

# Social Media Code of Practice



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## Document Control

Title	Manchester City Council – Social Media Code of Practice - Guidance
Document Type	Approved Guidance
Author	Jennifer Green
Owner	Communications
Subject	Social media guidance for staff
Government Security Classification	Official
Created	September 2014
Approved by	Personnel Committee
Date of Approval	September 2014
Review due	September 2016

## Revision History

Version	Date	Author	Description
2	19/08/2015	Jen Green	Inclusion of document control page

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# Social Media Code of Practice

## 1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this Social Media Code of Practice is to outline the responsibilities and standards expected by staff when using social media inside and outside work. The code is in addition to the Council's Email Policy and Internet/Intranet Policy and forms part of the Employee's Code of Conduct.

## 2. Introduction

2.1 Social media is an incredibly useful tool; it can increase engagement by reaching a wider audience, enabling active and potentially instantaneous conversations with our communities. It can also support increased participation, stimulating debate about services, campaigns and local issues, and often at a fraction of the cost of many traditional means of communication.

2.2 The use of social media is now a daily part of our communications mix. The following guidance has been produced to ensure appropriate legal and effective use of social media as a communication channel for the Council that does not compromise Council information, computer systems or networks and is in line with the Council's values. This Code of Practice must be read alongside the Council's Social Media Policy.

This guidance aims to help you and ensure that:

- There is a consistent approach to the use of social media
- Council information remains secure and is not compromised through the use of social media

- Users work within the Social Media Policy, other existing policies, these guidelines and relevant legislation
- The Council's reputation is not damaged
- Staff are protected by ensuring there are no inadvertent breaches of the Social Media Policy
- Staff are helped to do their job
- All stakeholders, including Council employees, councillors and members of the public, are treated with mutual dignity and respect in any electronic communication.

## 3. What do we mean by social media?

- 3.1 The term 'social media' is used to describe websites and applications for social networking, where people create, share and exchange content and ideas in virtual networks and communities. The content shared may include (but is not limited to) personal information, opinions, research, commentary, video, pictures, and business information.
- 3.2 For the purposes of this guidance, the term applies to (but is not limited to) blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, LinkedIn, YouTube, Vimeo, Foursquare, discussion forums, special interest forums, user communities and any other personal web space where content is created, manipulated and shared. There are many more examples of social media and this guidance is relevant in relation to any social media an employee may use.

#### 4. Why is social media guidance needed?

4.1 In December 2013, Internal Audit conducted an investigation into Social Media – Monitoring and Account Management. The report identified a number of areas of good practice, such as daily monitoring and action taken to address issues, training for the place-based media accounts, and public access and reporting to the Council's social media accounts. The paper also identified recommendations for improvements.

These include:

- A review of all policies and procedures
- A record of all the Council's social media accounts, including account managers
- The identification and closure of any redundant accounts
- Revised monitoring arrangements
- Development of good practice.

4.2 The Social Media Policy and this Code of Practice seek to minimise the Council's exposure to security risks, reputational damage and potential financial penalties from the Information Commissioner due to breaches of the Data Protection Act as outlined by Internal Audit.

#### 5. Social media guidance

5.1 The following guidance outlines the processes, responsibilities and standards expected for all Council social media accounts and personal use that may be directly or indirectly linked to the

Council, ensuring that staff are protected against inadvertent breaches of the Social Media Policy.

#### Guidance for Council accounts:

- **Before setting up a Council social media account**  
Staff must not set up any social media accounts without the agreement of the Digital Services Team in Central Communications and approval from the appropriate Head of Service. As part of the set-up process, an account moderator will be selected by the service area, and the user names and passwords held centrally. Information about how to request a Council social media account can be found on the Communications intranet pages. (See Appendix 2 for a definition of an account moderator.)
- **Approval from ICT for social media access**  
Access to and the general use of social media sites for business activities are subject to a comprehensive business case stating the purpose and benefits to ICT, along with the above approval from Digital Communications. It must be approved by the appropriate Head of Service and the approver of this business case must accept responsibility for ensuring the appropriate use of these sites.

