

#FollowMe

A social media guide for community councillors



This Guide has been produced by The National Communications Advisory Group (Scotland) and the Improvement Service in collaboration with freelance communications specialist Dan Slee.

The National Communications Advisory Group (Scotland) is a collective voice for the communications industry in local government. Members, drawn from councils across Scotland, promote best practice, support and challenge, provide training and deliver specific communications advice to national bodies on request.

The Improvement Service works with councils and their partners to help improve the efficiency, quality and accountability of local public services in Scotland by providing advice, consultancy and support. A key aspect of the Improvement Service's work is to support Community Councils in Scotland.



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Introduction

Humans are born wired for connection – it's in our bones, as strong a need as food, water and warmth.

When we are happy, sad, frustrated or angry there is something deep inside that makes us want to connect with another person.

When the Scottish men's football team reached the Euro 2020 finals, their dressing room celebrations saw them sing disco hit 'Yes Sir I Can Boogie'. People watched, liked and shared. Then recorded their own version.

Social media is a powerful tool for plugging into the conversations of the nation. As a community council it can allow you to hear a range of views on local issues as well as giving you the chance to make your case.

More than 80 per cent of people in Scotland have a social media account. More than 95 per cent of 16 to 24-year-olds use social media at least once a day. But you'd be wrong to think this was just young people. Sixty per cent of over 65s also use it at least once a day, too.¹

¹ <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector-research/cmr/cmr-2021>



Equipment to use

Having social media apps on your smartphone or tablet means you can post photos or even videos while you're out and about. Alternatively, you can access many social media channels via laptops or PCs.

Key social media channels explained

Facebook

If you're keen to reach people over the age of 30 Facebook is where you can find people online. Nothing can replace the sheer weight of numbers that you can find on Mark Zuckerberg's original invention.



Numbers: Overall, 70 per cent of the population are likely to be on Facebook.

Why people use it: To keep in touch with family and friends.

Who you'll reach: You'll probably reach over 30s on your Facebook page, especially in community Facebook groups in your area and on newspaper Facebook pages.

What's the catch: Buckle up. It can get noisy.

Tip: Everyone who joins Facebook needs to create a Facebook profile. This is an account that has to be in their own name. Once you've made that you can use it to make a Facebook page or group for your community council. Post what you are up to here. Don't create multiple profiles as it's against Facebook's terms and conditions. Keep your own profile as private as you can if you want to create some distance.

Tip: You will need to decide whether you want to set up a Facebook Page or a Facebook Group for your community council. Pages are more public, and allow a wider audience to browse your content, while Groups require people to sign up to access posts, which can put some people off. Pages are generally a better option for public-facing organisations like community councils, as it makes it easier for people to find and follow the information you are sharing, and your posts will also show up in search engines like Google. If you want a more private space to discuss community council business and projects with key local activists, then you could always set up a Group for just this purpose. You can find out how to set up a Facebook page in Appendix 1 at the end of this document.

Instagram

Lights, camera, action! Portrait shaped videos called Reels are most popular here.

Numbers: If you're after under 30s this is where you've a best chance to find them.

Why people use it: To post and share pictures and video and find entertaining content from brands and influencers.

Who you'll reach: Younger people – and the not-so-young - especially those who are interested in entertainment, travel and celebrity.

What's the catch: It's hard to find people in your neighbourhood.



WhatsApp

This is as close as you'll get to a universal social media channel. A majority of all ages use it and it's become a key way community groups to organise their members and supporters.

Numbers:: Almost half the population use it.

Why people use it To keep in touch with groups of family, colleagues or like minded people you're likely to know in real life.

Who you'll reach: All ages.

What's the catch: It's a great way to organise your community council activities but it's trickier to reach people you don't know.



Tip: Instagram was set up as a picture sharing social network. It's since gravitated to being more of a video sharing network. These are called Reels and tend to be shot in portrait format. They can be a minute long.

Tip: WhatsApp groups can be useful ways to mobilise community council members and supporters as well as keeping them informed of what you've been up to. If you've added an important post to social media, you can flag it on WhatsApp to make sure they don't miss it.

Messenger

This Facebook tool is great for sending a private message to Facebook friends. If you have a Facebook page, you can expect to be messaged on Messenger.



Numbers: If you have a Facebook page the chances are you'll be on Messenger too.

Why people use it: To keep in touch with friends, family and brands. You may get people raising a local issue with you using Messenger if they don't want to share it in a public forum.

Who you'll reach: If people like or follow your page they can message you. It's more incoming than a way to reach lots of people.

What's the catch: It's for one-to-one discussion rather than mass broadcasting and you might have to spend time managing incoming messages.

Tip: If you have a Facebook page people will be able to use Messenger to send you a private message. It's worth keeping an eye out for them when you check your page.

Twitter

Great for breaking news and swapping political discussion but now less useful at reaching the general public.



Numbers: On the wane - now the 6th largest social media platform with about a third of people using it regularly.

Why people use it: Breaking news, emergencies and live events are Twitter's strengths.

Who you'll reach: Local councillors and organisations who interact with your community council.

What's the catch: A deserved reputation for being hostile and toxic to people in the public eye.

Tip: Find out how to set up and use a Twitter account in Appendix 2 at the end of this document.

TikTok

It's the hip new kid in town. It's the new fun challenger video network that's making the old guard worried.

Numbers: Less than 20 per cent use it but numbers are growing - especially outside the under 24 demographic where it first boomed.

