



**Penrith & The Border  
Constituency Labour Party  
Social Media Policy: June 2018**



**Outline of this document:**

**A. Foreword**

**B. Principles for the Labour Party's use of Social Media**

**C. Specific Approaches in the Penrith & The Border CLP**

1. Introduction
2. Rules of Engagement
3. Standards
4. Moderation Policy and Procedure

**A. Foreword**

A starting point for all our actions as members of a party and a movement is to treat all people with dignity and respect. This applies to all our dealings with people, offline and online. Everyone should feel able to take part in discussion about our party, country and world. We want to maximise this debate, including critical discussion, as long as it does not result in the exclusion of others.

Abusing someone online is just as serious as doing so face to face. We stand against all forms of abuse and will take action against those who commit it. Harassment, intimidation, hateful language and bullying are never acceptable, nor is any form of discrimination on the basis of gender, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.

Any member found in breach of the above policies will be dealt with according to the rules and procedures of the Labour Party.

We wish to build a diverse movement that reflects the whole of society, so should always consider how our actions and words may limit the confidence or otherwise exclude either those less knowledgeable than ourselves or those already under-represented in politics. Those with privilege, whether due to their volume of experience, party position or status in society should have regard to how their actions may be felt by those in different circumstances to themselves.

It is perfectly possible to have vehement disagreements without descending into personal abuse, shaming people or exhibiting bullying behaviour. Forcefully made points and criticisms of the political views of others are totally legitimate, personal attacks are not. Debates amongst party members should be comradely, acknowledging that whatever our diverse views, we are one party with shared goals. Derogatory descriptions of the positions of others should be avoided.

Anonymous accounts or otherwise hiding one's identity for the purpose of abusing others is never permissible.

The use of sexualised language or imagery, and unwelcome sexual attention or advances are not acceptable, nor is the publishing of others' private information without their explicit permission.

We should not give voice to those who persistently engage in abuse and should avoid sharing their content, even when the item in question is unproblematic. Those who consistently abuse other or spread hate should be shunned and not engaged with in a way that ignores this behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to challenge abuse and to stand in solidarity with victims of it. We should attempt to educate and discourage abusers rather than responding in kind. We encourage the reporting of abusive behaviour to the Labour Party, administrators of the relevant website or social media platform, and where appropriate, to the police. This is a collective responsibility and should not be limited to those who have been subjected to abuse.

Trolling, or otherwise disrupting the ability of others to debate is not acceptable, nor is consistently mentioning or making contact with others when this is unwelcome.

## **B. Principles for the Labour Party's use of Social Media**

- We are direct, confident and proud in what we have to say - we speak boldly and with clear intention.
- We are clear about our position and our policies, and will give our members and supporters the language and tools to disseminate these.
- Collectivism is at the heart of what we do. Our members and supporters are crucial to all our achievements and their contributions, from door-knocking to online activism, are valued and acknowledged.
- We seek to break down the wall that creates 'us' and 'them'. When we say 'we' that means the whole movement and those who share our values, not an exclusive group.
- We want debate and discussion to flourish on our channels and will encourage feedback wherever appropriate.
- We make legitimate criticisms based on policy and political actions, never making personal attacks.
- We use accessible language and avoid jargon that could exclude or alienate.

- We put the stories and experiences of the public first. We prioritise the issues that affect people in their everyday lives, rather than providing news for insiders.
- We are inventive and innovative with our digital strategy and that means experimentation. We need people to be open-minded to change and encourage us to offer the best digital experience possible - even when that means trial and error.
- We know that not everyone will agree with us. Constructive criticism is welcome, but we want to create a welcoming space for our supporters, so if comments become abusive we will report them.

## **C. Specific Approaches in the Penrith & The Border CLP**

### **1. Introduction**

Social Media is an important means of communication which cannot be ignored. It is essential that we use it effectively, sensibly and responsibly. There are a few simple rules and procedures that will ensure that our social media activity always achieves what we hope it to achieve.

We have both public-facing and closed social media platforms that serve different purposes. However, the 'Rules of Engagement' should apply across all platforms whilst the section on 'Standards' is mainly, but not exclusively, to inform our interactions on public-facing platforms.

