



**Monmouth** | Ysgol Gyfun  
Comprehensive School | **Trefynwy**

*"Learning to Lead our Lives"*  
*"Dysgu Trwy Arwain"*

# **Digital Communications Policy 2015**

**EAS/Monmouthshire**

# DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

*“Anyone can see what you publish publically online. Ensure you’d feel proud if your post was used and shared in a newspaper”*

## **Purpose**

Digital communications are an essential part of day to day business, and we can’t thrive without communicating in this way. It is a very useful tool to do your job and when used well, it is an excellent way of engaging with people. Employees are actively encouraged to consider the use of digital communications to complement other traditional communication methods.

This policy helps people make the right decisions about the use of digital communications and understand the impact should they get it wrong. It outlines the standards we expect of people when using social media and publish things on the web, how we will monitor use and what will happen if it is used inappropriately.

This policy sits alongside more detailed digital communications guidelines which will help you to know when and how to set up websites and social media accounts, what the branding should look like, what to say and how to say it etc. It also links into the Councils Code of Conduct and employee handbooks.

## **The Scope**

This policy will cover any digital communications, such as e-mail, social media \*, SMS, websites, blogs, wikis, podcasts, forums, message boards, or comments on web-articles.

\* Social media includes all social networking sites, including but not exclusive to, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Yammer, Pinterest, Flickr, etc.

## **Responsibility for Implementation of the Policy**

Employees are responsible for their own compliance with this policy and for ensuring that it is consistently applied to protect the privacy, confidentiality, reputation and interests of Monmouthshire.

All employees should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it.

Any concerns should be reported to your line manager in the first instance. If this isn’t possible, please seek advice from another manager or colleague.

Your manager will help you with any queries you have about this policy, and how to use digital communications as a business tool.

## **Using digital communications sites in our name**

All digital communications sites that demonstrate they are part of Monmouthshire County Council should be set up using these '[corporate branding](#)' guidelines. They can also be found on [The Hub](#). You will also find general advice and guidance on the management of social media and measuring the effectiveness for your team.

When things are written down the reader can often misread your intended message, so please see our "Tone of Voice" guideline to ensure your messages and communications are effective and that people don't take offence by anything that's written.

## **Using work-related and personal digital communications**

You are permitted and encouraged to use relevant social media websites for any business activity. Social media should add value to our business and be a communication platform similar to our telephones and email.

There is often a fine line between the use of digital media as a work tool and your personal use as an individual outside of your work role. Sometimes your opinions may conflict so you must take care to separate the two when it happens.

If you use social networks or blogs for personal use and have indicated that you work at Monmouthshire County Council, you should consider using a disclaimer that states that opinions on this site are your own. An example: "The views expressed are my own and don't reflect the views of my employer".

## **Some important rules when using digital communications**

Whenever you use digital communications you must adhere to the following:

- Only set up a digital communications account if you are able to manage it and give speedy and appropriate replies to correspondence
- You must give your line manager access to any business digital accounts for business continuity purposes
- All information posted as part of your job role is a council record, evidence of the council's work, and may be used for reference by others in future.
- You are personally responsible for content you publish.
- Be honest and open, but be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to the reputation of Monmouthshire.
- Don't upload, post or forward any abusive, obscene, discriminatory, harassing, derogatory or defamatory content. This includes your colleagues, members of the public or MCC as an organisation. It could result in disciplinary action if you do.
- Never disclose commercially sensitive, anti-competitive, private or confidential information.

When making use of any social media platform (e.g. twitter or Facebook), you must read and comply with its terms of use.

## **Monitoring**

Employees should be aware that use of social media may be monitored. Monitoring is only carried out as permitted by law and as necessary and justifiable for business purposes.

### **What happens if you get it wrong?**

It's always possible to make a mistake and get it wrong. If this happens tell your line manager immediately and agree remedial action to avoid embarrassment and reputational damage.

If you breach this policy you need to know that action could be taken under our Disciplinary Procedure. Where evidence of misuse is found we may undertake a more detailed investigation in line with our Disciplinary Procedure

Misuse can also, in certain circumstances, become a criminal offence or otherwise give rise to legal liability against you and the organisation. If necessary, MCC may hand over information to the police in connection with a criminal investigation.