Why people use it: For fun and entertaining content.

Who you'll reach: Young people and increasing numbers of older ones too.

What's the catch: You'll need to be confident in front of a camera to communicate on TikTok.



Tip: TikTok is a video network. Add a hashtag for your area and your ward when you post your clip.

Nextdoor



Neighbours around the world turn to Nextdoor daily to receive trusted information, give and get help, get things done, and build real-world connections with those nearby — neighbours, businesses, and public service, including local councils and community councils. Nextdoor allows public services to share critical, real-time information directly at the neighbourhood level based on postcodes relevant to your area via an easy app on your smartphone or online.


Thousands of public services around the world already use Nextdoor to engage with communities. With a mapping feature that enables you to post messages at a hyper-local level, community councils could use Nextdoor to easily reach people in their immediate area — without them having to search for it on other social media channels.

Numbers: Low but growing. Around 1 in 4 UK households are using it.

Why people use it: To find out what's happening in their community.

Who you'll reach: Older social media users.

What's the catch: You're unlikely to reach many people under 50.



Tip: Let people know about the things you've improved in your area. Bread and butter things like having fly-tipping removed or making improvements to the High Street work well.



Tip: Nextdoor for public services allows community councils or groups of community councils to set up an account which can reach everyone within their area.

Other channels

Social media channels have all embraced video, so you no longer need a **YouTube** account to share this type of content. Simply post your clips to whichever channel you're using instead. **LinkedIn** is a useful channel used by professional people but could be useful if you need to reach local business people or regeneration forums.



Your page or account needs attention to grow. Spend a few minutes a day on reading and replying to incoming messages. That way you connect with people and encourage them to connect with you. Post regularly, too,



Be careful of sharing pictures and video to your social media account unless you shot them, or you have clear permission from their owner. Don't take pictures or video from the internet without permission.



If you are including people in pictures or video get their permission, especially when it comes to children. You need to tell them exactly how you are using it and if you're sharing it on social media.



Don't use copyrighted music unless you have the permission of the rights holder. Record companies and social media platforms use web tools to spot copyrighted material and either stop you uploading it or delete it once you have.



You can see how your page or account is doing by taking a look at the engagement figures, often referred to as analytics or insights. These are only available to the owner of a social media account and show how many people saw, clicked on or reacted to what you've posted.

Social media checklist for age groups

The social media channel you select will dictate which age group you are likely to connect with. In 2022, this is how the landscape looks

Social media channels and age

	13-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
Facebook	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Instagram	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓	
WhatsApp		✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
Messenger		✓	✓	✓	✓
Twitter	✓	✓	✓		
TikTok	✓✓✓	✓	✓		
Nextdoor			✓	✓	✓✓

Getting yourself set up

Have a set of social media house rules

When you start using social media in earnest then it's worth having a set of house rules.

This sets out what people can expect from your account and also allows you to set expectations for other people's behaviour.

These will apply when people look to come and engage with you on your social media page or profile. It's worth having these Plain English set of rules that are clearly displayed.

Remember, public social media channels allows for discussions of different points of view, and not everyone will agree with everything you share.

Feel free to use these rules as a starting point for what you do.

Social media house rules

Here's an example set:

Welcome to our social media account which shares our work and the local issues which affect our community. If you want to be part of the online community here please observe these rules which are designed to promote respect and online safety.

What you can expect from me as the owner of this social media account

We'll look to monitor this account and will try and respond as time allows.

Anyone looking to contact us privately with specific queries or case work are encouraged to do so by emailing INSERT EMAIL (or other alternative contact details).

What other users can expect of you

Debate and disagreement are welcome but please be courteous and respectful of others.

Be respectful and polite. Racism, threats, intolerance, abuse or intimidation are not acceptable.

Don't post misinformation or disinformation.

Don't post personal details publicly here or make public allegations. Please make formal complaints in the appropriate place.

Page admins reserve the right to block or report people who break these rules to the police.

You may want to add an expectation of when you'll monitor the page and how quickly you'll try and respond.

Local Government bodies across the four UK nations have developed resources for councillors to help with Civility in Public

Life. This includes [Rules of Engagement](#) which can be added to your social media profiles to outline the ways in which you intend to engage with people online.

Rules of engagement

Welcome to my page, which aims to communicate my activities as a councillor.

If you wish to be a part of this online community, you must agree to abide by this code of digital engagement, which is designed to keep everyone safe.

RULE 1
Debate and disagreement are welcome on this page, but only if expressed with courtesy, respect and politeness.

RULE 2
Posts should not contain abuse, harassment, intimidation or threats of any form.

RULE 3
Posts should not contain any form of discrimination – including racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia or religious intolerance.

RULE 4
Posts should not spread false or unverified information.

RULE 5
For transparency reasons, users should not post anonymously.

If any of these rules are broken, page admins reserve the right to delete posts, block users and report content to the police if necessary.

It may not be possible to respond to all queries on this page due to time constraints – if you have specific enquiries or casework, please send directly to my official email.

How to get started

Before your first post

If you're looking to dip your toe into a social media channel for the first time here's some tips.

Firstly, just watch. Join and then just spend the first month or so watching.

Follow. Follow or like people or organisations you know or that are active in your community. Follow other community councils to see how they are using social media.

Avoid following or liking fake accounts and bots. Bots are automatically created profiles often with stolen photographs to make them look like real people. One way to spot them is that they sometimes can be names with numbers.

