ANGUS COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE, 15 NOVEMBER 2022

USE OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS, SOCIAL MEDIA AND MOBILE TECHNOLOGIES

REPORT BY KELLY MCINTOSH, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

ABSTRACT

This report presents the updated Education & Lifelong Learning Directorate Policy for the Use of Electronic Communications, Social Media and Mobile Technologies. This report updates an existing policy which has been in place since October 2013 (Report 553/13 refers).

1.   RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Children and Learning Committee:

(i)   Approves the updated Use of Electronic Communications, Social Media and Mobile Technologies Policy and accompanying documents (see Appendix 1).

2.   ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/COUNCIL PLAN

This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within:
The **Angus Community Plan 2017-30**:
- The best start in life for children
- Improved physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing
- More opportunities for people to achieve success

The **Council Plan 2019-2024**:
- We want to maximise inclusion and reduce inequalities

The **Tayside Plan** for Children, Young People and Families 2021-23
- Our children having the best start in life in a nurturing environment
- Our children and young people being meaningfully engaged with high quality learning experiences to extend their potential
- Our children growing up healthy, confident and resilient with improving physical and mental health and strengthened emotional wellbeing

3.   BACKGROUND

3.1   At its meeting of 03 October 2013, the Education Committee approved Report 553/13 and its associated appendices. The report provided details of the comprehensive policy for the 'Use of Electronic Communications, Social Media and Mobile Technologies.'

3.2   Since October 2013, minor amendments have been made to the policy guidelines and appendices, however there has not been a substantive review. Since the original approval of the policy, digital learning and teaching has become a key strand of the Curriculum for Excellence. A national strategy for digital learning and teaching was published in 2016.

3.3   School closures during the Covid-19 have further highlighted the importance of digital tools to support education. Learners and teachers are routinely using tools such as Microsoft Teams, OneDrive and Google Classroom. A National eLearning Offer is also available.

3.4 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) [General Comment 25](#) also sets out the importance of digital technologies for children and young people, and the rights they enjoy when using them. Taking these developments into account it is felt that this is an appropriate time for Elected Members to review the policy documents and approve amendments suitable to the current digital learning environment.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 All Angus Council schools and early learning and childcare settings have access to a range of appropriate ICT resources. This includes traditional 'desktop' computers, tablet devices, Chromebooks and interactive whiteboards. School wifi networks have been updated to enable children and young people to bring their own devices to school. Using Covid-19 grant funding, approximately 2,500 devices have been issued to children and young people at risk of digital exclusion. Schools have also worked at a local level to address barriers to online learning and teaching.

4.2 Learners and staff have access to the internet, email and a wide-range of online educational resources. Access to the internet on Council-provided devices is controlled by a process called 'whitelisting,' which ensures access to inappropriate content is prohibited.

4.3 Angus Council has a responsibility to protect all children, young people and staff from harm. Safe use of the internet and digital technologies is a core part of the curriculum. Angus Council was the first local authority to work in partnership with Respectme and NSPCC Scotland on the 'Think before you type' campaign to address online bullying. The Council has a small team of Digital Learning Officers to support schools more generally with digital learning and teaching. Key actions for the DLOs include the development of an e-learning internet safety module for staff. The DLOs are also supporting all schools to apply for Digital School Awards. Criteria for the awards includes specific requirements around internet safety and resilience.

4.4 Schools will be encouraged to promote this policy to their school communities. Relevant pages on the Angus Council website will also be updated.

5. PROPOSALS

5.1 The updated policy modernises the language used to better reflect current technologies and pedagogical approaches. The documentation is also streamlined, with a clear focus on what employees need to know in order to carry out their roles. Where appropriate, links are made to other policies and sources of guidance.

5.2 It is proposed that the Children and Learning Committee approves the updated Use of Electronic Communications, Social Media and Mobile Technologies Policy and accompanying documents (see Appendix 1).

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and is attached.

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 The Directors of Children, Families and Justice, HR, IT and Business Support, and Legal and Democratic Services, the Communications Manager, and the Digital Learning Officers have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

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List of Appendices:
- Appendix 1 – Use of Electronic Communications, Social Media and Mobile Technologies