

Social Media Policy

1.0	SCOPE
	Purpose
1.1.	This document sets out whg's policy regarding the use of social media. It outlines the structure of how social media is used at whg and identifies what the company wants to achieve using social media as a communication tool. It also outlines the development, management, security and usage of whg's corporate social media accounts.
1.2.	This policy sets out the procedure for using social media across the business to ensure whg is acting correctly online. It also outlines what we expect from whg colleagues using social media when enhancing their professional profiles and sharing our work.
2.0	POLICY STATEMENT
	Use of social media
2.1.	As one of our digital communication channels, whg will use social media to communicate, engage, and build our reputation online with our target audiences. As well as being pro-active with our content to support Our 2030 Plan, using data to drive our decisions, we will also be re-active and listen to what's happening within our business and the wider sector to create supportive and responsive content.
2.2.	<p>We will look at what is said about us, monitor conversations and contribute when required. Any complaints or negative comments will be reviewed, responded to in a timely manner, and passed over to the relevant team to investigate and provide further support. Under no circumstances are comments to be deleted, with the exception of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversations using profanity or offensive terms. • Racism, sexism, homophobia or other forms of hate-speech, or contributions that could be interpreted in this way. • Religious or political comments which could offend. • Comments naming colleagues of whg or members of their family. • Pornographic or graphic images/videos. • Links to sites which could create spam or viruses for the business.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anything which could have a detrimental impact on whg. • Advertisements and spreading of misinformation / fake news. • Personal information (users sharing their details such as phone numbers and addresses in comments)
2.3	Only the Social Media and Digital Specialist will be able to delete comments from our posts and will first seek advice from either the Communications Manager or Head of Communications before making the decision. whg Social Media House Rules will be a guide on setting expectations for users when engaging with our content and give us the right to delete or block users. In the absence of the Social Media and Digital Specialist, the management and monitoring of the platforms would fall to another colleague within the Communications Team.
2.4	Colleagues are encouraged to follow whg's social media accounts and to engage with our posts, where appropriate, to help amplify our content to a wider audience. We recognise that some of our colleagues will have a pool of connections within the housing industry and a community reach that can help us better communicate our messages. Colleagues who leave whg will be reminded within their exit letter, provided by HR, to ensure they update their social media to no longer say they work for the business.
2.5	When sharing content on social media, key messages will be owned and driven from our corporate accounts, and colleagues will be encouraged to engage with our posts from their profiles. The Communications Team will not manage colleagues' accounts on social media, and personal accounts will be secondary when it comes to sharing whg content on social media, with the acceptance of some content being more relevant for the individual colleague. New and emerging social media platforms will be reviewed and monitored for whg to stay current and offer the best digital solution to support our communications and Our 2030 Plan.
	Content, tone of voice and accessibility
2.6	Engagement data across all social media platforms suggests content including videos and imagery outperforms purely written posts or status updates. As a result, all social media posts will include some form of visual imagery, such as static graphics, photographs, videos, or animation.
2.7	Only in exceptional circumstances would we post content without any of these assets. All content must follow our brand guidelines and be tailored to different audiences. Hashtags and tagging will only be used when relevant and to support wider content engagement.

2.8	Paid content (non-organic posts) will be considered when launching campaigns to help increase our reach and overall performance. Objectives, what we want to achieve, and how we would measure success will be outlined within the campaign plan when paid content is suggested.
	The tone of voice for our corporate social media channels should be tailored to a) the channel, b) the content, and c) the targeted audience, as outlined in our Communications Strategy document.
2.9	The tone on social media is much more informal than letters or emails, but it should be professional and appropriate. Posts should be engaging, and the personality of whg should come through, presenting a human rather than a corporate voice.
2.10	We should also ask questions and encourage discussions rather than just give answers or make statements. Our social media channels are a place to create conversation and engagement with our target audiences.
2.11	<p>Content shared on our social media account should support Our 2030 Plan or business objectives set out in our Communications Strategy document. Examples of content we would share on social media, but not limited to are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our events/activities for customers (and non-customers) • Updates about our development and partnership work • Our collaborative work with local partners in Walsall • Customer and colleague good news stories • New and current whg products and services • General whg news (updates on repairs, consultations, • Third party news and updates (include health, gov support etc) • Job opportunities to support local employment and strengthen our workforce • Celebrating milestones such as awards and achievements <p>We will also communicate when things aren't going well or when something hasn't gone right, including how we're going to resolve or improve it. This follows our approach as a business of being open and honest with our customers.</p>
2.12	When sharing news and updates from other accounts we will always fact check and make sure we are sharing from a reputable information source to avoid misinformation. For example, we would reshare content from the Department of Work and Pensions Facebook page for customers.
2.13	When required, job opportunities at whg will also be posted across our channels for maximum exposure to support our 'Work and workplace of the future' transformational project set out in Our 2030 Plan.