ICT will share all requests for social media access with the Central Communications Team. Information about how to complete the business case can be found on ICT's intranet pages.

- **What can you post on Council accounts?**

Officers must ensure that they respond to as many posts as possible, ensuring that they focus on the quality of response. This will support further engagement and participation, helping the accounts to become trusted sources of information. Growth in these forms of communication is organic and only happens if people believe their 'voice' will be heard, or if there is relevant and engaging content that warrants following and sharing.

Owing to the localised nature of some of the Council Twitter accounts, either geographically or thematically, it may be more difficult to find followers. It's even more important to make sure your posts are relevant and engaging and to respond to comments. This will increase the visibility of this content.

If you have lots of comments to respond to, focus your time on the most important issues or influential posts.

Make sure that you like, follow or share information following the site's or application's house rules. It doesn't mean we endorse them; rather that we think others might find their information interesting and relevant to the account's followers or fans. Do make sure that you only follow, like and share appropriate accounts linked to your day-to-day business, and not personal interest such as football clubs or celebrity accounts.

Don't use a formal tone of voice – there's no need, and with Twitter there's not enough room for formality. Write like you would when speaking to someone – be honest, warm and approachable.

Even though people often expect an instantaneous response, do take the time to make sure it's a good response. If you need to confirm facts or check with a manager first, that's okay. It's very difficult to remove poor content once it has been published.

Don't worry about challenging incorrect posts, but make sure that you are calm, respectful and factual. Remember that you are representing the Council and our values.

All Council accounts must have clear Council branding so they are easily identifiable as being part of Manchester City Council.

Be aware that if accounts are not well used, they may be considered redundant and Central Communications can close them.

If comments made on a social media account are a direct complaint or a specific Freedom of Information Act request, the account moderator should direct the responder through the formal Council processes.

Training and support for your social media account is available from the Digital Services Team in Central Communications. Email Web Admin for support.

- **What can't you post on Council accounts?**

Content including photos, images, text and film must be honest and officers must ensure the reliability of anything they publish or allow to be published. Once information is published, it is very hard to remove and can be copied, amended and shared by others without direct permission. There can be serious consequences of publishing inappropriate content: defamatory allegations made on social media sites can result in civil legal action, such as being sued for libel. Breaking a court order or other contempt of court can result in a fine or imprisonment.

Officers must not disclose personal details and should be aware of the Council's Data Protection Policy, which can be found on the Council's website. Furthermore, private meetings or reports that contain confidential information or matters exempt under the provision of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 – also known as 'Part B' reports – must not be published without written consent from the appropriate Head of Service. Questions about confidentiality should be directed to a manager or the appropriate Head of Service.

Officers must act professionally at all times in the Council's social media accounts. All posts must be in line with the Council's values and the Employee Code of Conduct.

Officers are not expected to respond to any messages that contain abusive language or swearing.

Content copied from elsewhere, for which the Council does not own the copyright, must not be published. If unsure before publishing online, officers must check with the copyright holder. Central Communications may be able to assist with this.

Officers must not publish the same or similar content repeatedly or in bulk – this can also be called 'spamming'.

Council social media accounts cannot be used for political purposes or political party campaigning at any time. Once in restricted publicity during the pre-election period, officers must ensure no statements are published that could be seen to have an influence on a political outcome in the run-up to an election. This includes announcements about any new or potentially controversial initiatives. Officers must also not seek to promote councillor accounts. Because of the restricted publicity during the pre-election period, it is acceptable that there is a slight reduction in the volume of posts published during this time. Published content must be in relation to current services. If any comments or responses to posts are overtly party-political, the account moderator must remove them immediately.

Most online communities have their own rules and guidelines, which we will always follow. Where possible, we will rely on the measures of protection and intervention the social networking site already has in place (eg. against illegal,

harmful or offensive content) by flagging comments or alerting them to any breaches of the site's terms and conditions. Account moderators are responsible for flagging these concerns directly with the site or application, and with Central Communications via Web Admin.

