6.1 Responsibility

Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd employee can send and receive personal and company's business emails providing they do not break the requirements of this policy.

Employees are permitted to send or receive personal email providing they comply with the requirements of this policy and it is not;

- a) Undertaken for profit,
- b) Used excessively, frequently or unreasonably during their working hours, and likely to distract officers from their duties.
- c) Likely to cause annoyance, or
- d) Contain material that has the potential to embarrass Walsall Council or bring Walsall Council into disrepute.

Email is not a confidential means of communication. Nothing must be sent in an email, which the sender would not be prepared to say in a public place. For example email messages can be: -

- a) Released in response to a Freedom of Information request, Environmental Regulation request, Data Protection request or during a disciplinary hearing or legal action.
- b) Intercepted by third parties.
- c) Inadvertently addressed.
- d) Forwarded accidentally. or
- e) Forwarded by initial recipients to third parties.

Employees are solely and individually responsible for their use of email and for maintenance of their mailbox.

Employees may give access to his or her mailbox to another officer providing;

- a) Authorisation from the Senior Manager within their department at their branch has given in writing.
- b) Walsall Council's Assistant Director responsible for information technology has been informed in writing via the ISS customer service desk, and
- c) Where email is sent on another person's behalf, the identification of both the sender and the person on whose behalf the email is sent shall be shown on the mail message.

6.2 Email security

A council approved, supplied and installed computer virus protection application must be installed on every machine used for emails owned by Steps to Work. This must be in force at all times and be kept effective by regular update and review.

Officers using external systems to access email for council business use must have reasonable antivirus software and security in place and conform to Walsall Council's home working policy.

Any file received, which is believed to be infected with a computer virus or other malicious software must immediately be reported to the ISS customer service desk at the earliest opportunity. Walsall Council's information technology officers' advice must be followed regarding action to be taken.

Computer viruses can have a serious impact on business systems and records of our transactions with citizens. Users must protect themselves from a suspected virus by being wary of any unknown emails. Users must read the email title and if the author is not a potential customer or is unknown to the user the email must be deleted. Email message attachments must also be deleted.

A disclaimer must be added to the signature to all emails. The disclaimer below is the current standard approved. All users must add this disclaimer to every email which is being sent outside of Walsall Council.

"The information in this message must be regarded as confidential and is intended for the addressee only unless explicitly stated. If you have received this message in error it must be deleted and the sender notified. The views expressed in this message are personal and not necessarily those of Walsall Council or Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd unless explicitly stated. Please be aware that emails sent to or received from Walsall Council or Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd may be intercepted and read by Walsall Council to ensure compliance with council policies or regulatory obligations, or for the purposes of essential maintenance or support of the email system. You should also be aware that any email may be subject of a request under Data Protection, Freedom of Information or Environmental Information legislation and therefore could be disclosed to third parties".

Encryption or compression of email, such as creating Zip files, must take place in accordance with instructions provided by Walsall Council's Assistant Director responsible for Information Technology through the ISS customer service desk.

6.3 Email received

Any email received, which is of an inappropriate nature, must be deleted at once and not distributed to anyone else. This includes, but is not limited to jokes, chain letters and messages of a pornographic, racist, sexist, unlawful or defamatory nature. Users not adhering to this corporate policy could face disciplinary action, not excluding dismissal.

Unsolicited offers to subscribe, unsubscribe, add or remove a user's name from a mailing list are to be deleted.

Downloading of files attached to emails for legitimate council business is allowed providing:

- a) Walsall Council's virus scanning software is used to check for embedded viruses,
- b) Wherever viruses are believed to exist, the file is not brought into any council equipment,
- c) Large files that are 20 megabytes in size or greater are downloaded following advice from the ISS helpdesk.

6.4 Generic mailboxes

Where an Operational Manager wishes to create a generic mailbox for receiving or sending emails, they must apply for access from the ISS helpdesk.

The generic mailbox must be:

- a) Administered by no less than two officers, who shall agree to comply with the requirements of this policy,
- b) Managed by a named officer, who should monitor use of the mailbox and track the response to enquiries from officers, and
- c) Used only for Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd business.

