

POLICY AIM

Being part of our the Sweetpeas team entails a position of trust and responsibility. We aim to ensure that our services, children, educators, and/or families are not compromised in any form on Facebook, Instagram, or any other social media platform and that all social media usage complies with the Service's philosophy, relevant policies, and the *Ethical Code of Conduct Policy*.

RATIONALE

We recognise both the benefits, and challenges, of using Facebook, Instagram and other social media platforms in the early childhood setting. This policy has been developed to provide employees, families, volunteers and students with standards of use as they engage in conversations or interactions using social media for official, professional and personal use.

SCOPE - WHO IS AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY?

- Educators / Staff
- Children
- Families
- Management
- Students / Volunteers

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD

QUALITY AREA 2 - CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Standard 2.2 (Safety) - *Each child is protected.*

QUALITY AREA 7 - GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

- Element 7.1.1 (Service philosophy and purpose) - *A statement of philosophy guides all aspects of the service's operations.*
- Element 7.1.2 (Management Systems) - *Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.*
- Element 7.1.3 (Roles and Responsibilities) - *Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and understood and support effective decision making and operation of the service.*
- Standard 7.2 (Leadership) - *Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community.*

RELATED POLICIES & LEGISLATION

RELATED SWEETPEAS POLICIES:

- Child Safe Environment Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Determining Responsible Person Policy
- Ethical Code of Conduct Policy
- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Handling Grievances and Complaints Policy
- Interactions and Relationships with Children Policy
- Supervision Policy
- Use of Technology Policy
- Volunteers, Students and Visitors Policy

RELATED EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AND REGULATIONS:

- Regulation 84 - Awareness of child protection law
- Regulation 181- Confidentiality and storage of records
- Regulation 183 - Storage of records and other documents

RELATED LEGISLATION:

- Privacy Act 1988
- Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998

TERMINOLOGY

- **Social Media** - “forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)” (Merriam-Webster dictionary)
- **Service** - the Sweetpeas service at which a staff member is employed.

IMPLEMENTATION AND STRATEGIES

Sweetpeas recognises that there are many advantages in using social media to network within Sweetpeas operations. It is important to approach usage with caution, through careful and systematic management. Whilst healthy debate may provide thought-provoking discussion, there are guidelines in place to ensure that our services remain open and welcoming for children, families, and staff.

The *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations* recognise the importance of safe physical and online environments to promote safety and wellbeing of all children. Sweetpeas has the responsibility to ensure children and educators are protected from harm when they engage with digital technology including social media.

This policy applies to all forms of social media including (but not limited to):

- Social networking, e.g., Facebook, Messenger, Twitter/X, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Discord
- Image sharing, e.g., Instagram, Snapchat, Imgur
- Video hosting, e.g., TikTok, YouTube, Vimeo, Twitch
- Community blogs, e.g., Tumblr, Medium
- Discussion sites, e.g., Reddit, Quora

SERVICE SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

Our services have a *Facebook* account and an *Instagram* account to converse and share information with our families and community, which is administered by the Approved Providers and Nominated Supervisor.

The intent for our social media pages is to:

- keep families in touch with what's happening at the services, including upcoming and special events.
- connect with other parents and share thoughts about programs, policies, and procedures.
- provide an avenue to ask parents their thoughts and provide appropriate research-based information on common child rearing issues.
- provide educational information to families and employees.
- share community information, including community events, community programs and other local information.

NOTE: The Service Facebook and Instagram accounts must not be used for personal comments or discussions by Sweetpeas employees.

PRIVACY

- All staff and educators must remain aware that they represent and could be identified as an employee of the company through any online activity.
- Staff and educators must maintain appropriate privacy of families, employees, students, children and volunteers, including when they have obtained permission to publish content to the Service social media pages.
- Absolutely no written content will be published on social media without the written permission of families to whom the content relates (see *Photo Authorisation Form*).
- Our services will gain written family permission prior to posting photos of children and will maintain a list of children who **do not** have permission to be posted on each platform.
- Passwords will not be shared without authorisation from Management.
- Our company will remain up to date with any changes to Meta (Facebook or Instagram) ensuring privacy settings remain up to date.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Regarding the Sweetpeas social media pages, the Approved Provider and/or Nominated Supervisor will:

