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Communications Policy

Introduction

* 1. IT and Communication play an essential role in the conduct of Dainty Little Hands Ltd. business.
  2. How we communicate with people not only reflects on us as individuals but also on us as a business. As a result of this, Dainty Little Hands Ltd. values communication with colleagues, clients and business contacts and ensures that systems and access to those systems are managed correctly, and not abused in how they are used or what they are used for.
  3. This policy applies to all members of the company, who use our communication systems, whether Directors, full or part-time employees, contract staff or temporary staff. The parameters and restrictions are outlined below, and all Staff are required to read them carefully.

1. This policy must be read in conjunction with the Social Media, Mobile Phones and Recording Devices Policy.

**General Principles**

* 1. Dainty Little Hands Ltd. information technology and communication facilities must be used sensibly, professionally, lawfully, consistently with the duties as outlined in the Job Description and in accordance with this policy and other company rules and procedures.
  2. At all times employees must behave with honesty and integrity and respect the rights and privacy of others in relation to electronic communication and information. Dainty Little Hands Ltd. reserves the right to maintain all electronic communication and files.
  3. Every employee will be given access to the Internet as appropriate to their job needs. For those who do not have daily PC access occasional access will be arranged, as necessary, by the Support Manager(s) and Managing Director.
  4. All PC/network access will be through passwords, and no individual is permitted onto the system using another employee’s password. Employees are not permitted to share their password with anyone inside or outside the company. Individuals will be allowed to set their own passwords and must change them as frequently as requested by the system set-up requirements. Passwords for company computers and other equipment must be shared with senior management upon request.
  5. All information relating to Dainty Little Hands Ltd. and our business operations is confidential. Paper-based and electronic information must be treated with utmost care.
  6. Many aspects of communication are protected by intellectual property rights which can be infringed in a number of ways. Downloading, copying, possessing, and distributing material from the internet may be an infringement of copyright or of other intellectual property rights.
  7. Particular care must be taken when using e-mail as a means of communication because all expressions of fact, intention and opinion in an e-mail may bind the sender and/or Dainty Little Hands Ltd. and can be produced in court in the same way as other kinds of written statements.
  8. When speaking with someone face to face, via the telephone, or in writing via a variety of media, as a representative of Dainty Little Hands Ltd. , the duty of care to the Organisation is required at all times.
  9. Use of any Dainty Little Hands Ltd. media to do or say anything which would be subject to disciplinary or legal action in any other context such as sending any sexist, racist, defamatory, or other unlawful material, is prohibited. If you are in doubt about a course of action, take advice from a Support Manager and/or Managing Director.

**Use of electronic mail**

* 1. **Business use**

The "Bcc" box must always be used when mailing to groups whenever the members of the group are unaware of the identity of all the others (as in the case of marketing mailing lists), where the membership of the group of one or more individuals should perhaps not be disclosed to the others. If the "Cc" box is used, each recipient is informed of the identity (and in the case of external recipients, the address) of all the others. Such a disclosure may breach any duty of confidence owed to each recipient, breach Dainty Little Hands Ltd. obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act or may inadvertently disclose confidential business information such as a marketing list. This applies to both external and internal e-mail.

Staff with Dainty Little Hands Ltd. must ensure that the use of e-mail is an acceptable form of communication bearing in mind that if the material is confidential, privileged or commercially sensitive then un-encrypted e-mail is not secure.

If an important document has been sent, always telephone to confirm that the e-mail has been received and read.

In light of the security risks inherent in web-based e-mail accounts, e-mail business documents must not be sent to any personal web-based accounts.

* 1. **Personal use**

1. Dainty Little Hands Ltd. e-mail facilities are provided for the purposes of the business and may not be used for personal purposes. The business may need to monitor communications for this reason and the reasons shown below.
2. Under no circumstances may Dainty Little Hands Ltd. facilities be used in connection with the operation or management of any business other than that of the company unless express permission has been obtained from a member of the Management Team.
3. Dainty Little Hands Ltd. will not tolerate the use of the E-mail system for unofficial or inappropriate purposes, including but not limited to:
   * + 1. Any messages that could constitute bullying, harassment or other detriment;
       2. On-line gambling;
       3. Accessing or transmitting pornography;
       4. Transmitting copyright information and/or any software available to the user; or
       5. Posting confidential information about other employees, Dainty Little Hands Ltd. , the people we support or suppliers.

