

HR & OD POLICIES

human resources and organisational development



Social Media Procedure

WHAT IS MEANT BY 'SOCIAL MEDIA' AND 'SOCIAL NETWORKING'?	3
UNACCEPTABLE USE	4
WHAT TO DO IF AN INCIDENT ARISES	5
SOCIAL MEDIA AND BULLYING	6

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.

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.

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.

flickr: One of a number of image hosting sites that allow users to share images with others. Images can also be searched by keywords and themes.

Wordpress: One of a number of websites that allow users to create a 'blog', whereby diarystyle entries can be created and shared with others. Some blogs are personal in nature, while others are specialist or offer a 'behind the scenes' look at an organisation.

YouTube: One of several websites that hosts video footage that can be shared with others. Links to such clips are often shared via other social media channels.

Communities of Practice: An online discussion forum commonly used by professionals to share experiences and expertise.

Wikipedia: An information website which allows people to create or add information to a communal document.

Most social networking sites require users to register and create a profile, although users can generally control how much information is shared with others.

It is common for individuals and organisations to use a number of social media platforms for different purposes and to engage with different audiences.

Aberdeenshire Council recognises that social media has become a part of everyday life for many of our employees and can be used positively. The Corporate Communications team have issued guidance for employees on [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 any social media communication that relates to Aberdeenshire Council.

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

2. UNACCEPTABLE USE

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 employees' own time.

Employees must not:

- Post any information, media, image or comment which could cause offence 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.

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 posted on a social media website 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; and
- 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

This list is not exhaustive.

Employees should be aware that disciplinary action (which may result in termination of employment) will be taken against inappropriate use of social media even where privacy settings on personal profiles are switched on.

3. 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 [HR&OD](#) who will advise on the most appropriate course of action to be followed.

4. 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 Procedure](#).

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 [Human Resources and Organisational Development](#).

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Index of Documents

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