Avoid clicking on private message links. A favourite tactic of scammers is to send you a private message with a link. Don't click on them. They can sometimes download damaging malware.

Check. Now, that's you set up, take a look to see how people are using it. Is it informal? What kind of things work best? Are people argumentative? Or supportive?

Your first few posts

You'll want to get into your stride if you decide the channel is for you. But what do you post?

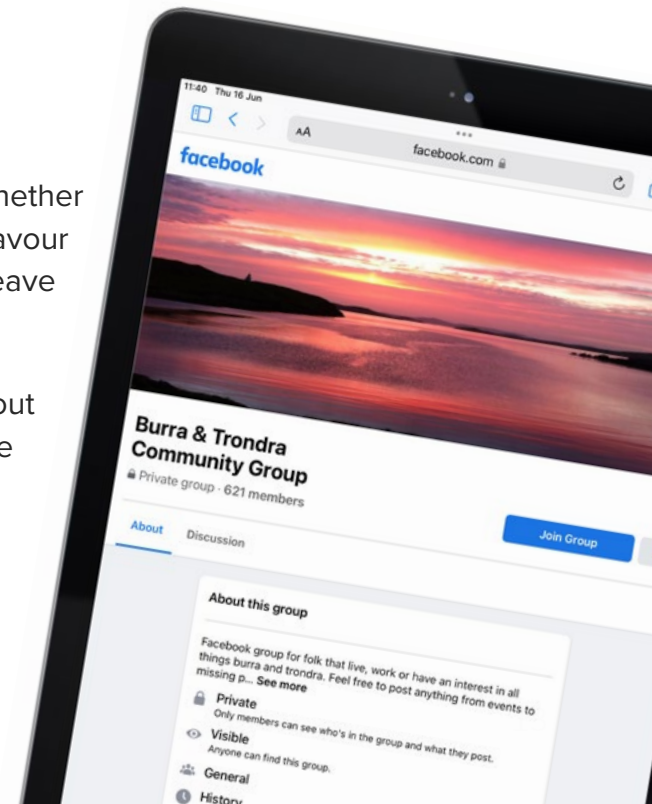
The best piece of advice before you hit send for the first time is this...

Before you hit send ask yourself, can I show this to...

- my mum?
- my boss?
- a reporter?

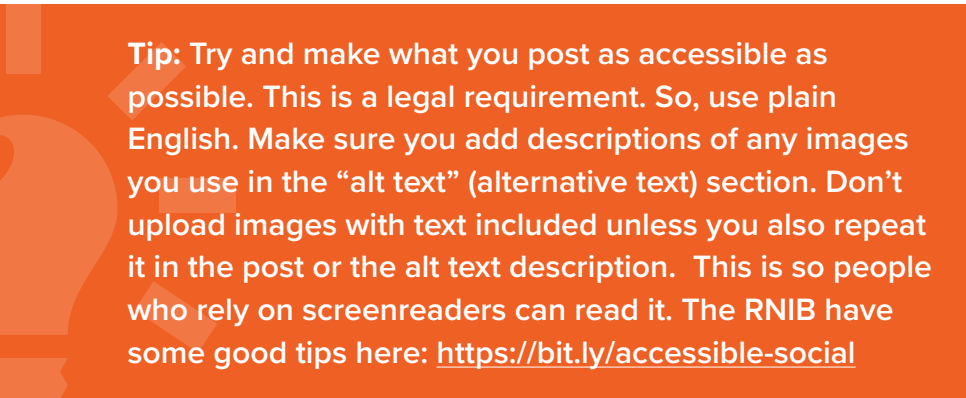
If you're in two minds about whether or not you can, do yourself a favour and don't send it. If in doubt, leave it out.

Remember, social media is about conversation. You're joining the biggest discussion there is.





Tip: Hashtags can be a way to follow a topic. On Twitter, #LES22 was used for tweets about Scottish local elections. You can always create your own hashtag for your particular community council area but try and keep them short and memorable!



Tip: Try and make what you post as accessible as possible. This is a legal requirement. So, use plain English. Make sure you add descriptions of any images you use in the “alt text” (alternative text) section. Don’t upload images with text included unless you also repeat it in the post or the alt text description. This is so people who rely on screenreaders can read it. The RNIB have some good tips here: <https://bit.ly/accessible-social>

When to reply to people

Remember that social media is a conversation.

You’ll soon begin to work out those who genuinely want to talk to you and those who want to try and wind you up.

- **Reply if you can help** and move the conversation on.
- **Feel free to signpost** to somewhere that can help.
- **Try and take it offline.** Especially if the person has some personal information to share.
- If people are raging, satirising or being sarcastic feel free to **monitor rather than engage** with them.
- **If people are abusive, think twice** about engaging. It can send a message that abuse doesn’t have consequences.

How community councils are using social media in Scotland

What kinds of things do community councils post about?

Local events

Promote upcoming local events to ensure that you get a good turnout or post pictures after the event. You could even post a live video on Facebook or live tweet from important local events and meetings.



Issues affecting the local community

Keep the local community informed about important issues affecting the area, either by sharing content from other organisations or by creating your own organic content.

News from Local Government

Your local council's Facebook and Twitter accounts can be a great source of news and information for people within your community. Make sure you follow them and other local organisations so that you can keep your constituents informed.

