

LNCT

Aberdeenshire Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers



Date: October 2025

LNCT/21/13

Social Media Policy

This agreement has been subject to review in Year 2025 by the LNCT Joint Secretaries and HR as part of a review of current Aberdeenshire LNCT Agreements.

**A copy of the Policy/Procedure is attached below.
Supporting documents detailed in the resource pack can be accessed directly by Aberdeenshire Council employees via the HR/People pages on Viva Arcadia.**

LNCT Joint Secretaries

Margaret Mackay (Education & Children's Services)

Margaret.MacKay@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Adam Sutcliffe (LNCT Teachers' Panel)

Adam.sutcliffe@aberdeenshire.gov.uk
aberdeenshire@eis.org.uk



Social Media Guidance

Review Date: 31st October 2025

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Rationale

Aberdeenshire Council recognises that social media has become a part of everyday life for many of our employees and that there are many benefits and opportunities to be found by using social media.

The aim of this procedure is to provide employees and managers with guidance on how they should use Social Media appropriately and sets out standards of behaviour expected in line with their responsibilities to the Council as their employer.

This guidance supplements other Council policies and guidance, including:

- Social Media – getting your message across
- Media and social media protocol 2025
- ALDO 'Social Media - Getting it Right' course
- Mandatory code of practice – acceptable use

This guidance also supplements other external policies and guidance, including;

- SSSC social media guidance for social service workers
- GTCS engaging online: a guide for teachers
- Any other relevant professional codes of practice

Introduction

Social media has become an integral part of our personal and professional lives. Whether you are an individual user or representing a business organisation, it is essential to be clear that when using social media platforms they are used effectively and responsibly.

This guidance deals with the use of all forms of social media, such as (but not exclusively), Facebook, LinkedIn, X (formerly known as Twitter), Snapchat, Instagram, WhatsApp, Tik Tok, YouTube and all other social networking sites, internet postings and blogs. It applies to the use of social media for business purposes (such as Microsoft Teams) as well as for personal use that may affect the Council or employees in any way.

Use of social media in the workplace

Corporate platforms

Aberdeenshire Council has a number of 'corporate' accounts which share information about all services of the council. These are seen as the 'official' and main accounts for authority. They are as follows:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- YouTube
- WhatsApp
- X (used for emergency messaging only)

Employees may contribute to the Council's social media activities, for example by writing for our blogs/managing a Facebook account/running an official X account.

Some employees may join Facebook or social media discussions involving the Council in order to represent the Council.

Employees must always be aware that, while contributing to the Council's social media activities, they must not:

- Bring the Council into disrepute
- Make derogatory or defamatory comments about individuals, the Council or other organisations or groups
- Breach confidentiality linked to the work of the Council
- Do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age
- Use social media to bully another individual (such as an employee of the Council)

Setting up a social media account

If you are considering setting up a new social media account it is essential that you refer to the Communications team guidance as there are a few steps that must be followed:

1. Contact news@aberdeenshire.gov.uk and request a meeting with one of the team.
2. Be prepared with information about the purpose of the proposed account, who you are speaking to and what you want to say to them.
3. If a new channel is the best way, complete the ALDO course and read the guidance fully.
4. Identify two service administrators for any account. Always make sure someone in Communications has admin rights and always share current passwords with the Communication team.

Personal use of social media

As the use of social media has grown, the lines between what is public and private, personal and professional have blurred. The Council understands that individuals employed by the council are entitled to express themselves freely outside of work. However, employees should be aware that actions in and outside work that affect their work performance, the work of others, adversely affect the Council's reputation or are inappropriate in line with the examples below, may become a matter of concern.

You should be aware that even if you do not specifically identify yourself as a Council employee, it may still be apparent that you are. You should also be aware that even on closed personal social networks and messaging services, like Facebook and WhatsApp, posts can be shared outside of the group and therefore posts intended to be private may become public.

As an Aberdeenshire Council employee be respectful in communications and ensure you do not:

- Share photographs or video footage of a service user, tenant, customer or pupil*
- Post any information, images or make comments which could be perceived as offensive in relation to any Aberdeenshire Council employees
- Make any comments which may be considered discriminatory or may be considered as bullying or harassment
- Post comments which bring Aberdeenshire Council into disrepute
- Share any confidential information about the Council, service users, tenants, residents, customers or pupils
- Make derogatory or malicious comments about Aberdeenshire Council
- Make 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 and the individual(s) concerned.

