

 <b>Warwickshire POLICE</b>  <b>West Mercia POLICE</b>		<b>POLICY</b>
Security Classification	<b>OFFICIAL</b>	
Disclosable under Freedom of Information Act 2000	Yes	

<b>POLICY TITLE</b>	<b>Social Media</b>
REFERENCE NUMBER	<b>A017</b>
Version	<b>1.1</b>

<b>POLICY OWNERSHIP</b>	
DIRECTORATE	ENABLING SERVICES
BUSINESS AREA	CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

IMPLEMENTATION DATE	<b>September 2013</b>
NEXT REVIEW DATE:	<b>September 2018</b>
RISK RATING	<b>MEDIUM</b>
EQUALITY ANALYSIS	<b>LOW</b>

Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police welcome comments and suggestions from the public and staff about the contents and implementation of this policy.  
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## 1.0 POLICY OUTLINE

Social media has become one of the mainstream channels that people communicate and share information not only at a peer level but also at an organisational one. Its appeal is it has provided a simple and accessible means of two-way, or even multi-way broadcast, opportunities for communicating with others. People and organisations can now communicate and share information with any number of people or groups not only locally but nationally and internationally.

Using the sanctioned social media channel should now be considered as a day to day means of engaging with and involving people in policing. There are some legal considerations to take into account such as The Human Rights Act 1998, The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1988. There are other risks attached to information sharing, however these should be proportionately and appropriately managed using the same principles that underpin all police activity.

Therefore the risks attributed to using social media should not inhibit or prevent Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police maximising the opportunities social media provides.

This policy details how both forces direct its workforce to use social media and its strategic intentions and principles for doing so.

## 2.0 PURPOSE OF POLICY

Since social media has been used by both forces, it has been shown that these channels are an important means to increase public engagement and confidence in policing services, building trust and respect in the forces. Therefore, Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police's strategic intent must draw on the possibility and opportunity that these channels provide and inspire our workforce and communities to engage through social media as a mainstream communications channel.

Our strategic intent will be:

**Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police will use social media to engage with, motivate, inform and influence our communities to better protect people from harm.**

The outcome we seek to achieve is that every day we want people to be discussing, debating and endorsing the work of Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police online. Through these channels it is often easier and quicker to inform our communities and partners of events happening in the policing world, often relaying the reader to more information.

We must recognise the vital importance of participating in online conversations and be committed to ensuring that we use the social media channel in the right way – not only

as a broadcaster of information but as a participant listening and responding to both the positives and negatives.

It is crucial that we always remember our role in the community and how people relate to us; our identity and organisational standards; our vision and purpose of protecting people from harm and increasing public confidence in the police service while using these channels.

Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police will use social media in accordance with our:

1. Strategic Intent and Principles for Use of Social Media (appendix 1)
2. Social Media Guidance (appendix 2)
3. College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (APP): Police use of Digital and Social Media
4. Force policy on the use of IT Systems
5. Force policy on the management of information
6. Force vision, values and code of conduct.

The communication channels that our communities use are changing and therefore Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police must explore these new opportunities through new technologies and systems as they appear. We seek to better engage with our communities and therefore need to be proactive in making conscious decisions which maximise each opportunity to use all the relevant and available channels.

Using the social media channels that our communities use gives us the opportunity for real business benefits; disseminating policing information, asking for witness and victim appeals, and helping reduce the fear of crime and increase confidence in the police service.

The principles outlined below are what the forces should be looking to achieve through their use of social media. These principles are generic so that they can be applied across any new emerging channels that will become available in the coming years, as well as those currently adopted by Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police.

To realise our strategic intent, Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police's principles for the use of social media will be to:

1. Maximise opportunities to use social media channels in line with the communities we serve
2. Have meaningful dialogue with our communities by engaging and replying to them
3. Achieve direct business benefits

By adhering to this policy Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police will be consistent with its approach and use of social media and how we engage with the communities within social media. By following the above principles, guidance and

other policies it will mean that our workforce will interact via social media in a professional and transparent manner and will be capable of withstanding scrutiny.

There will be occasions when members of the public will submit inappropriate, offensive or illegal comments on the channels that Warwickshire Police and West Mercia use. The channel administrator (those who manage the channel) along with Corporate Communications, should consider any comments that may fall under the National Crime Recording Standards definition of Hate Crime or malicious communication. Such comments must be properly referred to the Crime Bureau for advice on crime recording and promptly referred to Corporate Communications (if picked up by the channel administrator) who will manage subsequent action as appropriate with the relevant business partners.

### 3.0 IMPLICATIONS of the POLICY

By complying with the principles, guidance and College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice around social media we will have taken into consideration and managed:

1. The Management of Police Information
2. Risks and Health and Safety considerations
3. Human Rights Act, Equality Act, Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information Act and Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act
4. Legal consideration
5. Workforce Code of Conduct

### 4.0 CONSULTATION

The approach to adopt this new policy, as detailed above, was agreed by the Executive Board in May 2013. It was reviewed by Corporate Communications professionals and the Head of Corporate Communications in September 2016 and identified as remaining to be fit for purpose.

It was originally designed following consultation with Head of Intelligence, Authorising Officer, Business Assurance and Improvement and all Chief Officers. It also follows national guidance from the College of Policing and APP.

### 5.0 DOCUMENT HISTORY

The history and rationale for change to policy will be recorded using the below chart:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Author / Reviewer</b>	<b>Amendment(s) &amp; Rationale</b>	<b>Approval / Adoption</b>
July 2013	Kate Quilley	Harmonisation	JNCC 13/09/2013
Sept 2016	Kate Quilley	Review – Content unchanged appendix 1 minor adjustment	16/09/2016

## 6.0 PROCEDURE

All members of Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police will engage using social media in accordance with:

1. Strategic Intent and Principles for Use of Social Media ([Appendix 1](#))
2. Social Media Guidance ([Appendix 2](#))
3. College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (APP): [Police use of Digital and Social Media](#)
4. Force policy on the use of IT Systems