2.14	Photos and videos are a major part of interacting on social media. We will use photos and videos in line with GDPR legislation and ensure we have signed consent forms where appropriate. We will ensure that our consent form covers us for use on all social media channels and will sit with the Communications Team to store the information. People can withdraw their consent at any time, and we will take down the content if requested to do so within a timely manner.
2.15	All content should use our brand typefaces and colours, which have been selected with accessibility as a priority. Used correctly, our colours are Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) compliant, rated as either “Good” or “Excellent”.
2.16	Photos should also include alternative text (ALT text), either automated by the social media platforms or entered manually to enable screen readers to read the information for the benefit of a person with complete lack of sight, visually impaired, or who is otherwise unable to view the images on the page.
2.17	Our video content, produced in-house or by external agencies, should always, where possible, be subtitled using our typefaces and colours.
	Engaging with others on social media
2.18	<p>We will use social media to engage with our target audiences, other pages and users that we are interested in or who provide useful knowledge or information for our audiences, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers and potential customers • Developers and contractors • Others within the Housing Sector • Housing Associations • whg Colleagues and potential colleagues • Local Authorities • Government Regulators • Government Trusted Pages • External Partners • Housing Media and PR Agencies • Influencers and high-profile users • Awards and Housing Conference pages • Councillors, MPs and other influencers

2.19	Our primary aim will be to be seen as professional and helpful to our audiences, providing advice and guidance or pointing people in the right direction, both within our company and externally.
2.20	We want to build online communities that encourage two-way conversations. This is not limited to housing matters but will include other areas where we feel we can contribute to the discussion, such as information on financial matters or jobs, local activities or social issues.
2.21	whg colleagues should refrain from engaging and getting into a debate with our customers on social media and flag any concerns they have seen to the Communications Team.
	Dealing with comments and inbox messages (roles and responsibilities)
2.22	With the support and guidance from our Social Media and Digital Specialist, the Customer Services team will be responsible for monitoring our corporate social media channels and responding to comments and inbox messages within a reasonable time – prioritising comments first as these are seen by all users. It is the Customer Services team’s responsibility to flag anything we receive on our social media channels to the Communications Team which needs urgent addressing.
2.23	Any comments or inbox messages which violate our Social Media House Rules will be removed. This will include the use of offensive or aggressive language, comments about individuals, defamatory posts, spam, etc.
2.24	If a user continues to violate the policy, they will be blocked. When appropriate, whg will email the individual user to explain why they have been blocked (if contact details are provided) and to use another source of communication. Comments and inbox messages should be recorded for proof before blocking someone. Only the Social Media and Digital Specialist will have the ability to block someone and will first seek advice from either the Communications Manager or Head of Communications before making the decision.
2.25	Any requests, complaints, questions, etc. that require a response will be acknowledged by the Customer Service team, and if possible, resolved as quickly as possible, within 48 hours. We will establish a clear process for dealing with different types of requests and complaints and who these should be forwarded to. Complaints received on Facebook should be dealt with in line with our existing complaints procedure through the Customer Services Centre and allocated accordingly.
2.26	Customers who use social media to report a repair or who want to discuss an individual case will be informed how to contact us through the appropriate route. However, their comments will not be removed, even if they are complaints, as

