

Guidance - Use of Social Media Sites

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Purpose

For the purposes of this guidance, social media is any online platform or app that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum. This includes social forums such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. Social media also covers blogs and video and image-sharing websites such as YouTube.

This guidance should be used in conjunction with the Council's [Information Security and Acceptable Use Policy](#).

The purpose of this guidance is to provide advice about the standards expected when using social media sites for both personal and work-related use.

It is not intended to prevent employees from using these sites, but to raise awareness of the types of behaviour which could; undermine the integrity of employees, bring the Council into disrepute or compromise professional relationships with colleagues or service users.

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Scope

The guidance applies to all County Council employees, apprentices, casual and agency workers. It also applies to volunteers and others who work, whether paid or unpaid for and on of behalf of Leicestershire County Council. The guidance does not apply to those employed by schools and colleges with delegated budgets.

This guidance applies to the personal use of social media sites. It does not apply to the use of social media sites for work purposes which is covered separately by the [Information Security and Acceptable Use Policy](#).

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Acceptable Use of Social Media

The Council respects all employees' right to a private life and freedom of expression.

Employees should be mindful however that inappropriate content or behaviour on social media could undermine their own and the Council's reputation and bring the council into disrepute. Should this occur employees may face formal action (for further information on the type of action which may be taken, please refer to the [Information Security and Acceptable Use Policy](#)).

Content published on social media sites cannot be considered private, even if it is shared in a forum with restricted access (such as on someone's Facebook wall or within a private Facebook group).

Social media is designed to make sharing of information as easy as possible and an employee's content may be circulated to a wider audience without their knowledge or consent; bringing it to the attention of Council colleagues, managers, Councillors and customers.

Examples of inappropriate content or behaviour include (but are not limited to) the below;

- Presenting personal views as being that of the council.
- Staff identifying themselves as LCC employees when joining or associating with groups whose views or behaviours could be deemed inappropriate e.g. offensive, illegal, discriminatory or abusive,
- Criticising or arguing with customers, service users, pupils, colleagues or representatives from partner organisations.
- Making disparaging/defamatory remarks about the Council, its staff, customers, service users, ex-service users, service users' relatives, Council suppliers, pupils and partner organisations.
- Posting images/content or links to images/content that could be deemed inappropriate e.g. offensive, illegal, discriminatory or abusive.
- Posting content which identifies the employee as being involved in behaviour which undermines the public's trust in the employee's ability to undertake their role in a professional or competent manner.
- Revealing commercially sensitive information such as; trade secrets, method statements, detailed breakdown of pricing etc.
- Publishing or discussing confidential information about an individual (including; colleagues, service users, ex-service users, customers, pupils) or partner organisations.
- Discussing the Council's internal workings such as future plans that have not been communicated to the public.
- Using someone else's images or written content without permission and/or failing to acknowledge where permission has been given to reproduce something.
- Anything which could be considered; discriminatory against, bullying or harassment of, any individual including;

- Making offensive or derogatory comments relating to; age, disability, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- Posting images that are discriminatory or offensive (or links to such content)

In addition to the above, employees should never develop a social media relationship with service users or pupils or their family members/carers if it has arisen as a direct result of their working relationship. Employees must not request or accept service users or associated people as friends/contacts.

In a situation whereby, an individual who is a friend or relative of an employee beforehand, becomes a service user with whom they have contact/potentially have contact with, employees should seek guidance from their manager.

Employees must not endorse or criticise service providers used by the Council either via personal or work social media accounts. Equally any online relationship with service providers must not create a conflict of interest particularly when employees have procurement or commissioning responsibilities. Please refer to the [Policy on the Declaration of Personal Interests](#) for further information regarding how to identify and manage personal interests or relationships which could be perceived as a conflict of interest.

Employees are encouraged to speak to their manager if they require further advice regarding the types of behaviour or content on social media which could be deemed unacceptable.

Employees are also advised to report to their manager in the first instance, any inappropriate content or behaviour on social media which could undermine other employees and the Council's reputation.

All employees are required to adhere to the standards outlined in the [Information Security and Acceptable Use Policy](#) and this guidance. Employees should note that any breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action. Serious breaches of this policy, for example incidents of bullying of colleagues or social media activity that might cause serious damage to the authority, may constitute gross misconduct and lead to summary dismissal.

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