ANNEX 6

# Joint
# Social Media Policy

# Dumfries and Galloway

## Joint social media policy

### 1. Introduction

In Dumfries and Galloway, the Council, Police and NHS are committed to improve the way we do business and communicate with people in the region. This includes using all reasonable and cost-effective means to reach out to the different communities we serve.

'Social Media' is the term normally given to web-based tools (called Web 2.0) which allow users to interact with each other in some way. This could be by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests online. Social media involves the building of online communities or networks. This includes blogs, message boards, social networking websites (such as Facebook, Twitter, bebo, MySpace); content sharing websites (such as Flikr, YouTube) and many other similar online channels. The way such information is consumed is also changing with the increased use of mobile devices such as Blackberries, iPhones and similar hardware.

These platforms open up new and exciting opportunities. However, public sector organisations are only just getting to grips with such technology and there are many issues to consider, both as individual employees and as organisations.

To avoid major mistakes it is important to manage potential risks through a common-sense approach and framework. We need to pro-actively monitor the development of such applications.

### 2. Scope of the social media policy

This policy provides information of what to consider before using social media to get the best out of the tools available. The rules help staff and elected Members to maintain a safe professional environment, protecting themselves, the organisations and the people who use our services.

The policy covers the use of social media and networking sites, established and managed by the Council, Police and NHS in Dumfries and Galloway, on behalf of the organisation. There may be other methods of communication, such as text messaging, about which services have already issued protocols specific to their service.
It also covers the representation of any Council, Police or NHS D & G employee within existing social channels that acts on behalf of these bodies and acts in a professional capacity.

Internal discussion forums will also exist within the organisations and will be subject to different guidance. However, the general advice below will still be useful.

The schools network, GLOW, will also come under the general guidance and teachers will be covered by the General Teaching Council professional code of conduct. (Link in section 5).

Guidance notes will be developed for specific channels such as Facebook and Twitter.

## 3. Using social media
### 3.1 When to use it

Social media is just another communications tool. It is not something to use just because you can, but needs to be the most appropriate tool for the job.

**Evaluation criteria will include:-**

- What are the objectives of the campaign?
- What audience are you targeting and is the method right for them?
- Why use social media as opposed to other communications channels?
- Is an existing communication channel a better option?
- How would your chosen site/tool fulfill your objectives?
- Are others in the organisation doing something similar?
- How will the success of the project/campaign be measured?
- What are the potential risks and have they been addressed?
- Are the resources in place to keep the channel/network up to date and/or to moderate any discussion forums
- Who will be responsible for managing/moderating the channel?
- Has training been arranged for staff involved?

The use of common channels is encouraged – for example, the Council has its own You Tube channel and this should contain all Council related video.

### 3.2 How to use it:
#### 3.2.1 Authorisation from line manager and notification to Communication Unit (pro-forma)

You must get permission to use social media.

Getting the best from such tools means you have to understand the commitment and investment of time in building and developing sustainable online relationships with people. Managers have to consider whether those resources are available and whether a particular tool is the best one for the job. Departments should consider which level of management will make this decision.

Complete the evaluation form (See Appendix) and send a copy to the Communications Unit (organisation comms.team) and to the appropriate manager in your service who will check your request against the above criteria and the needs of the service.

The manager will consult with the Communication Unit (organisation's communications team) when making such a decision.

**Step 1** Consider whether a social media channel is the best means to communicate with your audience, using the criteria above.

**Step 2** Complete the template below in Appendix 1, sending a copy to your manager and a copy to Communications Unit, preferably by email.

**Step 3** Senior Manager in the service consults with Communications Unit before making a decision.

**Step 4** If the decision is given to go ahead, set up the new channel, letting Communications Unit know the channel details, when it is live, whether it is time limited and who will be responsible for its maintenance.

**Step 5** Communications Unit will maintain a list of current social media channels operated by the Council. This will be added to www.dumgal.gov.uk in due course.

**Step 6** When a channel has been closed/deleted, notify Communications Unit who will remove it from the list of live channels.

