

A collage of various social media icons. Visible icons include the Facebook 'f' logo, the YouTube play button, the Twitter bird, the Instagram camera icon with a rainbow stripe, and the LinkedIn 'in' logo. The icons are overlapping and set against a light blue background.

Social media policy

2018 - 2020

Social media is one of our main channels for engaging with our customers.

We want you to use this policy to help you get the best out of social media.



BARNSLEY
Metropolitan Borough Council

Introduction

Social media is one of our main channels for communicating with our residents. We want you to use this policy to help you get the best out of social media.

Social media connect you to your customers. It can connect you with breaking news as it happens or a good news story for a community group. It can also connect you to what people are saying, doing and thinking in their area.

It's a great way to promote your services and it also helps to promote engagement with our customers.

As part of our #DigitalFirst programme, we want you to feel confident in using social media as a communications channel with your customers and also as a channel to share your knowledge and learning.

You should follow this policy if you're an employee or elected member of Barnsley Council, including relief and agency employees, contractors, 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.

Social media is also changing and growing. To keep up with the changes we'll republish this policy in 2020.

Just for info...Throughout this policy the term "we / us" is used to describe the council's Communications and Marketing team.

1. What is social media?

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, Snapchat, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, YouTube and Flickr. We have also introduced SharePoint to this list. The information also covers any new social networking sites which will be developed in the future.

2. Using social media at work to engage with residents/customers

Social media is already being used by many council services. We want to support you to use it to promote your services, where it's relevant. This could be to advertise an event or service, to promote community engagement, or for many other purposes. The uses for social media continue to increase as the technology develops.

Before you create any council social media site you need to speak to us and complete a short business case ([available on the intranet](#)). We'll also offer guidance and support regarding your use of social media. You'll need to agree to and follow the guidance set out in the social media site owner's policy in Appendix A.

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3. Using social media for personal use at home

Using social media is a great way of connecting with your family and friends.

We want you to be proud that you work for Barnsley Council, if you want to have your employer information displayed as part of your profile, this is fine. However, as an employee or elected member, consider what you are posting and how this may reflect upon the values and reputation of the council.

We also work hard to promote the work that the council does. Sharing information helps spread the word about what's happening in Barnsley. You're welcome to promote the council's work. However, unless it's part of your role within the council, you should never make official announcements on a social media platform.

It is good practice to make it clear that comments are your own personal views and do not represent the council's official view. This makes it clear that you may have a greater understanding of the council, but you're not making any official declarations. Use wording in your profile such as 'Views expressed are my own'. However, should your actions bring the council into disrepute or have the potential to adversely affect the council's reputation or business, the council may investigate and start disciplinary action against you which could ultimately lead to your dismissal.

If you're carrying out a legitimate role which involves posting comments on social media, for example a Trade Union representative or a community action group representative etc, you need to make absolutely clear in which capacity you are making your posts.

You may want to join a group that has a conflict of interest with the council's services, such as a campaign group. You should follow the guidance on personal interests in the [Code of conduct for employees](#) or [Code of conduct for elected members](#)

Anything you post on your personal site is your responsibility. A comment, tweet, share or retweet posted to the internet is there permanently, regardless of whether you try to remove it. There'll always be a permanent record of everything you post. Irrespective of your privacy settings posts can, and often do, become publically available through screenshots, hacking and other methods.

It's always good to think about whether your actions could be considered defamatory, derogatory and/or offensive against the council. We'll not tolerate any post/share/retweet containing inappropriate comments concerning the council, its employees, elected members, residents, customers or suppliers. 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.

Examples of this could be:

- 1) *"It's an utter waste of time and public money, management haven't a clue – I'll tell them."*
- 2) *"My personal view is that there are other projects within which the money apportioned to this project could be utilised to achieve a better outcome, I will discuss this with the project lead."*

If you had posted the first comment, you would be asked to remove it and the council may investigate and start disciplinary action against you which could ultimately lead to your dismissal. If you had posted the second comment, the council may not take disciplinary action against you.

