

SOCIAL MEDIA ACCEPTABLE USE GUIDELINES

1 Introduction

1.1 Social media refers to the various online technology tools that enable people to communicate easily via the internet to share information and resources. Social media include, but are not limited to, blogs, wikis, RSS feeds, social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn or MySpace, microblogs such as Twitter, photo sharing sites such as Flickr, content sharing or bookmarking sites such as Digg and Delicious, customer feedback sites such as Yelp and video sharing sites such as YouTube.

2 Purpose

2.1 Social media have become an extremely important communications channel helping us communicate quickly where an emergency arises and can help support dialogue between the Council and its citizens, partner agencies and members of its communities.

2.2 This can clearly be of great value in the workplace and create new opportunities for communications and collaboration. But social media can also often blur the line between personal and professional communications. Consequently, using social media creates new responsibilities for employers and individuals.

2.3 The purpose of this document is to:

- provide clear guidelines and set standards of good practice to employees on the use of social media in the workplace
- ensure employees are aware of their responsibility to comply with the law on issues including discrimination, data protection, libel and copyright, and
- assist employees to distinguish between the use of social media in their work and personal lives

3 Using Social Media in the Workplace

3.1 Employees wishing to use social media to support their work duties should first discuss their requirements with their line manager and an appropriate ICT colleague.

3.2 When you are using social media in the work place you have a responsibility to use this in an appropriate manner. The following general points should help to keep you right and additional guidance is available in the guide - How To: post and respond on social media.

- Identity - if you are posting about your work for the council, you should identify yourself, be clear who you are and identify that you work for the council.
- Legal Responsibility - for the council's protection as well as your own, it is critical that you stay within the legal framework and be aware that libel, defamation, copyright and data protection laws apply. Ask permission to

publish or report on conversations that you take part in at work. Be aware that content on social media websites may be subject to Freedom of Information requests. Remember that if you break the law using social media (for example by posting something defamatory) you will be personally responsible and may also be subject to the Council's Disciplinary Procedures.

- Reputation - the council's reputation is made up in a large part by the behaviour of its employees and everything you publish reflects on how the Moray Council is perceived. Social media should be used in a way that adds value to the Council's business.
- Inaccuracies - when you see inaccuracies articulated about the Council by citizens, journalists or by other bloggers, you must also let your communications adviser know that you have identified information that is inaccurate or could damage the reputation of the Council <<insert link to email>>.
- Interaction - be prepared for a two-way conversation and that people are entitled to their views. Be factual and avoid becoming involved in unnecessary or unproductive arguments. If a conversation becomes offensive in terms of language or sentiment, handle this swiftly and with sensitivity, remove the comment(s), and make sure you inform your audience exactly why you have done this. A few sentences should suffice, along the lines of: "This comment was removed because the content was offensive. Comments are welcomed but please respect the views of everybody who comes here."
- Mistakes - if you make a mistake, be up front about your error and correct it quickly. If you choose to modify an earlier post, make it clear that you have done so. Remember that there are consequences to what you publish. If you're about to publish something that makes you uncomfortable, review the suggestions in this document. If you're still uncertain, discuss it with your manager or with the Communications team.
- Viruses - be mindful that social media sites can be used to distribute malware, i.e. viruses. Employees should be aware that downloading applications or accessing links, for example the use of shortened urls in Twitter, can fool users into accessing unsuitable or malicious sites. So take care with shortened urls, unless you are following an organization or individual you can trust.

4 Using Social Media for Personal Use

4.1 As the use and popularity of social media grows, the lines between what is public and private, personal and professional have blurred. The Council respects employees' rights to personal use of social media out with the workplace, however, you should be aware that any actions in and outside work that affect your work performance, the work of others, or adversely affect the Council's reputation, may become a matter for the Council.

4.2 Considering the following points may help avoid any conflict between your personal use of social media and your employment with the Council:

- If you already use social networks or blogs for personal use and you have indicated in any way that you work for the Moray Council you should remove these. The personal image you project in social media affects your reputation and may affect the reputation of Moray Council. Sounding off about the council, even on a personal blog can be damaging. By identifying yourself as a council employee within a social network, you are connecting to your colleagues, managers and even council citizens.
- When using social media for personal purposes, you must not imply you are speaking for the Council. Avoid use of the Council e-mail address, Council logos or other Council identification. Make it clear that what you say is representative of your views and opinions and not necessarily the views and opinions of the council.
- You must comply with other Council policies when using social media. For example, you should be careful not to breach council confidentiality and information security or information management policies, or the Council's Code of Conduct. If in doubt, don't post it.

For further more general tips on using social media [<<click here>>](#)

If having read this document you are still uncertain about the appropriateness of publishing something online, it is best to hold back and seek the advice of your line manager and the communications team, also bearing in mind the Council's Information Assurance guidelines.