

## Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Policy Screening Form

### Policy Information

Name of the policy	Social Media and Acceptable Use Policy
Is this an existing, revised or new policy?	Revised
What is it trying to achieve (aims/outcomes)	<p>The aim of this policy is to ensure a consistent approach to dealing with all social media communications activity. It aims are to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective engagement with the public and successful promotion of the Council and its services through the use of social media.</li> <li>• The Council's reputation and its employees and elected members are protected.</li> <li>• A consistent and corporate approach is adopted and maintained in the use of social media.</li> <li>• Council employees and elected members are aware of, fully comply with operate within existing policies, procedures, guidelines and relevant legislation.</li> <li>• Clear guidance on acceptable behaviour in the use of social media both professionally and personally is provided to employees and elected members.</li> <li>• Council information remains secure and is not compromised through the use of social media.</li> </ul>
Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy? If so, explain how.	All section 75 categories are expected to benefit from the policy.
Who initiated or wrote the policy?	Veronica Keegan Assistant Director: Digital and Communications
Who owns and who implements the policy?	Veronica Keegan Assistant Director: Digital and Communications

### Implementation factors

	Yes	No
Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/decision?		

If yes, are they Financial		
If yes, are they Legislative	✓	
If yes, and they are Other please specify:		

**Main stakeholders affected**

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy will impact upon?

	Yes	No
Staff	✓	
Service users	✓	
Other public sector organisations		
Voluntary/community/trade unions		
Other, please specify:		

**Other policies with a bearing on this policy**

<p>What are they? Who owns them?</p>	<p>The following, which is not an exhaustive list, are the principal related policies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to Information Policy and Procedure</li> <li>• Bilingualism Policy and Procedure</li> <li>• Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees</li> <li>• Corporate Privacy Notice</li> <li>• Disciplinary and Dismissal Procedure</li> <li>• Newry, Mourne and Down District Council’s Equality Scheme</li> <li>• Grievance Procedure</li> <li>• Information Security Policy Statement</li> <li>• IT Policies and Procedures</li> <li>• Local Government Employee and Councillor Working Relationship Protocol</li> <li>• Media Policy and Procedure</li> <li>• NI Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors</li> <li>• Records Management Policy and Procedure</li> <li>• Retention and Disposal Schedule</li> <li>• Safeguarding Policy Children and Adults at Risk</li> <li>• The Personal Safety of Employees Exposed to Workplace Violence and Abuse from the Public Policy and Procedure</li> <li>• Raising Concerns Policy (formerly referred to as Whistle Blowing Policy)</li> </ul> <p>This following is not an exhaustive list of the related legislative provisions and measures requiring regulatory and legal compliance. Elected Members and employees should be aware of legal issues, particularly libel and defamation, when using social media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Protection Act 2018</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defamation Act 1996</li> <li>• Disability Discrimination Act 1995</li> <li>• Environmental Information Regulations 2004</li> <li>• Freedom of Information Act 2000</li> <li>• Human Rights Act 1998</li> <li>• Intellectual Property Act 2014</li> <li>• Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Section 75)</li> <li>• Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003</li> <li>• Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order 1998</li> <li>• Public Records (NI) Act 1923</li> <li>• Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997</li> <li>• Safeguarding Board (NI) Act 2011</li> <li>• Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976</li> <li>• The Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) and Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice (BCAP)</li> <li>• UK General Data Protection Regulation 2018</li> <li>• Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018</li> <li>• Malicious Communications Act / Communications Act 2003 (sections relevant to offensive or menacing content.</li> <li>• Online Safety Act 2023</li> <li>• Protection from Harassment Act 1997</li> <li>• Communications Act 2002</li> </ul>
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### Available evidence

What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Specify details for relevant Section 75 categories.