Helpful information for local residents

Important information doesn't need to be local! There are lots of useful updates from across Scotland or even across the UK which you can share via your social media channels.

Community council meetings

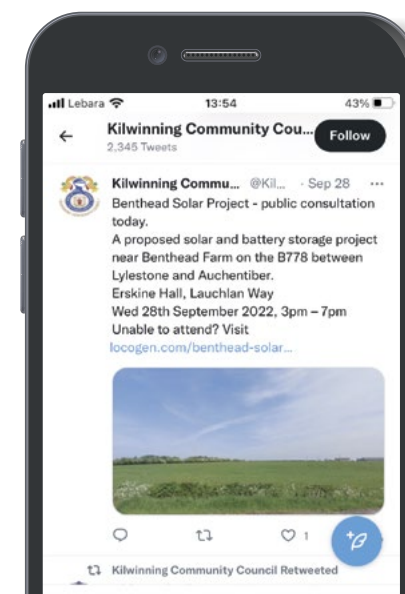
Again, community Facebook groups are invaluable. That hot topic will shine through.

Contacting fellow community councillors and community activists

WhatsApp can be an invaluable tool to help community councillors stay in contact with each other and with key contacts in their local area.

Identifying emerging local issues

Being a member of a Facebook group means you're able to see what the hot topics are as they emerge. Speeding cars? Residents are likely to let off steam in their local group. Nextdoor is good for this, too.



Reaching local journalists

Switch on Twitter and you'll find reporters who will cover your community council area and who may be interested in your stories. You can flag any posts which they may be interested in.

Listening to the local community

Again, community Facebook groups are invaluable. That hot topic will shine through.



I've heard of algorithms - what are they?

Each social media platform has an algorithm. Basically, these are ways the platform will automatically sort through all the things you could see and stack them in an order it guesses you'll prefer. So, you'll generally see more updates from people you interact with. The friend you chatted with on Facebook yesterday? You're more likely to see what they post today rather than the carpet shop whose page you liked a few years ago.

Each social media platform jealously guards its own algorithm. However, conversation and discussion tend to be rewarded. Posting a link to an external website is not.

Top tips for using social media

Now you've got your feet under the table, you've worked out the channel you want to use and you're starting to build your confidence, there are a number of key things to remember when it comes to using social media.

1 What you put online stays online

What you post has a habit of not going away even if you delete it. The community council which accidentally posts a poorly thought through opinion or a personal comment may find that someone has quickly screenshotted the offending article to make sure it is saved for posterity.

2 Be yourself

Be human. It's okay to talk about the weather, the local football team, your dog walk or the first daffodils of spring. Humans respond to humans.

3 Defamation applies online, too

What you post online matters. If you think you are a victim or if you've been accused, take legal advice.

The Defamation and Malicious Publication (Scotland) Act 2021 (the Act) became law in 2021 and is being made active. Defamation is defined under the new Act as the publishing

of a statement which has caused, or is likely to cause, serious harm to the reputation of another; that is, if it tends to lower the person's reputation in the estimation of ordinary persons. Be careful. Defamation can prove to be very expensive.

4 Not after 9pm on a Friday

You're unlikely to have a level-headed conversation with someone who may be unwinding after a bad week with a drink in one hand and their smartphone in another!



REMEMBER!!!

Creating engaging content

Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg talks about social media at first being text then as people's smartphones got better it was also about pictures. Now, a big chunk of social media is video.

Speak in plain English. Iron out the jargon and spell it out. You'll connect with more people that way.

Write about, photograph and video your community council area and explain what you like about it and what you're doing to improve it. The bandstand in the park, walking the dog in the nature reserve or on the street where residents are asking for speed humps. Take pictures of community councillors out and about in the local area, or of initiatives you have helped to support.

Selfie videos are your friend. Take a video of community councillors out and about talking about the issues you are tackling. Shoot in portrait mode for Facebook, Instagram or TikTok and remember that most smartphones have built-in basic editing tools to tidy up the start and end of a video clip.

Ask for opinions. The algorithms that run social media channels love discussion. Ask for opinions - remember, keep it respectful.

Photos of the local area. When you are out and about take a picture off the beaten track to see if people can identify it.

Comment. Feel free to take part in the wider conversation in the area. Chip into the discussion in a Facebook group or wherever you find it.



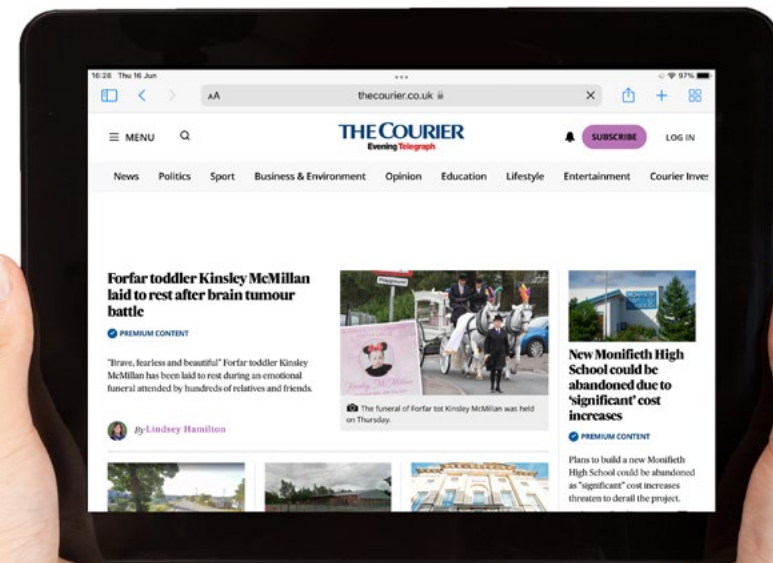
Traditional media and social media

Traditional media used to be the only show in town and community councils would have developed a relationship with the local reporter.

