

Blogging by Judicial Office Holders

Introduction

This guidance is issued on behalf of the Senior Presiding Judge and the Senior President of Tribunals. It applies to all courts and tribunal judicial office holders in England and Wales, and is effective immediately.

Definitions

A “blog” (derived from the term “web log”) is a personal journal published on the internet. “Blogging” describes the maintaining of, or adding content to, a blog. Blogs tend to be interactive, allowing visitors to leave comments. They may also contain links to other blogs and websites. For the purpose of this guidance blogging includes publishing material on micro-blogging sites such as Twitter.

Guidance

Judicial office holders should be acutely aware of the need to conduct themselves, both in and out of court, in such a way as to maintain public confidence in the impartiality of the judiciary.

Blogging by members of the judiciary is not prohibited. However, officer holders who blog (or who post comments on other people’s blogs) must not identify themselves as members of the judiciary. They must also avoid expressing opinions which, were it to become known that they hold judicial office, could damage public confidence in their own impartiality or in the judiciary in general.

The above guidance also applies to blogs which purport to be anonymous. This is because it is impossible for somebody who blogs anonymously to guarantee that his or her identity cannot be discovered.

Judicial office holders who maintain blogs must adhere to this guidance and should remove any existing content which conflicts with it forthwith. Failure to do so could ultimately result in disciplinary action. It is also recommended that all judicial office holders familiarise themselves with the new IT and Information Security Guidance which will be available shortly.