





SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Social media is a great way to engage residents, service users, customers and partners. Employees use and gain benefit from the use of social media both in their professional and private lives. We encourage employees to engage with and use social media and respect an individual’s right to free speech however as customers, colleagues and members of the community may access content that is posted, we have created this policy to provide guidance on the appropriate use of social media to our employees.

Social media are websites and applications that enable people to display and share information and ideas, interact with others or to find people with similar interests (social net-working).

The following are examples of social media commonly used however the number of social media sites is constantly growing.

	Facebook	Social net-working
	Twitter	‘Micro-blogging’ to share views and search for items of #interest
	Linkedin	Business net-working
	YouTube	Sharing videos

The guiding principles are:

- Engage with social media however do so using common-sense and judgement when deciding what and how to post;
- Adhere to the Chorley Council values and act with respect for others and professionalism.

Employee’s should be aware that their social media ‘footprint’ may be considered to be the footprint of Chorley Council as they are an associate of the organisation and therefore behaviour that falls into those outlined here, even in non-working time may be considered to fall under the remit of this policy. The risks to the Council of misuse of social media are:

- Bringing the organisation into disrepute
- Breaching confidentiality
- Breaching copyright
- Discriminatory comments
- Bullying/harassment
- Excessive use in works time
- Libellous, defamatory content (untrue material that has a reputational impact)
- Illegality
- Compromising Chorley Council interests
- Endorsing political causes

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- Defamatory comments about other organisations or bodies

In short anything posted on social media by an employee may become associated with Chorley Council because they are employed by the organisation and we need to minimise the risk to the Council.

The following are examples of social media misuse that can be considered to be covered by this policy, although this list should not be considered to be exhaustive:

- Posting material that contains discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation;
- Posting negative material about Chorley Council or an employee online that has the potential to cause damage to Chorley Council's reputation and/or could be upsetting to an employee;
- Falsely associating Chorley Council with some discreditable act;
- Posting commercially sensitive or internal information on a social media site;
- Posting on behalf of Chorley Council using unofficial/unauthorised social media addresses or channels;
- Demonstrating illegal or dishonest behaviour on social media e.g. abuse of Chorley Council policies or procedures;
- Use of social media in works time when clocked in;
- Affiliating Chorley Council to a political cause or party.

Failure to abide by the requirements of the Social Media Policy could result in disciplinary action being taken against an employee in accordance with Chorley Council's Disciplinary Policy.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the policy are to:

- Ensure the Council's reputation for objectivity, fairness and impartiality is maintained at all times;
- Ensure employees are aware of their responsibilities when using social media;
- Ensure the Council's information systems are used appropriately;
- Encourage good practice in the use of social media;
- Promote effective use of social media as a means of business communication;
- To protect employees/vulnerable service users;
- To ensure the Council's values are adhered to.

LINKS TO OTHER COUNCIL POLICIES

The Social Media Policy must be applied in conjunction with the Council's other relevant policies and procedures, namely:

- Code of Conduct
- Equality and Diversity in Employment Policy

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- Email, Internet, Tablet and Telephone Acceptable Use Policy
- Information Security Framework
- Grievance Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Preventing Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Adult Safeguarding Policy
- Child Safeguarding Policy
- The External Communications Protocol

SCOPE OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

The Social Media Policy applies to all employees and must be adhered to at all times. The policy applies to all employees when they are using social networking sites and their use is in anyway linked to Chorley Council, its employees, customers or partner agencies.

Employee's should be aware that limiting their online profile to their 'friends' does not ensure they are compliant with the policy. Any comments made on social net-working sites, even limited to 'friends' are in the public domain.

This policy provides guidance on personal use of social media only and does not provide guidance for use of social media in a works capacity. Employees should not use social media in a works capacity unless authorised to do so by their line-manager.

RESPONSIBILITIES

For Chorley Council's Social Media Policy to be effectively implemented there are a number of key stakeholders.

Managers will:

- Support the implementation of the Social Media Policy;
- Ensure members of their team have access to a copy of the Social Media Policy and are aware of it.

Employees will:

- Abide by the requirements of the Social Media Policy;
- If in doubt, seek advice from the Council's Policy and Communications Team or HR, prior to posting information on a social media platform;
- Inform their manager if they become aware of a posting on a social media site which may contravene the Council's Social Media Policy.

GUIDELINES FOR USING SOCIAL MEDIA

The Council respects an employee's right to a private life and the Social Media Policy does not wish to discourage, nor unduly limit, an employee's personal expression or online activities. However, employees must be aware that social networking sites are a

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public forum and should not assume that entries on a website will remain private. If an employee chooses to access social networking sites and/or other online forums, blogs etc. either inside or outside of work, he/she must do so in a responsible and appropriate manner and exercise judgement at all times in line with the Council's policies.

The internet service provided by Chorley Council in the workplace is for business use. A certain amount of limited and responsible personal use by users is also permitted. You must be clocked out before making personal use of the Council's facilities or making use of social networking sites on personal equipment e.g. smart phones.

