



Birmingham City Council

Internet Use Code of Practice

This Code of Practice contains rules for Internet use and supplements the *Internet Use Policy*. It should also be read in conjunction with the *Glossary and Appendix to the Internet Policy*. There is also an associated *Internet Access Request Form*.

If you have enquiries about this Code of Practice, contact the Information and Strategy Team on 0121 675 1431 or 0121 464 2877.

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1. OVERVIEW AND PUBLICATION PARTICULARS

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Overview

Authority	Birmingham City Council – Assistant Director Performance and Information
Owner	Birmingham City Council – Information and Strategy Manager
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Related documents ¹	Internet Use Policy Glossary and Appendix to the Internet Use Policy Internet Access Request Form Password Control Standard Access Control Standard Data Protection Policy Information Security Classification Standard Internet Monitoring Standard

BS ISO/IEC 27001:2005	<i>Control Reference</i>
BS 7799-2:2005	A5.1 Information security policy
control references	A7.1 Responsibility for assets
	A7.1.3 Acceptable use of assets
	A8.2 Human resources security during employment
	A10.3.1 Capacity management
	A10.4 Protection against malicious and mobile code
	A10.8 Exchange of information
	A10.9 Electronic commerce services
	A10.10 Monitoring
	A15.2 Compliance with security policies and standards, and technical compliance

¹ These documents are available on the Policies, Standards, Procedures and Guidelines (PSPG) database on Lotus Notes.

2. Introduction

2.1 Scope

This Internet Use Code of Practice applies whenever Birmingham City Council provides an Internet service, with the exception of Public Access Internet provision². It applies whenever the Internet is accessed through a Birmingham City Council connection, whether the computer equipment is owned by Birmingham City Council or not.

This Code of Practice applies to all those who benefit from Birmingham City Council's Internet Service: to employees; to temporary and agency staff; to contractors; to all third parties working for the council; to partners in joint ventures with the council; to Elected Members; to volunteers and any other parties using the council's Internet service. This Code of Practice applies to these parties whatever their purpose, whether or not the Internet connection is for their work or for private use.

² See the *Birmingham City Council Policy on Public Internet Access* available on the PSPG database.

3 RULES OF CONDUCT FOR THE INTERNET USER

3.1 Identities and passwords

You must assume personal responsibility for your identity (ID) and password. Never use anyone else's identity or password.

The ID and password issued to you is for your use only and consequently you are responsible for the activities undertaken with that ID. You must not share your ID or password with any other person. If you are asked to give out your password contact the Service Birmingham Service Desk³ and report it as a security incident.

Always follow the password guidelines contained in the *Password Control Standard*.

3.2 Control of access to your Internet session

Do not leave personal computers connected with the Internet "signed on"⁴ when unattended for any length of time. For short absences, users should lock the screen (Press Ctrl and Alt and Delete at the same time, followed by the Enter key). Remember that all time on the Internet is monitored, even when the session is minimised and not actually in use. Therefore, it is important that you close the Internet down after you have finished your session.

See also the requirements relating to "unattended user equipment" in the council's *Access Control Standard*.

3.3 Honest, legal and businesslike conduct

All Internet activity should be conducted in an honest, legal and businesslike way. You must always behave decently and appropriately.

You must take the utmost care not to enter into contractual obligations on behalf of the council over the Internet, unless the transactions are formally authorised in writing by your line manager having acted in accordance with the approved corporate procedure.

You must respect copyrights, software licensing rules and other property rights. Users must follow council policies, particularly those concerned with privacy, misuse of resources, data protection, harassment, discrimination, security and confidentiality.

3.4 Derogatory and defamatory remarks

You must not make personal, hurtful or derogatory remarks as part of your use of the Internet. In particular, you must not distribute defamatory material. Messages on the Internet can reach large numbers of people and defamatory statements can do a substantial amount of damage.

Factual statements published over the Internet must be accurate and any opinion expressed should not damage or discredit the subject of that opinion.

³ Service Birmingham Service Desk – telephone 4/4444

⁴ Signed on: see *Glossary and Appendix to the Internet Use Policy*.

3.5 Data Protection Act

Follow the council's *Data Protection Policy* which is available on the PSPG database in Lotus Notes.

3.6 Private use

Private use is use of the Internet in your own time, when Birmingham City Council management allows it.

Private use of the Internet is at your manager's discretion. Your manager may decide that private use is not appropriate if you work in a public place where your computer can be seen by members of the public, or that private use is not appropriate for some other reason.