### 3.2.2 Possible roles and responsibilities

To undertake your duties in this online space there are several different roles you may find yourself in. Sometimes these roles may be combined but more often you will be acting in a distinct capacity. Below are the types of role you may be asked to undertake and some common-sense guidance to help you fulfill this role.

**Individual contributor/participant on a personal basis**

Whether or not an individual chooses to create or participate in an online social network or any other form of online publishing or discussion is his or her own business. The views and opinions you express are your own.

As an employee of the Council, Police or NHS it is important to be aware that posting information or views about the council cannot be isolated from your working life. Any information published online can, if unprotected, be accessed around the world within seconds and will be available for all to see and will contribute to your Online Digital Footprint[1].

- Remember you are **personally responsible** for any content you publish.
- Understand your online **privacy** settings – Check your settings and understand who can see the information you publish and your personal information.
- All employees must be aware of and follow their organisation's general **Employee Code of Conduct.**
- All employees should be aware of and follow their organisation's **Information Security** Policy

- If you do talk about the work you do or a Council, Police or NHS service you are associated with, you should make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of your employer. **Use a disclaimer** such as: "The views expressed here are my own and do not necessarily represent the views of the Council (or Police or NHS D&G)."
- Do not let your use of social media interfere with your job. The Council has an acceptable use policy for online time.
- It may be inappropriate to add an NHS/Council/Police page as a 'friend' on your personal pages.

[1] A **Digital Footprint** is the data trace or trail left by someone's activity in a digital environment. Digital Footprints are the capture in an electronic fashion of memories and moments and are built from the interaction with the Internet, World Wide Web, Mobile Web and other Digital devices.

**Individual contributor/participant on a professional basis**

As an employee, you must take the following into consideration when using social media:

- You are **personally responsible** for any content you publish. Be mindful that it is in the public domain and on the record for a long time.
- If you wish to take part as a Council employee **you should clearly identify yourself and your role.** Make it clear whether you are acting in your professional capacity. Even if you do not intend to, your professional role or status as a public sector employee will affect the way you and the organisation are perceived. This brings certain responsibilities.
- **Be aware of your association with your employer** in online spaces. If you identify yourself as a Council, Police or NHS employee, ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself with colleagues and customers.
- **Be professional.** Make sure you are always seen to act in an honest, accurate, fair and responsible way at all times.
- Be aware of your **language and conduct**. The rules governing staff conduct such ***Equality and Diversity*** policies still apply. Also, as in all publishing, you should be aware of issues such as libel, defamation and slander. It is accepted that the **style** of the language may vary depending on the audience.
- **Never share confidential or sensitive information.** You should know and follow any Information Security Policy for your organisation. You have a unique inside track so be aware of the rules on data protection and financial regulations.
- **Try to add value**. Provide worthwhile information and perspective. An organisation's brand is best represented by its people and what you publish will reflect on the wider organisation.
- **Tell your line manager.** If you wish to participate in a professional capacity discuss with your line manager first. However, you won't need to complete the template before participating. Always alert your

manager or the Corporate Communications Unit early if you think you may have made a mistake.

- **Assess any risks.** Think through any potential risks and make sure you have plans in place to manage and mitigate these.

  When the channel involves engaging with young people, the staff involved must go through the **Disclosure Scotland** process.

  There may be additional disclosure requirements by the end 2010 for those engaging with groups of vulnerable adults.

- **Respect your target audience.** Think about their specific needs and be aware of any language, cultural or other sensitivities you may need to take account of.
- **Ask and seek permission** to publish any information, report or conversation that is not already in the public domain. Do not cite or reference customers, partners or suppliers without their approval.
- **Respect copyright** when linking to images or other online material.
- **Always stay within the legal framework** and be aware that freedom of information, data protection, financial and other regulations apply.
- **Monitoring and evaluation.** Make sure you have a plan for how you intend to monitor and evaluate the success of your activity.

**Broadcaster/publisher**

Your role is to simply provide or promote some form of information to an audience. To do this effectively you must be accurate, fair, thorough and clear in the information you provide. The rules of Accessibility and Plain English should apply. It is also a common oversight to forget to ensure that if you provide information or generate awareness through broadcast you must also provide a method or route for people to find out more or enquire about the information provided. If this is yourself make sure that you are set-up to manage this response. If it is someone else then ensure that they are aware that this is the case and they understand the information you have broadcast.