If inappropriate content is posted on your social media page or in response to your posts, they must be removed as soon as possible. The posts must be reported to both Web Admin and the social networking site. Comments that disagree, challenge or criticise the Council should not be removed. If we remove all critical responses, the social media accounts lose their trustworthiness and can quickly generate more negative comments. It's best to be transparent and challenge the comment cordially and calmly.

Do not post promotional content or endorse external organisations. For example, we don't promote any special offers or services from organisations we are not in a formal partnership with.

- **Leaving or moving within the Council**

All account moderators must share their user names and passwords for Council accounts with the Central Communications Team. This is to ensure that there is a centrally held record of all details should they be required.

When a member of staff leaves the Council, the employee's line manager is asked to change any passwords during the leaver's process and to inform the Central Communications Team of any changes. They will also be asked to confirm this has been completed in the ICT leaver's form.

When a member of staff moves within the Council and no longer has responsibility for social media accounts, their line manager is asked to change the account password and update Central Communications by emailing Web Admin.

- **Lost or stolen devices**

If devices that run Council social media accounts are lost or stolen, staff must make the Digital Communications Team aware, as well as follow the ICT process, so that the account passwords can be changed.

- **Malware and online crime prevention**

Social media can be used by the online criminal community to deliver malware, malicious software such as a virus, and carry out schemes designed to damage property or steal confidential information. To minimise risk related to such threats, adhere to the following guidelines. While these guidelines help to reduce risk, they do not cover all possible threats and are not a substitute for good judgment.

- Do not use the same passwords for social media that you use to access Council computers or devices.
- Do not follow links or download software on social media pages posted by individuals or organisations you do not know.
- If any content you find on any social media web page looks suspicious in any way, close your browser and do not return to that page.
- Configure social media accounts to encrypt sessions. Facebook, Twitter and others support encryption as an option. This is extremely important for roaming users who connect via public wi-fi networks.
- Council accounts should be accessed via Council-owned devices such as office PCs or tablets, so it can be ensured that these devices have the correct security settings and will be stored in a secure way.
- If staff are working remotely, they must use encrypted sessions.

## 6. Guidance for personal social media use

- 6.1 The Council respects the rights of all employees to a private life. However, officers must be aware that where they are identified as a Council employee, they are expected to behave appropriately and in line with the Council's values and policies.
- 6.2 Any content published online in personal social media accounts is your own; however, anything published about Manchester City Council cannot be kept entirely separate from your working life.

- 6.3 The Council needs to ensure that its reputation is not damaged and that confidentiality is protected. All stakeholders must be able to trust the integrity of our employees. Furthermore, the Council may be liable for the actions of officers who post inappropriately.

### With this in mind all staff are asked:

- To be aware that they are responsible for any content on their pages, including tags and comments
- To ensure that any comments or posts in their personal accounts about Council activities do not bring the Council into disrepute
- Not to share confidential information arising from their employment with the Council
- To respect privacy and confidentiality
- Not to discuss or criticise customers or colleagues
- Not to use work email addresses to set up personal accounts
- Not to accept customers/service users known through the course of their work as 'friends' on personal social media sites. If staff are repeatedly contacted by a customer or service user known through work on personal social media accounts, they may wish to seek advice from their line manager
- To ensure privacy settings are in place to restrict open access and understand who could have access to personal social media accounts
- To abide by the Council's Employee Code of Conduct and other Council policies.

6.4 Staff are also advised that where they choose to identify themselves as a Council employee they should include a disclaimer on their social media account profiles to make it clear that opinions expressed are their own; they should also take care to ensure their opinions are not perceived as comments made on behalf of the Council.

## **7. Use of social media and smart devices during meetings and events**

7.1 Increasingly, hand-held devices such as smartphones and tablet devices like iPads are used to access social media during internal and external Council meetings and events to share information, views or comments.