Local papers still have a role to play, but instead of the audience reading a printed newspaper, their audience is online.

Facebook is a big driver of traffic to the newspaper website which is often ringed with pop-up ads. Content that works well online includes video and pictures.

Here is a breakdown of Scottish councils, the largest newspaper in their area and how much their digital content - their website and social media - is seen within that area.



How much newspapers rely on digital content

(data: jicregonline and Facebook, 2022)

Council area	Largest news outlet	Largest news outlet's digital reach (%)	Facebook
Aberdeen City	Aberdeen Press & Journal	79.8	88,000
Aberdeenshire	Aberdeen Evening Express	65.9	121,096
Angus	Dundee - The Courier	15.8	69,000
Argyll & Bute	Oban Times & West Highland Times	17.4	17,465
Clackmannanshire	Alloa & Hillfoots Advertiser Journal	79.7	16,416
Dumfries and Galloway	Dumfries and Galloway Standard	63.5	18,000
Dundee City	Dundee - The Courier	83.7	69,000
East Ayrshire	Kilmarnock Standard	54.9	25,000
East Dunbartonshire	Glasgow Times	37.4	140,000
East Lothian	East Lothian Courier	83.6	24,000
East Renfrewshire	Glasgow Times	36.3	140,000
Edinburgh City	Edinburgh Evening News	83.4	234,000
Falkirk	Falkirk Herald	79.4	47,000
Fife	Dundee - The Courier	72.7	69,000
Glasgow City	Glasgow Times	41.7	140,000
Highland	Aberdeen Press & Journal	44.1	88,000
Inverclyde	Greenock Telegraph	79.2	37,000
Midlothian	Edinburgh Evening News	77.9	234,000

Council area	Largest news outlet	Largest news outlet's digital reach (%)	Facebook
Moray	Northern Scot	65.9	19,284
North Ayrshire	Ardrossan Herald & Irvine Times Group	62.8	19,000
North Lanarkshire	Glasgow Times	27.9	140,000
Orkney Islands	The Orcadian	84.0	19,900
Perth and Kinross	Dundee - The Courier	83.0	69,000
Renfrewshire	Paisley and Renfrewshire Gazette Series	41.4	13,000
Scottish Borders	The Southern Reporter	53.9	15,780
Shetland Islands	Shetland News	n/a	28,000
South Ayrshire	Ayrshire Post / Ayrshire Live	73.9	45,344
South Lanarkshire	Glasgow Times	29.3	140,000
Stirling	Stirling Observer	62.4	18,000
West Dunbartonshire	Lennox Herald	44.2	14,000
Western Isles (Comhairle nan Eilnean Siar)	Aberdeen Press & Journal	40.8	88,000
West Lothian	Edinburgh Evening News	84.0	234,000

What to do when things go wrong

Social media is a conversation and sometimes things don't go according to plan.

If you've made a mistake

Most things online can be fixed by deleting, acknowledging the mistake and apologising for the error.

If you're the victim of online abuse or trolling

Social media house rules can be useful for governing behaviour on your page, but they won't govern the rest of the internet. Abuse and trolling can be corrosive. Academic research says it can often be more harmful than other types of abuse.

LEARN MORE

If you want to learn more, you can check out the Digital Skills section of the learning portal from the Open University in Scotland and the Improvement Scotland, which includes free courses on computer skills and social media:

www.communitycouncils.scot/help-and-support/skills-and-learning

Here's sound advice on what to do:

Don't feed the troll. Trolls are people who make intentionally inflammatory statements to elicit an emotional response. They crave attention and a response. Ignore them. They hate that.

Take a screenshot. This captures what is on your device. This records the offending content as a picture.

Feel free to block or mute. If you've already explained how you'll be using social media in your house rules, people know what you'll tolerate. Nobody should put up with abuse.

Don't let people know this is getting to you. It only encourages people.

Switch off alerts. You may have a setting where your device pings every time you get a message. Switch this off on your device and put it in a drawer.

Report it. You can report individual tweets and other updates to the social media companies themselves. There may be other places you want to report it depending on who made the offending update. Talk to your CCLO to see if they or your local council can provide support or advice. Don't suffer in silence.

APPENDIX 1

Setting up a Facebook page

What is a Facebook page?

A Facebook Page is an account which is visible to the public and enables community councils to interact with their local community. You will be able to connect with a wide audience, post content, promote events, and share updates on your Facebook page. Anyone who sees your content will also be free to share it, leave reviews, message you with questions, etc.



How to get started

To set up and manage a Facebook page, you will need a personal Facebook account. So, sign up for one, or log in to get started (if you already have one). Once you've logged into your personal Facebook account, use the Menu on the left side of the screen to choose "Pages" and then "Create New Page"

The first piece of information you'll need to enter is your community council's name, which will serve as the page title. Next, enter no more than three categories that best describe your organisation – the best options for a community council might include "Community Organization" or "Community Service".

