

# Durham Youth Council Social Media Policy

## Background

Social media has grown substantially over recent years as a means of communicating and sharing information. The council recognises it can be a valuable interactive tool to help users and staff build online communities with shared interests, as well as enabling information sharing.

There are many types and brands of social media sites, currently popular social media sites include Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Bebo, Blogger and Flickr.

Some of these sites are used primarily to share information of a certain type, for example, Facebook hosts primarily photographs and text; YouTube hosts video content; Twitter hosts short chunks of text; Bebo and Blogger host blogs; and Flickr hosts images.

## The Council's Approach

As part of the county council's corporate aims, we strive to be customer-focused and accessible, to engage and empower communities, and have good communications between local areas and the council. We also work to ensure a more efficient and effective use of the resources we have.

Using social media can help achieve these aims, allowing us to both reach our users and listen to what they have to say. But as with any method of communication, the way we use it must be targeted, appropriate and effective.

When working with any audience, council staff should consider whether it is appropriate to use social media to enhance the effectiveness of their wider work.

### **Social media should form just one part of a wider information and marketing strategy.**

Social media can also be used as a tool for helping groups of people communicate with each other, and can be used to communicate with groups that do not, or cannot, use other methods of communication.

The council is developing corporate social media presences which you should use as a default option. If you consider that your project requires its own presence, you must go through an application process to request this (see page six for more information).

## Branding

It can be possible to add branding elements onto social media sites, but we may not use this as an opportunity to create or extend the use of a logo or branding that has not been approved through the council's own branding approval process.

It may also be inappropriate to include council branding if the site doesn't meet council standards in areas such as accessibility. Not adhering to the correct approach could have a wider effect on DCC's existing branding and the effectiveness of council branding as a whole, and may lead to our web presence being removed.

## Legal Requirements

Social media sites are different to the council's website(s) as the council does not have the final say on the information added by third party contributors. Third party contributors to our site will not always feel the need to adhere to the same standards that County Council staff must adhere to, but the council may still be responsible for the content.

With this in mind, all content on social media sites needs to be carefully monitored to ensure that it meets the following general rules:

- all content must adhere to the site's own terms and conditions

- a nominated County Council member of staff (the moderator) will monitor and moderate the information on a regular basis (weekly, daily or hourly depending on the nature of the site)
- the moderator will ensure that up-to-date information is added to the site regularly
- all defamatory, insulting, racist, sexist or personal content should be removed by the moderator immediately
- party political information or comments should not be added. If such information is added, it must be removed as soon as possible
- information for which we do not hold the copyright, should not be put onto the site.

As with all work carried out by County Council employees, employees must adhere to the Council's Code of Conduct for Employees when working with social media.

## Policy in regard to Our Young People and NYC

### **Introduction:**

This policy provides guidance on how Durham Youth Council (NYC) uses the internet and social media and the procedures for doing so. It also outlines our expectations of how staff, volunteers, Young People and external visitors involved in the organisation behave online.

### **Aims:**

The aims of this policy are:

- To protect all Young People involved in NYC that make use of technology, whilst in our care, including members of the Youth Council and Young People we consult/engage with (including mobile phones, internet enabled games consoles and the internet).
- To provide our staff, volunteers and external visitors with policy and procedural information regarding online safety and inform them how to respond to incidents.
- To ensure that NYC operates in line with its core values and within the law regarding how we behave online.

### **Understanding the Online World**

As part of using the internet and social media NYC will:

- ❖ Understand the safety aspects, including what is acceptable behaviour for staff, volunteers, Young People and external visitors when using websites, social media, apps and other forms of digital communication.
- ❖ Be aware that the same safety aspects apply regardless of the type of device being used (e.g. tablet, mobile phone, pc).
- ❖ Ensure that we adhere to relevant legislation and good practice guidelines when using social media platforms (including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram).
- ❖ Review our existing safeguarding policies and procedures annually to ensure that online safeguarding issues are fully integrated, including:
  - Ensure concerns or disclosures of abuse which take place online are written into our reporting procedures.
  - Incorporate online / cyber bullying into our anti-bullying policy.
- ❖ Provide training for the person / person's responsible for managing the charities online presence prior to embarking on this role and every 3 years thereafter.
- ❖ Ensure that all staff, trustees, volunteers, young people and external visitors have read, understood and committed to following this policy at the point of entry.