Section 75 Category	Details of needs/experiences/priorities																							
Religious belief	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="background-color: #d9ead3;">LGD</th> <th style="background-color: #d9ead3;">All usual residents</th> <th style="background-color: #d9ead3;">Catholic</th> <th style="background-color: #d9ead3;">Protestant and other Christian</th> <th style="background-color: #d9ead3;">Other religions</th> <th style="background-color: #d9ead3;">None</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="background-color: #f2f2f2;">Northern Ireland</td> <td style="text-align: right;">1,903,178</td> <td style="text-align: right;">869,753 (45.7%)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">827,545 (43.5%)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">28,514 (1.5%)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">177,360 (9.3%)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #f2f2f2;">Newry, Mourne &amp; Down</td> <td style="text-align: right;">182,074</td> <td style="text-align: right;">131,300 (72.1%)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">39,970 (22.0%)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">1,327 (0.7%)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">9,477 (5.2%)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>(Source: Census Data 2021)</p>						LGD	All usual residents	Catholic	Protestant and other Christian	Other religions	None	Northern Ireland	1,903,178	869,753 (45.7%)	827,545 (43.5%)	28,514 (1.5%)	177,360 (9.3%)	Newry, Mourne & Down	182,074	131,300 (72.1%)	39,970 (22.0%)	1,327 (0.7%)	9,477 (5.2%)
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Political opinion	<p>Elected political party representation is an approximate barometer of political opinion of people within the Council area.</p> <p>The party breakdown of the Council’s elected members is as follows:</p> <p>Sinn Féin <span style="float: right;">20 seats</span></p>																							

	<p>SDLP 8 seats Independents 3 seats Democratic Unionist 5 seats Ulster Unionist 1 seat Alliance 4 seats</p> <p>Councillors are elected within seven District Electoral Areas (DEAs) across the Council area. With respect to party political representation, democratic deficits exist within particular DEAs i.e three DEAs have no PUL Councillor representation (Newry, Crotlieve and Downpatrick), two DEAs have one PUL (Slieve Croob and Slieve Gullion) Councillor and, one DEA has one CNR (Rowallane).</p>																																																												
Racial group	<p>According to the 2021 Census, 3.4% (65,604) of the usually resident population of Northern Ireland belongs to minority ethnic groups. This is almost double the proportion in 2011 (1.8%).</p> <p>The minority ethnic language profile within the area serves as a possible indicator of the BME community profile. The composition of language groups in the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area is noted by NISRA (2021) as follows:</p> <p><b>Minority Ethnic Language Profile of the Newry, Mourne and Down LGD Area</b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="400 1077 1385 1883"> <thead> <tr> <th>Main language of residents in Newry, Mourne and Down District LGD</th> <th>Number</th> <th>Percentage %</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>English</td><td>168,408</td><td>96.1</td></tr> <tr><td>Polish</td><td>2,143</td><td>1.22</td></tr> <tr><td>Lithuanian</td><td>1,149</td><td>0.66</td></tr> <tr><td>Irish</td><td>553</td><td>0.32</td></tr> <tr><td>Romanian</td><td>347</td><td>0.2</td></tr> <tr><td>Portuguese</td><td>119</td><td>0.06</td></tr> <tr><td>Arabic</td><td>170</td><td>0.09</td></tr> <tr><td>Bulgarian</td><td>677</td><td>0.39</td></tr> <tr><td>Chinese (not otherwise specified)</td><td>70</td><td>0.04</td></tr> <tr><td>Slovak</td><td>98</td><td>0.05</td></tr> <tr><td>Hungarian</td><td>106</td><td>0.06</td></tr> <tr><td>Spanish</td><td>77</td><td>0.04</td></tr> <tr><td>Latvian</td><td>279</td><td>0.15</td></tr> <tr><td>Russian</td><td>180</td><td>0.10</td></tr> <tr><td>Tetun</td><td>22</td><td>0.01</td></tr> <tr><td>Malayalam</td><td>51</td><td>0.03</td></tr> <tr><td>Tagalog/Filipino</td><td>44</td><td>0.03</td></tr> <tr><td>Cantonese</td><td>38</td><td>0.02</td></tr> <tr><td>Other languages</td><td>711</td><td>0.41</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Main language of residents in Newry, Mourne and Down District LGD	Number	Percentage %	English	168,408	96.1	Polish	2,143	1.22	Lithuanian	1,149	0.66	Irish	553	0.32	Romanian	347	0.2	Portuguese	119	0.06	Arabic	170	0.09	Bulgarian	677	0.39	Chinese (not otherwise specified)	70	0.04	Slovak	98	0.05	Hungarian	106	0.06	Spanish	77	0.04	Latvian	279	0.15	Russian	180	0.10	Tetun	22	0.01	Malayalam	51	0.03	Tagalog/Filipino	44	0.03	Cantonese	38	0.02	Other languages	711	0.41
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	partner from a same-sex civil partnership: Aged 16+ years Census 2021	(6.3%)	(6.4%)															
Sexual orientation	<p>Analysis of the Census 2011 indicates that between 2% and 10% of the population may be lesbian, gay or bisexual.</p> <p>There are no official statistics in relation to the number of gay, lesbian or bisexual people in Northern Ireland. However, research conducted by the HM Treasury shows that between 5% - 7% of the UK population identify themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual or 'trans' (transexual, transgendered and transvestite) (LGBT). This is a sizeable proportion of the population here in Northern Ireland.</p>																	
Men and women generally	<p>The gender profile for the Newry, Mourne and Down LGD is as follows:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>LGD</th> <th>Male</th> <th>Female</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Northern Ireland</td> <td>936,132</td> <td>967,043</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Newry, Mourne and Down LGD</td> <td>90,063</td> <td>92,011</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Census 2021</p>			LGD	Male	Female	Northern Ireland	936,132	967,043	Newry, Mourne and Down LGD	90,063	92,011						
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Dependants	<p>Persons with dependents may be people who have personal responsibility for the care of a child (or children), a person with a disability, and / or a dependent older person.</p> <p>According to the Census 2021, there are 68,396 households in Newry, Mourne and Down, 33.9% of which have dependent children. With regard to these figures, dependents are defined as those aged 0-15 years or those aged 16-18 years who are in full-time education and living with their parents or grandparents. Similar to the regional trend, the proportion of households with dependents in the District has declined from 50% in 1981 to 33.9% in 2021.</p> <p>There are 5,639 lone parent households with dependent children in Newry, Mourne and Down which equates to just over 8% of number of total households in the District and is the fourth highest in Northern Ireland, after Belfast (17,292), Derry and Strabane (7,639) and Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon (6,556). Half of the parents in lone parent households in Newry, Mourne and Down are unemployed, almost a quarter are in full time employment and over a quarter are in part time employment. 93% of the parents in lone parent households in the District are female compared to 11% who are male.</p> <p>In 2019-21, the teenage birth rate (under 20 years old) was 6.5 per 1,000 mothers, which is the fourth highest in Northern Ireland after Belfast (11.4); Antrim &amp; Newtownabbey (6.9) and Mid and East Antrim (6.8) but below the regional average of 6.8 per 1,000 births.</p>
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### Needs, experiences and priorities

