

Social Media Conduct Guidelines

Preamble

The Liberal Democrats constitution states that the party is committed towards building and safeguarding a "fair, free, and open society", and championing "the freedom, dignity, and well-being of individuals". We live in a social media age and individuals acting on behalf of the party are public representatives and must act in a way that upholds the party values, encourages others to feel safe to interact with us on social media, and presents a credible and trustworthy image in the face of often divisive public discourse.

This document builds on the Liberal Democrats Members' Code of Conduct, found at <https://www.libdems.org.uk/code-of-conduct>

Any suspected breach of the Code of Conduct must be reported as soon as possible, with action undertaken in line with party rules and regulations.

Permanency and Privacy

It must be assumed that any content posted on a social media platform will exist permanently, no matter how briefly it is made public and how limited the circulation. There are services and software that will automatically track additions, removals, and changes to content over time.

Many platforms allow restrictions on the visibility of content, which can give the illusion that a private posting will never be available publicly. Accidental sharing, changes in access rights, changes in terms and conditions, data breaches, and even legal action can all allow private content to be made available. Assume private content on most of the major platforms could end up in public and treat accordingly.

Information provided confidentially, or which involves an individual's right to privacy, must not be shared on social media, even privately, unless the individual concerned has given explicit permission.

Party Values

The party is committed to a "fair, free, and open society". Our social media content must represent these values. You should aim to be open and transparent about content, ensure posts are correctly attributed, and are based on evidence rather than speculation and hearsay. Verify sources if the content has not come through official party channels. You should never post content that is misleading, malicious, discriminatory, offensive/obscene, or untrue.

Free and open debate is to be encouraged, but ensure your responses are polite and factual. Misinterpretation is easily done online, so in accordance with "freedom, dignity, and well-being of individuals" do not assume a particular tone or emotion from comments and critique. Treat others online fairly, respectfully, and transparently even if they do not act the same towards you.

Content should be respectful of a wide audience. Language should be clear and unambiguous. Accessibility features of platforms should be used wherever possible, for example to provide textual descriptions of images or captioning of videos. Pictures of text should not be used without providing a text-based alternative.

You should never post content under anonymous, misleading or fake identities. Nor should you post as someone else unless you have their permission and provide clear identification that you are acting on their behalf. Likewise, third parties acting on your behalf should never be used to post material that would be in breach of this document.

Platform Terms and Conditions

Every social media platform has some form of Terms & Conditions, which may or may not include a Code of Conduct. The exact terms of use vary quite widely between platforms, often change suddenly in response to incidents, and can be enforced inconsistently. Take the time to keep updated of changes.

You normally agree to abide by the terms of use automatically on sign up, whether you explicitly agree or not. It is essential that you familiarise yourself with the terms of use and ensure your use of the platform always complies. If you have any doubt about posting content, seek clarification from the local party before taking any action.

It is recommended that you also understand how a platform enforces terms and conditions. Make a note of how to contact the platform if you become the subject of a complaint, or if you need to seek clarification. Familiarise yourself with the platform's procedures and tools for dealing with online harassment, keeping in mind the platform's terms of use.

Platform Endorsements and Commentary

Platform tools involving reposting/retweeting third-party content, reactions such as likes and up/down votes, or comments on content should all be treated in the same way as more substantial material generated by yourself. While reposting or liking content does not always constitute an endorsement of said material, it can and will be construed as such and becomes associated with you. Treat such content as if you had created it yourself and ensure that it meets the Code of Conduct.

Comments on posts should follow the Code of Conduct as for other content. Responses to third-party content should also be considered in the context of the original material, and whether association with said material, even if indirectly, is problematic. If in doubt, seek advice before responding.

Property Rights

Material subject to copyright, trademarks, licensing, or other distribution restrictions must only be used in compliance with their respective rules of use, and when permitted by the platform. With some exceptions, such as public domain or CC0 material, all content is copyright protected by default and requires permission to use.

The Final Word

Whether you are acting in an official capacity, or a personal one, your online presence is representing yourself and the party. Keep this in mind when posting content online, especially in the heat of the moment - step away for a few minutes if necessary, to cool down. If you have any doubts about content you should refrain from posting and seek advice, or simply do not post at all. Mistakes can happen, and they should be reported to the party immediately for action.