If you're tagged in a post or tweet that is considered defamatory, derogatory and/or offensive against the council then please delete it immediately and tell your manager.

Some helpful guidance:

- If you have a work related issue please don't raise it via social media. Use the council's [dignity at work](#) or [grievance procedure](#).
- Don't divulge confidential information about, or belonging to, the council, its service users/customers, employees or elected members.
- Don't impersonate other employees or elected members on social media sites and forums.
- You can share photographs, images, video footage and comments of employees or elected members with their permission but you must not take and share photographs, images, video footage or comments from service users/customers without their permission. You can [read more information about consent on the intranet](#)
- Be aware of what's in the background of your photographs, images and video footage. Make sure that there isn't any confidential information on view.
- You don't have to accept 'friend' requests from anyone at the council if you don't want to.
- Don't start or accept an online relationship with your current or past service users/customers using a personal social media site. Like your offline work, where you have a close relationship with a service user, you must let your manager know.
- Check your privacy settings and make sure you understand what people can see. Social media is a public place and it's best to assume that all your posts can be seen by anyone.
- You need to follow the council's [Information and security and computer usage policy](#) and the [Code of conduct for employees](#) or [Code of conduct for elected members](#) when using council equipment and your council login.
- Outside of work, using your own equipment, you still need to follow the [Information and security and computer usage policy](#) and the [Code of conduct for employees](#) or [Code of conduct for elected members](#).

4. Using your personal social media sites at work

You're okay to use your personal social media sites while you're at work, using council or your own equipment. This should be in your own time and it must not interfere with your job or delivery of service.

5. Legal information

If you breach this policy it may result in disciplinary action under the council's [disciplinary procedure](#).

Tribunals and/or Courts may consider communications recorded on social media sites. It's highly likely that postings and comments can be used as evidence, regardless of the privacy settings of your page.

Comments made on a public forum are in the public domain. Updating your site settings to private will not protect you if you're found in breach of this policy.

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

The council reserves the right to monitor use of social media through line management and monitoring of excessive or inappropriate usage.

The council has a duty of care to take all reasonable steps to ensure your health, safety and wellbeing. Customers and residents have the right to expect the best service from the council and the council will always try to provide that service politely and respectfully. In return, we expect the same treatment. This includes any comments made on social media channels.

We'll not tolerate any violent or aggressive behaviour, or discriminatory/hate crime comments towards a council employee or elected member. We'll provide support and guidance to anyone who is affected by cyberbullying such as comments made about them on social media sites in connection with their role. Follow our zero tolerance approach:

1. Fill in a [violence and aggression report](#) as soon as possible. This allows us to make an official record and get you the help and support you might need.
2. If you can, take a screenshot of the message on social media and include it in the report
3. Block the person on social media and check your privacy settings.
4. Report as an individual to the police via 101 or online at <https://www.reportingcrime.uk/SYPincidentreport/>
5. Take note of our [Personal Safety and Violence and Aggression at work – Code of Conduct](#)

If you need to ask a social media site or an online media outlet to remove comments about you, it's better, in the first instance that you try to do this yourself. We'll help you to do this and offer more support in getting the comments removed if needed.

If someone has posted defamatory comments on social media or an online media outlet about an employee or elected member, including violent or aggressive behaviour, or discriminatory/hate crime comments, the council will try and support these employees or elected members generally in dealing with what is a difficult situation. But the law does not allow the council to provide any assistance in bringing legal proceedings.

As mentioned in section 3, it's always good to think about whether your comments or actions could be considered defamatory, derogatory or offensive as this could result in somebody taking legal action against you as well as against the council. If someone is taking legal proceedings against an employee or elected member because of their defamatory comments or actions on a social media site or online media outlet, the council is entitled, in appropriate cases where the person has acted reasonably and in good faith, to support them in defending those legal proceedings.

If comments are made by another employee or elected members, the council will address this using the council's appropriate policies and procedures.