Where emails are sent from a generic mailbox, their content must be restricted to Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd business.

6.5 Sending email

All emails must have full regard to the confidentiality of Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd and other people's information:

- a) Emails' contents shall include only information, to which the sender has the authority to access and to pass on to other people, and
- b) Emails must not be used to send confidential or sensitive information to people or organisations to whom it should not be disclosed,

Unauthorised disclosure in Emails of Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd or other people's confidential or sensitive information will be regarded as misconduct, including gross misconduct.

Full compliance with the copyright of any material sent or received via email must be adhered to. This includes, and is not limited to software, text, images, sound and video.

Sending, which shall include forwarding or distributing, of frivolous, abusive or defamatory messages may break the law or may harm Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd interests. This includes, but is not limited to messages which contain jokes, chain letters along with messages which are obscene, racist, sexist, ageist, pornographic, likely to cause offence to others or in breach of this policy. Action may be taken against any user not adhering to this corporate policy. Dependent on the severity of misuse, employees could face disciplinary action, not excluding dismissal.

The audience of an email must be considered carefully and the automatic forwarding of all messages to long circulation lists must be avoided to reduce email traffic and the time spent dealing with irrelevant correspondence.

Where any user receives an email for which they are not the intended recipient, they should: -

- a) In the case of frivolous messages or unsolicited offers make no reply,
- b) In the case of messages which are obscene, racist, sexist, ageist, pornographic, likely to cause offence to others or in breach of this policy, report these to their line manager and then to the ISS customer service desk. The Chief Executive will liaise with the Chief Internal Auditor to determine the action to be taken, and
- c) In the case of information inadvertently or mistakenly sent to them, inform the sender.

Users should neither use nor pass on any sensitive or confidential information sent inadvertently or mistakenly to them.

Users must not send emails to all staff unless absolutely necessary. The intranet or alternative communication tools must be considered before distribution.

6.6 Purchasing by email

- 1 Walsall Council's email is not to be used for the ordering or purchase of goods, works or services for Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd, except where this has been agreed in writing by Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd Finance Manager. Where such agreement has been made, a procedure set out by the Finance Manager in agreement with the Chief Executive shall be used in accordance with Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd financial and contract procedures rules.
- 2 Employees shall not use Walsall Council's email service to purchase any item for their own private use as this may lead sellers to believe they are entering into a contract with Walsall Council or Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd.

6.7 Retaining email

Some emails may contain information that needs to be retained as a corporate record of a decision or transaction. As a result, email messages must be treated in the same way as other records of business activities and must be identified and retained in accordance with Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd retention guidelines.

The Freedom of Information Act requires Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd to respond to all requests for information from anyone, regardless of the format of the information, including email within twenty working days. Advice should be obtained prior to replying to any email identified as such a request.

Emails should be retained only as long as they are needed as a corporate or personal record. Other, unwanted, emails should be deleted on a regular basis.

6.8 Legal Documents

Except where the Chief Executive gives prior written approval officers shall not send or receive by text or email formal legal documents relating to the work of Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd. Where draft documents are received or sent in this way, hard copies shall be exchanged and these hard copy documents form the legally binding documentation.

7 Using the Internet

7.1 Internet Access and Security

All access to the Internet using equipment supplied by Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd is to be made through Walsall Council's Internet service supplier and by the use of the server or modem designated.

The latest available version of Walsall Council approved, supplied and installed virus protection application is to be in use at all times. Any file infected or believed to be infected with a virus or other malicious software must be reported at the earliest opportunity to Walsall Council through the ISS customer service desk for investigation and eradication.

No attempt is to be made by employees to disable, defeat or circumvent council firewalls or other network security facilities.

Internet connections using Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd telephone network are not allowed.

7.2 Using or contributing to the Internet

Employees can use the internet for private or company business providing they do not break the requirements of this policy.

Where an employee's use of Internet services is considered inappropriate, the matter will be brought to that employee's attention through Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd Personnel Officer. Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd reserves the right to its Chief Executive in consultation with the Personnel Officer and the Board to withdraw services from any employee who has made improper use of the internet under the conditions of this policy.

