



Social Media Policy & Guidelines Summary

What is social media?

Social media is the term commonly given to online channels and tools which allow people to interact either with organisations or individuals – by sharing opinions, knowledge, content, common interests or asking questions.

Some well-known social media websites include: Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Yammer, Flickr, YouTube, Instagram and blogs on Wordpress.

Who uses social media?

Increasing numbers of people are using social networking and content sharing websites. Facebook alone has well over 30 million users in the UK and makes up nearly 96% of the online audience in the UK.

Social media is gradually replacing traditional media and mass communication methods and the Council needs to use social media channels to stay connected to and interact with residents, customers and partners.

What do I need to know?

Even if you do not use social media personally, you still need to read the two important documents highlighted below. This is to ensure you meet your responsibilities as a Council employee and use social media appropriately, as social media affects many aspects of the Council's work and communications.

The Council has updated its [Social Media Policy](#) and produced new [Social Media Guidelines](#) for employees and managers on the use of social media, whether this is being used for professional work purposes or in personal time.

What do I need to remember?

There can be serious consequences for not using social media appropriately.

- Access to social media from the Council's network is predominantly for work purposes.
- Follow the Council's Social Media Policy, Employee Code of Conduct and ICT Internet and Email Policy at all times – as well as any professional standards which might apply to your job.
- You are personally responsible for anything you post online and any views stated on social media are your personal views.
- Discussing the Council, your work or colleagues/partner/service users on social networks should not be considered private even in a forum with restricted access (social networks are designed to make sharing as easy as possible, so anything you say may be circulated to a wider audience).
- Don't allow your professional and personal use of social media sites to become blurred.
- Be mindful of the risks of using social media – be careful not to:
 - Disclose confidential information or breach safeguarding through using images or personal data;
 - Bring the Council's reputation into disrepute
 - Download anything which could be a virus
 - Breach the Law (e.g. defamation, libel, copyright, discrimination, criminal justice, data protection)
- Council social media accounts must be authorised by the Communications and Marketing service

How do I access social media?

Social media is accessed through the Internet. A key change (from 14 December 2015) is to open up access by default to all employees to social and streaming (e.g. video) media sites from the Council's network.

Employees will no longer be required to complete an ICT form to ask for permission for access. This is in recognition of the benefits of using social media for work purposes (e.g. to access training videos on You Tube).

Further information:

If in doubt about use of social media (whether in a professional or personal context) then seek advice from your line manager, HR or the Communications and Marketing service.

- Misuse of social media – line managers are normally responsible for addressing any misuse by individuals. If you notice any misuse of social media please inform your line manager immediately. The ICT service can provide information on access to inappropriate social media content and safeguards IT Security.
- Reputational issues – contact the Communications and Marketing service for initial advice (and signposting to other services such as HR and Legal as needed).
- Customer information and insight – the Communications and Marketing service monitors social media usage and interaction to gain information and customer insight to inform improvements to Council services and communications.

Further information is contained within the Council's [Social Media Policy](#) and [Social Media Guidelines](#).

A digital elearning module which includes advice on the use of social media is also now available on Learning Pool.