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy/decision? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories

Section 75 Category	Details of needs/experiences/priorities
Religious belief	No specific needs, experiences or priorities have been identified with regard to people of different religious belief.
Political opinion	No specific needs, experiences or priorities have been identified with regard to people of different political opinion.
Racial group	For 3.9% of residents English is not their main language which may impact upon fully accessing information through social media. Translation facility and alternative formats are available.
Age	No specific needs, experiences or priorities have been identified with regard to people of different ages.
Marital status	No specific needs, experiences or priorities have been identified with regard to people of different marital status.
Sexual	No specific needs, experiences or priorities have been identified with

orientation	regard to people of different sexual orientation.
Men and women generally	No specific needs, experiences or priorities have been identified with regard to men and women generally.
Disability	Accessing information through social media may present difficulty for some people with disability, Council officers are available to provide information in alternative formats where possible. The Reachdeck Toolbar on the Council's website provides accessibility features including text-to-speech, translation and screen customisation to support users with additional needs.
Dependants	No specific needs, experiences or priorities have been identified with regard to people with dependants.

### Screening Questions

1. What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 grounds?

Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? Major/minor/none
Religious belief	It is not anticipated there will be an impact on equality of opportunity for this category.	None
Political opinion	It is not anticipated there will be an impact on equality of opportunity for this category.	None
Racial group	<p>As previously noted, for 3.9% of residents English is not their main language which may impact upon access to information through use of social media.</p> <p>While the main language of 96.1% of residents of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is English, the Social Media and Acceptable Use Policy sets out implementation of the policy will be balanced with our duties to our citizens, service users and partners, our legal responsibilities.</p> <p>In addition, the Council's commitment to social media relations and its use to promote Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and its services is not the only means by which Council disseminates information.</p>	Minor
Age	Older people may have limited	Minor

	experience in using social media. Alternative promotion is also available through printed media.	
Marital status	It is not anticipated there will be an impact on equality of opportunity for this category.	None
Sexual orientation	It is not anticipated there will be an impact on equality of opportunity for this category.	None
Men and women generally	It is not anticipated there will be an impact on equality of opportunity for this category.	None
Disability	While Council acknowledges accessing information through social media may present difficulty for some people with disability, it is not the only means by which Council disseminates information. Council officers are available to provide information in alternative formats where possible. The Reachdeck Toolbar on the Council's website provides accessibility features including text-to-speech, translation and screen customisation to support users with additional needs.	Minor
Dependants	It is not anticipated there will be an impact on equality of opportunity for this category.	None

2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?

