



Social media protocol for CIEH staff, members, and representatives

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1. Introduction

This document outlines the protocol all CIEH staff and associated representatives should follow when using social media for business and personal purposes.

Associated representatives refer to chairpersons, presidents, board members, committee members, volunteers and any other person acting on behalf of the institute.

Social media is an increasingly popular form of communication for individuals and organisations. It is now widely used both socially and for business in the public and private sectors. Social media is the term used to describe any kind of online tool that you can use for engaging in a two-way conversation with other people; including traditional social networks such as Twitter and Facebook, blogs, photo/video sharing, mobile phone applications, texting, digital TV services, and gaming/collaboration tools.

Unlike a telephone conversation or email, it is a broadcast medium – your messages are likely to be viewed by a wider range of people than just the intended recipient or audience.

CIEH currently has six corporate social media channels: [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and TikTok. Feel free to like, follow, share and re-tweet us! For more detailed information on how CIEH uses social media and structures its content, see the CIEH Social Media Strategy.

Any staff or representative wishing to set up a social media account for CIEH business relating to their specific service area should seek approval and advice from the Marketing and Communications Team.

2. How it works – the basics

Twitter is a **micro-blogging** platform that allows users to write and share short posts called **tweets**. Tweets can only be up to 280 characters long, and can include web-links, photos, and videos. Other users can follow a person’s profile as well as like and share their posts.

The infographic below explains how to get started on Twitter and what the different symbols on the app mean. [More information on how to use Twitter.](#)



Tweet

It all begins with a Tweet. Join or start any conversation in the world with a simple Tweet. Find more tips about posting a Tweet.



Retweet

See something you like? Retweet it to spread the word instantly. Read more about Retweeting another Tweet.



Hashtag

Wondering what everyone’s talking about? Click on a hashtag and find out. Hashtags connect Tweets that talk about the same thing in one place. Learn more about how to use hashtags.



Follow

Never miss an update from the people that matter to you. Building your timeline all starts with a follow.



Search

Wondering what something is all about? Search and see the conversation unfold live. Find more tips in our Using Twitter search article.

Facebook is a social networking site comprising of individual profile pages, pages for businesses, as well as **groups**. Groups can be open for all to see or private and restrict those who join. Facebook also offers a free marketplace facility for people to buy, swap and sell their unwanted items. It also hosts jobs and events pages.

Posts on Facebook are not restricted by character limit in the same way Twitter is, meaning that posts can be much more detailed. However, its strict **algorithms** can determine how widely posts are shared based on the content alone i.e., the Facebook algorithm controls the ordering and presentation of posts so that users see what is relevant to them. [More information on creating and using a Facebook account.](#)

Instagram is a photo and video-sharing social media networking site. Users can upload content to their main feed (also known as the grid), or via **stories** which are a collection of images or videos used to tell a story. [More information on creating and using an Instagram account](#)

Each of these social media networking sites has a **direct messaging** function, allowing users to contact one another privately. Please contact the Marketing and Communications Team should you require assistance with another platform such as LinkedIn or YouTube

What you need to remember

Social media is a cheap and effective way of reaching out to the community and sharing information and ideas. Its immediacy can be invaluable in times of service disruption and crisis. It also means that all messages should be treated as public and are open to responses from people with different views and agendas. Sometimes this can be positive, but it can also result in unwelcome criticism and abuse. It is extremely popular with journalists, so anything you say on social media has the potential to be newsworthy.

Posts on social media can be deleted, but that does not mean it is forgotten. Even if you delete something from a social media site, it is likely that other people will have already seen it, in a news feed popping up on their desktop, or on their mobile phone. Someone may already have posted it elsewhere online, shared it with their friends, or taken a screenshot of the original post before it was deleted.

Using social media sites such as **Twitter** or **Facebook** is no different from talking loudly in a public place: you can expect other people to hear what you are saying, including some who like to gossip!

You must be willing to take personal responsibility for anything that you say or share

3. Social media and the law

The public nature of social media raises some general legal issues which **ALL users** should be aware of:

Libel

If you publish an untrue statement about a person which is damaging to their reputation, they may take libel action against you. The same thing may happen if, for example, someone else publishes something libellous on your website and you know about it and do not take swift action to remove it. A successful libel claim could result in the award of damages against you.

Copyright

Using images or text from a copyrighted source (for example extracts from publications or photos), without obtaining permission, is likely to breach copyright laws. Therefore, do not publish anything you are unsure about, or obtain prior permission. Again, a successful claim for breach of copyright would be likely to lead to an award of damages against you.

You do not need a user's permission to share or re-tweet their posts on social media. Just ensure that the content you are sharing is from a genuine source and is not misleading in any way (see **Fake news**).

Data Protection

Do not publish the **personal data** of individuals unless you have their express permission. Personal data includes names, addresses, contact numbers, and financial information. Never ask users to divulge any personal details, instead as a matter of best practice, if they wish for you to contact them to discuss a matter in detail, send them your email address via direct message and continue the conversation away from social.

Fake news

Untrue stories or news on the internet is defined as [fake news](#). There are two types of fake news you should be aware of:

- Deliberately published false stories – sent around to make people believe something which is untrue
- Stories that *may* have an element of truth to them but are not completely accurate. This is because the people writing them (i.e., journalists/bloggers) do not check all the facts before publishing and/or they may have exaggerated some of the facts to get people to visit a website (also known as **click-bait**)

3. Handling social media criticism/abuse

The Marketing and Communications Team undertakes regular monitoring of CIEH's corporate social media accounts for any user engagement. Sometimes this engagement can be negative and critical of the organisation. It is the role of the Marketing and Communications Team to manage and respond to such engagement if deemed appropriate.

