

# Social Media Policy

2024

This policy is also available in Welsh.

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Information sheet:

For further advice contact: Branch Head: Communications

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**Version control**

<b>Document version</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Date of issue</b>	<b>Key changes</b>
1.1	Branch Head: Communications	October 2024	This policy has been updated to reflect the evolution of social media channels and the patterns of social media usage across personal and professional accounts.

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## Introduction:

This policy outlines our rules and expectations for social media usage within Estyn. It should be read alongside our social media guidance for staff and our IT usage policy.

Many of us use social media in a personal and professional capacity daily. The range of channels available to us help us to stay in touch with our friends and families, preserve memories, and share updates with communities around the world. As a government organisation, social media lets us connect with our stakeholders in a more immediate and informal way than any other channel. It lets us communicate in a more efficient and open way and reach our stakeholders in the places they are already using to interact with others.

We encourage you to use social media responsibly. When you're online you should be respectful of others and be clear about who you're representing, whether it's you personally or if you're speaking on behalf of an organisation. Whoever you're representing, you are bound by the [Civil Service code](#) and the values within it: integrity, honesty, objectivity, and impartiality. As civil servants, we must serve the government to the best of our ability in a way which maintains political impartiality and is in line with the requirements of this code, no matter what our own political beliefs are.

Our corporate social media accounts are run by the Communications team. We currently run accounts on X, [Facebook](#), YouTube, and LinkedIn.

## Overview of Estyn's corporate Social Media Channels:

X	Facebook	LinkedIn	Youtube
@EstynHMI	EstynHMI	Estyn	@estynhmi995
@EstynAEF	EstynAEF		
@OwenEvansEstyn			

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## **Who does this policy apply to?**

This guidance applies to all Estyn employees; in their work or personal time, using work or personal devices. This includes permanent and temporary employees, agency workers, secondees, and staff on loan from other government departments.

## **What is social media?**

Social media is a collective term for digital platforms which allow users to share content, including text, pictures and videos. Here are some examples:

- Facebook
- X
- Whatsapp
- Instagram
- YouTube and Vimeo
- LinkedIn
- Snapchat
- Wikipedia
- Forums and discussion boards

This includes any messaging services that are integrated into these platforms (e.g. Facebook messenger or X DMs).

## **Why do we need a policy and guidance?**

We've written this policy to clarify what is and isn't appropriate for our staff when they use social media; it highlights the key things to remember and clarifies boundaries and potential issues to help our staff to use social media responsibly.

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Social media isn't always private. You might think that you're posting something to a specific audience, but anyone who can see your posts can easily copy and forward them on to others. This is also the case for private messages; it's simple to take a screenshot and share it with anyone. Once you share something online, you lose control of it; it can't be taken back.

It is important to remember that what you do online may impact on your work, the reputation of the Civil Service, Estyn, our employees, suppliers and other stakeholders, so think before you post.

The Government has published a '[social media playbook](#)' which talks about how the government digital service use social media. Our policy and guidance supports, clarifies and expands on this guidance and provides a framework for employees to feel empowered to use social media responsibly.

**The primary functions of Estyn's social media channels include:**

1. Enhancing stakeholders' and the public's comprehension of the organisation's activities through informative communication initiatives.
2. Sharing various forms of content created by us, including but not limited to thematic reports, effective practices, blogs, graphics, videos and podcasts.
3. Promoting ongoing campaigns.
4. Providing timely responses to inquiries.
5. Driving traffic to our website.

**Responsibility:**

You should apply the same rules when you interact with people online as you would in public or with your colleagues; for example putting something on a noticeboard at work, talking to your friends or colleagues

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in a public place, or speaking to a journalist. Remember that using social media can make a post difficult to retract.

You are responsible for everything you post online whether you use your own name or a pseudonym. This includes anything you choose to share on your own social media which has been made by other people. Make sure you read and follow the Terms of Use or Rules of Engagement for the social media platforms that you use.

**Roles:**

Responsibility for managing our corporate social media platforms lies with the Digital Communications Manager, who receives support from the Campaigns & content Officer for graphics, images, videos and podcast clips.

To adapt to the dynamic nature of digital communications, Estyn may seek assistance from external PR agencies. These agencies aid in content creation, graphic design, and image procurement under Estyn's supervision, adhering to established protocols.

Social media initiatives undergo regular review and discussion within the communication team. A strong relationship is also held between Estyn and external agencies to ensure alignment.

**Privacy:**

Estyn's social media channels and internal communication platforms should not be used for sharing personal information such as email addresses or telephone numbers in public posts. Additional precautions must be taken when handling posts involving children, especially at public events where photographs of children may be captured to highlight activities at Estyn's booth. Sharing photographs of children under the age of 16 on social media is permissible only if:

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- Written consent is obtained from the child's parent or guardian, or
  - A school or relevant organisation overseeing the child has provided written confirmation permitting the child's inclusion in social media posts.

