

Dedicated service social media pages - page owner's guidance

Social media is a website or app that helps you to create and share content and communicate with other people. Social media sites include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, YouTube and Flickr. It also includes SharePoint, MS Teams and Yammer. This list is not exhaustive and includes 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.

You should follow this guidance if you're an employee of Barnsley Council and you have responsibility for managing a council-owned social media page. This also includes relief and agency employees, contracted companies that deliver services for the council, consultants, apprentices, volunteers, trainees and people on work placements. This information also applies to employees in schools where the governing body has adopted the policy.

We want to support you to use social media platforms to promote your services. This could be to advertise an event or service, to promote community engagement, to share job or volunteering opportunities or for many other purposes. The uses of social media continue to increase as technology develops.

Some services have their own social media pages. They have these pages because we've identified that the service benefits from having a targeted audience, the channel is appropriate, and the service has the capacity to manage it effectively. These accounts are solely run by services, and they are accountable for the content and the management of the account.

Just for info...throughout this guide the terms 'we' and 'us' are used to describe the Communications and Marketing Service.

Please do not create any social media pages without our permission. This might seem like we want to control this, and in a way we do. As good as social media is, it takes a lot of resources to get it right and holds a big reputational risk if you don't.

If you're following this guide you should have:

- completed a business case to say why you should have a page
- had approval from Communications and Marketing service to create the page
- signed a social media agreement to acknowledge your responsibility for the page.

If you haven't posted on a page for a month or more then we reserve the right to revoke access or close down inactive or infrequently used sites.

1. Setting up a page

Before you create any council social media account you need to speak to us and complete a business case. We'll also offer guidance and support on your use of social media. **You cannot set up your own social media page without approval from the Communications and Marketing service.**

The business case asks you to think about why you want a site. Who is your audience and what will you be telling them? Will the site help achieve the council's priorities and outcomes?

It may be that you don't need a page and that we can post your information or event on the council's main social media sites. The council's main social media pages have a large established following of people.

We already work with a lot of services to promote their campaigns, but if you have something which you think would benefit from being posted on social media, please contact us at communications@barnsley.gov.uk.

2. Your role as a site owner of your dedicated service social media account

Once you're a social media page owner you'll be speaking on behalf of the council and you will be responsible, and accountable, for posting and managing the content and engagement on that page

2.1 Your daily activities and responsibilities for posting content

- You'll be responsible for the daily monitoring and upkeep of any material on your site.
- You should aim to post at least two to three times a week. Ideally, you will be posting daily.
- You are responsible for what you write. Everything is public and permanent, even with privacy settings in place. Screen shots can be taken and shared with a wider audience.
- Make sure your posts are accurate and be careful not to reveal confidential information about the council. If you see confidential information posted on a page or if there's an issue that is damaging to the council's reputation, please let us know. If you're not sure, don't post it.
- You should not share photographs, images, video footage or comments from people without their consent. You can [read more information about consent on the intranet](#).
- Be aware of what's in your photographs, images and video footage. Make sure that there isn't any confidential information on view and that it conforms with our [social media acceptable use policy](#).
- Your content must be non-political. Think about the language that you use and don't retweet any elected member's tweets, whatever their political stance.
- You must comply with The General Data Protection Regulations.
- Respect copyright and give credit where it is due. Don't post text, images or videos that are created by someone else without crediting them. This includes copying pictures from the internet. Where possible include a link to the source. You can [read more information about consent on the intranet](#).
- Don't post clippings of newspapers on your pages. We don't have a licence for this. You can post links from websites. You can [read more information about this on the intranet](#).
- Pay attention to your spelling, grammar and tone of voice.

- You should regularly check engagement on your page such as the comments and respond to these if needed in a timely manner. It's good to have pre-approved responses to common issues and questions that might get asked on your pages.
- We can help you decide if you should post certain content. Just email us at communications@barnsley.gov.uk

2.2 Barnsley Council brand and style guides

Barnsley Council works in partnership to bring people together and connect them to services helping them to be the best they can be.

We have one strong brand identity that all our services should use so our wide council offer can be easily recognised.

Following our brand and style guides mean that however someone interacts with us, they get the same consistent experience. This develops a more reliable, trustworthy identity for the council, turning people into loyal ambassadors.

It's important that our vision and values are clearly communicated to show how we're making Barnsley the place of possibilities. So, residents, businesses and visitors feel confident that their best interests are at the heart of everything we do.

When we create your pages, we'll work with you to make sure the branding on your pages aligns with our brand and style guides.

2.3 Creating engaging content

Making your content interesting will increase the number of engagements on your page. We'll speak to you about this when we create your page and you can contact us at any time at communications@barnsley.gov.uk

2.4 Managing the reputation of the council

We all have a responsibility to manage the reputation of the council. A key risk to our reputation is the incorrect use of social media. To help manage this risk, we'll need access to your administration rights so that we can check your site. If you currently have a site and haven't given us administration rights, please contact us.

