

Introduction

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) is the UK's first tenant and employee co-owned mutual housing society, with over 12,000 homes throughout the Rochdale area.

RBH is unique because it is owned by its members, its tenant and employee owners. We are proud to be the UK's first tenant and employee co-owned mutual housing society and ambitious about doing things differently.

We have a Representative Body, which is elected from and by our tenant and employee members, putting our members at the heart of RBH decision-making. Our Representative Body sets our strategy, appoints our Non-Executive Directors and it has set out our **values**:

Responsibility, Equity, Democracy, Pioneering, Openness and Honesty, Caring, and Championing

Our values inform the way we communicate with our tenant and employees every day, as well as how we engage with the wider community through our public channels.

We know that more and more of our members and local partners are using social media to meet and share ideas. We want everyone who uses these channels to have a **safe** and **enjoyable** experience when engaging with RBH online, which is why we have set out some guidelines.

These guidelines will explain:

- How RBH manages its social media channels
- What social media users can reasonably expect from us
- What we expect from people contacting us or using our discussion forums on social media
- Our approach to any online behaviour that puts any of our members at risk

We will keep these guidelines under review and are always open to feedback from our members about how we can improve the experience of connecting with us online.

If you would like to share your thoughts on our approach to social media, please contact us [here](#).

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How we manage our social media channels

Our social media channels are an extension of RBH as a business.

We use **Twitter**, **Facebook**, **LinkedIn**, **Instagram** and **YouTube** to connect with our members, our communities and the wider public – regularly sharing information and updates about our diverse work across the towns and villages of Rochdale.

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What can you expect from us?

RBH Social Media Guidelines



We want our social media channels to provide a safe environment for people to get in touch, share ideas and make useful suggestions that help improve the services we provide.

We work across the towns and villages of Rochdale and are always keen to share updates that are relevant to our tenant and employee members - including, but not limited to:

- Local or national news stories
- Information about changes to local services
- New construction and housebuilding activity
- Activity run by local partners
- Local public events

We always want the information and updates we provide to be **informative, accurate, respectful, and accessible to all**. We would welcome your [feedback](#) if you think we could do be doing more to achieve this.

Our Twitter accounts

Our Communications Team is responsible for two corporate RBH accounts, each focused on a different aspect of our work in the local community:

@rbhousing is our main Twitter account, where you will find updates about all our diverse work across the Rochdale Borough. Information posted on this channel will generally be relevant for all our tenant and employee members, as well as the general public.

@rbhtowncentre is dedicated exclusively to providing updates on our long-term plans to improve the quality and mix of housing in our College Bank and Lower Falinge neighbourhoods.

In addition, some individual teams or RBH colleagues have their own social media accounts, and some RBH tenants and employees may talk about their work with RBH on their personal accounts.

Directing any questions or comments to the most appropriate twitter account will make it easier for everyone to find the information they are looking for. You might receive a response from either of these accounts – if certain members of our social media team are better placed to provide an answer to your enquiry.

When are we active on social media?

As with most other parts of our business, we are active on social media between the hours of 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday - except Bank Holidays. All our active social media hours are referenced in our account profile information.

Sometimes we will schedule posts in advance that are published outside these hours, so seeing a post from us does not necessarily guarantee that a member of our team will be able to reply.

Our team is sometimes able to monitor our social media channels outside of these core working hours but we are only likely to respond to issues if they are raised during core working hours. Emergency issues experienced at any time should be raised by contacting us on **0800 027 7769**.

Answering your questions

While we try to respond positively to comments and queries, on occasion we receive a large number of enquiries at one time and we may be unable to answer each one or there may be a delay before getting a reply. For questions relating to a specific RBH service, we may need to check details with specialist teams before responding. Sometimes a response will come directly from that team, rather than via social media.

If we ever feel that posting a reply is likely to prolong or inflame an unproductive conversation on social media, we may on occasion exercise our right not to reply. It is our responsibility to assess each comment and enquiry independently, before making a judgement in the best interests of our entire social media community.

Access to group discussions

Sometimes we will use our social media platforms to hold constructive conversations about RBH and its services. For example, we sometimes use Facebook to host discussion groups for our tenant and employee members, where everyone has the chance to ask questions.

We control access to these groups, so that priority and attention can be given to our tenants and employees.

Privacy

We will never discuss your personal details or individual circumstances in public on social media. If you have questions about your tenancy, or would like to discuss personal information, you will need to contact us privately via personal message on social media or through our [website](#).