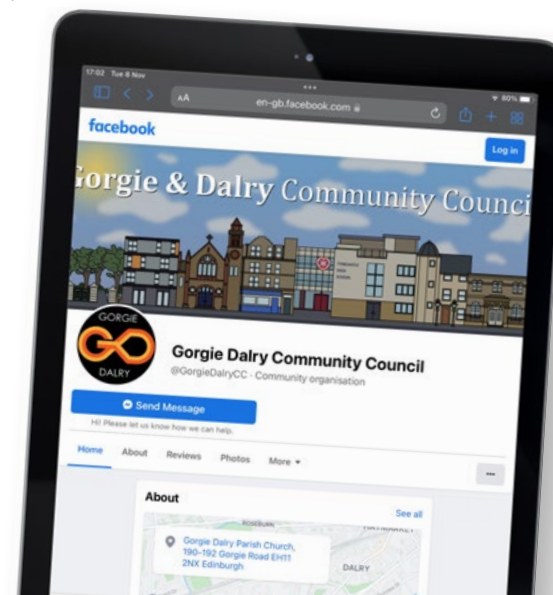
Next, you have to write a short description of what your organisation does, for example:

Welcome to the Gorgie Dalry Community Council page! We represent the interests of residents of the communities of Gorgie and Dalry in Edinburgh. Come along to our online meetings at 7-9pm on the first Monday of every month (except January and July).

The Page Preview display on your right should update instantaneously as you enter information. When you're finished, simply hit the "Create Page" button.

Upload profile and cover photos

Next you will need to add profile and cover photos. Your profile photo appears at the top of your page and alongside all your Facebook posts, so it is important to choose something recognisable. If your community council has a logo, this would



be a good option for a profile photo. The cover photo is the image that spans the top of your FB Page and should be something eye-catching but also recognisable to local people.

PROFILE IMAGE: 170 x 170 pixels is the standard size for the FB profile image. Although square dimensions are preferable, all profile photos will be cropped into circular edges for posts, so leaving a little extra space around photo edges is wise. Of course, FB will give you a preview of how your profile image will appear as you upload it.

COVER PHOTO SIZE: Use an 820 px wide by 462 px tall picture because it works well on desktops and mobiles. Remember to keep crucial design elements and text at the image's center because cropping can distort info.

Add collaborators to your page

If you intend to delegate Facebook responsibilities to a team, you'll need to grant them access and choose their roles. Navigate to page settings and find the Page Roles heading to add your collaborators. Simply enter their Facebook names or their accounts' email addresses. Remember, only individuals who are already your FB friends can be entered as collaborators.

Examples of roles include:

ADMIN: Full access to the page and its settings.

EDITOR: Can modify page details, post stuff, create FB ads, send messages, and view post creators and insights.

MODERATOR: This is the individual who makes sure your posts and comments on them meet FB standards; they can also create posts, send messages, create ads, leave comments and view insights.

What to post?

Because there is no one way to post successfully on FB, you may have to try out different types of posts to discover what your audience loves. Variety is important, so make sure to post a mix of videos, images, long texts, short texts and Stories to see how your followers interact with them.

You can even livestream community council meetings, so that people who are unable to attend can watch live or catch up with everything that was discussed later.

Facebook Stories

Facebook Stories is a great way to post supporting content for stuff already on your FB Page and to reach a wider audience. Stories appear at the top of the Facebook Feed in a highly visible area and are only live for 24 hours.

Share more often: If you've already shared content to your Page, a story can help you engage your audience with a different type of media to enjoy.

Humanise your community council: You want your Page to come across as friendly and accessible. Stories can help people get to know your community council better. Stories let you share personal, relatable content through fun, fleeting moments that bind everyone together.

Reach people consistently: If anyone in your audience misses a post, they'll see your Story at the top of their Feed. Stories let you re-engage a passive audience and provide updates in a dynamic way.

Facebook Messenger

Facebook Messenger provides a method for members of the public to get in contact with your community council. You can set up automated responses within Facebook Messenger to let people know when the account is monitored or if they should contact you via email for a faster reply.



Facebook Glossary

Newsfeed: This is the place where posts shared by people and organisations that you follow or like will appear. Your posts will also appear in the newsfeed of your followers.

Timeline: Often confused with a newsfeed, the timeline is your personal record of all the posts you've shared and posts you've interacted with. While you won't usually see followers' status updates here, there is one exception — if they've tagged you in a post or a photo, it'll appear on your timeline.

Algorithm: The algorithm is an elusive concept. Essentially, the algorithm is a series of computations that Facebook's servers do every second to determine what content you want to see, interact with, and click on next. The algorithm uses dwell time (how long you view a post), engagement, page likes, posts, and more to determine the type of content you might like to see. Over time, the algorithm gets better at determining what content to show you.

Status/post: The two terms are often used interchangeably, but “post” is the term Facebook uses to describe something you share on the newsfeed. Text, images, videos, and location are just a few of the types of posts you can share to the newsfeed for your friends to see.

Followers: These are the people who have followed your community council page. Your posts will appear in their newsfeed.

Groups: Facebook users with similar interests might find it helpful to create a group on the platform. A group is a community of users who interact with each other based on various topics set by the group's admins and other users. Only individual users can be added to groups — pages cannot be part of Facebook groups. Admins have a wide range of permissions they can enable or disable to have the group function in a particular way.

Events: With so much community happening on Facebook, individual users and businesses have the option to create and promote events. The events can accept RSVPs, create a guest list, and share the date time, and location of the event. Events can be virtual through a video platform or they can be in person with a physical location.