### **Monitoring:**

Effective monitoring of social media is crucial to maintain compliance, manage reputation, and address risks. The communications team at Estyn will consistently monitor official social media channels for engagement and feedback. Estyn use monitoring software Sprout social to track social media mentions and the communications team regularly flag online conversations with the senior management team. We use Meltwater to track media mentions and analyse data efficiently. Estyn will vigilantly identify and address potential risks or crises, such as misinformation or negative sentiment.

## **Personal Social Media Channels**

### **Resharing:**

We encourage staff to amplify corporate messages in a professional manner through their accounts to support the communications team in raising awareness of our work. X and LinkedIn are the professional channels where we would encourage staff to re share corporate content. By sharing or liking our posts, you are helping to broaden our audience reach.

### **Brand reputation & the use of Disclaimers:**

Estyn colleagues may choose to share insights about their work or personal interests on their personal social media channels. If affiliation with Estyn is evident from staff profiles or posts, they should include a disclaimer stating that their views and any reposted messages do not necessarily represent the views or values of Estyn. This precautionary measure helps protect the organisation's integrity in case of any

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inadvertent or deliberate sharing of inappropriate or damaging content by staff members.

Even with the presence of this disclaimer, Estyn colleagues must exercise caution regarding their social media posts, as the disclaimer alone cannot fully shield against potential reputational harm to the organisation. Any content that could potentially tarnish Estyn's reputation may be subject to disciplinary action. You should consider whether any posts you make in a personal capacity are in line with your responsibilities under the civil service code.

**Managing potential conflicts of interest:**

Our Managing potential Conflicts of Interests policy at Estyn provides guidance regarding personal political engagement, and colleagues must familiarise themselves with it. They should consider whether any comments or posts they intend to make could be perceived as political or controversial. Colleagues must seek approval for certain political activities and should consult the Head of Communications for specific advice before sharing views on social media related to political matters.

As civil servants we must maintain political neutrality and colleagues should refrain from posting, liking, or sharing anything in their personal capacity that could potentially bring reputational difficulties for the organisation, themselves, or their colleagues.

Estyn staff are prohibited from disclosing financial, operational, strategic, or legal information about Estyn at any time. Any personal messages written by staff on their social media channels must not:

- Reflect negatively on Estyn's reputation.
- Disclose confidential information.
- Engage in any activity that could be perceived as discriminatory or encourage illegal behaviour.



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## **Risks**

It's advisable for Estyn colleagues to exercise caution when posting on their personal social networks. If they anticipate that an update or message might lead to complaints, offense, or be otherwise inappropriate, it's best to refrain from posting it. When in doubt, it's safer to avoid posting altogether.

Content shared on social media platforms carries the potential risk of legal liability for the author, stemming from accidental or intentional violations of various laws, including but not limited to:

- Defamation
- Posting obscene or blasphemous material
- Safeguarding children
- Data protection regulations
- Anti-discrimination and harassment laws, human rights legislation
- Unwanted commercial communications
- Copyright, designs, patents, data protection, and privacy laws
- Computer-related offenses such as those outlined in the Computer Misuse Act and Telecommunications Acts
- Regulations related to the Regulation of Investigatory Powers
- Trademark infringement.

It's important to remember that anything posted online may remain permanently accessible and could potentially be republished in other media. Therefore, exercising discretion and adhering to legal and ethical standards are essential when engaging in online activities.

## **Group Chats**

You should not use personal group chats such as Whatsapp for business communication purposes. Only Microsoft Teams should be used for instant messaging.

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Personal group chats must not be utilised for work-related discussions. While we understand that colleagues may create personal group chats for social interaction, it's important to do so in a respectful manner. Participants should be mindful that any views or images shared in these group chats may be circulated within the workplace. If a colleague finds offense in any content shared, it could potentially lead to complaints, grievances, or dignity at work issues.

Any concerns regarding personal group chat activity should be brought to the attention of the Head of People.

**Pre-election restrictions:**

The Civil Service Code continues to apply during pre-election periods and this extends to any activity on social media. Under that, civil servants must adhere to two basic principles at all times:

- (i) to be, and to be seen to be, politically impartial;
- (ii) to ensure that public resources are not used for party-political purposes

Staff should refer to [Estyn's pre-election guidance for staff](#) for further detail on restricted activity.

Members of staff at Grades 6 and 7 are politically restricted and should be aware of expressing views on social media. Employees falling within the politically restricted category are prohibited from taking part in national political activities. They must seek permission from HMCI to take part in any local political activities and comply with any conditions laid down by Estyn in relation to participation in such local activities.

Politically free employees are free to take part in all political activities but must abide by the rules that apply to all employees which are set out on page 8 of our [guidance for staff](#).