Staff and representatives of the CIEH using social media, either in a personal or professional capacity, **must not** engage in content that is deemed to criticise CIEH or any post deemed offensive or abusive. Instead, please report any online criticism or abuse to the Marketing and Communications Team or a relevant manager to:

- Raise their awareness of the post in question
- Clarify the facts surrounding the comments/accusations made
- Seek advice from the Marketing and Communications Team on how to respond (if it is appropriate for you to do so)

It may be that the best course of action is to not engage with the individual(s) concerned. However, the Marketing and Communications Team will be able to guide you on this.

Acceptable Use Policy

CIEH has its own [Social Media Acceptable Use Policy](#) which details how all users of its social media channels are expected to conduct themselves. This applies to CIEH staff, CIEH members, its representatives, and the general public. This policy is in place to protect our staff in the event that defamatory or abusive behaviour is experienced online.

Blocking users

It is not best practice, nor is it recommended to block users on social media just because you do not like their opinion. However, users who are regularly abusive and offensive can be blocked but only as a last resort – otherwise, blocking them could create more problems than it solves. Before a user is blocked, they must be given an opportunity to improve their behaviour. The Acceptable Use Policy is designed for this purpose and any user behaving inappropriately should be signposted to this policy in the first instance. Please seek advice from the Marketing and Communications Team should you experience such poor behaviour online.

4. Expected conduct of CIEH staff and representatives

Writing for social media is much more informal than by traditional letters or email. While adopting a more informal style than traditional means, CIEH's corporate social media accounts, alongside those of all staff and Members will:

- Treat all individuals with respect
- Not be used to criticise individuals or organisations, even if invited to
- Not engage with people who are abusive, or use racist, sexist, homophobic or threatening language
- Not publish images of minors without the permission of the children(s) parents or guardians
- Not convey any political or commercial bias

- Not disclose any confidential information relating to CIEH business or the personal information of others

All the major social media networking sites have strict rules in relation to identity fraud and they have processes in place to weed out 'fake' or 'made-up' accounts. No-one should be conducting CIEH business via a social media account that isn't registered in their legal name or uses a profile image of a person that is not their own. Doing so risks damaging the CIEH and its reputation.

If talking about the CIEH on social media, staff and associated representatives should be clear about their own personal roles and the service that they represent and not say anything that might bring the CIEH into disrepute.

Staff and associated representatives must never openly criticise CIEH, named CIEH officers, its representatives, or its members, and be aware of their duty of confidentiality with respect to CIEH

Staff and CIEH representatives are encouraged to take part in discussions on social media as identified officers of the CIEH when they can contribute professional knowledge which can add value to the discussion.

Furthermore, CIEH staff and representatives should not accept **friend requests** from a social networking site sent by a contractor providing services to the CIEH as this could imply close personal association. For the avoidance of doubt, this does not apply to sites which are intended as a neutral professional connections' registry (such as LinkedIn.)

If you are unsure how to respond to any such request, please get in touch with the Marketing and Communications Team.

5. Dos and don'ts

The following lists of dos and don'ts have been adapted from the Local Government Association's [social media guidance](#)

Do

- Do try to make timely and relevant comments that you think other people will be interested in
- Do take a moment to think before you respond to a comment – comments once made, leave a digital footprint forever
- Do be aware of the privacy settings on the site you are using
- Do include photos and web links to help make your points
- **Talk** to members, stakeholders, staff, and others, and do answer their questions (quickly and honestly)
- **Be responsible** at all times
- **Be respectful** at all times, too
- Have a **personality** – corporate speak won't work well on social media
- **Share** other people's helpful content and links
- **Credit** other people's work, ideas, and links

- **Listen** (social media is designed to be a two-way channel, just like any good conversation)
- **Ask** your own questions. Seek feedback from your residents (but make sure you share the results with them)
- **Talk** to your communications team – they are there to help you
- And more than anything, use social media in the spirit in which it was intended – to **engage, openly and honestly**

Don't

- Don't post or share any content or comment which has the potential to cause reputational damage to the CIEH
- Don't post or share content which will embarrass yourself or the CIEH
- Don't re-tweet or share anything you do not know to be true or completely accurate
- Don't comment in haste, particularly when you are angry or have consumed alcohol
- Don't post comments that you would not be prepared to make on paper or face-to-face
- Don't give out personal details such as your address or phone number
- Don't broadcast or talk at people. Your audience will soon spot broadcasts and respond accordingly
- Don't block users on a whim, follow CIEH Acceptable Use Policy procedures
- Don't try to cover up mistakes, be honest and you'll get more respect for it
- Don't leave your accounts unattended for long spells and assume that social media will look after itself – you will need to invest time, enthusiasm, and energy to make it work.
- Don't ignore professional and legal advice, your communications colleagues are there to help you
- Don't think that a disclaimer in your bio will save you from potential legal action, it won't
- Don't share your passwords with anyone other than your communications lead (if necessary)
- Don't forget that social media is 24/7 – just because you leave work at 5:00 pm doesn't mean the world stops or that users won't be active. If your account is only staffed between 9am – 5pm, then you should say so on your profile

6. Resources

Further information on the use of social media is available from GOV.UK, the Government Digital Service (GDS) and the Local Government Association (LGA). Whilst the CIEH is not a government body, the guidance should be considered best practice:

[GOV.UK Social media guidance for civil servants](#)

[Government Digital Service \(GDS\) Social media playbook](#)

[LGA Get started on social media](#)

7. Further information

For further information and support contact the Marketing and Communications Team
marketingdepartment@cieh.org