Notification: Represented by the bell icon at the bottom of the screen (on your mobile) or in the top right (on a desktop), a notification informs you when a friend engages with your posts, photos, videos, or timeline, and the notification will explain what they engaged with and how. Friend requests will also appear here.

How to use Twitter

Setting up an account

On the Twitter homepage or app, choose to create a new account. Enter your full name, email address, and preferred password on the given fields before creating a Twitter name or handle which reflects the name of your community council. Try and keep it short and simple so that people can easily remember it.



Complete your biography, so that new visitors know what your community council does. You can include hashtags in your biography too, for example:

*The Twitter feed for #Raploch #Stirling #CommunityCouncil.
We meet the first Monday of the month at 6.30pm in
Raploch Campus. #RaplochCommunity*

All you need to do now is post for your first tweet and start following key organisations and individuals in your community.

Profile and cover photos

Next you will need to add profile and cover photos. Your profile photo appears at the top of your page and alongside all your tweets, so it is important to choose something recognisable. If your

community council has a logo, this would be a good option for a profile photo. The header photo is the image that spans the top of your Twitter account and should be something eye-catching but also recognisable to local people.

PROFILE IMAGE: 400 x 400 pixels is the recommended size for the Twitter profile image. Although square dimensions are preferable, all profile photos will be cropped into circular edges for posts, so leaving a little extra space around photo edges is wise. Twitter will give you a preview of how your profile image will appear as you upload it.

HEADER PHOTO SIZE: Use a 1500 x 500 pixel picture for your header image.

Length

Twitter allows a maximum of 280 characters per tweet. Shorter tweets generally get more engagement, but if you need more characters it is also possible to build threads with several tweets in them. In any case it's important to be succinct but it takes practice!

Content

Make sure your content is relevant for your audience. Highlight why it's relevant, don't expect everyone to know. Think about setting context, not everyone will know that you're attending a community meeting or local event. Threading tweets together can help you with this.

Visuals

Visuals are great for creating engagement. Where relevant, share photos or video in your tweets directly from the Twitter platform.

Tweets with links to more information or material are read and retweeted more often. You will need to include an alternative text or alt text for all your images, to ensure that people with visual impairments can still access the content.

Tagging others

To make sure specific audiences see your tweet, you can tag other people or organisations using their Twitter handles as well as hashtags in your tweet, but this will use up your characters quickly. If you have a picture attached to your tweet, you can tag accounts using the "Tag People" button below the image. Anyone

who is tagged in a tweet or in an image will be notified; this is a good way to highlight a tweet to others or to get organisations to share relevant content.

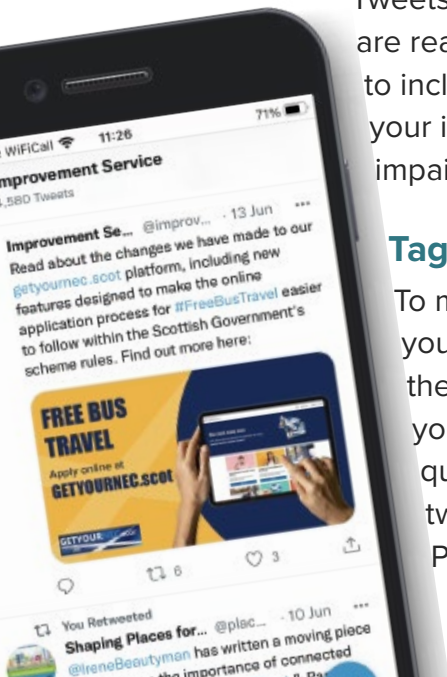
Hashtags (#)

A hashtag (represented by a # symbol) is used to denote a particular topic, theme of conversation or event, for example #Football, #news or #COP26. You can click on a hashtag and see a list of tweets that contain the same hashtag, so they are useful for linking up with other people interested in the same topics as you. They can also be useful for live tweeting and many events often have their own unique hashtag to encourage and enable this. If a particular hashtag is being used by a large number of people, it is said to be "trending".

Increase organic engagement

Try to include a call to action if possible, this could be phrases like "Sign up for our event", "Click this link", or "Read more here". Tweets with direct calls to actions have more engagement.

Do not be afraid to ask people to retweet (or RT) your content ("Please RT"), as this is an easy way to help increase your reach. Twitter culture strongly encourages sharing (retweeting) content from other users. It's a generous community – be giving and thoughtful about your RTs (retweets) and others will be too.



Engagement with other accounts

Twitter is one of the best platforms for one-to-one or one-to-few conversation. Spend some time in conversation with your followers to establish quality relationships. If you want to build strong relationships with your followers, you should try and avoid only sending tweets that look like mass broadcasting. Replying, asking questions or commenting on other accounts will increase yours and their reach and also let people know that you care about their content.

A very common way of engaging with other accounts is using the quote tweet function to retweet content which your followers might find useful, while adding your own view on the original content.

Reuse content

Do not be afraid to send out the same message several times. As Twitter moves fast it is unlikely that others will feel that you're spamming if you send out the same message twice in a day, or three or four times in a week. If you feel uncomfortable doing this, then make small changes in the way the key message is presented.

Voice

Keep it casual and informative. Strike a balance between informal and formal. Acronyms are fine but avoid texting language.