***Guidance and Tips:***

- *You must have buy-in from the organisation*
- *Making the commitment to maintaining the accuracy an updating of this information*
- *Ensure that there is a clear and resourced 'return path' for people to enquire or respond to your information. For example, when sending out pothole information, you would include the pothole hotline number.*
- *Understand the restrictions of your chosen tool. For example twitter restricts you to 140 characters; if you wish people to "retweet" your information allow space for this to occur.*
- *Use group/generic email addresses whenever possible rather than individual email addresses*

- Managers must keep copies of passwords so that the sites can be accessed easily by the service.

**Lead spokesperson**

A lead spokesperson may start, lead or participate in a discussion but in this role you must accept the full responsibility as THE voice of the Council, Police or NHS D&G on the matters you are called on to discuss. It is therefore important to understand the impact of your position and the accuracy and rationality of your comments in an online space. You will be held to account for them either by your employer, the media or the public. Be professional. Be responsible. Be credible. Most importantly never say anything that you cannot substantiate and avoid commenting on things that you are not spokesperson for (i.e.: if you are the Lead Spokesperson for Roads then it would be best you did not speak about Council issues relating to Child Protection, that is unless you are the Lead Spokesperson for this as well).

**Moderator (guidelines for moderation including escalation)**

A Moderator/facilitator is one of the most important and difficult roles to undertake. You should not underestimate the time needed to encourage, grow and create valuable online discussion or communities.

**Forum moderators are not police officers**

The biggest mistake forum or discussion owners make when taking on forum moderators is expecting them to police the community. Many see the main role of moderators as enforcers of the site rules, as people who delete posts they don't like and lock topics the moment they run off-course. If these are the priorities of your moderators, you are doing it all wrong.

The primary role of a forum moderator should be to promote interaction. A forum moderator should be posting new threads and adding new content to the site. They should be helping out members with their queries and they should be keeping threads alive by asking questions. That is not to say that forum moderators shouldn't be allowed to delete or lock threads that are inappropriate – of course this should be one of their roles. But this should never be their *primary role*.

Guidance on moderation can be found in a separate document:-

<u>How to effectively moderate forums and online discussions (see **Appendix 2**)</u>

**Forum Administrator**

A forum administrator may fulfill some of the advanced roles of the Moderator. However it might be better to separate the facilitation and moderation of the content of the site from the administration of the forum. Administrative tasks would include the channel being up to date, technical issues, adding or

deleting accounts, routing general enquiries and maintaining its technical/functional integrity.

A Moderator/Facilitator is NOT an administrative role as it is responsible for the content and its integrity on the site/forum and is a more evolved role.

**4. Misuse and inappropriate behaviour (how we deal with breaches)**

When an employee has misused their permissions, his/her account will be blocked/removed to prevent access. Misuse might include:-

- Using a site/tool for personal gain or to solicit business for personal gain
- Publishing materials that might be considered offensive or inappropriate
- Publishing materials that are defamatory or to the detriment of the organisation and/or the public perception of the organisation

Depending on the nature of the misuse, any further action must comply with the organisation's own disciplinary procedure.

Misuse by external contributors is dealt with in the guidelines on moderation.

**5. Links**

National Standards of Community Engagement
http://www.scdc.org.uk/national-standards-community-engagement/

Single Outcome Agreement
http://www.dgcommunity.net/DGCommunity/Documents.aspx?id=33658

General Teaching Council guidance http://www.teachingscotland.org.uk/viewpoint/big-issue/33-technology-and-the-ever-blurring-boundaries.aspx

CEOP – Child Online Exploitation and Protection http://www.ceop.gov.uk/

And http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk

National Youth Agency – Youth Work and Social Networking
http://www.nya.org.uk/catalogue/youth-policy/youth-work-and-social-networking

**Appendix 1**

**Template for Social Media evaluation**
Before referring this request to your respective communications or media manager for approval, you must have first completed the template below.

