Haringey Social Media Policy

Version 3
March 2014

1. Introduction

This document is a revised version of the Social Media Policy and Platform Usage Guidelines first published in December 2009, updated in January 2012, and then January 2014.

Scope of the policy

The policy covers personal use of social media by employees, officers commenting on other public channels on behalf of the council as well as council use of social media – including setting up and managing official Haringey Council social media channels.

What is social media?

Social media is the term commonly given to websites and online tools which allow users to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. As the name implies, social media involves the building of communities or networks, encouraging participation and engagement. Examples of social media include third party hosted platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as internally hosted discussion forums or blogs.

2. Employee use of social media

Staff access to social media

Council staff have access to social media websites as standard. Appropriate use of these websites is described below, and briefly outlined in the Internet Acceptable Usage Policy[1].

Using social media in a personal capacity

Many of you will use social media in a personal context, whether that's Facebook, Twitter, blogs, Instagram or other channels.

Material that you post via these channels - about Haringey Council, the borough of Haringey, your colleagues and customers, or a difficult day at work, all have the potential to cause problems.

An ill-considered comment you make in a personal capacity can easily be copied, re-distributed without your consent, put in another context, and linked to your role at Haringey Council.

You'll sometimes see disclaimers that say 'The views expressed here are my own, and not necessarily those of my employer' and we'd recommend you use this disclaimer too, but using it does not mean that you can then post anything at all without consequences.

> **Example:** In 2012 a press officer at Lambeth Council used his personal Twitter account (with disclaimer) to post "Having spent a considerable amount of time in Streatham, my solutions for supporting the High Road mostly involve napalm."
>
> This was picked up by the local and national news, angered local residents and politicians, and his resignation and letter of apology followed.

Setting aside discussions about our right to express ourselves freely outside of work, this example shows that what you say online can quickly move outside of your control (regardless of your privacy settings), and the public won't necessarily allow you to keep your personal and professional life as separate as you would like.

Enjoy social media, just be aware of the risks.

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[1] See http://intranet/it_services-harinet-policies.htm

Using social media in a professional capacity

If you spot a comment in a blog, forum, or on social media that you think Haringey Council should respond to - read our Responding to Social Media guide[2] and contact the Communications Team who can respond on your behalf. Do not respond yourself.

If you wish to use social media for professional development and networking eg tweeting at a conference, or contributing to a professional blog or forum, please take advice from your manager and discuss with the Communications Team beforehand.

If you manage an approved Haringey Council social media channel, please bear in mind the principles below.

General principles

- **Be professional -** remember that you are an ambassador for your organisation. Wherever possible, disclose your position as a representative of your directorate, department or team.
- **Be responsible,** be honest at all times and share learning and good practice with others where appropriate.
- **Be credible,** be accurate, fair, and thorough.

It is important as an employee you are aware that comments published online are not private. Information published online can be accessed around the world within seconds and will be publicly available for all to see.

It is also important to note that comments made about your employer online could attract media interest in you as an individual or contravene the employee code of conduct, so always proceed with care when you are posting.

If you have any doubts, take advice from your line manager.

Elections

During an election period you'll need to be particularly aware of the strict rules on impartiality and publicity. The **'Publicity during an election period: rules and guidance'** document[3] explains those rules in full, but in summary:

You are not allowed to support or promote the political views of any councillor or group of councillors.

That could include actions as innocent-seeming as posting a photo of a councillor opening a new facility, or tweeting a quote from them, so be extra

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[2] See social media page on the intranet http://intranet/odf-social-media.htm
[3] See http://intranet/electionpublicity

careful during an election period, and check with your line manager or the Press Team if you need advice.

Checklist for employees using social media

1. **Be aware of your association with Haringey Council** in online spaces. If you identify yourself as a Haringey Council employee, ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to colleagues and customers.

2. **Know and follow Haringey Council's Employee Code of Conduct**[4]**and Equal Opportunities Policy –** Areas particularly relevant to use of social media are:

   1. Actions that could lead to charges of Gross Misconduct:
   - Acts of dishonesty
   - Misuse of the councils property or name
   - Fraud
   - Improperly using one's position with the council for personal gain
   - Gross negligence
   - Breach of confidentiality
   - Wilful failure to carry out the duties of the post
   - Carelessness, causing loss, damage or injury
   - Culpable lack of care towards clients
   - Any action that could bring the council into disrepute
   - Any action that could prejudice a future decision eg a planning decision

   16. Working and contact with the media
   You should not speak, write, give interviews, or take phone calls for 'information' if you are seen to work for us or are referring to council business, unless the press office and your manager have given you permission.

   Where a breach of the Social Media Policy is found any action will be addressed through the Disciplinary Policy[5], which could lead to action up to and including summary dismissal.

3. Any social media activities that relate to your personal life, or are being done in a **personal capacity**, should be done in your **personal time** outside of work or during your breaks.