2.5 Management of the site

All Facebook pages will be linked to our central Facebook Business Manager dashboard. We'll need your Twitter account username and password which will be stored on a secure spreadsheet on SharePoint.

You're responsible, and accountable, for removing access and changing passwords when an admin leaves the council or changes their role. Please let us know as well.

Clearly state the times that your social media pages are monitored and make sure you have the resource to do this. The council's main social media pages are monitored between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Thursday and until 4:45pm on Friday. We also monitor the council's main social media pages for coverage during critical and major incidents, adverse weather and events. We don't respond to questions or complaints outside of these hours, even if we're posting from our pages. We direct people to the council's [contact us page](#).

We have an automatic profanity filter on our pages. When people include a keyword in their comments we've added to the filter, the platform will hide the comment so that it doesn't appear on our page. Our list of keywords includes terms relating to the bullet point list in the council's social media acceptable use policy. We'll help you set this up and show you how to update it.

As standard, we do not disable comments from our posts. It's at our discretion to disable comments from posts if we think this is the right action to take. We will support you with making sure that this is the right action to take.

2.6 Pre-election period

Whatever type of election, if someone engages on your pages with content which could be interpreted as supporting a party or candidate during the pre-election period, you should delete it. This includes pictures, videos, comments, statements, shares and retweets.

If you post content to the page which could be interpreted as supporting a party or candidate during the pre-election period, you'll be asked to remove it and the council may investigate and start disciplinary action against you which could ultimately lead to your dismissal. This includes pictures, videos, comments, statements, shares and retweets.

2.7 Social media advertising

Social media advertising is a great way of targeting messages to your customers. All Social media advertising should be booked by the Communications and Marketing service.

2.8 Contact from the media

The media frequently use social media content to create stories. If you're contacted by the media please do not respond to them. Contact us as soon as possible.

No place for Hate in Barnsley

Make sure you have read the No Place for Hate section in the Barnsley Council social media guidelines for employees. These will help you to understand and deal with unacceptable content on your social media pages.

It's not an easy thing to do, so please contact us and we can support you through the process.

Your approach

Treat people with respect. Be polite, respectful and courteous – even if they are not. It's important to keep calm, even if it isn't always easy.

Do not retaliate with a heated conversation. Do not be disrespectful to people or mock them.

We'll not tolerate any inappropriate content or engagement concerning the council, its employees, elected members, residents, customers or suppliers. This includes harassment, bullying, violent or aggressive behaviour, and discriminatory or hate crime comments. You'll be asked to remove it and the council may investigate and start disciplinary action against you which could ultimately lead to your dismissal.

Dealing with unacceptable content on your pages

People are free to express their opinion and the majority of people who follow our pages do this

in a balanced way. It's okay for people to not like the service we deliver or to disagree with decisions and they are free to communicate this. As frustrating as it may be, we won't take any action against these types of comments.

We do not accept content that is defamatory, 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).

Steps to take:

- Make sure you have the council's social media acceptable use policy clearly linked to your pages. We'll help you do this when we set up your page.
- Screenshot the content and get a link to the thread and the page (make sure you get the platform name, date and time on it) – this is really important for us to have this for further investigation.
- Create a log so you can add detail about the actions you take and the reasons behind them. Also, include the screenshot here. This is crucial if someone complains. We have a log on SharePoint and we can share this with you.
- Report the content using the platform's reporting process.
- If the content relates to the list in the council's social media acceptable use policy, you need to hide or delete it depending on the severity.
- You should respond publicly to the content and also via direct message asking you to remove it immediately. We'll tell you why we've removed it. We have a list of prepared responses which we can share with you.
- If people do not amend or remove their content, then you should block their access to your social media page. You should tell them that you're doing this.

Support for you

Managing a social media page can have its good and not-so-good days. Please get in touch with us if you need any support.

You can also speak to your manager for advice and support and get support from our [Well@Work service](#) if you need it.

Inactive or infrequently used pages

If you haven't posted on a platform for a month or more then we reserve the right to revoke access or close down inactive or infrequently used sites.

Mismanagement of pages

If you do not follow the guidance in this document it may result in disciplinary action under the council's [disciplinary procedure](#).

We will also take the steps to remove your access from pages and will look to see if the page needs deleting altogether.

Tribunals and courts can consider communications recorded on social media sites. It's highly likely that online content, postings and messages will be used as evidence, regardless of the privacy settings of your page.

All employees and elected members have a common law duty of fidelity and trust and confidence in their employers. A breach of this nature could be treated as a breach of the council's [Code of conduct for employees](#) and you could be subject to a disciplinary procedure which could ultimately lead to your dismissal.