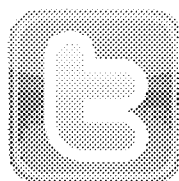


Police Federation

Online Social Media Guidelines



Social Media guidelines

This paper has been prepared by the Communications Team at Federation House. If you have any queries or comments, please contact us at 01372 35 2016.

This paper acts as a guideline for Federation representatives using social media platforms under the guise of the Police Federation. If you're a Federation representative creating or contributing to blogs, Facebook, You Tube, twitter or any other kind of social media, then these guidelines will help you use these platforms to the highest potential.

It is important to remember that social media platforms may be the first point of contact or introduction to the policing family for the majority of citizens so it is crucial that we make the right impression. We fully support and recommend the use of social media and it is vital to our communications strategy, but it is also important to use it correctly and positively to promote the role and value of the Federation, and of course our members. There is a risk however, that the Federation's message may get diluted if everyone involved is posting their own views rather than the Federation's views. Consistency is key if we are to send the correct messages into the public domain.

We have produced this guidance document to ensure we use social mediums such as twitter or Facebook to the full potential. We ask all who participate in social media on behalf of the Federation to consult these guidelines.

When you engage

Emerging platforms for online communication are fundamentally changing the way we work and communicate, offering new ways to engage with the public, colleagues, and the wider world. If you participate in social media, please follow these guiding principles:

- Stick to your area of expertise.
- Stop and think before you post. Ask whether you would say it in person or directly to another person. If not, don't post it.
- Think about who your audience is – its members, journalists, members of the public and anti-police campaigners.
- Post meaningful and respectful comments – in other words, no spam and no remarks that are off-topic or offensive.
- Try to reply to comments in a timely manner, when a response is appropriate.
- Respect proprietary information, content, and confidentiality.
- When disagreeing with others' opinions keep it appropriate and polite – don't get personal.
- Avoid tit-for-tat conversations – these can be offensive or boring for your other followers.

Rules of engagement

Be transparent. Your honesty – or dishonesty – will be quickly noticed in the social media environment. If you are talking about your work at the Federation, use your real name, identify that you work for the Federation, and be clear about your role. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, be the first to point it out. Transparency is about your identity and relationship to the Federation. You still need to keep confidentiality around sensitive Federation information and content. If you are unsure about a post, contact the communications team at Fed House and we will be happy to help.

Be careful. Make sure your efforts to be transparent don't violate the Federation's privacy, confidentiality, and legal guidelines. Ask permission to publish or report on conversations or meetings that are meant to be private or internal to the Federation. All statements must be true and not misleading and all claims must be substantiated and approved. What you publish is widely accessible and will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully. Remember – the release of any document or image through a social network site must be justified in law just as if it was put on a website or handed out as a 'hard copy'.

Write what you know. If you are writing about a topic that the Federation is involved with but you are not the expert on the topic, you should make this clear to your readers. If you personally publish to a website or twitter account, please use a disclaimer something like this: 'the views and postings on this site are my own and do not reflect the views of the Federation' – people tend to use this on personal twitter accounts.

Identity. Just by identifying yourself as a Federation representative, you are creating perceptions about your expertise and the work of the Federation. Be sure that all content associated with you is consistent with your work and with Federation values and professional standards.

It's a conversation. Talk to your readers like you would talk to real people in professional situations. In other words, avoid overly "composed" or offensive language. Don't be afraid to bring in your own personality. Consider content that's open-ended and invites response. Encourage comments. You can also broaden the conversation by citing others who are talking about the same topic and allowing your content to be shared or syndicated.

Are you adding value? The best way to get your comments read is to write things that people will value. It should be thought provoking, exciting and build a sense of community. If it helps people improve knowledge or skills, do their jobs, solve problems, or understanding the role of the Federation or the police service – then it's adding value. Social media can be particularly valuable as part of a campaign.

Healthy debate. There is a fine line between healthy debate and incendiary reaction. You do not need to respond to every criticism or gibe. Invite differing points without inflaming others. Some topics – like politics or religion – slide into more sensitive territory. Be careful and considerate. Although you can remove comments, once they are out there it's hard to get the words back. If you make a mistake, admit it and if you have to think twice about publishing something, fix it, or don't do it.

Otherwise... have fun and enjoy engaging with the world outside.