

HR & OD POLICIES

human resources and organisational development



Social Media Procedure

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1. WHAT IS MEANT BY 'SOCIAL MEDIA' AND 'SOCIAL NETWORKING'?

The term 'social media' is commonly used to describe any number of web-based and mobile technologies that allow users to communicate and interact with each other.

'Social networking', meanwhile, is a term commonly used to describe the process of using these channels.

Some popular examples of social media platforms include:

Facebook: Allows users to share information, images and links with others. Users can view, comment upon or 'like' other profiles, depending on privacy settings. From a business perspective, organisations can communicate and engage directly with customers via the platform.

Twitter: Like Facebook, users can share a range of information with others. This is done via status updates of no more than 140 characters. Users 'follow' other profiles that appear in a constantly updated news feed. Updates can be 're-tweeted' and shared with others.

LinkedIn: Aimed at the business community, LinkedIn allows users to connect with fellow professionals, share expertise, enter discussions and seek or promote job opportunities.

The above examples is not an exhaustive or inclusive list of social media platforms.

2. USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA WITHIN THE WORKPLACE

Increasingly, social networking is being used by businesses and organisations to communicate and engage with customers on a number of levels.

At a basic level, organisations may simply want to use social media to direct users to a corporate website, as a news outlet, or to promote job opportunities.

At a more advanced level, social media can be used as a means to respond to comments and complaints, consult and engage with customers, and to monitor and respond to feedback on an organisation. The Corporate Communications team have issued guidance on the use of social media for employees - [Social Networking and the use of Social Media](#). This Procedure provides information on how social media can be used to help teams and services engage with new and wider audiences. The Corporate

Communications team are responsible for monitoring the corporate feeds. If you require further advice and support on the use of social media in the workplace please contact the [Corporate Communications team](#).

3.ACCEPTABLE USE

Aberdeenshire Council recognises that social media has become a part of everyday life for many of our employees and can be used positively. While a large amount of activity on Social Media is either entirely harmless or non-work related concerns can arise where posting made by employee in a personal capacity express views which the Council would not wish to be associated with.

The behaviour expected for functioning in an electronic world are not any different from those expected of employee's on a daily basis in other methods of communication such as face to face. As a basic rule, if an employee is not happy for others to see particular comments, media or information they simply do not post it in a public forum online. This applies even where privacy settings are applied to personal profiles.

All Aberdeenshire Council employees, who have their own personal profile on a social media website, should be aware of their conduct on these sites and their responsibilities to Aberdeenshire Council. This applies equally to content posted in employee's own time.

If you identify yourself as an Aberdeenshire Council employee in your own social media profile or information you should be aware that this means that other people, including those in the Council, will be able to identify you as an employee of the Council. You should be aware that even if you do not specifically identify yourself as a Council employee, it may still be apparent that you are.

Employees should also be familiar with and adhere to guidance on social networking provided by professional or statutory bodies such as the GTCS and SSSC.

Employees must not:

- Post any information, media, image or comment which could be perceived as being offensive or which may be considered discriminatory or may be considered as bullying or harassment.
- Post comments, content, media or information that could bring Aberdeenshire Council into disrepute.
- Post any confidential information about service users or tenants.

To maintain a professional working relationship it is best practice not to exchange private text, phone numbers or, personal email addresses and employees should not accept or instigate friend requests with service users.

Any incidents of unacceptable or inappropriate use (as detailed within this procedure) will be investigated under [Aberdeenshire Council's Disciplinary Policy](#) and relevant Codes of Conduct or Professional Bodies and may result in termination of your employment.

Detailed below are some examples of inappropriate information which could result in an investigation under Aberdeenshire Council's Disciplinary Policy and possible termination employment:

- photographs or video footage of a service user or tenant*
- offensive comments in relation to any Aberdeenshire Council employee including management and other colleagues;
- discriminatory comments;
- comments which bring Aberdeenshire Council into disrepute;
- confidential information regarding an incident or decision at work;
- derogatory or malicious comments about Aberdeenshire Council;
- comments which may be harmful to employees, pupils, residents, tenants or service users of Aberdeenshire Council.

*unless express permission has been given by the Service and the individual concerned.

This list is not exhaustive.

Employees should be aware that disciplinary action (which may result in termination of employment) may be taken against inappropriate use of social media even where privacy settings on personal profiles are switched on and / or where Aberdeenshire Council is not identified as the employer.

4. WHAT TO DO IF AN INCIDENT ARISES

If you are made or become aware of any inappropriate use of social media by a colleague or employee of Aberdeenshire Council this should be reported to your line manager or senior officer within your Service immediately. Before an investigation can be undertaken there must be evidence of the inappropriate use. Advice should then be sought by the line manager to [askHR](#) who will advise on the most appropriate course of action to be followed.

5. SOCIAL MEDIA AND BULLYING

Any employee who feels that they have been bullied, harassed or victimised by another employee via social media websites can follow the procedures indicated within [Aberdeenshire Council's Grievance Policy](#).

Further information is also detailed within [Aberdeenshire Council's Bullying and Harassment Guidance](#).

Employees who are found to have bullied or harassed colleagues or line managers on social media websites will be subject to disciplinary action which may result in termination of their employment with Aberdeenshire Council.

For further advice and guidance on any of the above please contact [askHR](#)

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Social Media Policy

Revision Date	Previous Revision Date	Summary of Changes
28-09-2012		Creation of all Documents
21-08-2015	28-09-2012	Formatting
20-02-2018	21-08-2015	Update
12-08-2019	20-02-2018	Update to reflect terminology