7.2 Devices need to be used with care and in line with the above guidance for Council and personal social media accounts. Alongside this, officers are asked to ensure that devices are silent during meetings and that they are used without disturbing others.

## **8. Compliance**

8.1 The guidance in this document is in addition to the Council's 'Email Policy', 'Internet/Intranet Policy' and forms part of the 'Employee's Code of Conduct'. It must be read alongside the 'Social Media Policy' and any professional standards that govern an individual employee's area of work. Failure to comply with Council policies will be dealt with through the Council's disciplinary procedure.

8.2 Inappropriate content published in Council accounts by account moderators may lead to removal of access to social media sites at work. Breaches of the Social Media Policy and the Employee Code of Conduct will be dealt with through the Council's disciplinary procedure. Serious breaches could result in termination of the employment contract, and where applicable may result in civil action and/or criminal charges.

8.3 Further advice on these HR Policies can be sought from the HROD Helpdesk on 0161 277 1758 or email [HROD@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:HROD@manchester.gov.uk). Further advice on the use of Council social media accounts can be sought from Digital Communications, email [webadmin@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:webadmin@manchester.gov.uk)

## **9. Monitoring**

9.1 The Council deploys technical controls to monitor and report on employee use of social media through the Council network. The Council also uses a social media monitoring application to monitor and report all mentions of the Council in social media web spaces.

## Appendix 1: Current Manchester City Council social media accounts

Social media account	URL
Manchester Council Facebook Profile	<a href="https://facebook.com/manchestercitycouncil">facebook.com/manchestercitycouncil</a>
Manchester City Council Facebook	<a href="https://facebook.com/mancitycouncil">facebook.com/mancitycouncil</a>
Manchester City Council Twitter	<a href="https://twitter.com/ManCityCouncil">twitter.com/ManCityCouncil</a>
Manchester Libraries Facebook	<a href="https://facebook.com/manchesterlibraries">facebook.com/manchesterlibraries</a>
Manchester Libraries Twitter	<a href="https://twitter.com/ManLibraries">twitter.com/ManLibraries</a>
Manchester ASBAT	<a href="https://twitter.com/ManchesterASBAT">twitter.com/ManchesterASBAT</a>
Safer Manchester	<a href="https://twitter.com/SaferManchester">twitter.com/SaferManchester</a>
Manchester Markets Facebook	<a href="https://facebook.com/manchestermarkets">facebook.com/manchestermarkets</a>
Manchester Markets Twitter	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCRMarkets">twitter.com/MCRMarkets</a>
Clean Cities Facebook	<a href="https://facebook.com/MCRcleancity">facebook.com/MCRcleancity</a>
Foster for Manchester	<a href="https://facebook.com/FosterForManchester">facebook.com/FosterForManchester</a>
Manchester Leader's Forum Twitter	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCRLeadersForum">twitter.com/MCRLeadersForum</a>
Grow Twitter	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCRGrow">twitter.com/MCRGrow</a>
MCC Foursquare	<a href="https://foursquare.com/p/manchester-markets/81933763/home">foursquare.com/p/manchester-markets/81933763/home</a>
Ask Little Bill Twitter	<a href="https://twitter.com/asklittlebill">twitter.com/asklittlebill</a>
Ask Little Bill Facebook	<a href="https://facebook.com/pages/ask-little-bill-greater-manchester-energy-advice/817346941623178?ref=ts">facebook.com/pages/ask-little-bill-greater-manchester-energy-advice/817346941623178?ref=ts</a>