Private use is a privilege. The council may withdraw private use at any time and for any reason, including if it interferes with council business. Service Birmingham will notify the council whenever the private use privilege is adversely affecting the Internet service.

Any private use must take place during your "own time" and not during the time that you are being paid to carry out council business. If you are an employee who accounts for your time using a clocking in and out system, this means that you must be clocked-out from work when you make private use of the Internet.

Whether you are employed by the council, or not, you should never allow private use to interfere with the legitimate business purposes for which the Internet service is provided by the council. Unnecessary Internet use causes network and server congestion, slows other users and ties up printers and other shared resources.

Service Birmingham will monitor all Internet use, including private use (although this will not be exclusively monitored). Statistics on Internet use (including private use) are provided to management on a regular basis.

All Internet Users who use the Internet for their own purposes do so entirely at their own risk. For example, if you transact business on a credit card or a debit card over the Internet, you do this against the council's advice and entirely at your own risk.

If you use any e-mail system through the Internet (except the council's Lotus Notes system) for purposes which are not council business purposes, you must do this in your own time. All users of the council's e-mail service are expressly prohibited from forwarding (manually or automatically) any GCSx mail to any Internet based e-mail account, e.g. Yahoo, Hotmail etc, or even to an internal account if the e-mail is classified as PROTECT or RESTRICTED.

3.7 File transfers – software files

Note that different rules apply to the transfer of information or data files and transfer of software files across the Internet. This subsection is about software files.

Software files contain executable code. Examples of software files are: screen savers; toolbars; animated desktop tools; shareware; freeware; anti-spyware; games; plug-ins; applets; file sharing software. Examples of suffixes used in the names of software files are: .bin; .wmv; .pps; .vbs; .bat; .cmd; .com; .pif; .exe; .scr; .shs; .vb.

Software files **must not** be transferred from the Internet to the council's network. This means that you must not download any of the types of software listed in the paragraph above, or any other type of software, from the Internet.

No software owned by, or licensed to, the council or Service Birmingham may be transferred out of the council's network. All software is strictly controlled by Service Birmingham.

3.8 File transfers – information or data files

Note that different rules apply to the transfer of information or data files and transfer of software files across the Internet. This subsection is about information or data files.

Examples of information or data files are: Microsoft Word documents; plain text files; e-mails (without attachments) and graphics⁵ files. Examples of suffixes used in the names of information files are: .doc; .dot; .jpg; .xls; .pdf; .gif; .txt; .wps.

Information files may be transferred from the Internet to the council's network if the following conditions are met.

- There must be a legitimate business purpose for the transfer.
- Council data may only be transferred with written permission from your line manager and you must follow the council's *Information Security Classification Standard*.
- The file transferred must be below the size limit of 20 megabytes⁶. Larger files may be transferred only if this is specifically authorised by the ICF. Some large file transfers may need to take place outside the core time period (10:00 to 16:00 hours), subject to operational priorities. Some file transfers may need to be classified as RESTRICTED purely because of their size. Always check with your manager before transferring bulk or large data files.
- Video and audio material transfers must always be for business use and may be large files (see previous point). If you transfer video and audio files, this will increase congestion.
- Before downloaded files are opened, they must be scanned for viruses, using software provided and installed by Service Birmingham. If you use a mobile device such as a Blackberry or a laptop, you should regularly check with the Service Birmingham Service Desk that your anti-virus software is the most up-to-date version.

You **must not** participate in file sharing websites or mass e-mail projects.

If you do not know whether a file is an information file or a software file, **do not transfer it**.

3.9 Web content

Web content must not contain any material that is harassing, obscene, pornographic, discriminatory, libellous or defamatory, breaches confidentiality or is otherwise deemed unacceptable in the workplace.

Posting of web pages on council websites or Inline must follow the existing approval procedures and development and maintenance of those sites must conform to council policy. Contact the Customer Services Self Service Team for more information.

⁵ Graphics: see *Glossary and Appendix to the Internet Use Policy*.

⁶ Megabyte: see *Glossary and Appendix to the Internet Use Policy*.

4. PROHIBITED OR RESTRICTED ACTIVITIES AND SITES

N.B. see also the section on blocking in the *Internet Use Policy*. The following is not an exhaustive list and merely highlights the most important prohibitions. For more information see the *Internet Monitoring Standard*.

4.1 Blocked Internet sites

Internet Users **must not** attempt to use the Internet to display, access, use, extract, store, distribute, print, reveal or otherwise process information from Internet sites which have been blocked.

