

VOLUNTARY ACTION – LEEDS

INTERNET USE POLICY

Purpose and Scope of the Policy

This Policy exists to safeguard and promote the proper use of VA-L's internet and e-mail facilities. Staff (including volunteers) are responsible for using these facilities in an efficient, effective and ethical and lawful manner. Contravention of this Policy may expose VA-L to legal action and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

VA-L may monitor use of the internet and e-mails for legitimate business reasons, including compliance with this Policy; use of the facilities is considered to be an expression of consent by the user to such monitoring, recording and audit. However, e-mails between staff and trade union representatives, or concerning trade union business will not be monitored or read by managers.

VA-L holds no responsibility for any damage or distress caused to users of the facilities by their accessing inappropriate or offensive material.

General Use

1. The facilities must not be used for personal commercial purposes or profit, or for any illegal activity or any activity which is prohibited by VA-L's general rules (see VA-L's Disciplinary Procedure).
2. The facilities must not be used either to view or to download pornographic, indecent or offensive images, text or sound files; language used in e-mails must not be abusive, impolite or inappropriate.
3. The facilities should be considered like any other communication medium and used in an appropriate manner with regard to disclosure of personal information or what may be regarded by an e-mail recipient as offensive or abusive material.
4. The facilities may not be used to obtain or attempt to obtain unauthorised access to data held either by VA-L or by colleagues, or to the systems/network itself.

5. Staff should be aware that any views expressed in e-mails may be interpreted as the view of VA-L; because of this, staff should ensure that personal e-mails are accompanied by an appropriate signature and a disclaimer where necessary. All outgoing e-mails should state clearly who they are from - it should not be assumed that the recipient will understand the sending address.
6. Staff should help to ensure that computers and the network function as well as possible by defragmenting the hard drive when necessary, deleting on a regular basis e-mails and other materials which take up excessive storage space, remaining within allocated server space and reporting promptly to line managers any faults or problems with equipment.
7. Staff are expected to check and respond to e-mails regularly, and to ensure as far as possible that e-mail addresses (both outgoing and incoming) are correct to avoid unnecessary costs or annoyance both to VA-L and to the recipients. As with returning telephone calls, e-mail messages should generally receive a response within two working days.
8. Staff should be aware that e-mails may be checked in their absence (ie. during holidays/sick leave) if they have not left forwarding/checking arrangements.

Personal Use of the Facilities

Personal use of VA-L's internet and e-mail facilities is acceptable in one's own time (ie lunch and other break times) during normal opening hours providing that there is no cost to VA-L (ie while the facilities are already being used for work purposes), or providing that any printing or other costs are kept to a minimum and are repaid promptly to VA-L. However, personal use should be occasional and staff must ensure that any such use does not interrupt or disrupt VA-L's normal activities. In no case should personal use exceed 2 hours per week. Any abuse of this facility may lead to disciplinary action.

Spamming

Staff should not send unsolicited mailings via e-mail and VA-L's facilities should not be used to produce or pass on "chain" messages. If

messages are received which contain items as in "General Use" point 2, they must be deleted immediately and the sender informed that your terms of employment do not permit receipt of such mail at your place of work and may lead to disciplinary action against you the employee should they persist in sending such items.

Copyright

Users are required to respect the copyright of all materials and software; the unauthorised copying of software is an offence under the Copyright Design and Patents Act 1990.

Security, Downloading and Viruses

Staff are permitted to download documents both for work and for personal use (subject to the restrictions in the sections headed General Use and Personal Use of the Facilities, above), but they are responsible for ensuring that viruses are not spread from downloaded material. Personal printed material from downloaded files should be paid for as per normal photocopying costs. No software may be downloaded or installed without prior permission from line managers. Users should be aware that the download of material may interfere with network performance, and should try to download large files during quiet periods.

Staff should be aware of the virus risk with e-mails and attachments; if they receive unsolicited documents from an unknown source they should not open these before trying to verify the source, and – if in doubt – the message should be deleted; if a virus is found the message should of course be deleted. If a warning is received about a virus, it should not be assumed that this is necessarily genuine; before passing on the warning, it must be checked via one of the specialist websites – eg. www.vmyths.com

Any file ending .exe or .vbs or .com should not be opened unless its safety can be verified.

Staff should ensure that virus checking software is updated regularly and that virus scan facilities are used regularly. Any problems should be reported promptly either to the Information Worker or to line managers.

*Policy adopted by the Trustee Board of Voluntary Action – Leeds
November 2002; this update February 2005.*