**Use of Internet**

* 1. Dainty Little Hands Ltd. trusts employees to use the internet sensibly. Although internet facilities are provided for the purposes of the business, employees are not permitted to use them for personal use.
  2. Whenever access to a web site is used, the terms and conditions governing its use must be complied with. Care must be taken in the use of information accessed through the Internet. Most information is unregulated, and as such there is no guarantee of accuracy.
  3. The use of the Internet to access and/or distribute any kind of offensive material, or material that is not work-related, leaves an individual liable to disciplinary action which could lead to dismissal.
  4. Dainty Little Hands Ltd. prohibits:

1. The use of any images, text or material which are copyright-protected, other than in accordance with the terms of the license under which users are permitted to download;
2. Introduce packet-sniffing or password-detecting software;
3. Seek to gain access to restricted areas of Dainty Little Hands network;
4. Access confidential data;
5. Introduce any form of computer virus; nor
6. Carry out any hacking activities.

**Virus Protection Procedures**

In order to prevent the introduction of virus contamination into the software system the following must be observed: -

* + 1. unauthorised software including public domain software, magazine cover disks/CDs or Internet/World Wide Web downloads must not be used; and
    2. all software must be virus checked using standard testing procedures before being used.

**Use of Computer Equipment**

In order to control the use of Dainty Little Hands Ltd. computer equipment and reduce the risk of contamination the following will apply:

a) The introduction of new software must first of all be checked and authorised by the Management Team before general use will be permitted. This includes the Support Managers and the Managing Director.

b) Only authorised staff have access to the company’s computer equipment.

* + 1. Only authorised software may be used on any of the company’s computer equipment.
    2. Only software that is used for business applications may be used.
    3. No software may be brought onto or taken from the company’s premises without prior authorisation.
    4. Unauthorised access to the computer facility will result in disciplinary action.
    5. Unauthorised copying and/or removal of computer equipment/software will result in disciplinary action, such actions could lead to dismissal.

Please refer to the Social Media, Mobile Phones and Recording Devices Policy for detailed rules and restrictions regarding the use of devices.

**System Security**

Security of Dainty Little Hands Ltd. IT systems is of paramount importance. We owe a duty to all to ensure that all business transactions are kept confidential. If at any time we need to rely in court on any information which has been stored or processed using our IT systems, it is essential that we are able to demonstrate the integrity of those systems. Every time the system is used, responsibility must be taken for all security implications.

The company’s system or equipment must not be used in any way which may cause damage or overloading, or which may affect its performance or that of the internal or external network.

All confidential information must be kept secured and used only for the purposes intended and not disclosed to any unauthorised third party.

**Working Remotely**

This part of the policy and the procedures in it apply to employee's use of Dainty Little Hands Ltd. systems, to the use of Company laptops, whenever work is being carried out remotely or off-site.

When working remotely, the following must be adhered to:

* + 1. Password protect any work which relates to the business so that no other person can gain access.
    2. Ensure that no work can be overlooked by any other person;
    3. Reasonable precautions must be taken to safeguard the security of Company laptop computers and any computer equipment on which Company business is completed, all passwords must be kept secret;
    4. The police and the Company must be informed as soon as possible if either a Company laptop or any device has been stolen;
    5. Ensure that any work completed remotely is saved on the company system is transferred to the system as soon as reasonably practicable.
    6. Ensure that all communication sent is within normal business working hours for Dainty Little Hands Ltd. . In the event of a manager working late to fulfil business needs alongside work-life balance, it must be noted that the recipient of communications is not expected to respond, until normal working hours resume.

Ensure all PDAs or similar hand-held devices are password protected as they are easily stolen.

**Personal Telephone Calls/Mobile Phones**

* 1. Telephones are essential for Dainty Little Hands Ltd. business. Important incoming/outgoing personal telephone calls are allowed but should be kept to a minimum. We reserve the right to recharge for excessive personal use.
  2. Personal mobile phones should be switched off or ‘on silent’ during working hours and only used during authorised breaks.

Please refer to the Social Media, Mobile Phones and Recording Devices Policy for detailed rules and restrictions regarding the use of Mobile Phones.