4.2 Discriminatory or otherwise offensive material

Internet Users **must not** display, access, use, extract, store, distribute, print, reveal or otherwise process any kind of image, document or other material which is sexually explicit or offensive in any other way, on any council system. This activity would be a violation of council policies, particularly those relating to conduct and discrimination.

If access to this information is required for business purposes, a request must be submitted to the Information and Strategy Team⁷, using the Request to Access a Blocked Internet Category form available on the PSPG Lotus Notes Database, accompanied by a legitimate business reason for the access. The form must be forwarded to the Information and Strategy Team from the manager of the individual requiring access. This forwarding is taken as authority for access to be granted.

In exceptional circumstances, when access is required urgently, an Assistant Director must sign and submit the form. If you are authorised to use this sort of material, you should take great care not to offend others when the material is revealed, and not to retain such material or access to it when it is no longer needed for business reasons.

4.3 Further prohibitions

You **must not** participate in on-line gambling.

You **must not** play games over the Internet (unless you have a business purpose such as participation in an on-line professional training course).

Internet Users should not publish the addresses of Internet sites which encourage any of the prohibited uses listed here or in the *Internet Use Policy*.

4.4 Newsgroups, chat rooms, discussions and online collaborative reference resources (“Wikis”⁸).

Access to a newsgroup, discussion or collaborative reference resource is generally available. Access to chat rooms and instant messaging facilities is permitted where there is a legitimate business need by submitting a Request to Access a Blocked Internet Category form available on the PSPG Lotus Notes Database to the Information and Strategy Team⁷.

⁷ E-mail address on Lotus Notes: Information and Strategy Team

⁸ Wikis: see *Glossary and Appendix to the Internet Use Policy*.

Employees or agents of Birmingham City Council, authorised to speak to the media or in public, may sometimes contribute to a professional on-line forum. Such contributions might be personal professional opinions, or corporate statements. The following rules apply to such contributions:

- You must clearly distinguish your personal professional opinion from the council's corporate position.
- Where you are representing the corporate position, you must always take special care to maintain the consistency and integrity of the council's corporate message.
- You must always refrain from political advocacy.
- If you represent the council in a public forum you should clear the content with your line manager, or with Corporate Communications⁹.
- All employees must be aware of their responsibilities as council officers when making any public statement about the council.
- Users must forgo some personal freedom of expression when participating in newsgroups and forums on council business and should not give private opinions where this is not relevant to their business purpose.
- The council retains the copyright to original material posted to any forum, newsgroup or web page by any employee in the course of his/her duties.

Specific advice about speaking to the media or in public should be sought from Public Affairs and Corporate Communications.

5. DISCIPLINE

5.1 General

Any Birmingham City Council Internet User who contravenes the rules of the *Internet Use Policy* or this Code of Practice under the council's disciplinary procedure wherever this is appropriate for that user. It is possible that the disciplinary procedure can result in dismissal. When there is evidence of a criminal offence, the police will be informed.

Where contravention of the *Internet Use Policy* or this Code of Practice has occurred, Internet access may be suspended immediately for the Internet Users concerned, pending investigation.

5.2 Council staff

The council's disciplinary procedure applies to all council staff. Information about the procedure can be found on People Solutions.

5.3 Internet Users who are not council staff

All Internet Users agree to the *Internet Use Policy* and *Internet Use Code of Practice* when they are given access to the Internet (see the *Internet Access Request Form*). For non-council employees with access to the Internet service, there will, in most cases, be separate disciplinary arrangements or codes of conduct for breach of this policy. Any suspected breach will result in immediate termination of the connection while investigations take place.

⁹ See contact details in Glossary and Appendix to the Internet Policy.

6. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Internet Users should address all complaints and enquiries about the Internet service to the Service Birmingham Service Desk¹⁰. The Service Desk is the first point of contact for Internet Users and will handle all enquiries about blocked sites, monitoring of Internet use, service delivery etc.

7. HOW TO GET INTERNET ACCESS

All employees and Elected Members who have a business need to access the Internet should complete the *Internet Access Request Form*¹¹. The applicant must accept the terms of the *Internet Use Policy* and *Internet Use Code of Practice* before access is granted. The form should be signed by the applicant and the authorising manager and a copy held locally by both parties. The authorising manager should then use the SLAM (Starters, Leavers and Movers) process to request access from Service Birmingham.

Partner organisations, contractors and volunteers must request access to the Internet via their own organisations.

¹⁰ Service Birmingham Service Desk – telephone 4/4444

¹¹ This form is available on the Policies, Standards, Procedures and Guidelines (PSPG) database on Lotus Notes.