Social media account	URL
Manchester Archives Wordpress	<a href="https://manchesterarchivesplus.wordpress.com">manchesterarchivesplus.wordpress.com</a>
Manchester Gritters Twitter	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCCGritters1">twitter.com/MCCGritters1</a>
Manchester International Women's Day	<a href="https://facebook.com/MCRIWD">facebook.com/MCRIWD</a>
Vimeo	<a href="https://vimeo.com/manchester">vimeo.com/manchester</a>
YouTube	<a href="https://youtube.com/mancitycouncil">youtube.com/mancitycouncil</a>
Flickr	<a href="https://flickr.com/photos/manchester-city-council">flickr.com/photos/manchester-city-council</a>
Adopt with Manchester	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/adoptwithManchester">www.facebook.com/adoptwithManchester</a>
Mcr Santa	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCRSanta">twitter.com/MCRSanta</a>
Manchester City Council LinkedIn	<a href="https://www.linkedin.com/manchestercitycouncil">www.linkedin.com/manchestercitycouncil</a>
M4 Print Design Studio Twitter	<a href="https://twitter.com/M_FOUR">twitter.com/M_FOUR</a>
Manchester Art Gallery	<a href="https://twitter.com/mcrartgallery">twitter.com/mcrartgallery</a>
Manchester Archives+	<a href="https://twitter.com/mcrarchives">twitter.com/mcrarchives</a>
Library Theatre Co	<a href="https://twitter.com/librarytheatre">twitter.com/librarytheatre</a>
Physical Disabilities Partnership	<a href="https://facebook.com/groups/McrPhysicalDisabilities">facebook.com/groups/McrPhysicalDisabilities</a>
Manchester Youth Council	<a href="https://facebook.com/ManchesterYouthCouncil">facebook.com/ManchesterYouthCouncil</a>
Manchester Libraries Blog	<a href="https://manchesterlitlist.blogspot.co.uk">manchesterlitlist.blogspot.co.uk</a>
Archives+ Blog	<a href="https://manchesterarchiveplus.wordpress.com">manchesterarchiveplus.wordpress.com</a>
MCC Crumpsall	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCCCrumpsall">twitter.com/MCCCrumpsall</a>
MCC Harpurhey	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCCHarpurhey">twitter.com/MCCHarpurhey</a>
MCC Higher Blackley	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCCHBlackley">twitter.com/MCCHBlackley</a>

Social media account	URL
MCC Cheetham	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCCCheetham">twitter.com/MCCCheetham</a>
MCC Chorlton	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCCChorlton">twitter.com/MCCChorlton</a>
MCC Didsbury	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCCDidsbury">twitter.com/MCCDidsbury</a>
MCC Wythenshawe	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCCWythenshawe">twitter.com/MCCWythenshawe</a>
MCC Moss Side	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCCMossSide">twitter.com/MCCMossSide</a>
MCC Moston	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCCMoston">twitter.com/MCCMoston</a>
MCC Rusholme	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCCRusholme">twitter.com/MCCRusholme</a>
MCC Hulme	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCCHulme">twitter.com/MCCHulme</a>
MCC Miles Platting and Newton Heath	<a href="https://twitter.com/MPlattNtonHeath">twitter.com/MPlattNtonHeath</a>
MCC Withington	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCCWithington">twitter.com/MCCWithington</a>
MCC Whalley Range	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCCWhalleyRange">twitter.com/MCCWhalleyRange</a>
MCC City Centre	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCCCityCentre">twitter.com/MCCCityCentre</a>
MCC Longsight	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCCLongsight">twitter.com/MCCLongsight</a>
MCC Levenshulme	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCCLevenshulme">twitter.com/MCCLevenshulme</a>
MCC Burnage	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCCBurnage">twitter.com/MCCBurnage</a>
MCC Bradford	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCCBradford">twitter.com/MCCBradford</a>
MCC Ardwick	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCCArdwick">twitter.com/MCCArdwick</a>
MCC Ancoats and Clayton	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCCAncClay">twitter.com/MCCAncClay</a>
MCC Fallowfield	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCCFallowfield">twitter.com/MCCFallowfield</a>
MCC Charlestown	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCCCharlestown">twitter.com/MCCCharlestown</a>
MCC Gorton	<a href="https://twitter.com/MCCGorton">twitter.com/MCCGorton</a>

## Appendix 2: Definition of an account moderator

Officers with responsibility for Council social media accounts are known as account moderators. They will produce content, and review and monitor the social media accounts they have responsibility for.

Account moderators will be selected by the service area and will receive training and support from Central Communications.