**Social media policy for all staff**

#### Here in the communications team at [insert organisation] we’re experienced in using social media and know how to get the most from these important platforms. Our best accounts are recognised as being effective ways for us to engage with our residents/customers/patients/tenants and to promote our services, offers and events.

#### Our social media accounts are an asset

#### After many years of using social media across the team we know what works and what doesn’t and we can advise you on the best way to use social media. It takes significant time to create and manage an effective social media account and so it shouldn’t be undertaken lightly. Done well, social media can help our customers get the information they want quickly which, in turn, can reduce the need for customers to call us or visit us which can benefit us both.

#### What happens when it goes wrong…

#### However, when social media goes wrong it can go wrong spectacularly and cause problems for the organisation and our reputation. We must all work hard to avoid this. We’re sure that you wouldn’t but if you or any other member of staff were to do or say something damaging or inappropriate on an organisational social media account then our existing HR code of conduct policy will apply. Don’t let that be you – let’s work together to achieve great outcomes from our use of social media.

#### Social media is not a silver bullet

#### We have embraced social media in a significant way but it is not a silver bullet and nor is it a quick win to deliver your service objectives and key priorities.

#### Opening new accounts

#### A word about new accounts. We receive many internal requests to set up or endorse new accounts and, sometimes, opening a new account might be the right thing to do if the business case stacks up and there will be a return for the significant time invested in social media. But, more often than not, using the well followed and well-resourced corporate accounts is the best tactic.

#### If you are considering opening a new account you must come and talk to the communications team first. It has been agreed that the final decision on whether a new organisational account can be opened sits with me.

#### Good governance

#### We embrace innovation here in the communications team so if you have a great idea for how we can engage our residents/customers/patients/tenants even more effectively please come and talk to us. But it is essential that we have good governance in place which includes you sharing all account passwords with us at all times.

#### This list of do’s and don’ts is a guide to what is expected of all staff. As an overall guide staff are reminded that they should never post on social media something which they would not happily say in a meeting or public forum. Just to repeat - our existing code of conduct and HR policies apply to social media too so don’t get yourself into hot water – come and talk to us in communications if you have any ideas, concerns or questions.

#### Social Media Do's and Don'ts at a Glance

## Do

* **talk** to residents/customers/patients/tenants, staff and others. And do answer their questions (quickly and honestly)
* **get approval from the communications team before setting up any new account – there has to be a business case for using a brand new account versus an established well-resourced corporate account**
* **share your passwords with the communications team. Always. If you look after an organisational social media account you are duty bound to share your passwords with the communications team and** especially when you change them.
* **trust** your teams and staff to use social media. We trust staff to answer telephones, emails and talk to customers and social media is another customer service channel now.
* **be responsible** at all times
* **be respectful** at all times, too
* **innovate**– different approaches work for different people
* have a **personality**– corporate speak or just issuing press releases won't work well on social media
* **share** other people's helpful content and links
* **have a plan for your account – agree your objectives for the account and then understand what content is needed and when and create and share it at the times your audience are most likely to be on these channels. Talk to your communications team about planning templates to help you**
* **use hashtags but use them appropriately and strategically – your hashtag should also be your campaign ‘call to action’, objective or event hashtag, Make sure they are clean – e.g. they haven’t been used before**
* have a clear plan for how to **resource your account** – and who looks after it when you are on leave
* **credit** other people's work, ideas and links
* **listen** - social media is designed to be a two-way channel, just like any good conversation
* **ask** your own questions. Seek feedback from your residents/customers/patients/tenants (but make sure you share the results with them)
* have a **rota** where appropriate – share the load and you'll get more from your accounts
* adhere to your existing **HR policies**– you don't need a separate HR policy especially for social media
* **monitor your accounts** daily and respond to questions same day
* **evaluate your accounts** – you must share a side of A4, monthly social media report with the communications team on the 1st of each month
* ensure that social media is **effectively embedded** into the council’s emergency plan
* consider your social media accounts as **customer services channels** and be prepared to respond to customer enquiries quickly and effectively in a way which would be happy with if you were the customer
* consider **paid for advertising** on social media but only for campaigns, events or recruitment where you can demonstrate a financial return. Talk to the communications team before beginning any paid for campaign.
* **talk** to your communications team – we are here to help you
* **learn** from others – there is rich learning of good practice social media use across both public and private sector via organisations such [comms2point0](http://www.comms2point0.co.uk/)
* and more than anything, do use social media in the spirit in which it was intended – to **engage, openly and honestly**.

## Don't

* **broadcast** or talk at people. Your residents/customers/patients/tenants will soon spot too many broadcasts and respond accordingly
* **block** social media – social media is not a risk, blocking its use is a risk
* try to **cover up** mistakes, be honest and you'll get more respect for it in the long run
* just **build accounts** and just hope people will come – sometimes it is best to go to the places where your audiences are already having conversations, such as Facebook groups, LinkedIn groups or Twitter Chats
* **assume** that social media will look after itself – you will need to invest time, enthusiasm and energy to make it work. And don't leave your accounts unattended for long spells
* **continue with poor performing accounts – sometimes it’s best to close an account which in not delivering, effective or active. The communications team has the authority to close such accounts**
* **assume that social media is ‘free’**. It isn’t –your time costs the organisation. Social media is a time consuming activity and you have to consider this against your other work and priorities
* post content which will **embarrass** the organisation or yourself
* **ignore** legal advice, it's there to help you
* think that a **disclaimer** in your bio will save you from potential legal action, it won't
* expect your staff to make do with **old technology** which can be a barrier to effective working
* **share your passwords** with anyone other than your communications team
* **don’t** forget that **social media is 24/7**– just because you leave at 5.00 pm doesn't mean the world stops or that residents won't be active. If your account is only staffed 9-5 then you should say so on your profile