## The use of Virtual Meetings and TEAMS

DYC have recognised a growing need to incorporate the use of digital media platforms, an example of which is TEAMS, in order to communicate and hold virtual meetings with our colleagues, Young People and parents/carers/guardians.

It might be appropriate for Young People to be invited to join virtual meetings in order for them to be able to engage in or access the work we carry out. In this case, an email address needs to be provided, this can be either a parent or Young Person's email address, in the event this is a Young Person's email address and the Young Person is under the age of 18, parental permission must be given for us to use this. This is obtained through our parent consent form.

Parents/carers and Young People must be made aware that these meetings will involve a group invitation and that other members of staff, partners and Young People/parents will be able to view the provided email address and invitation list. This will be made clear in consent forms and be reflected in our Privacy Notice.

During virtual meetings organised by DYC, Youth Council members will be under the supervision of a suitably qualified and experienced member of staff and every care will be taken to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the Young People.

There may come a time when DYC Young People will have to access external virtual meetings arranged by an external partner organisation. Where appropriate, a DYC member of staff will also be available to supervise and attend, in the event there are no DYC members of staff available, Young People will only be encouraged to attend these meetings if there will be another adult (possibly from another organisation) attending and supervising with the relevant clearance, qualifications etc. expected of our DYC staff. The platforms being used might differ to that of TEAMS, for example; Zoom. These platforms might be an 'open arena' and not have the same level of securities enforced by DYC. In order to keep everyone safe, it's important that Young People are advised not to give any personal information in this environment, and to treat any event like that as if they would their personal social platforms, for example; not disclosing addresses, which school they attend, telephone numbers etc.

DYC recognise that managing and monitoring virtual meetings can be more challenging than managing face-to-face meetings. There is a potential risk of unwanted/uninvited guests attending, DYC will do everything to ensure this does not happen at any of our virtual events, for example; sending out individual invites via TEAMS or Outlook, making use of the 'lobby' tool which means we control who enters and leaves the meeting etc. but we cannot guarantee that partner organisations or externally planned virtual meetings will follow the same guidance. In the event that something does happen, for example; there are inappropriate comments made, verbal abuse, or any participants feel uncomfortable etc. All attendees are advised to end the call and leave the meeting immediately. Incidents need to be recorded and logged on our systems and risk assessment will need to be reviewed.

It is expected that everyone participating in Virtual Meetings adhere to the same expectations described in our Code of Conduct, for example; to be appropriately dressed, respectful and good role models.

It is also asked that when participating in Virtual Meetings, attendees consider their choice of venue. It is not recommended that attendees access these meetings in a public place, for example; a café or public park etc. this is because of the nature of some of the things that might be discussed. If this is unavoidable, then proper measures need to be taken to ensure confidentiality. In this situation, attendees are recommended to use the 'chat function' rather than communicating verbally and suitable headphone equipment be used in order to access the discussion. It is also recommended that when attending these meetings virtually from home, the attendee takes into account their setting and what might be visible in the background, for example; personal items, family photos etc. It's advised that the attendee 'risk assess' this and consider using the 'background' or 'blurring' tool if available. When using the background function, the appropriateness of the background needs to be considered. If it is deemed inappropriate, they attendee will be asked to change this by DYC staff member. If the device the attendee is using, doesn't have these feature, then they may want to consider having their 'camera' function turned off.

DYC will also host what is called a 'channel' within TEAMS, this is a platform similar to that of social media whereby members can post, access documents and discuss topics. This is a private channel and members

must be added into this via a moderator or admin in order to access its content. This will be managed/monitored in the same way any social media platforms would be, as identified in this policy.