Employees are permitted to use the internet for company use and personal use providing they comply with the requirements of this policy and it is not;

- a) Undertaken for profit,
- b) Used excessively, frequently or unreasonably during their working hours, and likely to distract officers from their duties.
- c) Likely to cause annoyance to other employee's, and
- d) Used to access material that has the potential to embarrass Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd and bring Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd into disrepute.

Where employees make inappropriate use of internet services and websites including, but not limited to creating, accessing, distributing or storing pornographic, racist, sexist, or defamatory material, this is prohibited and employees not adhering to this corporate policy could face disciplinary action, not excluding dismissal.

Unless permission has been obtained from Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd Chief Executive, users are not permitted to use Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd IT services to create an online diary, a web log or 'blog', even if the user is doing so in their own time. Employee's developing or keeping a 'blog' without permission could face disciplinary action, not excluding dismissal. 'Blogging' refers to the development of an online diary, journal or weblog which enables users to contribute to or view regular updates within the journal or online diary. The activity of updating or contributing to a blog is called blogging and a creator of a blog is called a blogger.

Employees contributing to an online diary or 'blog' may face disciplinary action, not excluding dismissal if this is done frequently, undertaken during work time, or is defamatory to Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd.

Where employees post content on the internet where they are identifiable as an employee of Steps to Work, they should do so in a manner that is consistent with their contract of employment. Where an employees behaviour on the internet could be deemed as detrimental to Steps to Works reputation or where colleagues would have a proven case for bullying or harassment then that behaviour will be managed via the appropriate Steps to Work policy. It is expected that users of social networking applications will always exercise the right of freedom of expression with due consideration for the rights of others and should ensure that any contributions they make are professional and uphold the reputation of the trust.

Following agreement with their line managers, employees of Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd may contribute to notice boards, information sites, forums, and newsgroups in Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd name for company purposes, providing the content is not defamatory or bring Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd into disrepute.

Playing games over the Internet is not to be undertaken through Walsall Council's services.

All employees must refrain from political advocacy and/or the endorsement of commercial products or services when using Walsall Council's email or internet services.

Unnecessary or excessive Internet usage is to be avoided. This causes network and server congestion, slows other users, and ties up printers and other shared resources.

All Internet usage must be conducted honestly, respecting copyrights, software licensing rules, and intellectual property rights as in other business dealings and adhere to other council policies. Dependent on the severity of misuse, employees not adhering to this corporate policy could face disciplinary action, not excluding dismissal.

Unlawful Internet usage is forbidden.

If when using the Internet, the user receives “screen pop ups” offering services or advertisements, they must close the screen and inform the ISS customer service desk.

Internet facilities must not be used to break the law. Use of any information technology resources for illegal activity is grounds for gross misconduct and Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd will co-operate with any law enforcement agency in such situations.

No user shall deliberately use Walsall Council’s Internet or intranet facilities to propagate any virus, worm, Trojan horse or trap-door program code or other malicious software.

Employees must not use Walsall Council’s web services to access personal Internet email providers without initial advice and written approval from Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd Chief Executive.

7.3 Downloading material from the Internet

All users must comply with the copyright of any material downloaded from the Internet in accordance with section 4 of this policy. This includes but is not limited to software, text, images, sound and video.

Employees must only download software with the prior written approval of Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd Chief Executive.

Users downloading any communications intensive operations including; large file transfers, video downloads, mass emails) must do so outside core times following advice from ISS. Video and audio streaming technologies represent significant data traffic, which often causes local network congestion.

Video and audio material downloaded must be for Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd use only.

Before downloaded files are run or accessed, they must be scanned for viruses, using memory-resident or network computer virus checking software. Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd Chief Executive must be consulted before any software is downloaded from the Internet onto Walsall Council’s network services. Any downloaded software must be for direct business use, be properly licensed and immediately added to fixed asset registers. No pirated software or data may be downloaded or distributed.

All files downloaded from the Internet remain the intellectual property of their creator or current owner. All material uploaded to the Internet shall become the intellectual property of Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd unless otherwise agreed by the Chief Executive.

Internet facilities must not to be used to download entertainment software or games. Neither shall it be used to download material which is obscene, racist, sexist, ageist, pornographic, likely to cause offence to others or in breach of this policy.

