# Glasgow City Council workers caught trying to access Netflix, Pornhub and gambling sites on work devices



Staff at Glasgow City Council have found themselves at the centre of a scandal involving attempts to access inappropriate websites, including streaming platforms and pornographic content, on work devices. According to revelations reported by The Mail, staff made 63 unsuccessful attempts to access Netflix and 17 attempts to enter the adult site Pornhub over the past year. The council’s systems managed to block these attempts, but five successful entries to gambling websites were noted, highlighting potential gaps in oversight.

This situation arises against the backdrop of increased remote work among public sector employees, a trend that has attracted scrutiny since the pandemic. Many council workers have been allowed to work from distant locations, including countries like Japan and India, often only needing to attend the office part-time. Critics, including Scottish Conservative MSP Annie Wells, argue that such leisure-seeking behaviour amongst council employees is unacceptable, particularly considering the significant city-wide tax increases affecting locals. Wells asserted to The Mail that Glasgow taxpayers expect full attention devoted to essential services such as road repair and waste management, rather than attempts to access "dodgy content" during work hours.

The findings from Glasgow are not unique. Similar investigations across several Scottish councils, including Angus and Highland, have revealed attempts to access adult content, although those councils have attributed some incidents to system testing rather than employee misconduct. For example, Angus Council blocked six attempts to access Pornhub, while Highland blocked fifteen, with councils emphasising the effectiveness of their firewalls in safeguarding workplace integrity.

Moreover, the implications of employee behaviour at public councils extend beyond mere internet access. Glasgow City Council has been proactive in addressing issues related to gambling, drugs, and alcohol among its staff. It offers dedicated support services, including a 24/7 helpline and a comprehensive wellbeing programme aimed at fostering a healthier work environment. The council's initiatives include signing the Unite Charter to combat gambling-related harms in the workplace and enhancing its ICT acceptable use policy to ensure that staff adhere to professional standards.

The incident at Glasgow City Council adds to a troubling narrative of inappropriate online behaviour in the public sector, which has been magnified by the remote working culture that has taken root since the COVID-19 pandemic. As these revelations continue to surface, the scrutiny on councils’ IT policies and employee conduct is likely to intensify, as taxpayers demand accountability and a focus on the essential services that affect their daily lives.

In a context where public trust is paramount, it remains crucial for councils not only to enforce strict IT policies but also to cultivate a work environment that promotes integrity and responsibility. As councils across Scotland navigate these challenges, the balance between flexible working arrangements and employee conduct remains a crucial discussion point for local governance.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14745915/Now-SNP-led-council-staff-try-watch-Netflix-porn-using-work-computers.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/aberdeen-aberdeenshire/6650202/access-denied-just-who-is-trying-to-watch-x-rated-content-on-council-servers/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14745915/Now-SNP-led-council-staff-try-watch-Netflix-porn-using-work-computers.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/council/council-staff-tried-to-access-pornography-and-gambling-websites-3116462)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/aberdeen-aberdeenshire/6650202/access-denied-just-who-is-trying-to-watch-x-rated-content-on-council-servers/), [[4]](https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/article/4861/Gambling-Harms-Alcohol-and-Drugs-Support), [[5]](https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/workforcewellbeing)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14745915/Now-SNP-led-council-staff-try-watch-Netflix-porn-using-work-computers.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-22807593), [[7]](https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/13108305.council-fined-150-000-laptop-thefts-breach-data-rules/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14745915/Now-SNP-led-council-staff-try-watch-Netflix-porn-using-work-computers.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/aberdeen-aberdeenshire/6650202/access-denied-just-who-is-trying-to-watch-x-rated-content-on-council-servers/> - An investigation revealed that staff at various Scottish councils, including Angus and Highland, attempted to access adult websites on work computers. Angus Council blocked six attempts to access Pornhub, while Highland Council blocked 15 attempts to access adult content. The councils' IT departments stated that these incidents were due to system tests and not indicative of staff behavior. The findings highlight the effectiveness of council firewalls in preventing access to inappropriate material.
3. <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/council/council-staff-tried-to-access-pornography-and-gambling-websites-3116462> - A Freedom of Information request revealed that Edinburgh City Council staff attempted to access gambling, pornography, and social media sites on work computers between June and November 2020. The council's IT systems blocked these attempts, and a spokesperson emphasized the importance of adhering to the council's ICT acceptable use policy. The council stated that any identified attempts to access inappropriate sites would be investigated, and appropriate disciplinary action would be taken.
4. <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/article/4861/Gambling-Harms-Alcohol-and-Drugs-Support> - Glasgow City Council provides support for staff affected by gambling, alcohol, and drug-related issues. The council offers a dedicated addictions helpline available 24/7, providing free and confidential advice. Additionally, the council has updated its workplace policies to support staff and reduce the impact of these issues on the workforce. External resources, such as a staff health and wellbeing handbook, are also available to employees seeking assistance.
5. <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/workforcewellbeing> - Glasgow City Council's Workforce Wellbeing Support page offers comprehensive information on financial wellbeing, including benefits, cost of living, debt advice, and avoiding scams. The page also provides resources on gambling harms, alcohol, and drug support, including dedicated helplines and updated workplace policies. The council has signed the Unite Charter as part of its commitment to reducing gambling-related harms in the workplace and supporting employee wellbeing.
6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-22807593> - Glasgow City Council was fined £150,000 by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for the loss of two unencrypted laptops containing personal details of over 20,000 individuals. The ICO discovered that an additional 74 unencrypted laptops were missing, six of which were known to be stolen. The council took immediate steps to ensure similar breaches did not occur again and cooperated fully with the ICO's investigation.
7. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/13108305.council-fined-150-000-laptop-thefts-breach-data-rules/> - Scotland's largest local authority, Glasgow City Council, was fined £150,000 by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for failing to protect personal data and breaching the Data Protection Act. The fine followed the loss of two unprotected laptops containing personal details of tens of thousands of council tax payers. The ICO also discovered that a further 74 laptops were missing, with at least six known to have been stolen.