



The Langstane Group

Social Media Policy

Senior management team approval	06 May 2021
Board / Committee	Board of Management
Approval date	26 May 2021
Implementation date	26 May 2021
Review date	3 years
Version	Version 3

Policy Version	Date of Approval	Changes made to Policy
Version 1	19 July 2013	New policy
Version 2	17 August 2018	Altered to meet new template, expanded on points relating to planning and role of all teams
Version 3	06 May 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of reference to twitter as this is not used by the Association; • Removal of reference to PR & Marketing plan which is not currently in circulation; • Update to section 5 to include a note on the use of emojis or emoticons within a work environment; and • General updates to formatting

1. Introduction

Langstane Housing Association uses social media in order to share information with tenants and other stakeholders online.

2. Policy Statement

This policy sets out standards and guidelines to be maintained when using social media in a way that encourages interactions between customers and the Association and also manages risk.

The Association will use social media to:

- share information about the Association's activities, services and achievements
- seek and welcome feedback on the services we provide and our performance
- target harder to reach groups who may be more active online
- canvas opinion and consult on Association activities
- share related information which may be of interest to our customers
- promote discussion with our customers on topics related to our service

For the purposes of this policy, social media is defined as forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos).

Examples of popular social media sites include but are not limited to:

- LinkedIn
- Twitter
- Facebook
- YouTube
- Instagram
- Snapchat

The Association uses Facebook and YouTube as these are three of the most popular social media platforms and have large followings and a broad user demographic.

The Association will continue to contact tenants by their preferred method of communication. The Association will update tenants using social media where it is effective to do so and recognises that other methods of communication will be used where appropriate.

3. Objectives

This policy aims:

- To make staff aware of the standards and guidelines for use of social media
- To provide a framework that allows staff to embrace the use of social media to meet the Association's objectives but mitigates the inherent risks of its use

4. Links to Other Policies

The operation of social media will at all times comply with all relevant policies including:

- Customer Care Policy
- Unacceptable Actions Policy
- Tenant Participation Strategy
- Data Protection Policy
- IT Security Policy

5. Policy

The use of social media exposes the Association to public criticism, potentially publishing inaccurate or conflicting information and having to manage offensive or illegal comments posted by third parties.

The Association will ensure that robust procedures are in place for the management of our social media presence and to ensure that the objectives of this policy are delivered with minimal risk to the Association. All posts and responses must adhere to the principles set out in our social media conduct guidance note (see Appendix I).

Any comments that present a threat to the Association's reputation should be immediately flagged to the relevant Departmental Director, or in their absence, the Chief Executive.

Only appointed staff members will have permission to post material on the Association's behalf. Posting online is considered to be equivalent to issuing a press release or talking to the media and posts should reflect the values and aims of the Association.

Appointed staff members will be given appropriate training to ensure they feel confident in posting as the online voice of the Association and will have sole responsibility for posting new content, monitoring comments and responding to customers.

For the basis of monitoring and updating social media the following roles are appointed staff members:

- Support Services Manager
- Housing Services Manager
- Support Services Team Leader
- Customer Participation Officer
- PA to Chief Executive

The Association will ensure that sufficient resources are provided to monitor the page and ensure a prompt, accurate response to customer comments.

Teams are encouraged to contribute potential stories and news to be disseminated via social media. Where possible this will be planned on a week by week basis to ensure that each platform is used to its full potential.

All updates and information published via social media will be in plain English, without the use of jargon, and will deliver the message in a clear and concise manner.

Care will be taken to avoid any copyright or propriety issues relating to the sharing or posting of information. Where images or personal information is being used all necessary permissions will be sought and recorded prior to any post being published.

Given the problems that can arise from the use of emoticons or emojis in the workplace, even when the emojis are correctly interpreted, the Association prohibits the use of emojis in employees' business specific communications, whether with customers or other employees. Although this step cannot eliminate inappropriate workplace conduct, this is a step toward eliminating a potential source of risk.

6. Tenant Contact via Social Media

Where a tenant has contacted the Association via social media raising an issue the details of the issue will be recorded on the housing management system and actioned. At least once a year any information stored on the social media platform will be deleted.

Any contact that is rude, offensive, or insulting will be removed as soon as it is discovered. Where necessary the individual concerned will be subject to the processes outlined in the Unacceptable Actions Policy.

7. Monitoring and Review

The level of activity and effectiveness of the Association's social media presence will be monitored regularly to ensure the aims of the policy are being met and to review the style and content if necessary to improve performance.

Social media interaction, post reach, and analytic information will be used to determine the effectiveness of both individual posts and platform use in general. Where possible this will be compared to other similar organisations and usage will be reviewed to take account of best practice.

Where available this will be done through utilising tools made available by the platforms themselves.

Details of social media activity will be provided via the quarterly activity report provided to the Operational Services Committee.

Right to Complain

In the event you are not satisfied with the service you have received, please contact the Association for a copy of the Complaints Policy, which can also be viewed on Langstane Housing Association's website – www.langstane-ha.co.uk

Equality and Diversity

The Langstane Group is committed to promoting equality and diversity across all areas of work. Discrimination or harassment of any kind is not tolerated.

If you would like this document sent to you in large print, please contact Support Services on 01224 423000

Social Media Conduct: Guidance Note

This note sets out the values and standards that all Langstane Housing Association's conduct on social media should meet and guides staff on how to get the best out of our presence in social media.