Anyone who feels that they have been harassed, bullied, or are offended by material posted or uploaded by a colleague through a digital communication platform (whether from a work or personal account) should inform their line manager who will investigate the matter.

# Digital Communications Guidelines

We encourage open and two-way conversation with citizens. Such dialogue is crucial in our effort to engage with citizens and to support our values of openness, fairness, flexibility and teamwork. While we encourage all employees to join in conversations, it is important to understand what is recommended, expected and required when you discuss council-related topics.

If you want to start a social network or blog for council purposes, you should tell your manager and consult with the digital team. Ultimately, you have sole responsibility for what you post or publish in any form of online social media.

## Considerations before setting it up...

- You should know the audience you want to communicate with and be able to describe them. Your audience can not be 'everyone'; if you try to communicate with everyone, you will engage no one
- You should have a clear aim, purpose and measurable outcomes for the social network or blog
- There are lots of social media platforms. You should only create profiles on ones that are relevant. It is better to do one really well, than several poorly.
- Do you have the resource to manage the account/s? You should be clear how many times a day you intend to update/check the platform and be consistent in your approach.
- Social media should be prioritised similarly to an email and incoming messages should never be ignored.
- You need to ensure other officers have access to the social network or blog when you are unable to update it

## Guidelines for all accounts

- We discourage anonymous social media accounts. We believe in transparency and honesty.
- What you publish will be around for a long time so consider the content carefully and also be sensible about disclosing personal details.
- Write using the tone of voice guidance but don't be afraid to talk from your own perspective providing it is clear that you are not speaking on behalf of the council.
- You must follow copyright and data protection laws. Be aware that content on social media websites may be subject to Freedom of Information requests.
- Our reputation is made by your behaviour. Everything you publish reflects how we are perceived. Please ensure you are aware of the council's values and reflect these digitally.
- If you identify inaccuracies about the council, please politely and sensitively point out the situation as you see it. You must also advise the communication department that you have identified information that is inaccurate or could damage the reputation of the organisation. If you make a mistake, be open and honest whilst quick to correct it.
- When using an account that identifies you as an employee, team or department, you must always respond; never ignore any comments or messages online.
- If a conversation is offensive in terms of language or sentiment, make sure you inform your audience why you have removed the comment. An example may be: "*This comment was removed* because moderators found the content offensive. I will respond to your comments but please respect the views of everybody who comes here".

- If you have only one person managing a social media account, ensure the person is named in the biography/'about us' section. If more than one person manages an account ensure posts are attributed to the team member with a caret symbol (^) and their initials (i.e. ^JG).
- Protect your personal privacy. Don't ever divulge any information that can identify your personal details such as home address, personal phone number, or family information.

## **What to do if you If your account gets hacked**

Log in to the social networking site and change your password as soon as possible. You then delete all offensive or spam messages sent from the account.

## **Personal Accounts**

If you use social networks or blogs for personal use and have indicated that you work at Monmouthshire County Council, you should add a disclaimer that states that opinions on this site are your own. An example: "The views expressed are my own and don't reflect the views of my employer".

In addition, you need to ensure that you do not make comments of a defamatory nature about work colleagues as this could constitute a disciplinary offence.

The following are some examples of inappropriate online activity that may constitute misconduct (this is not an exhaustive list):

- ☒ Defamatory comments relating to the council or damaging its reputation or that of its partners.
- ☒ Breaching confidentiality. Any offensive, defamatory, discriminatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, hateful, racist, sexist or other inappropriate comments on any social network site or blog relating, directly or indirectly, to your employment or to your work colleagues

## **Social Media Management Guidelines**

If you use social media as part of a team or department, you should measure how effective the account is. Below are three steps to manage your accounts:

- 1 Define your objectives and identify what you want to achieve through social media
- 2 Select a measuring mechanism (some details about how to do this are shown below)
- 3 Evaluate your social media activity

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**This policy was agreed by the Governors**

Signed: ..... Chair of Governors

Date: .....

Signed: ..... Headteacher

Date: .....