

Social Media Policy



WORKING TOGETHER

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Policy Overview

The councils expect the highest standards of conduct from all employees, and for everyone employed by the councils to act with honesty, integrity, and to represent the councils to the best of their ability.

This policy provides guidance on the use of social media to ensure that employees can use it effectively for both business and personal purposes, whilst ensuring the councils' reputations as community leaders is maintained.

This document is part of a family of policies which provide advice and information on the expected behaviours and values of Chorley and South Ribble employees, see the Grievance, Code of Conduct, and Conduct policies for more information. This policy applies to all employees of Chorley & South Ribble Borough Councils, and their wholly owned companies, who have satisfactorily completed their probationary period, except for Statutory Chief Officers.

Policy Objective

The councils understand that social media is an essential communication tool for both individuals and the councils.

This policy will help employees to make the right decisions about social media. It is important to understand the opportunities, as well as the risks social media brings. This policy outlines the standards we expect when employees engage in social media, in both a business and personal capacity.

Definitions

Social Media	Commonly used to describe any number of web-based and mobile technologies that allow users to communicate and interact with each other.
Social networking	Used to describe the process of using these channels..
Social media platforms	A non-exhaustive list of platforms includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facebook• Twitter• LinkedIn• Google+• Yammer• Microsoft Teams Chat• What's App• Messenger• Instagram• Snapchat

Business use of social media

Employees must have express consent from their manager to use the councils' social media accounts as part of their role and should not upload any materials to the councils' accounts without prior consent. This applies both when working from home or from work, using either Council IT equipment or personal devices.

Generally, the use of social media in a business context is to:

- Promote and publicise activities that will enhance the reputation of the councils, the services it provides and commissions, and the wider community of organisations with which it works in partnership
- Respond to specific questions from the public, businesses, and partners
- Clarify or correct any unclear or incorrect statements or views
- Provide information, advice, and guidance (particularly in emergency situations)
- Promote the image of a human and approachable council

All information and responses you post as an employee are public statements and count as a council record and are evidence of the council's work. They may be used as reference at any time in the future and **you are responsible for anything that you say online.**

You must not use any information that you obtain in the course of your work for the council for personal gain or pass it on to others who may use it in such a way. You must not disclose any politically sensitive information. This requirement continues after you have left employment.

You should **NEVER** use social media to "spy" on service users or other employees covertly, even if their privacy settings allow you to do so as this could contravene Article 8 of the Human Rights Act.

Do not use social media platforms including private messaging applications to raise or discuss a complaint or grievance about the council, your manager, colleagues etc. If you have a complaint, you should use the councils' grievance procedures.

Those working directly with clients, vulnerable adults and young people must not interact with them on a personal basis via social media sites e.g. including them as a friend or contact. This is to ensure that employees and clients are protected from any misunderstandings or allegations of wrongdoing.

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. There is still a requirement not to use your personal social media during work time whilst clocked in. We need to make you aware that if your personal use of social media conflicts with your duties for the council, or your obligations as an employee then we may take action.

Do not use council email addresses and other official contact details for setting up personal social media accounts or for communicating through such media. As is the case for business use of social media you should never publish anything that is confidential to the council or use social media to comment on potentially sensitive matter.

Do not use personal social media platforms including private messaging applications to raise or discuss a complaint or grievance about the council, your manager, colleagues etc. If you have a complaint, you can discuss with your Line Manager and/or use the council's grievance procedures.

Monitoring use of social media websites

Use of social media platforms (whether accessed for work purposes or not) may be monitored and, where breaches of this policy are found, action may be taken under the conduct procedure.

The councils reserve the right to restrict or prevent access to certain social media websites if personal use is excessive. Monitoring is only carried out to the extent permitted or as required by law and as necessary and justifiable for business purposes.

What is and is not acceptable

Social media has become a part of everyday life for many 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 postings made by an employee express views which the council would not wish to be associated with.

The councils have no intention of stifling discussion about the council as an organisation but, do draw the line at posts or messages, on whatever channel or social media site, that cross the lines in terms of acceptability. This includes targeting employees with direct, unacceptable, criticism.

The councils reserve the right to act 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
- Incite someone/people to break the law

What to do if an incident arises

If you get a message or response wrong, tell your line manager immediately to agree remedial action and minimise embarrassment and reputational damage.

If you are made or became aware of an inappropriate use of social media by a colleague or employee this should be reported to your line manager or senior officer within your service directorate or to HR.

Social media and bullying

Any employee who feels that they have been bullied, harassed, or victimised by another employee via social media should inform their Line Manager who will take advice from HR and investigate the matter as appropriate. Employees can also follow the procedures indicated in the Grievance policy.

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 employment.

Breach of Social Media Policy

Breach of this social media policy may lead to formal action under the council's Conduct Policy up to and including dismissal.