

BARNSLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT OF: Executive Director, Core Services

TITLE: Social media guidance for employees and elected members

REPORT TO:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting	16 November 2022
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Core Services
Key Decision	No
Public or Private	Public

Purpose of report

This report informs members of the updated social media guidance and best practices for employees and elected members.

Council Plan priority

Enabling Barnsley

Recommendations

That Cabinet:-

1. Agree the recommendation to Full Council on 24 November, acknowledging the updated social media guidance and best practices for employees and elected members.
2. Encourages all employees and elected members to pledge their support to the No Place for Hate campaign and to acknowledge their role and responsibility in making online hate and abuse socially unacceptable.

1. INTRODUCTION

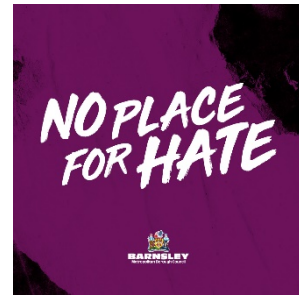
- 1.1 Social media can be a powerful force for good, and we want to encourage people to use social media in positive ways. It can bring considerable benefits to our organisation, helping us to showcase our work, increase engagement with residents and provide us with data that supports our council priorities and outcomes.

1.2 What is social media?

Social media is a website or app that helps you create and share content and communicate with others. Social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr Nextdoor and YappApp. It also includes SharePoint, MS Teams and Yammer. This list is not exhaustive and consists of any platform, website and application that focuses on communication, community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. The guidance also covers any new platforms which will be developed in the future.

1.3 No Place for Hate in Barnsley

Our No Place for Hate campaign started in February 2021, to tackle hate and abuse on both our channels and channels across the borough. The campaign focuses on making online hate and abuse socially unacceptable.



You can read more about the campaign on our website barnsley.gov.uk/noplaceforhate.

As part of the recommendations to cabinet, we strengthened our [social media policy and social media acceptable use policy](#), and it's actively enforced on all of our social media channels by employees in both the Communications and Marketing service and owners in dedicated services.

We make about 11 serious interventions (banning and reporting) a month, ranging from defamation, allegations, threats, name-calling towards our employees and elected members and hate crimes. We also take smaller interventions on a daily basis such as hiding and deleting comments on content such as language, spamming or off-topic material.

There have been a few cases where we have used legal support to communicate with people where the online hate and abuse have been severe.

We actively contact local social media groups that serve our communities to highlight inappropriate content, asking them to act against it.

We've used the campaign messaging for different situations such as Hate Crime Awareness Week, Black History month, Joining Forces, support for Ukraine and Pride. Our partners are engaged and share the messaging through their channels.

1.4 Timescale

The guidance will be reviewed in 2024 to enable us to consider future technological advances.

We'll monitor our performance and application of this guidance to see if it's working and fit for purpose and make in-year amendments if needed.

2. PROPOSAL

2.1 Background to our guidance

Our current policy was created in 2018 and was due for updating in 2020. There's been a delay in updating this while our resource was focused on responding to the pandemic. This guidance was one document for both employees and elected members.

2.2 Tailored guidance

The guidance has been split into three guides to provide tailored advice and support for employees and elected members. The three guides are:

- Social media guidance for employees
- Social media guidance for elected members
- Site owner guidance for dedicated service social media pages

2.3 Expected benefits of the updated social media guidance

This updated social media guidance reflects the advances in social media over the last four years. It provides guidance for people on how to responsibly use social media at work, in their personal lives, and as an owner of a council social media page. It will support us in dealing with any issues and support our HR procedures when needed.

People are free to express their opinion, and most people who follow our pages do this in a balanced way. We have a zero-tolerance approach to no place for hate in Barnsley, including on our social media pages.

We do not accept content on our pages that is defamatory, slanderous, discriminatory, inciting or intimidatory behaviour, or is classed as misinformation (false, misleading or out-of-context material regardless of the motivation behind it) or disinformation (a deliberate attempt to mislead using material that the deceiver knows is untrue, designed to be widely shared).

