



## THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

### FLICKR GUIDANCE

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The past five years has seen a revolution in the way people communicate on the internet. Social media, which includes sites such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, allows people to stay in touch with each other 24 hours a day. The public can hold conversations with thousands of people at once, and get instant feedback on their actions and opinions.

As the lead for social media in West Midlands Police, I want to ensure we are embracing all of the latest technology available to communicate with our communities. There is a genuine thirst from the public to know what officers are doing, and to be kept informed using social media, and I want officers and staff to take advantage of this.

To help you we have put together this guidance document which gives you hints and tips to make sure your Flickr account is a success and avoids some of the potential pitfalls.

Essentially, the most important thing to remember is to use your common sense – once you have an account, make sure you use it regularly and respond to questions that you are asked and don't post anything that you would not say to the public or you would not want to see printed in the media.

Every message that you put out needs to serve a policing purpose, and remember to think about the values-based decision making model whenever you are using social media, in the same way as you do with any other decision that you make at work.

This guidance is around the *professional* use of social media but in respect of its *personal* use, I would urge staff to look closely at the policy and think carefully about any information they are putting into the public domain. This follows some learning from the USA and other countries, which shows there is a risk of being compromised if users fail to take common sense precautions.

Social media gives us lots of new opportunities to engage with our communities in new, innovative ways, enhancing their trust and confidence in their local police. Let's ensure that we use it effectively.

**Assistant Chief Constable Sharon Rowe**

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## MANAGEMENT AND OWNERSHIP

Flickr will be owned and managed by the press office.

Anybody who would like images to be added to the site should contact David Hodgetts, Stuart Davis or Graham Bedingfield.

## VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

### Regular updates

The success of Facebook relies on users regularly updating their status. While we don't want officers spending all of their time on the internet, it's important that you don't leave your account without an update for weeks.

### Broadcast vs engagement

Whenever we post photographs the site should be monitored for any comments posted. These should either be answered, deleted if they are inappropriate, or followed up if offensive (as per offensive comment reporting process).

### What photos will be added

- Images from local neighbourhood initiatives
- PR shots taken by the force photographer
- Campaign posters and imagery to support forcewide campaigns

### People reporting crime

We cannot accept reports of crime through our social media sites. If somebody tries to report a crime, refer them to the 0345 113 5000 number, and this webpage, xxxxxx which explains what to do to report a crime.

## DOs AND DON'Ts

### Do:

- Add images on a regular basis to ensure the site is maintained.
- Ensure that releases of image batches are publicised externally
- Cross reference any new images added to Flickr with other social networks, such as Twitter, YouTube and Facebook.
- Link back to [www.west-midlands.police.uk](http://www.west-midlands.police.uk), or an appropriate page (such as YouTube videos, partner agencies) whenever possible.
- Avoid jargon and formal language.
- Use every opportunity to promote the Flickr account.
- Make sure that if you have taken pictures of people who can be identified, you have sort their permission and they have signed a release form (available from the press office)

### Don't:

- Add images of people sentenced, missing people or wanted offenders (see below)

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- Add images of wanted people or suspects.
- Add images of juveniles.
- Add pictures of anything that may be used as evidence in court.
- Add graphic or sensationalist images, eg, pictures of vehicles involved in RTCs.
- Don't identify crime scenes. You can add pictures from scenes such as cannabis factories, but don't do anything that would identify addresses, victims or suspects.
- Add anything from a crime scene that is outside the investigation or policing.
- Be careful about adding pictures of children. Not only will you need parental permission (as above) but some Safeguarding Boards do not allow pictures of school children to be used on any social networking sites.
- Contain personal details of other people
- Contact protectively marked, sensitive, restrictive or sensitive information
- Be libellous
- Breach copyright
- Undermine operational activities or the security of staff
- Damage the reputation of WMP

## **Updated Guidance**

This guidance will be updated regularly to reflect any changes in the use of Facebook. To view the most up-to-date guidance for all social media, please see the Press & PR Dept's website or click here:

[http://intranet2/hq\\_departments/press\\_and\\_pr/multimedia\\_and\\_web\\_development/social\\_media.aspx](http://intranet2/hq_departments/press_and_pr/multimedia_and_web_development/social_media.aspx)