4. Employees are **personally responsible** for the content they publish on blogs, wikis or any other form of user-generated media.

5. **Identify yourself** - name and, when relevant, role at Haringey Council - when you discuss Haringey Council or Haringey Council related

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[4] Policy currently sits on the Grievance Procedure page here
http://intranet/capability_disciplinary_grievance
[5] See HR policies page on the intranet for latest version http://intranet/hr_policies

matters. You must make it clear if you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of Haringey Council. In these cases please use the following disclaimer: "The views expressed here are my own and do not necessarily represent the views of the council". It is always best to write in the first person.

6. **Ask and seek permission** to publish or report on conversations that are **meant to be private or internal to Haringey Council. Don't cite or reference** customers, partners or suppliers without their approval.

7. **Respect copyright**, data protection, fair use and financial disclosure laws.

8. **Respect your audience**. If you are using social media as part of your work, do not include insults, obscenity, gossip or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the workplace. You should also show **proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be** considered objectionable or inflammatory—such as politics and religion. This is equally good advice for private use, particularly if you are identified as a Haringey Council employee.

9. **Don't pick fights**

10. **Be the first to correct your own mistakes** but do not alter previous posts without indicating that you have done so.

11. **Try to add value**. Provide worthwhile information and perspective. **Haringey Council's brand is best represented by its people and what you publish may reflect on the council's reputation.**

12. **Be aware of bullying and harassment.** The increased use of social media and fast evolving technology may offer more opportunities for bullying to take place. Examples can include cyber bullying and social exclusion. Cyber bullying is where bullying, harassment or victimisation can be conducted via social networking channels. For example using a social networking site to post photographs or offensive comments about colleagues. Social **exclusion can be through the use of 'friendship circles'** and excluding colleagues. Alternatively employees may feel peer pressure **to become someone's 'friend' on**line. Where you feel that you are a victim of this or see this happening please refer to the Bullying and Harassment Policy[6] for further guidance.

3. Development of council social media channels

Any social media channel set up on behalf of the council must be authorised in advance by the Assistant Director of Communications. This is to ensure that the channel is:

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[6] See HR policies page on the intranet for latest version http://intranet/hr_policies.htm

- required
- **consistent with the council's strategic objectives**
- properly resourced
- meets with council branding guidelines

The process[7] for developing a new social media channel involves initial meeting with the Web Communications Team to discuss requirements, completion of a project checklist and, where appropriate, a business case.

Management of council social media channels

All council owned social media channels need to be managed professionally in line with council web publishing standards. To ensure the channels meet these standards the communications team will centrally monitor activity on a regular basis. This will be done using social media monitoring and management tools.

As part of this process owners of council social media channels must:

- comply with our guidelines on publishing[8] to ensure content quality and accuracy
- be available to participate in regular reviews of the channel
- notify the Web Communications Team of any changes in personnel – ensuring any staff using the channel have been properly trained and made aware of the usage guidelines

Security of council social media channels

All council owned social media channels need to have robust security in place to manage staff access to social media accounts, and administer and change passwords on a regular basis.

To ensure the security of these channels, social media account holders must:

- change passwords every time a member of staff who did have access leaves the organisation.
- ensure passwords are sufficiently complex – a minimum of 8 characters, including numbers and a mixture of upper and lower case letters
- have a system for changing passwords regularly in line with council security policy.
- provide the communications team with administrative access to the channel in case of emergencies and to enable cross-posting and effective monitoring.

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[7] More details and guidance can be obtained from the Web Communications Team, including example and blank checklists.
[8] Guidelines and resources are available for each of the main social media channels and are available from the Web Communications Team.

- make use of any centrally managed secure social media management tool.

Support for owners of social media channels

Advice and assistance on developing and maintaining a successful social media channel will be provided by the Web Communications Team.

A range of materials are available, including tutorials, guidance documents, videos and e-learning modules to assist people working with social media better realise the benefits and avoid the risks. These are also available through the Web Communications Team.

Social media monitoring

Overall monitoring of all social media channels will be handled by the communications team. This includes:

- Monitoring non-Haringey owned social media for comments about the council and responding appropriately if required.
- Monitoring messages sent out on behalf of the council by services.
- Providing guidance notes to social media publishers on how and when best to respond (see separate Responding to Social Media document[9]).
- Providing advice to services on how to respond to potentially sensitive issues.

The Web Communications Team will also help services set up their own monitoring alerts to help them manage their social media presence.

4. Further information

- If you have any queries regarding the setting up or usage of social media in the organisation, please contact the Web Communications Team on x6951 or webcommunications@haringey.gov.uk
- If you need advice relating to employee usage of social media, or the council Code of Conduct, then please contact Human Resources on x3888 or your directorate HR contact.

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[9] Available from the Web Communications Team