### **2. Rules of Engagement**

- Always try to be polite and engaging and act with maturity and consideration for other users;
- Always be pleasant and do not use personal insults, harass, or use aggressive language;
- You are a good example because you do not participate in, or defend, any form of discrimination or bigotry;
- Do not support or condone illegal or violent activity;
- Avoid making any comments or remarks that could bring the Labour Party into disrepute;
- Always use polite language avoiding expletives or offensive language;
- If you have any doubts about what you are about to post, don't post;
- Never post anything that could be libellous or defamatory;
- Never use 'out of context' quotes to make a point - make sure that you have researched your subject;
- Always be friendly, even when faced with insults and aggression;
- Try not to make personal remarks — posts can criticise behaviours, policies, statements but should avoid personal attacks;
- Demonstrate and share the intelligence, wisdom and humour we know you possess.
- Take some responsibility for the quality of the conversations in which you're participating and help make intelligent places for discussion.

### 3. Standards

There are some simple guidelines for interactions on **public-facing platforms** that we expect all participants to abide by. These guidelines directly inform our approach to moderation (detailed below in paragraph 4). These apply across all social media sites, whilst moderation decisions are also informed by the context in which comments are made.

- a. **We welcome debate and dissent, but personal attacks, persistent trolling and mindless abuse will not be tolerated.** The key to maintaining our social media platforms as inviting spaces is to focus on intelligent discussion of topics.
- b. **We acknowledge criticism of the postings, but will not allow misrepresentation of our posts, purposeful or not.** For the sake of robust debate, we will distinguish between constructive, focused argument and smear tactics.
- c. **We understand that people often feel strongly about issues debated on social media platforms , but we will consider removing any content that others might find extremely offensive or threatening.** Please respect other people’s views and beliefs and consider your impact on others when making your contribution. Your comment might be making a good point, but if you are offensive with it, your point will be lost.
- d. **We will not tolerate racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia or other forms of hate-speech, or contributions that could be interpreted as such.** We recognise the difference between criticising a particular government, organisation, community or belief and attacking people on the basis of their race, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability or age.
- e. **We will remove any content that may put us in legal jeopardy, such as potentially libellous or defamatory postings, or material posted in potential breach of copyright.**
- f. **Communications on the issues of moderation,** in terms of queries or comments about moderation, should not be posted as comments, eg, on Facebook Groups or Loomio posts. (See below for what you should do in paragraph 4)
- g. **Be aware that you may be misunderstood.** Try to be clear about what you are saying, and expect that people may understand your contribution differently than you intended. Be patient with people and try a different way of making your point.
- h. **Make it a positive experience for all.** We want to have welcoming spaces for intelligent discussion, and we expect participants to help achieve this by notifying us of potential problems and helping each other to keep conversations inviting and appropriate. If you spot something problematic in an interaction, please report it to the relevant operator who should respond within 5 days. If you do not get a response, or you are not satisfied with the response, you should then notify the CLP Secretary (at [clpsecretary@penrithborderlabour.org.uk](mailto:clpsecretary@penrithborderlabour.org.uk) ) who will pass your comments on to the Executive committee for further consideration. When we all take responsibility for maintaining an appropriate and constructive environment, the debate itself is improved and everyone benefits.

#### **4. Moderation Policy and Procedure**

- a. We will, when necessary, remove or reject user postings or comments. We reserve the right to take steps, or to implement measures, which we hope will benefit all participants.
- b. If a contribution to a social platform is perceived as breaching the guidelines set out above, it will be removed by the moderators. Even if only part of a comment or posting is perceived as breaching the guidelines, the whole thing may be removed
- c. In cases which are open to interpretation or aren't clear-cut (in terms of adherence to the Rules Of Engagement and Standards set out above) we may err on the side of caution but we will try not to be heavy-handed.
- d. When a comment or post is removed for any of the reasons above, it is sometimes necessary to delete subsequent messages which refer to explicitly or quote from the original (removed) comment.
- e. When a post is rejected or deleted, for whatever reason, the moderator will inform the person who made the post in writing or by email and will explain why the post has been taken down or rejected.
- f. However, the moderator will also invite the person who made the post to appeal against the decision, usually through the provision of further information and/or clarification. The moderator will either accept the appeal and allow the relevant post, or reject the appeal.
- g. If the person who made the post continues to believe that their post should be allowed, they must make their case, in writing, to the CLP Executive Committee. Because we are ultimately responsible for everything which appears on social media platforms that we control, all actions and decisions taken on appeal by our Executive are final.
- h. Please inform us of any inaccuracies, inappropriate, suspicious, SPAM or dodgy posts, and, in accordance with the procedures outlined in this in section 4, we will remove the content in a timely fashion. Objectionable content or behaviour will not be tolerated