This updated social media guidance provides clear steps on how to manage unacceptable content on social media on their pages, council pages and community pages. It also covers related situations when people are out working in the community.

It also offers support and guidance to anyone affected by online hate and abuse. We're committed to challenging online hate and will consider legal action where necessary alongside working with South Yorkshire Police.

2.4 Governance

The guidance will be supported by the council's [Code of conduct for employees](#), the [Code of Conduct for Elected Members](#), our [Dignity at work policy](#), and our [social media acceptable use policy](#).

2.5 Promotion of guidance to employees and elected members

Our Communications and Marketing Service and Human Resources will make sure the guidance is cascaded throughout the organisation and that all employees understand the guidance and their responsibility on social media.

This guidance will be promoted to employees and elected members in various formats, including intranet guidance, hard copy guidance and quick reference guides.

2.6 United in our stance for no place for hate in Barnsley

To really make a difference, we need everyone to show a united stance against hate and abuse in our borough. This starts with us; employees and elected members.

As part of no place for hate and our updated social media guidance, we're encouraging everyone to show positive behaviour online and to play their part in developing supportive, inclusive online communities.

We're asking you to think before you click post. To consider the effect that your actions could have on others. To challenge or report online abuse when you see it.

We ask people to pledge their support using our online form. You can access it using the QR code or the link:

<https://surveys.barnsley.gov.uk/s/NoPlaceForHate/>



3. IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

3.1 Financial and Risk

Consultations have taken place with representatives of the Service Director of Finance (S151 Officer). There are no financial implications or risks arising from the contents of this report, to inform members of the updated social media guidance.

3.2 Legal

The updated social media guidance provides clear information on the legalities of social media and the comments people make on the pages.

3.3 Equality

Equality Impact Assessment Pre-screening completed determining full EIA not required.

Reference within the guidance has been made to hate and harassment and the 'No Place for Hate' campaign, the Dignity at Work Policy and the Code of Conduct. These should all help to mitigate any impact in relation to the equitable application of the guidance.

3.4 Sustainability

The decision-making wheel has not been completed. The report is for noting and does not require a decision.

3.5 Employee

The guidance helps employees and elected members to get the best out of using social media responsibly. The guidance will be supported by the council's [Code of conduct for employees](#), the [Code of Conduct for Elected Members](#) and our [social media acceptable use policy](#).

3.6 Communications

Our Communications and Marketing Service and Human Resources will make sure the guidance is cascaded throughout the organisation and that all employees understand the guidance and their responsibility on social media.

Our awareness-raising campaign will make sure that the guidance is accessible and that the communication support needs of our disabled employees and elected members are integrated into the campaign. This will help to make sure that everyone understands their personal and professional responsibilities as well as understanding the protections that have been put in place to safeguard them while at work.

4. CONSULTATION

The following services have been part of updating this guidance:

Engaged:

- Communications and Marketing Service
- IT Services
- Legal Services
- Human Resources
- Customer Feedback
- Health, safety and emergency resilience
- Current council social media page owners

Informed:

- Trade Unions
- Cabinet Spokesperson Without Portfolio about member development

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 The current guidance on social media could have remained in place. This option hasn't progressed as the current guidance doesn't offer the support needed to manage inappropriate content on social media.

5.2 The guidance on social media could have remained as a single document for both employees and elected members. This option wasn't progressed as the guidance needed to be tailored to different audiences to make it more relevant and effective.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Acknowledge the updated social media guidance and best practices for employees and elected members

It's crucial that the council's senior leadership acknowledge the guidance and champion and monitor its application across all employees and elected members.

7. APPENDIX

- Appendix A: Social media guidance for employees
- Appendix B: Social media guidance for elected members
- Appendix C: Site owner guidance for dedicated services social media pages

8. REPORT SIGN OFF

Financial consultation & sign off	<i>Avanda Mitchell 31.08.2022</i>
Legal consultation & sign off	<i>Jason Field 26/08/22</i>

Report Author: Katie Rogers
Post: Head of Communications and Marketing
Date: 4 November 2022