



Introduction

1. Nottinghamshire County Council's Social Media Policy commits the Council to make sure its social media activity is:
 - Safe
 - Appropriate
 - Purposeful
 - Legal
2. To ensure Council social media activity meets these requirements, anyone using social media on Council business needs to follow this protocol. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action being taken.
3. Specific uses of social media, such as with young or vulnerable people will need to comply with any service specific policies and protocols.
4. As participants on social media sites are personally accountable for any contributions, it is strongly suggested the guidance participation is followed.

Scope

5. The scope is defined within the Social Media Policy.

Protocol

Summary

6. When setting up social media accounts, groups, pages or services on behalf of a Council service you will need follow a set procedure:
 - a. Consider the key questions about setting up social media services as given in appendix 1.
 - b. Contact the Communications and Marketing service to get advice before setting anything up. They will provide advice and guidance on the steps involved and whether it is worthwhile to continue.
 - c. Develop a business case for consideration by your Corporate Director.
 - d. Submit the business case to the Communications and Marketing service for approval in line with the Social Media Policy
 - e. Once approved, complete the risk assessment and return it to the Communications and Marketing service

- f. Set up the social media service, ensuring joint administration access with the Communications and Marketing service
- g. Notify your Corporate Director and relevant Committee Chairman
- h. Ensure the social media service is monitored and report any issues to the Communication and Marketing service

Using social media when acting on behalf of the Council or as part of your job

- 7. All requests (internal and external) relating to the setting up of social media services must be directed to the Council's Communications and Marketing service. It will help to consider the key questions outlined in appendix 1.
- 8. Ensure you have the full approval and support of your Corporate Director and an approved business case from Communications and Marketing. The business case is there to help:
 - a. Understand the resources you will need in order to maintain and foster sustainable relationships.
 - b. Make sure you think through why you are deploying social media and what outcome you wish to achieve. For example, if you are inviting public responses then think through how you will make use of the results and how this fits in with other forms of consultation. Ask yourself "Is social media appropriate for this activity?" Appendix 1 outlines an evaluation checklist
 - c. You have a clear plan from the start about how long the association between NCC and the site/profile/page will last.
 - d. Make sure you have a plan for how you intend to monitor and evaluate the success of your activity.
- 9. Use the Council's social media risk assessment process to think through any potential risks and make sure you have plans in place to manage and mitigate for these.
- 10. Ensure that Communications and Marketing are included in the administration of any social media channels set up on behalf of the Council.
- 11. Administration accounts should be set up using a generic Council email address that can be accessed by more than one person wherever possible.
- 12. Where possible, engage with the public through open groups or pages, rather than "friending" or "liking" them, as this can give a false impression of a relationship, or open up information about you to them.

Participation as an employee or in a professional capacity

- 13. There are many cases where individuals participating on social media sites in a professional capacity can be beneficial (such as support forums, LinkedIn and Yammer). This activity will not be proactively monitored by the Council but Council policies including, but not limited to, the Code of Conduct and Equality and Diversity policy apply online.

14. The basic principles should be followed whenever you are using social media:
- **Be credible.** Be accurate, fair and transparent.
 - **Be consistent.** Encourage constructive criticism and deliberation. Be cordial, honest and professional at all times. You should always be politically neutral.
 - **Be responsive.** Respond to communication and, when you gain insight, share it where appropriate.
 - **Be integrated.** Wherever possible, align online participation with other online and offline communications.
 - **Be legal.** Stay within the law at all times. Remember, you are personally responsible for what you post. As in all publishing, you should be aware of issues such as libel, defamation and slander, so be aware of your language and conduct
15. You are personally responsible for any content you publish so be mindful that it is in the public domain and on the record for a long time.
16. If you participate as a Council employee you should clearly identify yourself and your role and make it clear whether you are acting in your professional capacity
17. Be aware of your association with the council in online spaces. Think about the implications for the Council of “liking”, “befriending” or “favouriting” people, brands, campaigns or pages.
18. Never share confidential or sensitive information. You should know and follow the Information Security Policy. Posts are subject to the Data Protection Act 1998.

