

## **Scottish National Party: Social Media Policy**

### **Introduction**

Every day, people discuss, debate and champion the SNP, our people and our policies in thousands of online interactions. As a political party we recognise the importance of these conversations and are committed to engaging with people online as effectively as we do offline. These Online Social Media Principles have been written to empower our members and supporters to be positive and proactive participants in this new communications reality; be dutiful representatives of the party and to share the optimistic and ambitious attitude that our people, policies and vision for Scotland embodies.

### **Who are these guidelines for?**

If you are using social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or Flickr, if you blog or post comments on other people's blogs, then these guidelines are for you.

### **Personal and Private are not the same**

Although communication through social media networks are primarily a personal matter, this is not the same as it being private. Often anything that is added to these sites is easily found through search engines such as Google. Even in cases where only your friends can see what you add to the conversation; there is a possibility that one of them will forward what you say and, in doing so, make it visible to a wider audience. Therefore, at all times, personal conversation within social media networks should be considered public rather than private.

Our vision is to make Scotland as successful as possible. The first step of that process is achieved through winning the normal powers that every independent nation enjoys. Then we can go on to steer Scotland's success as a pioneering and ambitious 21<sup>st</sup> Century country. This vision is guided by shared values that we adhere to as an organisation and as individuals both offline and online.

### **SNP (CRITICaL) Values**

- **Courtesy:** To be polite to one another and show respect, especially to those who think differently to us
- **Responsibility:** to control the impulse to react before thinking through a problem, and to follow through on your commitments
- **Imagination:** Explaining complex ideas in a way that is engaging and relevant to people
- **Tenacity:** Patience leads to virtue or merit. Do not be impatient, rather continue steadfast and persevere
- **Integrity:** To be honest and open about who we are and what we believe
- **Collaborative:** Working together for a better country
- **and Leadership:** The courage to shape a better future

The Online Social Media Principles are intended to guide your interactions online, both when participating personally and on behalf of the party.

The most important thing to remember is that we are a political party and our primary role in social media communities is to build the SNP brand by promoting our candidates, our policies and our vision for Scotland.

As a party we adhere to the following set of Principles and we expect the same commitment from all party representatives - including party members, supporters, affiliated organisations, MSPs, MEPs and MPs. These Principles are:

## Principles and Expectations for Representatives Acting in a Personal Capacity Online

There's a big difference between "speaking on behalf of the party" and "speaking about the party". The following principles refer to those personal or unofficial activities where you might discuss the SNP.

- 1. Existing Party Rules & Codes of Conduct:** Adhere to the all applicable party rules [<http://www.snp.org/rules>] including the codes of conduct and membership rules, in every public setting. In addition, laws regarding information protection must be respected.
- 2. Online Responsibility:** You are responsible for your actions. Anything that you post that could potentially tarnish the SNP will ultimately be your responsibility. Do not say anything online that you wouldn't feel comfortable seeing quoted in the press, being asked about by your family or having to justify to your boss.
- 3. Vigilance:** Each SNP representative is one of our most vital assets in monitoring the social media universe. You will come across both positive and negative comments about the party, as well as people who are trying to spark off negative discussions about us.

If the comments you find are positive and you think they are important, then go ahead and share them with others, being sure to let us know about any significant praise on: [socialrelations@snp.org](mailto:socialrelations@snp.org) .

If however, you uncover negativity then you need to exercise sound judgement.

The SNP is a large and complex organisation and we work in complicated legal and operational contexts. People frequently misunderstand (or choose to misrepresent) us and our policies. If you come across such misunderstandings, feel free to identify yourself and your party affiliation and then correct their mistake; but do so respectfully and with referenced facts only. In the majority of cases, people won't mind being corrected so long as your message is made in a friendly manner. But should you get the impression that someone is deliberately misinterpreting everything you say, then just ignore them as they are more than likely looking to taunt, with a view to embarrass you or the party.

If you come across obvious misrepresentations of the truth or are uncomfortable in correcting mistakes, please contact the communications team as they are trained to handle these matters. Remembering to send relevant links and context information to: [socialrelations@snp.org](mailto:socialrelations@snp.org) .

- 4. Honesty:** If you yourself have made a mistake, be upfront about it. Admit it and correct the mistake. It is very important however, to do so visibly - for example by using the strikethrough function and adding a paragraph that explains the update you've made at the end.
- 5. Business and Personal Lives:** Online, your personal and professional personas are likely to intersect. The party respects free speech rights that all representatives have. But you must remember that colleagues, the press, and the public often have access to content you publish online. Never disclose party confidential information and keep in mind that positions you take personally online, that are counter to the SNP's interests, might cause conflict.

## Principles and Expectations for SNP Spokespeople Acting in an Official Capacity Online

Just like with traditional media, we have an opportunity to effectively manage the party's reputation

online and to engage and participate in the thousands of online conversations that mention us every day.

The following Principles are for those Official Spokespeople who represent the SNP in an official capacity and “speak on behalf of the party”.

**1. Training:** You have undergone training in communications, public relations and/ or social media engagement and are certified as a key communicator.

**2. Professional Approach:** Always remember that you are representing the SNP. As a party representative, it’s important that your posts convey the positive and optimistic spirit of the party. Maintain the party values in all communications.

**3. Full Disclosure:** The SNP requires that all representatives, when communicating on behalf of the party, disclose their name and position. It is never acceptable to use aliases or otherwise deceive people. For example, “Hi, my name is Joe and I work at SNP HQ on the membership team. I’d like to point out...”

**4. Keep Records:** Since online conversations can be fleeting, it is essential to keep records of all communications you engage in on social media sites. This cannot be understated, as official online statements can be held to the same legal standard as those in traditional media. Keep a copy of any online dialogue pertaining to the party and send a copy to [socialrelations@snp.org](mailto:socialrelations@snp.org) .

**5. Be Confident:** Remember that the Internet is a permanent record. As an official spokesperson, never post unless you are confident that your response is accurate. If you are in any way unsure, then pass the issue onto a subject matter expert, by sending details to [socialrelations@snp.org](mailto:socialrelations@snp.org) .

**6. Provide Context:** If you are unable to reduce your response down to character restrictions, then provide a [voteSNP.com](http://voteSNP.com) short URL link to a more thorough response.