## **Managing our Online Presence and Site Monitoring**

Our online presence will adhere to the following guidelines:

- ❖ All social media accounts will be password protected and at least 3 members of staff will have access to each account and password at all times, these will be designated 'admin' for the accounts.
- ❖ A designated person approved by DCC will monitor accounts.
- ❖ The designated person managing DYC online presence will seek advice from our designated safeguarding lead on safeguarding requirements.
- ❖ The designated person will remove any inappropriate posts identified as quickly as possible informing anyone affected - including Young People, and their parents (if aged under 18).
- ❖ All account, page and event settings will be set to 'private' to ensure that only approved members known to the project can view their content.
- ❖ In the case of a 'public' page; setting and moderation settings will be used to full advantage in order to monitor and control what is being posted, the ability for non-admins to post on the wall will be suspended, posts not from admin will need to be approved before they go live, profanity and blocking certain word controls will be utilized. 'Country Restriction' tool will be used in order to restrict who can view/access the page. Where appropriate the 'age restriction' tool will be used to ensure our content is relevant and appropriate for our target audience.
- ❖ No identifying features (e.g. names, addresses, dates of birth, telephone numbers, school uniforms) will be posted on social media platforms.
- ❖ All online posts will be consistent with DYC aims.
- ❖ We will ensure that all Young People involved in DYC are made aware of who manages our social media accounts and who to contact if they have any concerns about the running of these accounts.
- ❖ Written permission will be sought from the Young Person, and their parents (if aged under 18) prior to posting photographs or videos of the Young Person online.
- ❖ All of DYC accounts and email addresses will be appropriate and fit for purpose.

All pages will be monitored daily. The team have enough content to share with Young People to post at least three posts a day, the 'scheduling' post feature will be utilized to ensure that there is constant activity.

The page will be used to advertise and signpost events, links to information and news updates relevant to our Young People. The page will also provide the public with an insight on the work of DYC and promote positive practice. All posts will be monitored and managed by Admin to ensure they are relevant, safe and appropriate.

Please note that DYC do not take responsibility for the use of social media platforms, groups or any other forms of communication used to make contact between youth council members (young people) outside of DYC's official means of communication and contact.

DYC encourage building and maintaining positive relationships amongst members of the council and understand a need for young people to possibly socialise or maintain contact outside of planned meetings that are facilitated by staff members, but do not take responsibility for and will not be monitoring these sites or groups.

## **Be-friending and De-friending**

This is a process where we can accept friends, followers or fans onto our social media presence. Both of these processes can be politically and socially damaging if done badly. When our site receives requests from other people to become a friend, fan or follower, where this page is not a public platform, we will find out as much about the person as possible before making a decision on whether to be-friend them or not. Similarly, we will be cautious if we decide to de-friend someone. We will provide a good reason to de-friend an individual and only de-friend if the content they are adding to our presence breaks corporate policies, legal rules, or brings the Council into disrepute.

## What we expect of staff, trustees and volunteers

- ❖ All staff should be aware of this policy and behave in accordance with it.
- ❖ All staff should seek timely advice from the designated safeguarding lead if they have any concerns about the use of internet or social media.
- ❖ Staff should not communicate with Young People online or via social media outside of NYC official pages, this should not be in a 'private' messaging format. In a scenario where contacting a Young Person via Social Media is considered appropriate and there are no other options, at least 2 of the named Admins/Moderators should be involved in any correspondence, and this should be logged. If under 18, Young People should not be contacted via social media without parental permissions.
- ❖ All staff should communicate any messages they wish to send out to children and young people to the designated person responsible for the organisation's online presence.
- ❖ All staff should not 'friend' or 'follow' Young People from personal accounts on social media.
- ❖ All staff should ensure that any content posted is accurate and appropriate.
- ❖ All staff should not communicate with Young People via personal accounts or private messages.
- ❖ Where a Young Person is aged under 18, rather than communicating with parents through personal social media accounts, all staff should choose a formal means of communication such as face-to-face, email, letter, or use an organisational account, profile or website.
- ❖ At least one other member of staff should be copied into any emails sent to Young People, or, where appropriate, copies of emails should be logged and saved.
- ❖ Staff should avoid communicating with Young People via email outside of normal working hours.
- ❖ Emails should be signed off in a professional manner.
- ❖ Any disclosure of abuse reported through social media should be dealt with in the same way as face-to-face disclosures.
- ❖ Smartphone users should respect the private lives of others and not take or distribute pictures of others if it could invade their privacy.
- ❖ Everyone (including young people) must not engage in 'sexting' or send pictures to any-one that are obscene, indecent or menacing.
- ❖ Staff should not use personal devices for work related purposes, including contacting partners, Young People, parents etc. and should only use devices specifically allocated for work related tasks. In the event of emergency, where staff have no option but to use a personal device, for example; in the event of an accident, whereby contact needs to be made with a Young Person's parent or carer and staff are unable to use their work allocated mobile phone, staff may use their personal device to make contact, but must ensure their number/contact details are withheld either by adjusting their settings or placing 141 in front of the number they are calling.