Employees working with children, young people and vulnerable adults should take extra care. You should not share personal contact details e.g. phone number, email address or request and/or accept current pupils, clients, or vulnerable adults as “friends”, “followers” or “contacts”. If there is any instance where an employee considers this appropriate this must be discussed with the line manager.

Employees should also be familiar with and adhere to guidance on social networking provided by professional or statutory bodies such as the GTCS and SSSC.

Employees are also required to complete the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Awareness Course on the ALDO learning platform.

What to do if an incident arises/social media breach?

If you make 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, providing evidence where possible. Advice should then be sought by the manager through askHR on the most appropriate course of action to be followed. If the employee is registered or is applying to register with the SSSC, the SSSC should be informed.

The Communications and Marketing Team should also be contacted for advice and support should an incident arise, via news@aberdeenshire or by calling 01467 538222.

Disciplinary action

Any behaviour displayed on social media that is deemed unacceptable, or which is harmful to the Council; brings the Council into disrepute or is harmful or offensive to employees, service users, pupils or clients of the Council, will not be tolerated. This applies even where privacy settings on personal profiles are switched on and / or where Aberdeenshire Council is not identified as the employer.

Any inappropriate behaviour considered a breach of this guidance will be investigated under Aberdeenshire Council's Disciplinary Procedure and may result in termination of employment depend on the seriousness of the action.

Relevant Professional Bodies eg SSSC or GTCS may also be informed.

Employees may be required to remove any social media content that is considered to constitute a breach of this guidance. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.

Manager responsibilities

Managers have responsibilities for the effective implementation of this guidance. This includes ensuring that all team members have the opportunity to read and understand this guidance and are aware of the standards of behaviour expected. Managers are not expected to monitor social media use of team members but are expected to take action when they are made aware of behaviour which falls below the level required.

Frequently asked questions

Can I disclose on social media that I work for Aberdeenshire Council?

Yes, but ensure you reflect a professional view of yourself and the Council in your postings. You should be aware of the ability of people to connect your work role to other social media which you use on a personal basis.

Can I post reviews, even positive ones, about working at the Council?

Yes, it is recognised that employees may want to use of opportunities offered by social media, and social media can be used to benefit the Council. However, it is important that employees protect the privacy, confidentiality and interests of the Council, its services and employees. If in doubt, seek advice or do not post at all.

What happens if I make a mistake when using social media?

How the Council deals with particular mistakes will depend on the nature of the error and the connection to your work. You should always inform your line manager if you are at all unsure whether you have made a mistake on social media that may affect the Council or its business and reputation.

Your conduct online is subject to the same disciplinary rules and the expectations as your offline conduct. However, steps you could take are:

- Delete the post and apologise for the mistake, explaining the material was posted by mistake.
- Inform your line manager

Will the Council actively search social media for information posted by employees on their personal accounts?

No, unless information has been received that would require further investigation.

What should I do if a colleague is sending me unwanted messages or posting disparaging messages about me or others?

Any employee who feels that they have been harassed or bullied or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague on a social media platform should inform their line manager. Alos refer to the Anti Bullying and Harassment Guidance

What should I do if I am made or become aware of any inappropriate use of social media by a colleague or employee of Aberdeenshire Council?

You should report this to your line manager or senior officer within your Service immediately and if possible take a screen shot.

Are messages received via WhatsApp, Messenger and similar social media platforms covered by this guidance?

All forms of social media and digital communication are covered by this guidance. This includes WhatsApp, Messenger etc and any new forms of social media or digital communication that may be introduced or become popular in the future. Whilst in these forums only the sender and receiver(s) see the content, it can be seen by others if it is transferred into other social media platforms or shared by someone in the group. The fact that the content may be private, or was intended to be private, would not excuse otherwise unacceptable or inappropriate behaviour such as derogatory or discriminatory comments about colleagues or third parties.

Document Revision History

Document Revision History					
Rev No.	Rev Date	Summary of Changes	Reviewing Team	Contributors	Next Review Year
001	28/09/2012	Creation of all documents			
002	21/08/2015	Formatting			
003	20/02/2018	Update			
004	12/09/2019	Update to reflect terminology			
005	08/06/2023	Revision to procedure			
006	31/10/2025	Updating terms and clarifying expectations	HR Operational	J Lockhart M Chapman	2026