

Monmouthshire County Council

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.

Digital communications can be used to the maximum benefits for the organisation and our customers for self service, but we must design in simplicity to e-forms and processes to make it so simple that customers wouldn't want to do it any other way.

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.

A Special Mention About E-mail

E-mail is a long established communication tool, and is an important part of digital communications. It isn't the same as the usual Social Media platforms though, as it has important information security and storage limitations. Here are some basic principles that apply specifically to e-mail -

- Its easy to send documents and information out from MCC via e-mail, but check carefully that you have the right recipient and that you aren't sharing information that you shouldn't.
- Don't send documents to your personal e-mail to work on from your home PC. Its not safe and its not allowed.
- Your email inbox is not meant to be used as a permanent file storage device. If you are not around other people don't know where to find the information so make sure you save it in a place where people can access it. This is particularly relevant to documents that form part of personal or legal case files.

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.

We will make every effort to help put things right in cases when you get it wrong, but you need to know that where evidence of misuse is found we will always undertake a more detailed investigation. The investigation may lead us to take Disciplinary action. This is particularly relevant to the deliberate misuse of digital media to download, view or manipulate offensive material of any kind or level, particularly where it raises safeguarding concerns.

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.