6. Guidance for elected members

Using social media for council business

We're starting to see more and more elected members using social media as a channel to engage with their communities.

Your posts, tweets or comments on social media about the council or your role as an elected members are treated the same way as any other communications and so are also covered by your [Code of Conduct for Elected Members](#).

If anyone considers that your posts, tweets or comments on social media have failed to comply with the [Code of Conduct for Elected Members](#), you may subject of a complaint to the council's monitoring officer.

We'll not tolerate any violent or aggressive behaviour, or discriminatory/hate crime comments towards a council employee or elected member. You can find more information on this in section 6.

Using social media for personal capacity

There's nothing to stop you using social media in a purely personal capacity. Your posts, tweets or comments should not relate to the council or your role as an elected member.

You should follow the guidance in this policy and make it clear on your social media accounts that you're posting, tweeting or commenting in a personal capacity. You should be careful not to give any impression that you're acting in your capacity as an elected member. This approach will stop any reason for people to think that your posts, tweets or comments on social media are from your role as an elected members.

7. Roles and responsibilities

Employees and elected members have a responsibility to:

- make sure you understand the policy and guidelines to using social media
- avoid behaviour that may cause someone to feel the subject of harassment or bullying
- act responsibly when using online media for work and personal use

- report instances of harassment, bullying, violent or aggressive behaviour, or discriminatory/hate crime comments to their manager or relevant officer.

Managers have a responsibility to:

- make sure you understand the policy and guidelines to using social media
- act straight away to stop any harassment, bullying, violent or aggressive behaviour, or discriminatory/hate crime comments whether a complaint is raised or not
- make sure employees and elected members are aware of the social media policy and employee / elected members guidelines
- support employees and elected members who are the subject of harassment, bullying, violent or aggressive behaviour, or discriminatory/hate crime comments
- make sure all complaints are dealt with consistently and in line with other policies.

Human Resources and Communications and Marketing have a responsibility to:

- provide support and advice on the policy and guidelines, where necessary.

Appendix A - Social media site owner's policy

Social media is an effective tool for communicating to a wide audience. It's instant, offers two-way engagement and provides tools to help you target and measure your communications. Social media is being used by many council services. We want to encourage you to use it where it's relevant.

1. Setting up a site

Before you create any council social media site you need to speak to us and complete a [short business case](#). We'll also offer guidance and support on your use of social media. Please don't set your own sites up without talking to us first!

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 site and that we can post your information or event on the council's core social media sites.

2. Your role as a site owner

Once you're a social media site owner you'll be speaking on behalf of the council.

The following points will help you to manage your site:

- You'll be responsible for the daily monitoring and upkeep of any material on your site.
- We 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.
- 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 must change passwords or remove access when an admin leaves. Please let us know as well.
- In discussion with you, we reserve the right to revoke access or close down inactive or infrequently used sites.
- Treat people with respect. Don't post negative comments about other people, companies or organisations. Follow the guidance set out in this social media policy. Your site must have the acceptable use policy displayed or made available. Screenshot anything on your site that might relate to this policy.
- We'll not tolerate any post/share/retweet containing inappropriate comments concerning the council, its employees, elected members, residents, customers or suppliers. This includes harassment, bullying, violent or aggressive behaviour, or discriminatory/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. You can find out more information about this in section 5 of the policy.

- Be responsible for what you write. Everything is public and permanent, even with privacy settings in place Screen shots can be taken and shared to a wider audience.
- 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 team.
- 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 site 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.
- Your content must be non-political. Think about language that you use and don't retweet any elected member's tweets, whatever their political stance.
- If the media contact you via your social media site please do not respond to them. Contact us as soon as possible.
- 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](#).
- Let your manager know if you're subject to comments made about you on social media sites in connection with your role. We'll not tolerate any harassment, bullying, violent or aggressive behaviour, or discriminatory/hate crime comments towards a council employee or an elected member. You can find out more information about this in section 5 of the policy.