

Derby City Council Social Media Policy

This policy is intended to provide clear guidance regarding the acceptable use of electronic communications and social media both within and outside of work.

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The acceptable use of social media by employees

Introduction

Derby City Council strives to be an open and transparent organisation. We want to actively engage with our residents, businesses, visitors and partners. Our communication with stakeholders should be a two-way conversation, so everyone's views can help to shape the services we provide.

This policy is intended to provide clear guidance regarding the acceptable use of social media both within and outside of work.

This policy covers all:

- employees of the Council
- agency, temporary or contract staff working for the Council
- staff of third party suppliers contracted to and/or delivering services on behalf of the Council
- volunteers working with the Council on Council projects
- work placements.

This policy does not cover Councillors. Councillors should consult the Local Government Association's social media best practice guidelines and refer to their own code of conduct document.

We acknowledge that social media is a reality and, when used effectively, can positively support Council business and the services we provide.

There is increasing use of social media for work-related purposes, such as posting proactive messages about our services or activities, dealing with queries and comments, uploading audio and video materials, and professional/peer networking.

Understanding the risks of social media

Exceptional care should be taken when using any social media tools. Most social media sites work on the principle of 'broadcast-by-default', which means it is not always possible to control who may, or may not, see the content. We encourage anyone covered by this policy to check their personal privacy settings on any social media networks they use.

Even though social media sites allow users to change privacy settings and to block unwanted contacts, the content you post could be shared beyond an audience you choose.

The terms and conditions of such sites give powers (and in many cases ownership) of the published content to the social media site itself, and not to the person who originally posted it¹. When you sign up to a social media site, you should take time to read and understand the terms and conditions of the site and how that site will use your data and content you share.

Clear legal precedents have now emerged showing how the misuse of social media can result in both civil and criminal action. Users of social media need to be aware of such consequences. Recent high profile cases have shown the legal dangers posed by social media that have led to significant fines and, in some cases, imprisonment.

The Data Protection Act 2018 applies to the use of digital communications, including social media. Therefore, whether using social media for work or personal purposes, you are advised to follow the principles of this act when referring to any other living individual.

Failure to do so could lead to enforcement action and potential civil or criminal action against the Council and/or against you as the individual responsible.

Acceptable use and monitoring social media

This policy should be read and considered together with the Council's other policies, including the Employee Code of Conduct, the Information Security and IT Acceptable Use Policy and the Data Protection Policy. The duty and obligations they impose also apply. Employees should pay particular attention to professional requirements, for example, case management rules.

Any social media activity by an employee or other person covered by this policy (in or out of the workplace) that could be deemed:

- a breach of the Code of Conduct or other Council policy
- or likely to damage the Council's reputation

will be subject to investigation in the same way that similar action would be taken in other circumstances, such as verbally in the work-place, on the phone or in public.

No data about individuals or organisations collected for the Council's business use should be published or distributed via social media because:

- we cannot control or secure the potential audience
- we cannot ensure that ownership of this data remains with the Council

¹ For example: Although you have updated your status on Facebook, or taken the picture you shared, Facebook's terms and conditions could mean that Facebook now own that image or post – not you.

- we must comply with UK and European laws which state all data must be held on servers in 'approved locations' (we cannot do so for social media providers)
- we must comply with relevant laws before sharing data with partners
- we have a duty of care to the data 'subject'.

We reserve the right to monitor and maintain audit trails of electronic communications (including, but not limited to, content on social media sites).

We do not routinely monitor use of electronic communications or social media set up by individuals and not in the name of Derby City Council. However, where items are published electronically referring to the Council, our business, activities or services, or to named employees in their Council role, we may respond where it is brought to our attention.

Official communications

Our policies and procedures for official communications, and for issuing media statements, apply equally to social media.

Any official public statement or post intended as a news release or in response to an enquiry from the media will be issued by the Communications team via the Council's press office.

Official communications prepared in advance, with an embargo set, must not be published using a digital or social media channel before the embargo date and time.

It is also important that we continue to have effective internal communications which allow us to share information with staff and others on a basis of trust and in confidence.

No content published or distributed as an internal communication or as a communication with or between trusted partner(s), may be copied or republished via a digital or social media channel without prior authorisation.

Social media for work use

We allow the use of social media for business purposes as defined in this policy.

Examples may include:

- to engage residents (or other stakeholders) who prefer to use social media
- to engage partner organisations who use social media
- to participate in peer and professional body networks
- to access business-related content posted or published via social media.

We have a duty to protect ourselves and our reputation and want to use social media in a way that is consistent, meets our priorities and reflects our values.

You must not set up a social media account on behalf of the Council without prior, written permission from the Communications team.