- obtain written authorisation from a child's parents prior to posting any comment or photos of their child to the page (see *Photo Authorisation Form*)
- ensure personal information about families, children and staff is not posted online.
- ensure the highest level of privacy settings are established and maintained on the account
- ensure all passwords are kept confidential
- log out of Facebook and Instagram when not in use and prior to leaving the Service
- regularly scan online content related to the Service to ensure appropriateness
- adhere to our *Handling Grievances and Complaints Policy* and procedures to investigate any occurrences where a person working at the Service may:
 - post photos or information of the Service or children
 - defame, harass or bully any other person who works at Sweetpeas or is connected to the services.
- ensure that any staff or educator found guilty of any Facebook misconduct (on both a Service Facebook page and any private page) is aware that this may result in termination of employment.

Regarding all social media, the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff members, volunteers and students will not:

- access personal Facebook accounts or any other social media accounts on any workplace device (see *Use of Technology Policy*)
- access personal Facebook or any other social media accounts whilst educating and caring for children
- post any photos taken of the children enrolled at the service on their personal Facebook, Instagram or any other social media account
- post any information about the Service, colleagues, children, or families on any personal social media account
- vilify, harass or bully any other person who works at the Service, family or community member connected to the Service
- post offensive or derogatory comments or information that could bring their professional standing or that of the company into disrepute
- use their personal camera or phones to take photos or video whilst at the Service.

PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

Staff members are to use their own personal discretion when adding a member of a family enrolled at a Sweetpeas Service as a 'friend' on Facebook or any other social media. The company does not recommend that staff add families of a Service to personal social media accounts as **they will still be seen as a representative of the company and required to uphold the Sweetpeas *Ethical Code of Conduct Policy* on all posts.**

- It is extremely important not to post information about any Service, colleagues, children, or families on personal social media accounts, as this not only contravenes the company policies and *Ethical Code of Conduct* but is considered a breach of the Commonwealth's *Privacy Act 1988* and *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*.
- Families are asked to respect that staff may have a personal policy on adding families to personal social media accounts due to their professional philosophy, and that Sweetpeas does not recommend staff to have families as friends on their private account.
- If adding families to personal social media accounts, educators will adhere to relevant policies, including the *Ethical Code of Conduct Policy*.

CONSEQUENCES FOR INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT

For inappropriate conduct to be unlawful, there is a need to demonstrate a connection between the behaviour and the employment relationship that:

- is likely to cause serious damage to the relationship between the employee and Service
- damages or harms the Service's interest or reputation
- is incompatible with the employee's duties in the education and care sector.

A person who has been involved in inappropriate conduct may require reprimand as per our *Ethical Code of Conduct Policy*. This may lead to termination of their position.

RESOURCES

- Australian Government eSafety Commissioner. [eSafety Early Years program](#).
- Australian Government eSafety Commissioner. (2020). [Early Years Online safety for under 5s](#).
- Australian Government eSafety Commissioner. [eSafety checklist for early learning services](#).

RELATED SWEETPEAS DOCUMENTS:

- Photo Authorisation Form

REFERENCES

- Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012
- Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013
- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Regulation 2022
- Children's Guardian Act 2019
- Children's Guardian Regulation 2022
- Dictionary by Merriam-Webster: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>
- Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics. (2016).
- Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2011).
- eSafety Commissioner: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators/early-years-program>
- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2017).
- Guide to the National Quality Standard. (2017). (Amended 2020).
- Privacy Act 1988
- Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998
- Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS

This policy will be updated regularly to ensure compliance with all relevant legal requirements. Appropriate consultation of all stakeholders (including staff and families) will be conducted on a timely basis. In accordance with *Regulation 172* of the National Regulations, families of children enrolled will be notified at least 14 days and their input considered prior to any amendment of policies and procedures that have any impact on their children or family.

Version	Amendment(s)	Review Date	Updated By
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy drafted and submitted for review	September 2022	Sarah Williamson (Assistant Director-St Clair), Cassandra Way (Assistant Manager)
1.1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updated examples of social media services• Checked for spelling and grammatical errors	November 2023	Cassandra Way (Assistant Manager)