Please provide a brief summary of why you intend to use social media:

Aims

What are the key objectives?

Objective 1…

Objective 2…

Have you identified suitably skilled individuals to act as the moderators for the given channel(s)? Yes/No

Have they read through the social media policy document, in particular the section on moderator responsibilities? Yes/No

If you have answered yes to both of the above, please provide the details (including contacts) for the nominated moderator(s)

Moderator 1

Moderator 2

Please indicate the site(s)/tool(s) you are intending to use and why:

We intend to use…because…

Have you considered who your audience is and their sites/tools/channels of preference? Yes/No

If yes, please detail your intended audience and why you feel your chosen site/tool would be the best mechanism for engaging them:

Our intended audience is…and we are using…to reach them because…

Does your intended audience consist of children, young people or vulnerable adults? Yes/No

Have the staff planning to use this channel been through Disclosure?

Have you contacted Communications/Media team to ensure there is no duplication within other services? Yes/No

Does your aim warrant the creation of additional site/tool that might otherwise be promoted via existing central channels (e.g. the corporate website)?

Please state your case…

Please indicate how you intend to measure the relative success of the project/campaign:

We intend to measure…because…

Have you fully considered the risks associated with using social media? Please indicate the risks you have considered and how you would intend to mitigate these risks.

Risk 1 is...and we intend to mitigate that risk by...

## Appendix 2

### How to effectively moderate forums and online discussions

### Why forum moderation is necessary

If you don't moderate your forum it can be overwhelmed with spam and abusive posts – this is the primary reason why you should ensure all the forums you run have some degree of moderation. Spam and abusive posts are detrimental to your online community – you must moderate your forums to prevent irreversible damage from taking place.

### Why moderation should be taken seriously

Many forum moderators will often delete comments they disagree with, or members they suspect of spamming, then think nothing else of it. This is a mistake.

Forum moderation, if done incorrectly, can be worse than having no moderation at all. Over-zealous moderation can result in members ending up feeling alienated and angry when they find their posts or accounts deleted for no understandable reason.

A community relies on its members – before you take decisive action against yours, make sure you are making the right decision.

### How to avoid conflict when moderating

It is essential that your online community has a set of rules, parameters or guidelines for your members to follow.

Before you have to take action against a member, you should always contact them and try to get them to remove or edit the post themselves by referring them to the rule you feel they have broken.

In this way, you are making your site user feel far more valued on a personal level – this is far preferable to the member simply returning one day to find their post(s) or account deleted.

### The key to effective forum moderation

You should only edit the accounts or posts of your members as a last resort.

If you are unhappy with any content they have created, speak directly and confidentially to that person.

This way, you will not end up alienating your community – they will respect you far more as a moderator and will feel far more valued as a member of your community.

Each online community will be unique and will develop its own "rhythm"; you may feel that the community is inactive when in fact it could be in a quiet phase within its cycle. Good community managers learn the unique rhythms of their communities and contribute, encourage and foster participation at the right times.

***Guidance and Tips:***

- *Special needs of the audience*
- *Are children or vulnerable people involved – Disclosure may be necessary for any Council staff accessing the network/forum. Be aware that procedures for protecting vulnerable groups (both adults and children) are due in 2010*

**Appendix 3**
**List of known, current social media channels used by Dumfries and Galloway Council**

1. www.bebo.com/youth_work
2. www.bebo.com/oasisyouthcentre
3. www.bebo.com/goodie
4. http://www.bebo.com/YouthBeatz
5. www.bebo.com/GoodieH0
6. www.bebo.com/TAttic
7. www.bebo.com/DumfriesOpenCentre
8. http://www.facebook.com/people/Goodie-Hoodies/100000361775724
9. http://www.facebook.com/pages/Youth-Enquiry-Service/214999233394
10. http://www.facebook.com/YouthEnquiryService
11. http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100000854024671
12. http://twitter.com/youthbeatzcouk
13. http://www.youtube.com/user/youthworknithsdale0
14. http://www.youtube.com/dgcouncil

There may be more channels in use that have not been notified to Communications Unit at this time.