Guidance on personal use of social media

19. Whilst the Council's Social media policy does not apply to personal use of social media, the Council's code of conduct does (specifically section D35, appendix 1 paragraphs 31 and 41). Therefore it is sensible to consider how you use social media personally.
20. Whether you choose to create or participate in a personal online social network or any other form of online publishing or discussion is your business. Any views and opinions expressed as a result are your own, therefore it is advisable to use a disclaimer such as: “The views expressed here are my own and do not necessarily represent the views of the County Council.”
21. For those individuals that have access to social media sites on Council equipment you should abide by the E-mail and internet policy (section 5.5) if accessing your personal accounts.
22. If you attract media interest in yourself or the organisation, inform your line manager and the Communications and Marketing

Roles and Responsibilities

23. The Council will:
 - Respond to comments or complaints in a timely fashion, in line with Council policy.
24. The Communications and Marketing service will ensure:
 - The Council's Social Media Policy is upheld
 - Appropriate advice is given
 - That a clear approach is followed for the Council's corporate social media platforms (see Appendix 2)
 - That a list of social media associated with the Council is maintained and publish links to its main accounts and how it manages them on the website at www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/socialmedia
25. The service retains responsibility for
 - daily monitoring, tracking and responding to all communication received via service-associated social media channels
 - Responding to enquires received within office hours by the end of the working day.
 - Responding to enquires out of office hours by the close of the next working day
 - Ensuring that the risk assessment for its social media channels is kept up to date.

Further information

26. For any queries about this protocol contact the Council's Communications and Marketing service.

Appendix 1

Key questions to discuss with Communications and Marketing when considering using social media.

Key questions:

- What is the purpose? How does this fit in with your overall plan for communications?
- Could you achieve the same effect or better on nottinghamshire.gov.uk
- Does the site appeal to a key demographic not available via nottinghamshire.gov.uk? Is this the right site to engage with your audiences?
- Does anything similar already exist? If it does, would working with an existing presence be better for users and for the Council?
- What commitment are you willing to make to the site? Do you have the resources you need to keep it refreshed and relevant? For how long?
- What is your exit strategy?
- How will you measure success? Try to set a target and a review point before you launch;
- Is your overall investment in time and/or money likely to be worth the benefit the presence is likely to deliver?
- Who will be the accountable and responsible for the content?

Appendix 2 – Communications and Marketing Social Media Approach

Introduction

The Digital team within the Communications and Marketing service is responsible for managing the Council's corporate social media accounts:

- Twitter (www.twitter.com/NottsCC)
- Facebook (www.facebook.com/Nottinghamshire)
- YouTube (www.youtube.com/NottsCC).

Team Purpose

The purpose of the Digital team is to provide the residents of Nottinghamshire with information and services provide by the Council over digital channels.

The Digital team work with a variety of social media platforms to activity engage and inform the public, thereby enhancing the reputation of the Council at a local, regional and national level.

Increasingly people are turning to social media platforms to find, access, and comment on Council services. It is vital that Digital team work effectively on social media platforms to ensure this experience is consistent and managed effectively.

Managing Platforms

The Digital team follow the approach as outlined on the Council's website (www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/thecouncil/news/social-media).

Posting Updates

The Digital team are responsible for posting content to council's social media platforms.

A social media duty officer is in place each working day. The officer on duty will work with the Media and Marketing teams, and other service areas to provide relevant content about Council services and information via the Council's digital and social media platforms. Where appropriate information will be scheduled out of hours or provision will be made to provide officer cover.

The tone will be personal and approachable, and use clear language. It needs to be clear that it is a human voice. Humour should be used, providing it does not trivialise or offend.

Responding to enquiries

Social media platforms are a two-way medium. Therefore the public can post comments and ask questions.

The social media duty will monitor the Council's social media platforms for enquires and take responsibility for responding.

Where possible, the responses will signpost the most appropriate contact method for resolving the enquiry. This may be the correct email address or phone number to contact the relevant service, or a link to web based services or information.

Given the instant nature of social media, response should be quick. Services will need to understand the priority that is needed in getting an answer if it has not been possible to signpost an enquiry.

Comments that are critical of the Council or its services will be acknowledged. Care will be taken to avoid being drawn into an argument, by focusing on the facts and avoiding political views or statements. A link to either the complaints form, or to find a Councillor should be provided.