7.4 Purchasing over the Internet

Employees must not use the Internet for the ordering or purchase of goods, works or services for Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd use, except where Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd Finance Manager has agreed this in writing. This is because sellers may be lead to believe they are entering into a contract with Walsall Council or Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd. Where such agreement has been made, a procedure set out by the Finance Manager in agreement with the Chief Executive shall be used.

Employees must not use Walsall Council's internet services to purchase any items for their own personal use.

8 Monitoring of email and Internet usage

8.1 General requirement to monitor

Walsall Council will undertake regular monitoring of Internet and email usage in order to:

- a) Protect Walsall Council's and Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd business interests,
- b) Safeguard the efficiency and integrity of services provided,
- c) Plan future communications requirements, and
- d) Ensure compliance with this procedure.

Monitoring and interception of electronic communications will be undertaken in accordance with Section 5.2 of this policy.

Monitoring and interception systems will be used to analyse the use of:

- a) Walsall Council's intranet and Internet sites,
- b) The identity and amount of use made of other Internet sites accessed,
- c) Internal email, and
- d) External email.

The results of general monitoring exercises shall be disclosed only in accordance with the requirements of the law and council policies.

8.2 Monitoring individuals' activity

Detailed analysis of an individual's use of the Internet and/or email will only be carried out following a formal request to Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd Chief Executive.

The Chief Executive shall first determine whether there is sufficient reason for an investigation to take place, and in particular whether there appears to have been;

- a) A breach or breaches of the law,
- b) Disregard for Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd policies, or
- c) Any other activity that may bring Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd into disrepute.

Where Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd Chief Executive instigates an investigation, he shall examine or ask others to examine to the extent he considers necessary:

- a) Emails – whether internal or external,
- b) Intranet and Internet pages, along with any items downloaded, and
- c) Files and other records held electronically, whether or not created from Emails or Internet pages.

In conducting such an investigation, Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd Chief Executive or any officer acting on his behalf shall be given full and prompt access to:

- a) Computers or peripheral equipment where owned by Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd, held or stored on its premises,
- b) Removable media, and
- c) All items stored on Walsall Council's network on behalf of Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd.

The Chief Executive shall ensure;

- a) All routine and investigatory monitoring activities are carried out in accordance with the agreement made by users in accordance with Section 5.2 of this policy,
- b) Details of all internet sites visited, names of Email correspondents, and contents of Emails are used only for the investigation or as part of a subsequent disciplinary process, and
- c) The police are informed wherever serious breaches of the law are suspected,

Employees shall cease examination immediately upon their discovering or holding reasonable suspicion of:

- (i) Child pornography, whether as pornographic images or other material. or
- (ii) Digital files that may be required for use as evidence and become contaminated by further examination or other actions.

In these cases, the matter is to be passed to the police at the earliest opportunity.

8.3 Agreement

By signing the access request form, employees agree that their use of email facilities and the Internet may be monitored.

Signing the access request form shall also provide consent for the Chief Executive to undertake detailed examinations of Email and internet usage as set out in section 8.2 above.

9 Roles and responsibilities

9.1 Chief Executive

Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd Chief Executive shall: -

- a) Alert Walsall Council's Assistant Director responsible for information technology of any concerns regarding email or Internet use which are discovered,
- b) Investigate any irregularities reported with regard to the usage of email, Internet and intranet services,
- c) Inform the police where there are grounds to suspect illegal misuse of Walsall Council's email and Internet and intranet systems.

9.2 Personnel Officer

Steps to Work (Walsall) Ltd Personnel Officer shall: -

- a) Assist the Chief Executive by providing information sought in relation to the investigating of any irregularities in the usage of email, Internet and intranet services, including supporting disciplinary procedures,
- b) Provide and verify information relating to the identity and employment of users and potential users of Walsall Council's email and Internet services.

9.3 Employees

Employees shall be responsible for: -

- a) Complying with the requirements of this policy,
- b) Reporting any non-compliance with this policy to the Chief Executive, and
- c) Seeking advice as appropriate.

Last Reviewed January 2010