If you would like to use social media on behalf of the Council for a specific team or service, then please refer to the Communications Toolkit on iDerby in the first instance. Please note that all requests for team/service specific social media accounts will need:

- Line manager approval
- Approval for budget for a user licence for the Council's social media management platform
- Evidence of Policy acceptance (the Information Security and IT Acceptable Use Policy and the Data Protection Policy) and E-Learning completion (mandatory Data Protection e-learning).

You should not use a separate social media site for content that could (and should) be published on our corporate Twitter or Facebook sites or the Council website.

If you wish to extend the reach of relevant content, it should be published on the Council's website first, before a link to the material is posted to the corporate social media accounts by the Communications team.

Our customers and others have a right to transparency and openness. Don't forget that you represent the Council when posting to social media. Any content you publish or post (and any material you access) must be relevant to your role at the Council and could be interpreted as being made on behalf of the Council.

In the same way that you are responsible for your actions by email, on the telephone or when wearing your council ID badge or uniform, you are entirely responsible for your actions, views, opinions and any published comments on social media.

Your personal use of social media

The Council does not want to prevent or restrict your use of social media in your own time and for your own purposes.

However, if your personal use of social media conflicts with your duties for the Council, or your obligations as an employee, as a contracted supplier, a volunteer or councillor, then we may take action.

No private information you have access to as a representative of the Council should be copied, published or commented upon when using social media for personal use.

Our standards and codes of behaviour extend beyond the workplace in respect of your actions or communication(s) that could bring the Council into disrepute.

Before you comment or share something, think – would you want your manager to see it? If the answer is no, then you probably shouldn't.

Use of social media at work

We do not block access to social media sites at work but will restrict access to sites if the purpose or content are not consistent with our values and policies.

Personal use of social media sites is only permitted in your own time.

If you are suspected of using social media for personal use during working time, just as carrying out other personal activities in work time, you may be subject to investigation and potential disciplinary action.

Your use of social media and other electronic communications, whether for work or personal use, must be consistent with the standards of behaviour expected by the Council at all times, and must be legal.

The acceptable use of social media by customers and residents

Introduction

We recognise that social media has an important role to play in how we communicate with, engage and promote dialogue with our stakeholders.

For some people, sites like Twitter and Facebook are their preferred method of interacting with the Council.

We are pleased to be able to offer this method for people to get in touch, to ask us questions, report issues and to seek our help or support. We have an existing process for dealing with complaints on our customer service website, My Account.

We acknowledge that everyone has a right to free speech.

However, a right to free speech must be balanced with UK laws covering matters such as libel and defamation, contempt of court, harassment, the Communications Act, Computer Misuse Act and what is generally acceptable.

As a Council, we also have a duty of care towards our employees and councillors.

What is and isn't acceptable

We know that there will be times when people will be unhappy with what the Council does (or doesn't do) or the decisions it takes.

Criticism is a fact of life and we know organisations like ours are in the public spotlight. In fact, we encourage public debate and it's good that people are free to share their views about the city and the council.

We have no intention of stifling discussion about us as an organisation.

However, we draw the line at posts or messages (on whatever channel or social media site) that we deem to be unacceptable. This includes targeting individual members of staff with direct, unacceptable, criticism.

We will reserve the right to take action in relation to social media posts or messages which:

- are abusive
- are harassing
- are threatening
- use sexist, racist or other unacceptable language/swear words which are intended to cause concern/harm
- are defamatory or libellous
- may be in contempt of court
- break any other law (such as hate crime)
- are spam
- contain inappropriate material (photographs or video)
- incite someone/people to break the law.

How we will deal with unacceptable behaviour

In the first instance, the Communications team will issue a written warning to the author and any inappropriate material will be removed from the Council's social media feeds. Where it is not possible to remove the material, we will ask the author to remove the material and explain why it is not acceptable.

If unacceptable behaviour continues, the Communications team will consider blocking users from interacting with the Council's social media feeds. This initially will take place for one week if the author does not remove unacceptable material or refuses to modify their behaviour/language.

The Communications team will make all efforts to identify the person responsible, but where they cannot, or, if unacceptable content continues to be published, they will remove posts, messages or content which are considered to be unacceptable from the Council's social media feeds.

We may also report the matter to the police where behaviour amounts to abuse or harassment or a criminal offence is suspected. Where the content could be considered criminal (such as hate speech) the Communications team will take screenshots of unacceptable material as evidence before deleting it.

All decisions on these matters will be made by the Communications team after consultation with the Council's Legal Services.

The Council reserves the right to take whatever legal action that may be necessary in the case of libellous or defamatory posts/messages.

Queries relating to the application of this policy should be addressed, in writing, to yourcityyoursay@derby.gov.uk.