As information posted on social media networks can be quickly and widely disseminated, control over posted information can be rapidly lost which makes it difficult to retrieve an inaccurate message once it has been sent. Employees need to bear in mind the types of information they post and check the content before it is posted both for accuracy and to ensure it meets the requirements of the Council's Social Media Policy.

Employees must consider the following points when accessing social media accounts to ensure that there is no contravention of Council policies and procedures:

- Refrain from speaking in an official capacity on behalf of the Council unless authorised to do so. Comments made even in a personal capacity may be wrongly attributed to the Council if an individual can be linked to the Council in any way or is a known employee of the Council. For example, comments made in online discussions on local topics of interest e.g. planning applications, changes to the Town Centre etc. may be inadvertently linked to the Council if made by an employee. The Policy and Communications Team actively manage the online reputation of the Council and selectively engage and participate in conversations to manage the Council's reputation.
- If an employee chooses to comment openly on any aspect of Council business, policy or contribute to online discussions on local topics of interest, they should ensure that they make it clear that the views expressed are their own and not those of Chorley Council. Employees should be aware that they still have a duty under this policy not to post negative material about Chorley Council or an employee online that has the potential to cause damage to Chorley Council's reputation and/or could be upsetting to an employee. If in doubt an employee should seek advice first from the Council's Policy & Communications Team or HR Team.
- This policy does not prevent employees who are also Chorley residents commenting on issues that affect them as a resident. Any comments made must follow the guiding principles, make it clear that it is their view as a resident and be proportionate. A campaign of objections is unlikely to be viewed as proportionate.
- Not make any comment, or post any material including posting pictures/and or videos, which may otherwise cause damage to the Council's reputation or bring the Council into disrepute.
- Not post information which could constitute contempt of court, a breach of copyright, a breach of the Data Protection Act, the Human Rights Act, the Freedom of Information Act or the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act. If in doubt, please seek advice from the Council's Legal Team.

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- Not post or respond approvingly to material that is offensive, obscene, defamatory derogatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, racist, sexist or is otherwise unlawful;
- Not use or disclose any confidential, personal, secure or protected information (including images) obtained in their capacity as an employee of Chorley Council;
- Not interact on websites which could damage working relationships with colleagues, councillors, partners, customers or service users;
- Remain aware of their professional boundaries when using social networking sites and in particular:
 - Employees should not affiliate Chorley Council to a political cause or party (this includes befriending elected members on social net-working sites). You may follow elected members on Twitter to keep abreast of their priorities however interacting on-line with an elected member compromises the Council's impartiality and is inappropriate.
 - If employees include colleagues in their friends networks on social media sites, they should follow the guiding principles and not comment on or discuss work-related matters. To do so may clearly link the posts to Chorley Council and may also leave the employee open to accusations of cyber-bullying.

ROLES WORKING WITH CLIENTS, ADULTS AT RISK AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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.

USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR COUNCIL BUSINESS

Chorley Council has corporate social media channels to communicate and engage with the general public. If there is a specific job role requirement/ business reason to access social media sites, they should contact the Policy and Communications Team for advice and assistance.

Employees should not set up business accounts on a social network or internet platform on behalf of a Council function/service.

MONITORING

When making personal use of the Council's facilities to access social media, the Council reserves the right to monitor e-mails, internet usage and electronic communication in line with ICT policies and the obligations contained within related legislation. This will only be implemented in a proportionate way to facilitate a business requirement. The Council will not and will not support its employees to actively go 'fishing' to identify breaches of the Social Media Policy where employees are using social media in their own time.

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POSTING INAPPROPRIATE MATERIAL

If an employee is found to have posted material in clear breach of this policy he/she will be required to assist in ensuring such material is removed without delay. Failure to assist could lead to disciplinary action being taken in accordance with Chorley Council's Disciplinary Policy. In addition the act of posting inappropriate material could itself lead to disciplinary action.

In any suspected breach, the following will be considered:

- Was the individual identifiable as an employee?
- Are colleagues also 'friends' i.e. linked to them on the social network?
- What was posted or what was said about whom or what?
- Did what was posted reflect badly on the Council?
- Could what has been posted reasonably be considered to cause offence?
- How accessible was it in general?
- How did the Council become aware of the breach?
- Could it be described as work-related or linked to work?
- Are there any mitigating circumstances?

Examples of ways employees may be linked to the Council are

- Stating in their profiles that they work for Chorley Council
- Stating in a discussion online that they work for the Council
- Sharing Council information
- Including colleagues as 'friends' i.e. being linked to them on social networking sites

The list gives examples of how someone can be linked to the Council but is not exhaustive.

RESPECTING OTHERS

All employees of Chorley Council are expected to treat colleagues with dignity and respect in accordance with the Council's values.

An employee subject to workplace harassment and/or bullying via the internet or a social media network often referred to as cyber-bullying, will have recourse to the appropriate HR policy e.g. Preventing Bullying and Harassment Policy.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

Chorley Council is responsible for the effective implementation of the Social Media Policy and for ensuring it is regularly reviewed. Recognising that social media is a fast changing area, the Council will monitor and review the use of social media networks and the Social Media Policy.