North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service

Social Media Policy

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Policy Superseding:

This policy supersedes the following policies from the date adopted date in the information panel:

- N/A

Contributors:

Development of this policy was assisted through information provided by the following organisations:

- N/A
1. INTRODUCTION
This policy highlights the importance of social media platforms for communicating with the public, whilst engaging in these methods of communication in a responsible, coordinated and consistent manner.

2. PURPOSE
To provide guidance to all staff who use social media corporately or personally, to ensure that they act in a way which reflects the values and reputation of the Service.

This policy will be reviewed every 12 months due to the developing nature of social media.

3. SCOPE
This policy applies to employees, temporaries, and other workers at North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service including all personnel affiliated with third parties.

This policy applies to all equipment that is owned or leased by North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

4. POLICY
4.1 What is social media?
Social media is the name commonly given to Interactive Communication Technology websites; primarily those which enable users to interact and communicate by sharing content such as opinion, media (video, images and audio) knowledge and interests.

Typically, social media relates to the building of ‘networks’ or online communities through encouraging participation and engagement.

The term encompasses many variations of online media, e.g. blogs, micro-blogs (Twitter), podcasts, ‘wikis’ (such as Wikipedia), message boards, social book marking websites (Reddit), social networking websites (Facebook, MySpace) and media content sharing websites (such as Flickr, YouTube).

The paramount feature of all of these platforms is that of a central focus on User Generated Content, whether it is a photograph stream on Flickr or a Poll on Facebook.

4.2 Use of social media by NYFRS
Social media is used by the Service as a concise and fast platform to inform and engage with the public and increase the online presence of NYFRS. It provides a more personal approach to informing, updating and engaging with the public.
Social media sites are used by NYFRS to raise awareness about initiatives and campaigns in a non-intrusive and cost-effective manner.

The Communications and Media section have the responsibility for posting, moderating and editing social media content produced on behalf of the organisation on the Service’s main corporate social media accounts. Incident information is also added to Twitter by Control and items posted in the breaking news section of the Service website are auto-fed on to twitter.

The main NYFRS accounts are:

- **Twitter (@NorthYorksFire)** - information including incident updates, fire safety messages, dates of events/open days/diversionary activities, links to recent press releases
- **Facebook (North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service)** - including incident updates, fire safety messages, dates of events/open days/diversionary activities, links to recent press releases.
- **You Tube (North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue)** - videos relating to recent press releases, fire safety initiatives and the Corporate Campaigns strategy.

The most appropriate social media sites for the Service to use are kept under constant review by the Communications and Media section.

Authorised users of other corporate Twitter accounts includes the Community Safety Officers (CSO) who can use their accounts to deliver local community safety information including safety tips and details of events being attended. A list of these accounts is provided below:

- @NYFRS_Sca (Scarborough CSO)
- @NYFRS_Rip (Ripon CSO)
- @NYFRS_York (York CSO)
- @SafetyServiceNY (Safety Service for Bedale, Richmond and Colburn)

Community Safety Officers who would like a corporate Twitter account should contact the Communications and Media Section.

No additional corporate social media accounts should be created by any member of staff.

The CSOs also have access to the Service’s corporate Facebook account, which they use to provide details of community safety events and initiatives.

Where a station or department has information it wishes to communicate via social media, they should contact the Communications and Media section who can advise on the best communication method and provide, or seek, approval for the proposed content.

Senior and Middle Managers are also authorised to set up Twitter accounts, which can be used corporately. It is up to each individual to decide if they want their Twitter account to have a corporate name e.g. DCFO_NYFRS. If they choose to use their Twitter account in a corporate capacity they must follow the guidance below.

The key subject areas for all the corporate social media accounts are:

- Community safety or Technical Fire Safety advice
- Details of events.

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- Details of day to day activity
- Retweets of local road closures, or local weather.
- Publicity for Consultations and other Fire Service Related campaigns

All users of corporate social media accounts must take care to ensure that information they post;
- Does not damage the Service’s reputation
- Does not breach any other Service Policy (e.g. IT usage Policy, Staff code of conduct etc.)
- Does not breach copyright
- Does not identify an individual
- Does not include personal information about others (including photographs of them) without their consent.
- Is not libellous (damaging to someone’s reputation).

Care must be taken when sharing/retweeting opinions expressed by others as it can be seen as endorsement which could be considered as libellous.

Individuals who are in politically restricted posts must ensure that what they write is politically neutral.

Middle and senior managers, who have corporate Twitter accounts, may post personal messages, but must take additional care to ensure that these messages reflect the values of the Service.

4.3 Risks associated with corporate social media use

The main risks associated with the use of social media is the potential damage to the Service’s reputation due to misuse.

If practice is not carefully monitored and assessed, incidences of misinformation could occur or unsuitable content could appear to be representative of the organisation, through the posting of defamatory or abusive content; or inappropriate comments or conversations.

If too much focus is put on using social media at the expense of other forms of publication certain groups in the community and within the organisation may feel alienated if they do not have access or the relevant knowledge/skills to access these sites.

4.4 Personal Use of Social Media

All staff who use social media privately are advised to review the privacy/ security settings in order to protect themselves and their family and friends.

If you have identified yourself as a member of the Service you should ensure that your profile(s) and any posted content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to colleagues and the public.

The Service’s reputation for quality and service in the community is crucial and staff should be aware of this when identifying themselves as NYFRS employees on social media sites.
Personal information which is published on social media sites must not bring the Service into disrepute. Examples of this include posting inappropriate pictures and or comments linked to your employment or colleagues that may be considered derogatory, offensive or bullying (see Staff Code of Conduct). You must never disclose confidential information gained through employment of the Service.

Information on social media may be available for a long time after it was posted, even if the person who posted it deletes their original post. Remember people can ‘retweet’ items on Twitter, or take screenshots of content.

Staff who regularly come into contact with young people through youth intervention programmes should make themselves aware of the Child Protection Policy, particularly this paragraph:

*Where NYFRS employees have worked with or built a professional relationship with, young people through the Service’s youth intervention programmes they must not under any circumstances, become involved in communications with those young people via social networking sites or other electronic communication methods such as text messaging. In such circumstances an approach from a young person (under the age of 18) should be rejected and deleted and where necessary the contact should be recorded or referred to the appropriate agency where necessary.*

4.5 Misuse of Social Media

All employees are under an obligation to ensure that they have regard to this policy.

If you see content on social media that reflects badly on the Service you should contact the Personnel & Development Manager or the Communications and Media section immediately.

Information breaches or breaches of the Data Protection Act should be reported to the CAO Manager.

5. POLICY GOVERNANCE

The following table identifies who within North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service is Accountable, Responsible, Informed or Consulted with regards to this policy. The following definitions apply:

- **Responsible** – the person(s) responsible for developing and implementing the policy.
- **Accountable** – the person who has ultimate accountability and authority for the policy. N.B Only one role is held accountable.
- **Consulted** – the person(s) or groups to be consulted prior to final policy implementation or amendment.
- **Informed** – the person(s) or groups to be informed after policy implementation or amendment.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Responsible</th>
<th>Head of Risk Management</th>
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<tr>
<td>Accountable</td>
<td>Chief Executive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consulted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed</td>
<td>All Employees, All Temporary Staff,</td>
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6. REFERENCES

The following North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service policy documents are indirectly relevant to this policy:

- Staff Code of Conduct
- IT Usage Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Visual Imaging Policy

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If you have any questions concerning this policy or your obligations under it, you may direct them to either your line manager or Communications and Media Officer on ☑️ 8572 (01609) 78 8572 or ☏️ sarah.woodcock@northyorksfire.gov.uk

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