**Acceptable times to send and receive messages**

1. Dainty Little Hands Ltd. will add you to the group Whatsapp, with your consent. All messages must be sent at a reasonable time of the day. No messages must be sent after 8pm, or before 7am.
2. Any communication by any type of messaging media must adhere to the above parameters, before 8pm and after 7am.
3. Please refer to the Sickness and Absence Policy for rules on calling in sick (the only acceptable form of communication is telephone, and not message, voicemail, or email).

**Monitoring of communication by Dainty Little Hands Ltd.**

Dainty Little Hands Ltd. is ultimately responsible for all business communications, and will, so far as possible and appropriate, respect privacy and autonomy. The company may monitor business communications for reasons which include:

* + 1. Providing evidence of business transactions;
    2. Ensuring that business procedures, policies and contracts with staff are adhered to;
    3. Complying with any legal obligations;
    4. Monitoring standards of service, staff performance, and for staff training;
    5. Preventing or detecting unauthorised use of communications systems or criminal activities;
    6. Maintaining the effective operation of company communication systems.
  1. From time-to-time Dainty Little Hands Ltd. may monitor telephone, e-mail and internet traffic data (i.e. sender, receiver, subject; attachments to e-mail, numbers called and duration of calls; domain names of web sites visited, duration of visits, and business files downloaded from the internet) at a network level. This includes monitoring of any additional accounts that have been set up for the purposes of performing work tasks, which are subject to the same rules as work email accounts. Information acquired through such monitoring may be used as evidence in disciplinary proceedings.

Sometimes it is necessary for Dainty Little Hands Ltd. to access all business communications during any employee’s absence.

**Data Protection**

* 1. Data protection is about the privacy of individuals and is governed by the General Data Protection Regulation and current Data Protection Act. Employees using Dainty Little Hands Ltd. communications facilities may be involved in processing personal data for the company.
  2. Personal data, whilst being processed for Dainty Little Hands Ltd. must be kept secret, confidential and secure. Particular care must be used so as to not to disclose such data to any other person (whether inside or outside the company) unless authorised by the Management Team. Personal data must not be used except as authorised by the Management Team for the purposes of a specific role. The Management team includes the Support Managers (Aimee Smith and Tom McCaughey), and the Managing Director (Jayne Dainty).
  3. The General Data Protection Regulation and current Data Protection Act gives every individual the right to see all the information which any data controller holds about them. Any communication, used by any communication method, can be provided to any individual that it is concerning, therefore, personal remarks or opinions are not to be used, and all information must be relevant and appropriate, as well as accurate and justifiable.
  4. The General Data Protection Regulation and current Data Protection Act provides that it is a criminal offence to obtain or disclose personal data without the consent of the data controller. "Obtaining" here includes the gathering of personal data by employees at work without the authorisation of the employer. This offence may be committed if without the authority of the Dainty Little Hands Ltd. Management Team, any employee exceeds their authority in collecting personal data; accessing personal data held by Dainty Little Hands Ltd. ; or passing on personal data on to someone else (whether inside or outside the company).

**Use of Social Networking Sites**

Any work-related issue or material that could identify an individual who is a client or work colleague, which could adversely affect Dainty Little Hands Ltd. , must not be placed on a social networking site. This means that work related matters must not be placed on any such site at any time either during or outside of working hours and includes access via any computer equipment, mobile phone, or PDA.

Please refer to the Social Media, Mobile Phones and Recording Devices Policy for detailed rules and restrictions regarding the use of Social Networking sites.

Confidentiality

Employees are not permitted to register with sites or electronic services in Dainty Little Hands Ltd. name without the prior permission of the Support Manager(s) and/or Managing Director. Employees are not permitted to reveal internal company information to any sites, be it confidential or otherwise, or comment on company matters, even if this is during after-hours or personal use. The company confidentiality policy applies to all electronic communication and data.

**Compliance with this policy**

* 1. Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action being taken. If any Employee does not understand anything contained in this policy, please discuss it with a member of the Management Team.
  2. Please note that the procedures and policies outlined in this policy, and in any related policy, may be reviewed or changed at any time.

Next review date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_01/08/2025\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Jayne Dainty\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_19/01/2024\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_