If any personal information is shared over our channels, we will remove it immediately – to protect our members' privacy.

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What do we expect from you?

We want everyone who connects with us on social media to feel comfortable making comments, suggestions and asking questions, without worrying about the behaviour of other users.

Our social media community, which includes tenants and employee members, as well as followers from outside RBH, deserve to be treated with the same respect that you would show in person. We actively encourage comments and discussion and we know there will be differences of opinion; but these should always be made with respect for others and in line with our values.

We welcome constructive conversations over all our social media channels, but for the safety and security of our social media community, RBH will not allow any posts that:

- Breach any of the terms set out by individual social media platforms

- Encourage discrimination based on; race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, nationality, disability or age
- Criticise individual RBH tenants or employees by name
- Are **defamatory** to any person or group*
- Are **abusive or threatening** in nature**
- Are obscene, offensive or **inflammatory*****
- Share personal information about individuals, with or without their consent
- Deceive people or make false claims
- Advertise products or services that are irrelevant

We have the right and responsibility to decide whether any content shared over our social media channels is inappropriate and whether it breaches our guidelines. We will make every effort to remove any content that is unsuitable and may take further measure if necessary (see below).

These guidelines are in place to ensure that everyone can rely on the information they are accessing over social media and that no-one is put at risk by any inappropriate activity.

*We would define **defamatory** content as anything that is deliberately damaging to a person or group's reputation

****Abusive or threatening** language could involve swearing, or hinting that someone may come to harm

*****Inflammatory** comments are used to stir up anger or violent feelings in others.

Responding to inappropriate behaviour on social media

We feel it is our responsibility to monitor and make note of any activity relating to RBH and its members on social media, if we consider it to be in breach of our standard guidelines.

If we feel strongly that any content being shared on social media poses a genuine potential threat to any individuals or groups, we will not hesitate to remove it - if we are able to do so. The safety and security of our tenant and employee members is our number one priority, and it is our duty to act quickly to protect them whenever we can.

Managing inappropriate behaviour on our social media platforms would normally follow the following process:

1. Response

If we notice any content on our social media channels that we feel is inappropriate, we will try to notify the relevant person that they have breached our guidelines. This would normally be done with a public comment.

For example, if a statement has been made that is inaccurate or potentially misleading to other users, we will challenge this information publicly and provide a more accurate reference point wherever possible.

When experiencing a high volume of comments over a short period, as can happen quickly on social media, we may not be able to respond to each individual comment – but we will challenge information that we know is untrue.

2. Warnings

RBH Social Media Guidelines



If the same social media account continues to post content that we feel is inappropriate, or if potentially harmful information is not removed on request, we may issue a warning to that user.

This warning would remind the user about our social media guidelines and encourage them to take extra care when posting in the public domain.

We want our social media community to continue to grow and thrive for everyone, which is why we hope a warning would prevent any further necessary action.

3. Blocking

If warnings have been issued with no effect, and we feel that a user's behaviour is repeatedly disrupting the experience for other social media users, we reserve the right to block them from interacting with our social media channels. We reserve the right to block accounts without warning in exceptional circumstances, and we will always take immediate action in cases where discriminatory comments are made against any of the nine protected characteristics - as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Blocking an account would prevent that user from any future contact with us or our followers via that social media channel.

We must stress, this kind of action would only ever be a last resort – if we felt that continued interaction with this user was having a serious and negative impact on the social media community that we are responsible for.

4. Report

If we feel that any content posted on our social media channels breaches the guidance on conduct for Facebook or Twitter for example, we may be obliged to report the relevant user to the platform operators. It would then be the decision of the relevant platform to decide what action is taken.

Threatening, abusive or offensive messages sent over any social media platform could also be a legal offence and may need to be reported to the Police. The most relevant offences related to social media are 'harassment' and 'malicious communications'.

Harassment is defined by the Police as a 'course of conduct' (two or more related occurrences). These kinds of messages do not necessarily have to be violent, but they would need to have caused some alarm or distress to others.

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We want our social media community to continue growing, so that we can reach more and more people across the towns and villages of Rochdale who might benefit from our services. We need your help to make sure everyone has a safe and pleasant experience when using our online channels.

If you notice anything that we could be doing differently, or you see something that doesn't look right on our social media channels, we would love to hear from you.

If you would like to learn more about social media in general or would like help setting up an account to get the most out of your experience with RBH online, please get in touch with us [here](#).