

February 2021

Personal Use of Social Media

The purpose of this guidance is to help Welsh Government civil servants use social and other digital media appropriately. It also makes clear our responsibilities to do so in accordance with the [Civil Service Code](#).

Introduction

The use of digital and social media can help the Welsh Government to reach out to the public. Digital technologies help civil servants to engage more directly with the public allowing us get the Welsh Government at the heart of the conversation.

It is important to remember that the benefits provided by the use of these technologies also call for greater responsibility amongst those using it. Civil servants are subject to the same scrutiny in the digital world as they are in the 'real' world. We must therefore ensure we behave appropriately.

We must use common sense about everything we publish on digital and social media. Once something has been sent, it's public. This guidance will ensure that your social media activity will enhance your job as a civil servant, while also retaining the highest levels of integrity.

Propriety and ethics

As civil servants, we are all bound by the [Civil Service Code](#). The Code sets out the core values – integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality – and the standards of behaviour expected of us.

The simple rule to remember is that the principles covering the use of social and other digital media by civil servants in **both a work and personal** capacity are the same as those that apply for any other activity. Social media is a public forum and the same considerations would apply as, say, to speaking in public or writing for a publication either officially or out of work. In social media the boundaries between professional and personal are often more blurred – so it's important to be particularly careful.

As a civil servant you are free to use social and other digital media in your own time. You do, however, need to be mindful of your responsibilities as a civil servant – these responsibilities include:

- Not disclosing official information without authority;
- Not taking part in any political or other public activity which compromises (or might be seen to compromise) your impartial service to the government of the day or any future government;

- Taking care when commenting on government policies and practices and not doing so without the proper authorisation;
- Avoid making any comments on politically controversial issues;
- Avoid making any kind of personal attack or tasteless / offensive remarks to individuals or groups.

The [Civil Service Code](#) applies equally to the use of digital technologies at work or at home. The posting of any content that is considered inappropriate – whether in an **official or personal capacity** – may result in disciplinary action which could lead to dismissal.

6 things to remember when using social and digital media. (Whether at work or in a personal capacity)

1. **Propriety** - adhere to the Civil Service Code and apply the same standards online as are required offline, whether acting in an official or personal capacity;
2. **Common Sense** - social media helps us connect with people but remember to use your judgment when deciding what to post online;
3. **Accuracy** - check the accuracy and sensitivity of what you are posting before pressing submit;
4. **Permanent** - remember once something is posted online it is very difficult to remove it;
5. **Doubts** - if in doubt, don't post it!
6. **Security** – take steps to protect your social media account and only use Welsh Government social media accounts [as detailed in the notice that was issued to all staff in January 2020](#).