	they provide an opportunity to show how we dealt with the matter and demonstrate good customer service.
2.27	Many complaints, comments, or questions may just require a 'standard' response, so we will develop a stock of standard answers that can be used. However, these will always be tailored to the individual so that they are seen to come from a person and not be an automated response. We will ask the customer to send us an inbox message if we require personal data or information to help deal with their comment.
2.28	Where a question can be answered immediately, without the need for follow up and is not of a personal nature, we will endeavour to provide a response on the post rather than ask the customer to send us a message. Not all comments will require a response – ideally, we can let conversations develop. However, where appropriate, we will also reply to positive comments, thanking people for their comments, offering additional information, inviting other people to reply with their experiences etc. to help create a two-way dialogue.
	Responding to social media criticism
2.29	There will be occasions where whg is mentioned on social media accounts not owned by whg. Where the comment is regarding a complaint, we will follow the process as outlined above. Where negative comments are made on a page/profile not owned by whg which do not relate to a specific complaint, we will consider on a case-by-case basis whether we should engage with the page or social media user.
3.0	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
3.1.	We will measure the impact and performance of our social media activity using listening tools and analytics from the individual platforms to inform our data-driven decisions. When measuring our results, we will refer to our Communications Strategy, which will outline our objectives and will be reported on every quarter via the Communications Report and Customer In The Room (CiTR) Report.
4.0	EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY
4.1	Comments by other social media users on whg social media content could impact and/or discriminate against a particular group of people. Comments will be closely monitored, and offensive comments will be removed, as set out in this policy. Customer Services and the Social Media and Digital Specialist will be responsible for monitoring this, with support from the business and the wider Communications Team when required.
5.0	TRAINING AND DISSEMINATION

5.1.	Colleagues will receive training from the Social Media and Digital Specialist to boost their knowledge on how we use social media, including best practice on how to be active on their own profiles when representing whg. Bespoke training will also be provided to Customer Services colleagues to upskill and empower them to respond to customers on social media.
6.0	MONITOR AND REVIEW
6.1	This policy will be monitored by the Corporate Director of Governance, Compliance, and Comms and reviewed every three years by the Policy Group or more often if events or best practice merit this. Due to social media developing at a fast rate, this policy will need to be updated and amended when anything could affect whg or its shareholders.
6.2	The Social Media and Digital Specialist will regularly review our social media channels to assess performance and effectiveness. If a platform is deemed no longer beneficial for the business, the Social Media and Digital Specialist, in collaboration with the Communications Manager, will prepare a detailed report based on data and analytics. This report will include a recommended course of action before any decisions are made. Depending on the platform, we will carefully plan the necessary steps to ensure a seamless transition, including retaining our social media handle while discontinuing active use of the platform.
7.0	Security and access to accounts
7.1	Access to our social media accounts is restricted to members of the Communications Team, with limited exceptions for Customer Services, who may require access but will receive direct support from the Social Media and Digital Specialist. All social media passwords are securely stored in a password-protected Excel spreadsheet. Communications Team members will manage social media accounts through their personal accounts, in compliance with platform terms and conditions. Employees with access must ensure they use strong passwords and have two-factor authentication enabled. Upon the departure of any colleague with access, their permissions will be revoked, and passwords updated as needed.
8.0	ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
8.1	Documents, policies and procedures associated with this Policy are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand Guidelines • Communications Strategy • Social Media House Rules

Document author	Social Media and Digital Specialist
Document owner	Corporate Director Governance, Compliance, and Comms
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Consultation	n/a
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Corporate Plan aim	We will provide safe and secure homes and deliver high-quality services. Our communities will be empowered to thrive and we will always do the best for our customers.
Equality Assessment	10 September 2024
Key changes made	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included roles and responsibilities for responding to comments and inbox messages on social media. • Added accessibility information. • Removed references to Twitter. • Added reference to our Comms Report and Communications Strategy. • Mentioned our Social Media House Rules. • Added references to Our 2030 Plan. • Included the process and responsibilities of deleting a comment and blocking a user. • Added reference to using paid content on social media. • Included rules on whg colleagues using social media.