Wording

The best tweets catch the reader in the first words and clarify why this tweet is important information. Good ways to achieve this is through setting the context (e.g. "Just over 60 days left until election!") or mention who this tweet is intended for. Creating a sense of urgency is very effective as well ("Breaking news...").

Getting followers

You get followers by being interesting and engaging and getting retweeted to a larger audience. But before you can get a retweet, you will have to have followers. The first followers will come when you are refollowed by the people that you start following. To gain more followers, make sure your account is recognised and easily accessible. Include links to your Twitter handle on your community council website and in materials that you send out to the community, such as newsletters.

Finding and following other people/organisations

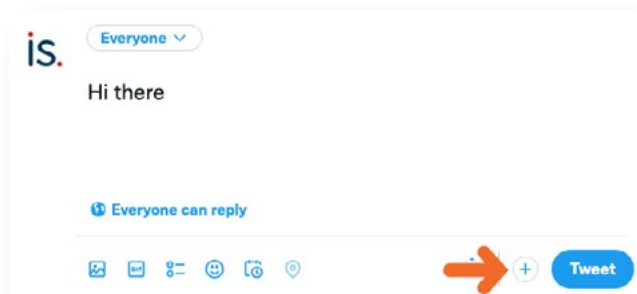
You can use Twitter to find people or organisations with common interests or areas of work, then 'follow' them. Typing a search term, for example the name of your local town or village, into the search box on Twitter will give you a list of tweets mentioning this phrase or people (accounts) related to this phrase. You can then click 'follow' next to any accounts you are interested in.

When you find an account you are interested in, look to see who else they follow or who follows them. If you see hashtag relevant to your area, click on it and look at who's posting content related to it.

As you follow people and gain followers, Twitter will suggest people to follow based on your interests. You can also use the "Who to follow" box at the top of your profile page for further suggestions.

Threading

A thread can be a good way to cover an event if you want to make a more coherent social reporting. A thread on Twitter is a series of connected Tweets from one person. With a thread you can provide additional context, an update, or an extended point by connecting multiple Tweets together. To start a thread, complete your first tweet and then click on the plus sign below the compose box.




Once you have posted a thread, you can always add additional Tweets using the plus sign again. Threads may have less individual engagement but allow you to communicate more coherent and detailed information to people following an event or a subject.

Twitter Glossary

Twitter uses quite a lot of jargon which can initially seem confusing. Below are some of the most common terms used.

Tweet: A short message (limited to 280 characters) that is published on Twitter. Tweets can contain text, links and images. There is a counter which will show if your Tweet is too long.


Compose box: The space where you write a tweet. You can find this at the top of your news feed, or if you are using the Twitter app, by clicking on the blue quill symbol  at the bottom right of the screen.


Follow and unfollow: If you “follow” another Twitter account, their tweets will appear in your Twitter feed (see below). You can choose to “unfollow” people if you don’t want their tweets in your Twitter feed anymore.


Twitter feed: A stream of tweets from people who you follow. Your feed is arranged in chronological order (i.e. newest tweets are at the top) and is constantly being updated as people publish new tweets. This is the main part of Twitter and the first thing you see when you log in.

Twitter handle: Your unique Twitter username. Handles are preceded by an @ symbol.

Mention: If you want to communicate with another Twitter user, you simply include their Twitter handle in your Tweet or tag them in a picture. They will then be notified that you have mentioned them. You can carry out a conversation or discussion with another user by ‘mentioning’ each other in your tweets (but remember that your conversation is completely open to the public).

Reply: You can respond to a tweet by clicking the small “reply” button next to it which looks like a speech bubble.  Your reply will by default include all the Twitter handles mentioned in the original tweet you are replying to, including those tagged in pictures. You can edit which handles you want to reply to if necessary.

Retweet (RT) and quote tweet: If somebody enjoys your tweet, they can share it with their own followers. This is known as “retweeting”. Twitter will notify you when one of your tweets has been retweeted. A lot of tweets will contain a request for a RT. A quote tweet is a retweet which has additional information added by the retweeter. You retweet by using the circular arrow symbol,  which will give you the option to either retweet or quote tweet.

Like: If you read a tweet that you find interesting or engaging but do not want to retweet it to your followers, you can instead simply “like” the tweet, by clicking on the heart symbol. 

Delete: You can delete a tweet if you spot a typo or want to redraft the content after it has been posted by clicking on the three dots at the top right of the relevant message and choosing the Delete Tweet option. While this will remove the tweet from your Twitter feed, there are websites which are set up to save deleted tweets, and anyone who has already seen the tweet may have taken a screenshot before you had the chance to delete it.



Pinned tweet: If you have an important tweet, you may want to make sure that it is pinned to the top of your account. This means that no matter how many more tweets you have posted, the pinned tweet will always appear at the top of the page when people visit your Twitter account. You can also do this by clicking on the three

dots at the top right of a tweet and choosing the “Pin to your profile” option. The same menu allows you to unpin a tweet if it is no longer a priority.



Direct message (DM): Although Twitter is public, you can send a private message to another user (rather like an email). This is called a “direct message” and you can start a private message by going to the Messages section in the menu on the left or by using the envelope icon on the app. You can normally only direct message somebody who follows you.

Notifications: If you are tagged in someone else’s tweet, then you will automatically be notified. This allows you to respond as appropriate, whether by retweeting or replying. The notification symbol in Twitter is a bell, and if you have notifications there will be a number next to this bell when you log in, indicating how many you have.

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Future comms made easy