## What we expect of external parties working with NYC

- ❖ When visiting NYC, interacting with Young People representing / or supported by NYC or referencing NYC elsewhere (e.g. via social media) external parties should be aware of this policy and behave in accordance with it.
- ❖ In both a personal and professional capacity, external visitors should not communicate with individual Young People representing / or supported by NYC via any means without the prior written approval of NYC.
- ❖ External visitors must be accompanied by NYC staff at all times when visiting NYC and / or interacting with Young People representing or supported by NYC.
- ❖ External visitors must not duplicate, edit / manipulate or make use of any online or social media content released by NYC without prior written approval.

## What we expect of Young People

- ❖ All Young People should be made aware of this online safety and social media policy and agree to its terms. This policy and expectations will also be shared in NYC Handbook for reference.
- ❖ We expect Young People's behaviour online to be consistent with the guidelines surrounding online use and behaviour set out in this policy.
- ❖ Young people should follow the guidelines surrounding online use and behaviour set out in this policy on all digital devices (including smart phones, tablets and gaming consoles). In the event that

a Young Person's online behaviour is so severe as to threaten the safety and wellbeing of another person(s), we reserve the right to take appropriate and immediate action including exclusion.

- ❖ Where appropriate, and only with the correct level of approval from Durham County Council, NYC Members are required to use separate dedicated social media profiles and email for their role within NYC, in order to avoid accusations of party-political allegiance.
- ❖ If you would like to make party political statements on your personal profile they should contain no reference to NYC or Durham County Council.
- ❖ NYC respects all Young People's right to a private life, however, Young People must be aware that where they are identifiable as a NYC Member, they are expected to behave appropriately.
- ❖ If NYC Members choose to comment or post opinions from their personal accounts about NYC activities, they should not bring the NYC or Durham County Council into disrepute.

## Using mobile phones or other digital technology to communicate

When using mobile phones or other digital technology to communicate via voice, video or text (including texting, email and instant messaging), NYC will take the following precautions to ensure Young People's safety:

- ❖ Unless Young People are aged over 11, staff will avoid having Young People's personal mobile phone numbers and will instead seek contact via a parent, guardian or carer. Staff will not attempt to make direct contact with Young People without consent from parents, these details should be provided by parent/carer through our consent forms. Where parent's have not given permission for us to directly contact their children, this will be logged in our systems.
- ❖ All staff will seek Young People's permission (and parental permission where the young person is aged under 11) in order to contact the young person directly.
- ❖ All volunteers will have a separate phone from their personal one for any contact with parents and Young People.
- ❖ Texts will be used for communicating information to Young People and not to engage in conversation.
- ❖ All information / communication between Young People and/or parents should be recorded.
- ❖ If a young person tries to engage a member of staff in conversation via texts, the member of staff will:
  - End the conversation or stop replying.
  - Schedule a face-to-face visit to continue the conversation if needed.
  - If concerned about the Young Person's welfare, follow the charities safeguarding policies and procedures.

## Use of other digital devices and programmes

The principles in this policy apply to all current or future technology - including computers, laptops, tablets, phones, smartphones, web-enabled games consoles and smart TVs - and where an app, programme or website is used.

If any digital devices are used as part of activities within the organisation:

- ❖ We expect Young People to adhere to the guidelines surrounding online use and behaviour set out in this policy.
- ❖ We'll establish appropriate restrictions more commonly known as 'parental controls' on any device provided to prevent misuse or harm.

**Note: Any concerns about the use of social media in regard to Safeguarding need to be shared and discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead. For more information see Durham City Centre Safeguarding Policy.**

**Designated Safeguarding Lead for Durham Youth Council:**

Participation & Engagement Officer

[youthvoice@durham.gov.uk](mailto:youthvoice@durham.gov.uk)

*This policy is adapted from Social Media and Durham County Council Policy and amended to reflect the way we Safeguard and use Social Media in Durham Youth Council and Durham County Council. It has taken into account, guidance from DfE in regard to use of Social Media and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020. These can be found on [www.durham.gov.uk](http://www.durham.gov.uk) and [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website.*