

Title	LWETB Communications Policy
Date	14 th September, 2020
Approved By	Chief Executive LWETB
Noted By	LWETB Board

LWETB Communications Policy

Introduction

LWETB aims to facilitate excellent internal and external communications among staff, learners, students and trainees and the general public.

Communications should be open, appropriate to the audience, clear, concise, constructive, informative and timely. It is important that information be disseminated in a consistent manner.

Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all manner of communications issued or engaged in by staff, internally and externally, pertaining to activities or issues related to LWETB. This policy applies to all LWETB employees at all levels, throughout the organisation.

Purpose and Aims

The purpose of this policy is to outline policy and procedures for managing communications in order to:

- Ensure a clear understanding and awareness of what we do
- Share successes and learning opportunities of the organisation
- Proactively and consistently engage, collaborate and consult with stakeholders, both internal (staff) and external, in a timely manner
- Develop a clear brand looking at the longer term view and the wider context
- Communicate organisational changes effectively
- Mitigate reputational risk

This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant LWETB policies, circulars and legislation (available on our Website).

Responsibilities

The Chief Executive (CE) or designated person is ultimately responsible for communicating externally on behalf of LWETB.

Details of staff and their roles and responsibilities are outlined on an ongoing basis to administrative staff, Principals and Centre Heads. This is a live document and will be updated on a regular basis. Staff should check this publication on a regular basis in order to ensure internal communication is effective.

All staff are responsible for ensuring that effective communication takes place with colleagues.

In order to support efficient and effective communication, a range of protocols is in place regarding

- what information should be communicated to whom
- who should issue such information
- how such information should be communicated.

Content of Communications

Communications issued on behalf of LWETB should never:

- Be defamatory or incur liability for LWETB;
- Contain inappropriate content: inappropriate content includes pornography, racial or religious slurs, gender-specific comments, information encouraging criminal skills or terrorism, or materials relating to cults, gambling and illegal drugs. This definition of inappropriate content or material also covers any text, images or other media that could reasonably be regarded as offensive on the basis of race, age, sex, religious or political beliefs, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or any other characteristics protected by law;
- Include material offensive or material which is deemed as harassing to others;
- Broadcast unsolicited views on social, political, religious or other non-business related matters;
- Involve publishing or posting communications of material that could damage LWETB's image or reputation.

Data Protection

The Data Protection Acts give every individual the right to access information that a Data Controller holds about them. LWETB is a registered Data Controller. Staff should be aware that information recorded and all communications should be accurate, fact based and not opinion based.

All staff should ensure that they are familiar with the requirements to hold data securely and not to disclose data to any unauthorised third party.

Staff should refer to the Data Protection policies and procedures for further detailed information. Data breaches should be reported immediately to LWETB Data Protection Officer in line with Data Breach Management Policy.

Communicating sensitive information

Care should be taken when handling sensitive information. Sensitive data includes information pertaining to an individual's race, colour, sexual orientation, religion, political opinions, membership of a trade union, criminal record and includes medical information in relation to employees, students, learners or trainees and information regarding financial and commercially sensitive matters relating to the business of LWETB.

All staff are obliged to take care in the processing and transmission of confidential information, with regard to how and to whom such information is communicated.

- All documents should be stored securely and in line with LWETB Records Management Policy.
- Laptops and mobile devices should not be left unattended or unlocked when not in use.
- Computer screens should be locked and password protected when left unattended.
- Computer screens should be positioned out of view of members of the public.
- General discussion regarding students and other LWETB business should not take place in an open forum or in a public place, including in the reception area of LWETB offices.
- In transmitting information via email, particular attention should be paid to ensuring that correct email addresses are used.
- Password protection and encryption, where available, should be utilised.

Equal Access

Particular forms of communication may be required in order to ensure equal access to information and learning opportunities for any user with an inability to use a particular communication process. Section 28 of the Disability Act 2005 stipulates, inter alia, that:

- Communications by a public body to a person with a hearing or visual impairment must, as far as practicable, be provided in an accessible format, following a request. Information provided electronically must, as far as practicable, be compatible with adaptive technology. Published information relevant to persons with intellectual disabilities, must be made available in easy to read formats.
- Under the Official Languages Act 2003, public bodies have a duty to ensure that stationery, signage and recorded oral announcements are provided in Irish or bilingually, and any correspondence by post or email sent in Irish will be replied to in Irish.