1. The voice of Langstane

Remember you are posting as the online personification of Langstane. Our posts will be interpreted as the opinions of the Association so they should reflect the values of the Association. The tone should not be too formal and posts should be clear and in plain English.

Posts will be a balance of corporate, informative messages and where appropriate, taking into consideration the wider image of the Association, more entertaining, fun posts but they will never be less than honest, respectful and accurate.

Posts will be clear and concise and in Plain English. They will be no more than 50 words of explanation followed by a link to the Association's website.

2. Encourage debate and value complaints

Encourage customers to visit and like our page by posting questions, seeking opinions and holding competitions. Respond promptly to comments so customers know that we are paying attention – check the page regularly throughout the day.

Appreciate responses – positive or negative. It means that people are engaging with us!

If someone makes a criticism of Langstane – listen to what they have to say and respond respectfully. If Langstane has made a mistake, be open about it, apologise promptly and explain what went wrong. If the criticism is inaccurate or there has been a misunderstanding, respectfully offer the correct information.

If the customer wants to discuss a query or complaint which involves their personal information, advise them that a staff member will contact them privately to discuss the matter and give them a timescale.

Complaints received via social media will be logged on QL using the Association's Complaints Handling Procedure.

3. Act

Any issue we are made aware of must be responded to as if the customer contacted us in person. If someone draws our attention to something, we must follow it up within the usual timescales, and return to the customer to let them know what action we have taken – online or privately as appropriate.

This includes feedback from customers. If a tenant makes a suggestion or asks for improvement in an area of service, let them know who we will pass their comments to – and if changes are made as a result of their feedback, publicise it. It lets our customers know that we take their comments seriously and value their opinions.

4. Be useful – and accurate

Add to conversations by posting helpful information. Post (direct) links to websites about topics people are discussing, provide contact details and re-post information the audience may find useful.

Be sure that anything you post is correct - and spelt correctly. Hurried posts containing spelling mistakes and inaccuracies can damage customers' perception of the Association. Check and re-check your information and if in any doubt – don't post it.

If you do post a mistake, correct it promptly, but don't delete any posts if they have already been 'liked' or commented on.

5. Be aware

We have a responsibility to ensure our page does not contain any illegal, offensive or defamatory material. Prejudiced comments will not be tolerated by the Association.

There are in place, rules and guidelines for those interacting with the Association via social media. These will be prominently displayed and where someone falls foul of the expected behaviours actions should be taken in line with the rules.

Interaction via social media will be treated in the same way as any other interaction with the Association. Where behaviour is unacceptable then provisions within the Unacceptable Actions Policy should be applied.

6. Storytelling

Storytelling is a tool used in communications to describe when an organisation uses news stories and general communication activities to feed into a wider narrative or story. In the context of social media what this means is trying to ensure that when

news is being put up, where possible, it should be linked in with the wider role and objectives of the Association.

For example a story about a successful eviction due to Anti-Social Behaviour is not just a good news story for the neighbourhood affected but also a wider example of action that the Association takes to meet its objective of managing safer communities. Stories about changes to rent are accompanied by those about how investment in the stock improves tenants' lives. So on and so forth.

The aim of this is to try and ensure that those receiving the communications are able to link communication with wider policy objectives of the Association. This is important as it uses day to day actions to bring reality to the overarching goals of the Association.

7. Sharing

An important part of social media usage is sharing interesting or useful news and information from others. This is both a useful way to disseminate information from other organisations and a good way to build up collegiate relationships on social media. It also allows for posts to be seen by a wider audience and can attract new followers to the account.

Examples of stories or items that could be shared are:

- Important news items that would be of relevance to tenants i.e. flood warnings, events of interest
- Work or projects by partner organisations that have been supported or have been carried out in conjunction with the Association

Sharing of posts should be a two way thing and when posting it is important to tag any other relevant agencies or organisations in posts. This brings the post to their attention and where it meets with their own practice for sharing they may share it.

Before sharing posts on platforms such as Twitter the user must assure themselves that the source of the information being shared is reliable, accurate, and does not hold any views or posts that could bring the Association into disrepute.

8. Following

A large part of social media is following or connecting with other organisations and individuals. It is important to ensure that any accounts that are followed or connected to are appropriate for the Association to follow. Examples of organisations that it would be appropriate to follow would be:

- Other housing focused organisations
- Organisations the Association works with, for example WorkingRite, Salvation

- Army, TPAS,
- Local Authorities
- Charities where the focus is similar or complementary to the Associations.
- Individuals with a connection to the Association or wider housing movement, for example CEO of another housing association, CIH/SFHA staff members

Care will be taken to ensure that any account that is followed is appropriate and that following the account could not bring the Association into disrepute. It may be that some organisations or individuals will follow the Association’s account but it would not be appropriate to follow back. There is no compulsion upon the Association to follow back or connect with accounts that may not be appropriate. No political or religious accounts will be followed.

9. Planning

Planning is an important part of ensuring an effective social media presence. This can be done via a simple planner and teams will be encouraged to submit stories or information they wish to be highlighted as soon as possible. It is important that accounts are active and interactive in order to attract as many followers as possible. This increases the reach of the information shared and makes their use more effective.

Where news stories are to be shared across more than one platform they should be amended as necessary to fit the medium that they are being used on.

If you have any questions not covered in this guidance note or you are unsure of how to respond to a post or comment from a customer, speak to your Team Leader for advice.

Platform	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Facebook					
Website					