<b>Section 75 category</b>	<b>If Yes, provide details</b>	<b>If No, provide details</b>
Religious belief		No
Political opinion		No
Racial group		No
Age		No
Marital status		No
Sexual orientation		No
Men and women generally		No
Disability		No
Dependants		No

3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

<b>Good relations category</b>	<b>Details of policy impact</b>	<b>Level of impact? Major/minor/none</b>
Religious belief		None
Political opinion		None
Racial group	As previously noted, for	Minor

	<p>3.9% of residents English is not their main language which may impact upon access to information through use of social media.</p> <p>While the main language of 96.1% of residents of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is English, the Social Media and Acceptable Use Policy sets out implementation of the policy will be balanced with our duties to our citizens, service users and partners, our legal responsibilities.</p> <p>In addition, the Council's commitment to social media relations and its use to promote Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and its services is not the only means by which Council disseminates information.</p>	
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**4.** Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Good relations category	If <b>Yes</b> , provide details	If <b>No</b> , provide details
Religious belief		No
Political opinion		No
Racial group		<p>No</p> <p>As previously stated, the Social Media and Acceptable Use Policy sets out implementation of the policy will be balanced with our duties to our citizens, service users and partners, our legal responsibilities.</p> <p>In addition, the Council's commitment to social media relations and its use to promote Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and its services is not the only means by which Council</p>

		disseminates information.
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**Additional considerations**

**Multiple identity**

Generally speaking, people can fall into more than one Section 75 category. Taking this into consideration, are there any potential impacts of the policy/decision on people with multiple identities? (For example; disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men; and young lesbians, gay and bisexual people).

N/A

Provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

**Screening Decision**

In light of your answers to the previous questions, do you feel that the policy should (please underline one):

1. **Not be subject to an EQIA (with no mitigating measures required)**
2. Not be subject to an EQIA (with mitigating measures /alternative policies)
3. Not be subject to an EQIA at this time
4. Be subject to an EQIA

If 1. or 2. (i.e. not be subject to an EQIA), please provide details of the reasons why:

The outcome of the decision is that the Corporate Social Media Policy not be subject to an equality impact assessment (with no mitigating measures required).

If 2. (i.e. not be subject to an EQIA), in what ways can identified adverse impacts attaching to the policy be mitigated or an alternative policy be introduced?

In light of these revisions, is there a need to re-screen the revised/alternative policy? Yes / No. If No, please explain why

If 3. or 4. (i.e. to conduct an EQIA), please provide details of the reasons:

**Timetabling and prioritising EQIA**

If 3. or 4, is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities? NO

If YES, please provide details:

Please answer the following questions to determine priority for timetabling the EQIA. On a scale of 1-3, with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for EQIA.

<b>Priority criterion</b>	<b>Rating (1-3)</b>
Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations	
Social need	
Effect on people's daily lives	
Relevance to a public authority's functions	

Note: The Total Rating Score should be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for EQIA. This list of priorities will assist you in timetabling the EQIA. Details of your EQIA timetable should be included in the quarterly Section 75 report.

Proposed date for commencing EQIA: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Monitoring**

Effective monitoring will help identify any future adverse impacts arising from the policy which may lead you to conduct an EQIA, as well as help with future planning and policy development.

Please detail proposed monitoring arrangements below:

The Social Media Policy will be reviewed every 4 years or sooner as required due to legislative/operational requirements.

Implementation of the policy will be through the associated procedures.

### **Approval and Authorisation**

<b>Screened by:</b>	<b>Position/Job Title</b>	<b>Date</b>
Colin Moffett	Head of Corporate Policy	20 March 2026
<b>Approved by:</b>		
Veronica Keegan	Assistant Director: Digital and Communications	20 March 2026

Note: The completed policy screening template, signed off by the appropriate policy lead within the Council, and approved by the senior manager responsible for the policy, should be forwarded to the Head of Corporate Policy who will arrange for it to be included in the Council's Quarterly Report on Screening and made available on the Council's website.