Editorial Guidelines and Standards

Templates, guidelines and other documents along with training may support staff in applying standardised communications conventions in their day-to-day role. These will be provided throughout the year. A set of LWETB Brand Guidelines and House Style Manual is under development and it will provide an overview of standards related to:

- use of logos
- the preferred 'house-style' for common communications e.g. letters, emails, commonly used terminology
- grammar and punctuation

Communications materials should strive to adhere to the Plain English guidelines recommended by the National Adult Literacy Association (NALA).

Protocols for Communications Channels

Staff are requested to adhere to the recommended protocols so that uniformity of practice may be achieved across LWETB, as far as is practical.

Standards and recommended best practice for particular channels of communication are outlined below in a range of policies and procedures.

Further information will be provided through CPD training and guidelines as appropriate.

Use of SharePoint

Microsoft 365, One Note and SharePoint will become a more frequently used method of communication. Training and guidelines on its use will be provided will be accompanied by a set of communications guidelines.

Incoming Communications

Staff should familiarise themselves with the procedures for handling outgoing and incoming mail relevant to their office. The following are the general procedures for the handling of mail and deliveries:

- Mail, whether received by post or hand-delivered, must be date stamped with the date of receipt on the envelope and when opened, on the top right hand corner of each document.
- Mail received by post must be appropriately recorded.
- Out-going mail is recorded.
- Mail received is circulated on the same day to the recipients.
- Receipt of deliveries and large items will be notified to the intended recipient via email. Such items should be collected as soon as possible to ensure that the reception area is kept clear and presentable.

Publications, Promotional Material and Public Relations

All LWETB external and internal correspondence, publications, leaflets, posters and online content should be professional, clear, accurate, accessible to a wide range of people and follow the agreed corporate format.

Guidelines for logos other than LWETB logos (e.g. funding agencies) which may be used by LWETB should be adhered to.

All publications should be approved by the relevant line manager and be proofread thoroughly prior to issue so as to ensure they contain accurate information and project a professional image of LWETB.

Permission for use of LWETB name or logo by a third party for publication may only be given by the Chief Executive or designated staff member. Where appropriate additional support may be sought from the Communications Manager.

Where the production of printed material, advertisements or other forms of literature is necessary, staff must ensure that appropriate procurement procedures are followed. The placement of media advertisements is also subject to public procurement procedures.

Communication with the Media

Queries from the media should be directed to the Chief Executive or senior management team. No comment or response should be provided to a media query without prior approval from the relevant Director or Chief Executive.

Website/Social Media Pages

The LWETB website, the websites of LWETB schools, centres and services, and their social media platforms are important means of communicating information about LWETB, relevant news and other updates or developments.

Staff should monitor posted information under their control to ensure that outdated or inaccurate information on the website and social media platforms is replaced with updated information as soon as it is available.

Permission for the establishment of additional websites and social media pages should be sought and obtained from the designated staff member prior to the establishment of such resources.

Email Usage

All staff members are provided with an individual LWETB email account, and this account should be used when engaging in LWETB business by email communication.

LWETB business should not be transacted through other non-approved email services (e.g. Gmail etc.). Use of LWETB email accounts should be restricted to communication related to LWETB business.

Staff should be aware that all emails are subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2014 and the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003.

Copyright

LWETB should respect and operate within copyright legislation.

Policy Infringements

Contraventions of this policy may lead to disciplinary action. Unauthorised or inappropriate use of LWETB communications channels may lead to disciplinary action or criminal prosecution.

- LWETB’s IT and internet resources, including computers, smart phones and internet connections, are provided for legitimate business use.
- LWETB therefore reserves the right to monitor how communication tools are used and accessed through these resources.
- Any such examinations or monitoring will only be carried out by authorised users.
- Additionally, all data relating to social networks written, sent or received through LWETB computer systems is part of official LWETB records.
- LWETB can be legally compelled to show that information to law enforcement agencies or other parties.
- LWETB reserve the right to retract a communication if it is deemed to be inappropriate or offensive.

Responsibilities

Owner	Responsibilities
Director of Organisational Support & Development	Revisions and updates to the policy
LWETB Senior Leadership Team	Review
LWETB Chief Executive	Approval of the Policy
LWETB Board	Noting of the Policy